

INFORMATION YOU CAN TRUST FROM THE FALMOUTH PREVENTION PARTNERSHIP



THE CONSEQUENCES OF UNDERAGE DRINKING

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On January 4, 2013 the Cape Cod Times reported that police in Sandwich “plan to summons 35 teenagers for underage drinking,” after breaking up a party on New Year's Eve.

According to police, teens attending this underage drinking party were in various stages of intoxication and a large amount of alcohol was present in the house. On a night when the outside temperature was well below freezing, a teenage girl from the party was found wandering in nearby woods with no shoes and not wearing a coat.

The law in Massachusetts is clear. Whoever furnishes alcohol to a person under 21 years of age shall be punished by a fine up to \$2,000 or imprisonment for up to a year or both.

Further, anyone who provides alcohol to an underage youth who is involved in a DUI accident could be held legally and financially responsible.

Problems and Costs Associated with Underage Drinking in Massachusetts

A government report published in 2011 documented that underage drinking cost the citizens of Massachusetts \$1.4 billion in 2010. These costs include medical care, work loss, and pain and suffering associated with the use of alcohol by youth. This translates to a cost of more than \$2,000 per year for each youth in the State

Young people who begin drinking before age 15 are four times more likely to develop alcohol dependence and are two and a half times more likely to become abusers of alcohol than those who begin drinking at age 21.

The social costs of underage drinking in Massachusetts are substantial, including harm due to traffic accidents, violent crime, property crime, unintentional injury, and risky sex.

For example in 2009 an estimated 21 homicides; 22,500 nonfatal violent crimes such as rape, robbery and assault; and 29,900 property crimes including burglary, larceny, and car theft were attributable to underage drinking. Further, an estimated 357 teen pregnancies and 20,420 teens having risky sex were attributable to underage drinking.

Alcohol and Your Child's Future

A criminal or juvenile record can prevent your child from getting a job or joining the military. Teens who make bad decisions about alcohol can jeopardize involvement in school activities, sports or clubs; college admissions; and financial aid.

Alcohol and Your Child's Brain

The brain does not fully develop until a person is over the age of 20. Drinking alcohol during adolescence damages parts of the brain responsible for: decision-making, self-control, and memory and learning.

As a parent, the things you say and do have tremendous influence on the decisions your child makes—especially when it comes to using alcohol and other drugs. Teens whose parents set rules about alcohol are less likely to drink. By talking with your children about not using alcohol and other drugs, you can help them make better choices and live safer, healthier lives.

And, don't forget that it is against the law for you to provide alcohol for anyone under age 21!

To help support parents and other adults in our community, the Falmouth Prevention Partnership manages ***Parents Who Host Lose The Most***, a public awareness campaign to provide members of the community with accurate information about the health risks of underage drinking and the legal consequences of providing alcohol to youth.

To speak with someone about the program contact the Partnership Director, Patricia Mitrokostas at 508-540-2317 or coordinator@falmouthprevention.org

Recommended Resource

MedlinePlus: Underage Drinking is an excellent source of information about underage drinking. The site provides access to information from reliable sources that is accurate and up-to-date. (<http://www.nlm.nih.gov/medlineplus/underagedrinking.html>)

For more information, visit the partnership's website at: www.falmouthprevention.org.

This article was written by Dr. Bihari, a pediatrician, chairperson of the Falmouth Prevention Partnership Steering Committee, and a member of the Board of Directors of the Community Health Center of Cape Cod.