# About this Guide:

**This booklet is designed to help both teens and adults have a great time and the most positive experience possible at social events.**

**Dances, parties and other get-togethers play an important role in helping our young people develop social skills and grow as individuals. However, the involvement of alcohol, tobacco and other drugs at these events can take an otherwise positive experience and turn it into a major threat to safety and health.**

**In addition, the sale, provision or allowed consumption of alcohol and other drugs by minors is against the law. Adults can be sued and/or prosecuted for incidents or injuries stemming from alcohol and other drug use by minors within their homes or properties.**

**All of us – parents, schools, community organizations, religious groups – need to be involved in our children's lives in order to prevent the onset, use and abuse of alcohol, tobacco and other drugs. Yes, parties can and should be fun. They also should be planned, supervised and safe, providing activities that interest young people and abundant opportunities to socialize without the use of alcohol, tobacco and other drugs.**

**This booklet is designed to give you information and guidelines on:**

- **Planning parties and social events**
- **Establishing ground rules**
  - **For parties and events at your home or on your property**
  - **When your teen attends parties/events outside of your home**
- **Supervision, role modeling, and making a difference**
- **The laws regarding underage use of alcohol, tobacco and other drugs**

**By educating yourself and your teen, and providing opportunities for open communication, you are increasing the chances your teen will be able to make healthy and substance-free choices.**

## Planning Parties and Social Events

- **Plan the party with your teenager** and review the guest list.
- **Establish the ground rules** and be sure your teenager understands and is in agreement of these rules. *(See next Section)*
- **Establish what time the party will start and end,** and make sure all guests are aware of it.
- **Plan events around a specific activity or theme –** skating, swimming, a cookout, a movie night, a sporting event, etc.
- **Provide plenty of non-alcoholic refreshments,** foods and snacks. Encourage your teenager to do the grocery list and shopping with you.
- **Invite another parent, couple or adult friend** to help supervise and provide company during the event. They will be available to help out if problems arise. Consider inviting a guest's parents to help out.
- **Discuss potential problems** or situations that might arise with your teenager ahead of time and possible solutions.
- **As a gesture of respect and friendship,** notify your neighbors of the party in advance.

## Establishing Ground Rules

### For Parties and Events in Your Home or on Your Property

Involve your teen in setting ground rules for parties in advance. Make sure you agree on the rules, then discuss how to convey these rules to guests. Point out that if a guest breaks any of the rules, you will immediately address the issue with the guest. If the issues cannot be resolved, you will ask the guest to leave. Make it clear that if the guest has consumed alcohol or other drugs or is putting themselves or others at risk, you will also contact the parents/guardians or law enforcement, if necessary, to respond and come and pick the guest up.

**Here are some typical ground rules:**

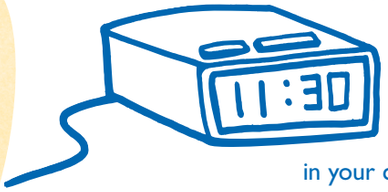
- **Absolutely no alcohol, tobacco or other drugs allowed.**
- **Do not permit guests to leave and return to the party without a specific reason.**
- **Leave the lights on.**
- **Some rooms and areas are off limits.**
- **People must respect and protect your families' personal property.**
- **Established curfew/ending time should be known and followed.**
- **Discuss and rehearse for the unexpected – what to do.**

## Establishing Ground Rules

### When Your Teen Attends Parties or Events Outside of Your Home

- **Obtain the address and phone number** of the party and ask your teenager to call you if the location changes.

- **Call the host's parents** to ask about adult supervision and guidelines. Ask directly about their policy and response to alcohol, tobacco or other drug use by minors.
- **Speak directly to the parent.** If your teenager complains that you do not trust him or her, explain that trust is not the issue; unsupervised parties or parties where alcohol, tobacco or other drug use is permitted are not acceptable to you.
- **When you drive your teen to a party**, wait to see that he/she is inside the house. Agree on a pick-up time and be prompt.
- **If you're not available to drive your teen,** make sure you know and approve of who is driving. Ask your son or daughter to call if plans change.
- **Make sure your teen knows how to reach you** or a responsible designated adult at all times.
- **Make it easy for your teen to leave the party.** Tell your child you'll come pick him/her up if things become uncomfortable.
- **Know what time the party ends,** and be available (or expect to be awakened) when your teen returns home. This is a great opportunity for communication regarding the positives and negatives of the event. It will also provide an opportunity for you to demonstrate interest in your child's life and to respond to your teen's experience, feelings and reactions.




At the back of this booklet, you will find samples of "A Contract for Life" and a "Parent's Agreement" that you and your teen can complete and agree to regarding safety and the expectations for teens and parents. Consider using one or both of these or creating your own signed agreement together.

## Supervision, Role Modeling and Making a Difference

There is much we can do as parents and concerned adults to prevent the use and abuse of alcohol, tobacco and other drugs by our children.

