

THE
NORTH FORK
ALLIANCE

SAFE HOMES

A Pledge for Parents



NORTH FORK ALLIANCE
631-477-6821
www.NorthForkAlliance.org

What is **SAFE HOMES?**



The Safe Homes network is for all parents of children who are in pre-kindergarten to twelfth grades. It provides a way for parents/guardians to unite in a clear "No Use" message to children by publicly stating that there will be "No Use" of alcohol, tobacco, or other drugs, by minors, in their home or on their property.

The Safe Homes Pledge is not a legally binding document. It is a good faith effort in our mission to change the attitude that underage drinking, smoking and drug use is acceptable.

Just the **FACTS**

- Underage drinkers are at higher risk of brain damage than adults.
- Adolescents from 14 to 21 years of age who abuse alcohol have a smaller hippocampi--the area of the brain that handles memory and learning, than non-drinkers. This reduction is significant and possibly irreversible according to the American Medical Association. Our brains go through important transformations during adolescence and studies show alcohol use during adolescent years are associated with damage to memory and learning capabilities, as well as to the decision-making and reasoning areas in the brain.
- Alcohol takes a greater toll on brain development of those under twenty-one than on any other age group. Adults would have to consume twice as many drinks to suffer the same damage as adolescents and even occasional heavy drinking injures young brains.
- Adolescent drinkers score worse than non-users on vocabulary, visual-spatial and memory tests, and were more likely to perform poorly in school, fall behind and experience social problems, depression, suicidal thoughts and violence. (AMA, 2002)

Why should **I JOIN?**

Joining the Safe Homes Network lets children know that you care where they are going, what they will be doing and with whom they are spending time. By joining the Safe Homes Network, parents work together to help young people resist the pressure to use alcohol, tobacco and drugs.

UNDERAGE DRINKING, SMOKING AND DRUG USE POSE SIGNIFICANT RISK TO THE HEALTH AND SAFETY OF YOUTH.

- Drinking under the age of 21 is against the law.
- Driving while intoxicated is a criminal offense.
- Alcohol and other drug use cause injury, loss of inhibition, sexual abuse, illness and even death.



How to Begin

THE CONVERSATION



Research shows that parents have a great influence in their ability to affect their children's decision to use alcohol and drugs. Parents who voice their **disapproval of underage drinking**

and drug use can positively affect their child's decision not to use drugs or drink underage.

You may not want to alienate or embarrass your teen by discussing the issue of underage drinking and drug use. But by not talking, you risk your child being exposed to a host of potential problems associated with underage drinking and drug use; including injury, unplanned sexual activity, decreased memory, low grades, pregnancy, sexually transmitted diseases, alcohol poisoning, driving accidents, drug overdose and even death. It is far better to be safe than sorry.

Be prepared to talk about the issue of underage drinking and drug use. Take some time to really think about what you want to say and key points to go over with your teen. Anticipate how your teen might respond to your questions. Remember teens do not want a lecture. You do not need to cover everything at once. This should be an ongoing conversation with your teen throughout adolescence.

What to say and HOW TO SAY IT

- Send a clear message that underage alcohol use and drug use are not accepted.
- Keep the lines of communication open.
- Listen to your teen. When you listen, you create a safe environment where your teen will feel comfortable talking with you about his or her concerns.
- Have your teen practice saying "no" to illegal activities.
- Discuss ways to get out of uncomfortable situations. Help your teen think of ways to respond when they are offered alcohol or drugs. For example, "No, I don't want a beer"; "I have to stay in shape for my team." or, "Nah, I'd rather have a soda. or, just "no thanks".
- Set firm rules and consequences.
- Discuss what the consequences will be if they choose to drink or do drugs (i.e., loss of car privileges, phone, dating, computer and misdemeanor charge if caught). Follow through on the consequences.
- Be alert for possible signs of alcohol and drug use. Watch for problems like dropping grades, withdrawal, missing money, or a new set of questionable friends.

BEFORE YOU GO OUT OF TOWN AND LEAVE A TEEN ALONE OR IN CHARGE, CONSIDER THE FOLLOWING:

- Can your teen handle the responsibility?
- Make it clear that throwing a party is not an option!
- Ask a trusted adult such as a close neighbor to check on your teen and your home while you are gone.
- Be clear about consequences (in advance) if your teen chooses to have a party while you are gone.

