

PACKED WITH HELPFUL SKILLS

THE SOURCE PARENTS TRUST

PE

**NEW!! TEEN
BRAIN RESEARCH**



EXCLUSIVE

**PARENTS OVERPOWER
PEER PRESSURE**

Funding Provided by Cobb EMC



SHOCKING

**ALCOHOL
RUINS TEENS'
DEVELOPING
BRAINS**



TEEN:

**"MY PARENTS
SAVED ME
FROM ADDICTION."**

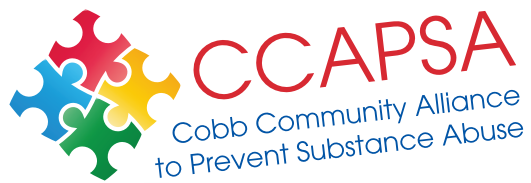


**THE BITTER
SHOWDOWN**

**ALCOHOL VS.
TEENAGE BRAINS.
HOW WILL PARENTS
REACT?**



TIPS TO STOP UNDERAGE DRINKING www.ccapsa.org



Dear Cobb County School and Marietta City School Families,

You have more power over the choices your children make than you may realize. Alcohol is the #1 drug of choice among children and adolescents; they use alcohol 10 times more than all illegal drugs, combined. Studies show that parents — not peers — are the most important influence in a teen's life. This places parents in a prime position to reduce underage and youth binge drinking. Parents can set an example, talk with youth, and monitor youth activities. Empowered parents and adult family members can trump peer pressure!

The good news? The most effective techniques to remain connected to your teen are among the most simple:

- Set a family policy about underage drinking & consequences that will be carried out
- Know your children's friends
- Know where your children are and with whom
- Ensure your children's social environments are alcohol free
- Have daily positive communication and interaction with your children

The Cobb Community Alliance to Prevent Substance Abuse, Inc. (CCAPSA), in partnership with the Cobb County School District and Marietta City School District, is providing this special edition to educate parents and families about the dangers of underage drinking.

Please visit our website at www.ccapsa.org. There you can learn more about recent trends in underage and youth-binge drinking and see the variety of resources available for families to start those conversations with children, learn more about social host ordinances and other enforcement tools in place within our County, and tools to help you be an empowered parent!

For all of our students to have the brightest possible future, it is essential they choose to be alcohol free. Talk with your children about the critical issue today. We wish you and your family all the best.

Sincerely,

Mr. Chris Ragsdale
Superintendent
Cobb County School District

Dr. Emily Lembeck
Superintendent
Marietta City Schools

- Most parents talk to their kids about drinking two years too late. Age 8 is not too early.

- What parents may not realize is that children say parental disapproval of underage drinking is the key reason they have chosen not to drink.



Teen brain development and alcohol

RESearch shows that alcohol affects a developing teen brain differently than an adult brain. "The brain goes through dynamic changes during adolescence, and alcohol can seriously damage long- and short-term growth processes" (American Medical Association *Fact Sheet*, 2003).

Alcohol may impair memory, learning, decision-making and impulse control; and it greatly increases the risk of addiction. In addition, alcohol can cause young people to develop social problems, have poor judgment, get into trouble, do poorly in school and experience failure in achieving lifelong goals.