- **Talk to your teen ahead of time** regarding your values, rules and boundaries around alcohol, tobacco and other drug use.
- **Offer and encourage opportunities to discuss and/or role-play** difficult situations and their solutions.
- **Stay at home and be available during parties** or events in your home.
- **Volunteer to supervise or chaperone events** at other homes or in the community.
- **Educate yourself about alcohol, tobacco and other drugs.** Be a credible source of information to your son or daughter. Be willing to learn with and from your child.
- **Become knowledgeable about the laws** regarding the sales, provision and use of alcohol, tobacco and other drugs by minors.
- **Be very aware of the role model** you are presenting to your kids. Remember: actions speak louder than words. Your behaviors and social activities are models for those of your children.
- **If you don't want your teen to use alcohol,** tobacco and other drugs, don't abuse them yourself. If you have a problem with any of these substances, seek help for yourself. Obtaining help for your own problem is the best lesson you can teach your child.

- **Be aware of how commercials, song lyrics** and popular culture influence and encourage teens to experiment with alcohol and other drugs. Help your child understand and sort out these messages.
- **Talk, Talk, Talk and Listen, Listen, Listen.** Open communication is the best prevention tool available to you and your child.

# The Laws Regarding Underage Use of Alcohol, Tobacco and Other Drugs

## Introduction

The Vermont Department of Liquor Control (DLC) is the only agency exclusively dedicated to the enforcement of liquor and tobacco laws and regulations in our state. Despite efforts of the 17 investigators working for the department, recent studies have shown that underage consumption of alcohol is still much too high. This is particularly true at the high school level, where the Youth Risk Behavior Survey data shows many teens binge drink and have alcohol readily accessible. Underage drinking parties go on nearly every weekend at homes, in the woods and in the fields of our state and communities. Despite possibly tragic consequences, information on these events is rarely forthcoming.

The DLC works with other agencies to enforce the law and with communities and schools to discourage or stop underage drinking. DLC conducts controlled buys, or "compliance checks", to gain compliance from retailers, and surveillance operations to stop underage purchases through third parties. It is only through a community wide effort that a reduction in underage drinking can be achieved. It is our hope that this guide will assist parents in curtailing what is a dangerous, and sometimes fatal, activity. To report underage drinking you can call a toll-free anonymous phone line in Vermont —**1-866-TEEN-USE** (1-866-833-6873.) For more information go to: **www.vermontstart.org**.

## The Laws

The following are some of the major state laws concerning teen alcohol and tobacco use.

## Laws About Underage Tobacco Use

A state law, passed in 1997, addresses the issue of teen tobacco use. First, the law prohibits young people under age 18 from possessing or purchasing tobacco products. A person found in violation of the law will have the products immediately confiscated and will be subject to a civil penalty of $25. Failure to respond to the ticket within 120 days of the notice will result in a motor vehicle license suspension. In addition, any person who sells or furnishes tobacco products to a person under age 18 shall be fined not more than $100 for the first offense and not more than $500 for any subsequent offense. Vermont law also states that no person (of any age) shall be permitted to use tobacco on public school grounds and no student shall be permitted to use tobacco at public school sponsored functions.

## The Law Regarding Alcohol

There are several laws under Title 7, Vermont Statutes Annotated that deal with underage drinking or furnishing of alcohol to minors. **Persons under the age of 21 who possess, purchase, or procure alcohol can be arrested and charged.** As of July 1, 2000, for a first offense, a minor would be issued a civil ticket rather than getting arrested. The penalties for the civil offense are a fine of up to $300 and the minor would have to complete a teen alcohol safety program administered by court diversion. If the person failed to answer the ticket or complete the requirements, his or her driver's license would be suspended. The consequences of a second offense are much more severe. This would be a criminal offense, and a person, if convicted, would have a permanent criminal record. Additionally, the penalty imposed could be a fine of up to $600 and/or 0-30 days in jail. The driver's license of a person would be suspended for 120 days as a result of this conviction. Another program, an alcohol driver safety program administered by the Division of Alcohol and Drug Programs, would also be required.

In addition, the person may find that they are required to go through screening to assess whether they have a substance abuse issue. These penalties are only for the possession of alcohol by a minor, and do not include any other consequences such as having one's car towed, being arrested for operating a motor vehicle under the influence, or being taken into custody as an incapacitated person due to one's level of intoxication.

For a person **furnishing alcohol to someone underage** or if a person creates a direct and immediate opportunity for a person to consume beverages, the penalties are even more severe. They can be fined up to $2,000, or sentenced up to two years in jail, or both.

Additionally, when a person furnishes to a minor and the minor/minors cause death or serious injury to them or another person while operating a vehicle on the highway, the furnisher shall be imprisoned not more than five years or fined up to $10,000 or both.

These are only the criminal violations. Liquor licensees and others who furnish alcohol illegally are also subject to civil action.