When your child is **HAVING A PARTY...**

PLANNING AHEAD WILL HELP MAKE YOUR PARTY A SUCCESS

- Decide on a guest list. Give your teen a maximum number to invite. Set an age limit for guests. Keep a copy of the guest list for your records.
- Send invitations! Have your teen inform his/her guest that the party is by invitation only. Don't send e-mail or use social media invitations. Avoid the "open party" situation.
- Set a party time, inclusive of a start and end time.
- Put your phone number on the invitation and welcome calls from parents.
- Inform parents/guardians about the party and explain your expectations of party-goers. No Alcohol!
- Have parents or responsible adults drop-off and pickup teens. If teens drive to the party, plan to hold all keys to eliminate the temptation of leaving and returning to the party.
- Stay at the party. Your presence is important. Walk through the party area frequently. Have additional adult supervision on-site during the party.
- Ask all uninvited guests to leave immediately. If necessary, call the police to escort unwanted guests out.
- If you suspect a teen guest is intoxicated, contact his or her parents/guardians immediately.
- Have guests remain in the party location; do not allow teens to go back and forth to a parking lot or their car.
- Hold the party in an area you can monitor party guests from inside and outside.
- Watch for strange behavior. Pay attention if a guest frequents the bathroom after getting a drink. This could indicate the use of illegal substances or alcohol.

Set the **GROUND RULES** for having a **PARTY**

MAKE SURE THEY ARE CLEARLY UNDERSTOOD BY BOTH YOU AND YOUR CHILD IN ADVANCE

- No drugs or alcohol.
- No smoking.
- No leaving the party & returning without adult permission and supervision.
- No uninvited guests.
- Party area should have ample lighting for the time of the day; keep lights on throughout the party.
- Parent(s) will be providing supervision by serving refreshments, etc.
- Some rooms in your home are off limits to guests; insist on party-goers staying in designated party areas.
- Secure all forms of alcohol, prescription medication, firearms and other hazardous items in your home in a safe place.

HELPFUL TIPS

- ▶ Serve a wide variety of foods that appeal to teens, including healthy options.
- ▶ Serve a variety of drinks in cans or bottles. Avoid serving punch or soft drinks in cups.
- ▶ Do not allow teens to bring outside drinks, cups or open bottles into the party.
- ▶ Have different activities planned for entertainment.



WHEN YOUR CHILD IS INVITED TO A PARTY:

- Tell him/her that you intend to call the host parent to confirm there will be parental supervision and that no alcoholic beverages will be served. Be sure to follow through on these plans.
- Be sure to know when the party ends and when your child will be home.
- Make it easy for your child to leave a party where there is drinking or other drug use. Discuss this in advance. If, for any reason, your child wishes to leave the party early or has a change in plans, he/she should be able to call you or another designated driver for assistance.
- Make it easy for your child to talk to you when arriving home. Being up and available when your child comes home from a party encourages communication and could alert you to a potential problem.

What every parent & child **NEEDS TO KNOW...** **THE LAW!**

PARENTS HAVE THE RIGHT TO PROVIDE ALCOHOL TO THEIR OWN CHILDREN IN THEIR OWN HOME WHEN THEY ARE PRESENT...

However, it is illegal to purchase, aid and abet or give alcohol to other minors. **Suffolk County Social Host Law** was enacted to deter underage drinking parties or gatherings where adults knowingly allow minors to drink alcohol. The law fines adults (any person over 18) who serve alcohol to a minor (any person under 21) or fails to stop them from drinking at their residence. Failure to comply can include fines and up to a year in jail.

New York's Zero Tolerance Law for Drivers Under 21 applies to a person under 21 who operates a motor vehicle with a blood alcohol concentration as low as .02%. A minor can be charged with "driving after having consumed alcohol". A blood alcohol concentration of .02% is equivalent to less than one drink for an average size person. If charged, a first offence requires license suspension for six months plus fines. A second offense requires loss of your license for one year or until the age of 21 whichever is longer. Any charge will remain on your record for three years or until 21, whichever is longer.

