



AN IMPORTANT MESSAGE TO PARENTS

Springtime excitement is in the air and as a parent of a High School student you have two special events quickly approaching, prom and graduation. These events are times of celebration and building memories to last a lifetime. The Cass County Prosecutor's Office, Cass County Sheriff's Office, C.A.S.S. Coalition and your local Police Department want remind you to help your child keep Prom and Graduation memories happy ones. It is extremely important to emphasize the importance of celebrating responsibly.

Now is the time to talk to your children about the dangerous consequences of alcohol and drug use. The National Highway Traffic Safety Administration reports that over one-third of teens killed in alcohol related accidents died during the months of April, May and June....prom and graduations season. Unfortunately it can be all too easy for teens to get alcohol; older siblings/friends, parent's unsecured cabinet/refrigerator even miss-informed parents are the most common ways. Thankfully there are several things as a parent you can do to help keep your child from making one foolish choice to use alcohol or illegal drugs that could change their life----and the lives of others-----forever.

Know the Facts:

- ◇ Studies have shown that parents are the biggest influence on a teens' decision to use or not use alcohol.
- ◇ Teenage drinking often leads to delinquent behavior, poor school performance, and a greater risk of becoming alcohol-dependent later in life.
- ◇ Teens are more likely to binge drink that can lead to alcohol poisoning and even death.
- ◇ The brain does not stop developing until a person's mid twenties. Alcohol use of any kind can cause damage to the brain's development which can be come permanent.
- ◇ Teens allowed to drink at home are more likely to drink away from home, drive after drinking, and to binge drink.

Know the Laws:

- ◇ It is illegal for persons under 21 years of age to possess or drink alcoholic beverages. Minors who do so can be charged with a criminal offense and face criminal penalties, including fines, court costs, probation, community service, jail time, and suspension of their driver's license for repeat offenses. If your child is 17 or over, a conviction will establish a long term criminal record for your offspring.
- ◇ Under no circumstances is it acceptable for an adult to provide a person less than 21 years of age with alcohol, or to host a party where minors are consuming alcohol. Adults who do so can face serious criminal penalties. When a young person dies after consuming alcohol, the adult who provided it to him or her can face up to 10 years in prison.
- ◇ If a minor causes a crash or is injured and you assisted them in obtaining alcohol or permitted them to drink it, you can be sued for the damages or deaths that result

Know what to Do:

- ◇ Set and enforce clear rules and consequences regarding the use of alcohol and other drugs for your teen now, before there is an issue.
- ◇ Monitor your teen's social media sites such as Facebook and Twitter.
- ◇ Monitor your teen. Confirm that there will be an adult monitoring any party or event your child attends and that alcohol will not be allowed.
- ◇ Make a plan if your teen finds themselves in a situation where alcohol is present
- ◇ Host and monitor a safe, alcohol free event for your teen and encourage other parents to do the same.
- ◇ Do not allow drinking in your home or on your property. Check on the party to be sure your teenager's friends did not bring alcohol in to your home.
- ◇ Do not provide alcohol to anyone under the age of 21. Report underage drinking...it could save a life

As your local law enforcement officials, we ask for your support in helping to avert tragedy. We encourage you to communicate with your teenager about the dangers of alcohol use. The enclosed agreement is a great way to start the conversation with your teen and to take steps keeping the memories of this momentous time happy ones.

Victor Fitz, Cass County Prosecutor

Joseph Underwood, Cass County Sheriff

Frank Williams Jr., Cassopolis Chief of Police

Tom Atkinson, Director of Dowagiac Public Safety

Kenneth Wray, Ontwa/Edwardsburg Chief of Police

Mike Grice, Silver Creek Chief of Police

Rachel Sadowski-Spiegel, Chief Pokagon Band-Potawatomi Indians

Willie Mays, Lt. Michigan State Police post 53