## Something to Think About

**As graduation approaches at your high school, has your daughter or son suggested a party? Perhaps the gathering would be at your home or camp and would provide or permit alcoholic beverages for those teens wishing to have a drink. The kids will leave their keys with you or another adult — no one is supposed to drive after drinking. Seems like you should agree to the party? Think again!**

**Even if you are on your own property or in your own home you can be imprisoned two years, or fined $2,000 or both if you sell or furnish any beer, wine or liquor to a person under 21 years of age. Under certain circumstances, you could be charged with contributing to the delinquency of a minor, if the State can prove that you condoned or encouraged the misconduct.**

**If the party gets out of control and someone drinks too much and dies, under a recent Vermont Supreme Court decision you may be prosecuted for involuntary manslaughter.**

**Still think you may okay the party? Think of your civil liability. In other words, your duty to pay damages if either a party-goer is hurt or a third person is injured. Your liability for negligence is recognized under Vermont law if you furnish alcohol to a minor who causes injury to another. The minor's injury may be your liability also.**

**Do you think your homeowner's insurance will cover the party? Maybe, maybe not… Even if you are covered, you bear responsibility for any punitive damages.**

**So if you're thinking of permitting a teenage party with alcoholic beverages — think again!**

The Vermont Department of Health, Division of Alcohol & Drug Abuse Programs would like to thank the Chittenden South Partnership for Youth, Springfield New Directions, Youth Resiliency Project, Windsor New Directions, Windsor and Orange County Court Diversion, River Connection Regional Partnership, Community Partnership of Orange/Windsor, Vermont Department of Education and the Vermont Department of Liquor Control.

## PARENTS' AGREEMENT

Because we love our children, take seriously our responsibility as parents and recognize that not making a decision in today's world is a decision in itself, and because we recognize loving also means setting appropriate limits, and because we value the future of our children and the welfare of our family, and because we believe in communication and commitment to and with other families in our communities.

We, therefore, agree together to do the following things:

We will consider it crucial to know where our children are at all times.

We will consider the value of work – an honest effort for an honest reward – an acceptable norm at home, at school, and in the community.

We will welcome honest communication regarding our child's behavior, and we will accept the same communication regarding our own.

In the event that our son or daughter will be attending a social event, gathering or party in another home, we will call the parents to determine if they will be present to supervise.

We will communicate with the school regardless of our youngster's age.

We will consider driving and the use of a vehicle a responsibility not a privilege.

We will not drive a vehicle; to include cars, boats, snowmobiles or other vehicles, while under the influence of alcohol or other drugs and will not allow our children to ride with anyone whom is under the influence of alcohol or other drugs.

We will be active and selective in our permission for television, movies, Internet use, music and media access and not apologize for doing so.

We will feel free to volunteer as supervisors or chaperones at school, church, or other social functions for young people.

We will express our values, feelings, and family rules to our youngsters about the use and abuse of alcohol, tobacco and other drugs as well as about other destructive or high-risk activities. We will also support our schools and communities in their efforts to deal constructively with these problems.

We will recognize that measuring up to any norm is difficult in a complicated world. Therefore, we will be supportive of each other, believing in our basic intent and goodness as parents and young people.

Signed on the _____ day of _____ 20_____

_____

# Contract for Life

## A Foundation for Trust and Caring

**This contract is designed to facilitate communication between young people and their parents about potentially destructive decisions related to alcohol, drugs, peer pressure and behavior. The issues facing young people today are often too difficult to address alone. SADD believes that effective parent-child communication is critically important in helping young adults to make healthy decisions.**

## Young Person

I recognize that there are many potentially destructive decisions I face every day and commit to you that I will do everything in my power to avoid making decisions that will jeopardize my health, my safety and overall well being, or your trust in me. I understand the dangers associated with the use of alcohol and drugs, and the destructive behaviors often associated with impairment.

By signing below, I pledge my best effort to remain alcohol and drug free. I agree that I will never drive under the influence of either, or accept a ride from someone who is impaired, and I will always wear a seat belt.

Finally, I agree to call you if I am ever in a situation that threatens my safety and to communicate with you regularly about issues of importance to us both.

Young Person

## Parent (or Caring Adult)

I am committed to you, and to your health and safety. By signing below, I pledge to do everything in my power to understand and communicate with you about the many difficult and potentially destructive decisions you face.

Further, I agree to provide for you safe, sober transportation home if you are ever in a situation that threatens your safety and to defer discussion about that situation until a time when we can both discuss the issues in a calm and caring manner.

I also pledge to you that I will not drive under the influence of alcohol or drugs, I will always seek safe, sober transportation home, and I will always remember to wear a seat belt.

Parent/Caring Adult

Students Against Destructive Decisions

The SADD Contract for life can be found online at:
**http://www.saddonline.com/contract.htm**

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Vermont Parents Guide

# A Guide to Safe and Substance Free Social Events, Parties and Gatherings

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