You have Civil Liability (meaning you can be sued to pay damages) if you host a party and a party-goer is hurt or a third-party is injured. Parents may be held responsible if a teen, as a result of alcohol use in their home: gets into a fight and hurts someone or themselves, falls and hurts him/herself or someone else, sexually assaults someone, damages property, dies from drinking too much, injures or kills someone while driving after leaving the party.

911 Good Samaritan-New York's Fatal Overdose Prevention Law was enacted to encourage people to call 911 when witnessing or experiencing an alcohol or other drug overdose by providing a limited shield from charge and prosecution for possession of narcotics, marijuana, and, for minors, alcohol. The policy provides limited immunity from arrest when the witness(es) who call 911 or the overdose victim possess residual or very small amounts of drugs.

Suffolk County **SOCIAL HOST LAW**

WHAT IS THE SOCIAL HOST LAW?

The primary purpose of the social host law is to deter underage drinking parties or gatherings where adults knowingly allow minors to drink alcohol or alcoholic beverages. The law applies to any adult (including parents) who is over the age of 18 and who knowingly allows the consumption of alcohol by minors (any person under 21) at the adult's residence.

WHO CAN BE CHARGED?

Anyone who is over the age of 18; and owns, rents or otherwise controls a private residence; and knowingly allows the consumption of alcohol or alcoholic beverages by any minor on such premises; or fails to take responsible corrective action upon learning of the consumption of alcohol or alcoholic beverages by any minor on such premises.

WHAT IS "REASONABLE CORRECTIVE ACTION"

Reasonable Corrective action shall include, but not be limited to:

Making a prompt demand that the minor stop drinking the alcoholic beverage or leave the premises; and if the minor refuses to comply with the request, the adult must promptly report the underage drinking to; local law enforcement; or to any other person with greater degree of authority over the minor (e.g., the minor's parents or guardians, etc.).

WHAT ARE THE PENALTIES?

1st Offense: Up to \$500

2nd Offense: \$1000 and/or up to a year in jail

WHY IS THIS LAW NEEDED?

This law provides a legal basis for holding adults responsible for knowingly allowing parties for youth under 21 to occur on their property whether or not they provided the alcohol.

By signing the
SAFE HOMES PLEDGE
 you agree to:



■ **Actively** supervise all gatherings or parties of youth in your home or on your property or ask another responsible adult to do so.



■ **Not** to allow possession or use of alcohol, tobacco or other drugs by youth in your home or on your property.



■ **Ensure** that all alcohol, tobacco and medications are stored securely in your home.



■ **Dispose** of any unused prescription drugs and keep them out of the hands of youth.

■ **Set** clear expectations of your child knowing where they are going, whom they are with, what their plans are and when they are to return home.

■ **Communicate** with any **SAFE HOMES** parent/guardian of a child you personally observe using alcohol, tobacco or other drugs.

Just the **FACTS**

■ Approximately 10% of 12 year old kids say they have used alcohol once. By age 13, that number doubles. And by age 15, approximately 50% have had at least one drink.

The **SAFE HOMES** Pledge

Pledge Sheet for Parent/Guardian to Fill Out and Return

YES, our family has discussed underage drinking, tobacco, and drug use and we agree to the pledge as a member of the Safe Homes Network.

(Please use one form per family)

Parent/Guardian _____

(Please Print Name)

Signature _____

Students' Names:

Print Name _____

School _____ Grade _____

Print Name _____

School _____ Grade _____

Print Name _____

School _____ Grade _____

Print Name _____

School _____ Grade _____

Please fill out the following contact information

Mailing Address: _____

Town _____ State _____ Zip _____

Phone Number: _____

E-Mail Address _____

Please check here if you would like your phone number and e-mail address to be included in the Safe Homes Directory.

Please check here if you do not wish to have your phone number and e-mail address included in the Safe Homes Directory, but would like to be a Safe Home and receive a Directory.

Please send your Safe Homes Pledge to:
North Fork Alliance • 421 First Street • Greenport, NY 11944
Or Take the Pledge online at WWW.NORTHFORKALLIANCE.ORG



**FOR MORE INFORMATION
ABOUT THE SAFE HOMES
NETWORK IN YOUR
COMMUNITY CONTACT:**

**North Fork Alliance
421 First Street
Greenport, NY 11944
Phone: 631-477-6821**

www.NorthForkAlliance.org

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