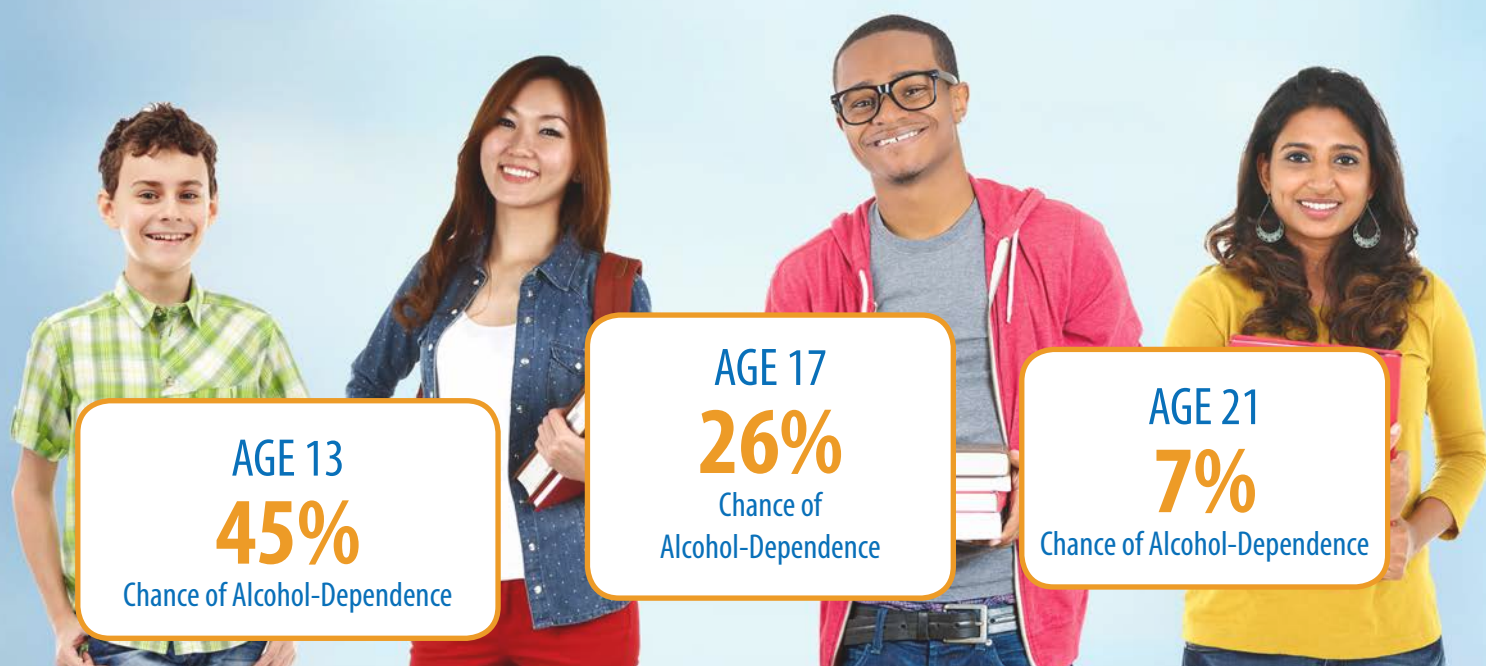
To compound this problem, research shows that parents generally underestimate the extent of teen drinking and its negative consequences. Thirty-one percent of youths who said they had been drunk in the past year were said by their parents to be non-drinkers. Others may view underage drinking as inevitable, but it isn't. To be alcohol-free, a teen needs parents who are trained in BONDING (creating a warm, loving relationship), setting BOUNDARIES (discussing clear, firm rules about no-underage-alcohol use) and MONITORING (knowing where your kids are and making sure they stay in an alcohol- and drug-free social environment at all times).

Alcohol affects a teen brain differently than an adult brain.

- The brain's hippocampus (responsible for learning and memory) can be **10% smaller** in underage drinkers.
- It can actually cause serious damage to the still-developing adolescent brain (10–21 years).

Significant increased risk of addiction

- Research shows more than half of Georgia parents don't know that underage drinking increases the risk of alcohol-dependence.



ALCOHOL HIJACKS THE BRAIN'S PLEASURE-REWARD SYSTEM

THE BRAIN REWARDS positive actions with feelings of pleasure so we want to repeat these actions. We remember “feel-good” brain chemicals (or neurotransmitters), such as dopamine, which connect the pleasure to the thing we enjoyed. Alcohol hijacks our brain's pleasure-reward system by tricking the brain into generating pleasure-reward feelings from a harmful chemical—alcohol—instead of a real experience.

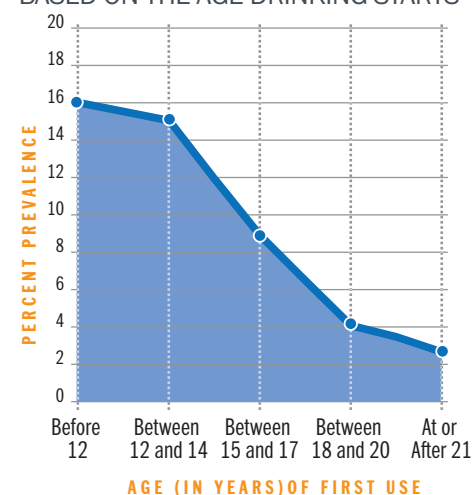
If teens continue drinking, the brain changes and adapts to the presence of alcohol, and soon they need more and more alcohol to create the

same amount of pleasure. If they continue to drink, they will begin to crave it and feel uncomfortable—sometimes even extreme discomfort—without it. They become addicted. Getting their next drink becomes more important than family, grades or even sports.

Because the teen brain produces an abundance of dopamine, it can go rapidly from liking, to wanting, to needing alcohol, which programs the brain for alcoholism. Alcohol can also damage the brain's ability to sense pleasure from normal, healthy things and experiences—leaving a young person feeling “flat” about things he/she previously enjoyed.

Alcohol-dependence

BASED ON THE AGE DRINKING STARTS



- If your family has a history of alcoholism, your children need to know that they are at a greater risk for problem drinking.

SOURCE: Grant, BF and Dawson, DA.
Journal of Substance Abuse 9:103-110,1997

Preventing underage drinking is as easy as **1-2-3**



1 Bonding

Developing a strong relationship with your child is important. Research shows that family conflict and a weak parent/child bond increases a child's risk of drinking underage.

Bonding can be as simple as going out and having fun together, talking about school, and making time each day to listen to your child's concerns. Studies show that even making the effort to eat dinner as a family five times each week reduces the chance that a child will use alcohol or drugs by as much as 33 percent.

2 Boundaries

Parental disapproval is the number one reason why teens say they don't drink. When parents set clear rules about not using alcohol, kids usually follow them.

It's important, however, that your kids know why you don't want them to drink. Explain how underage alcohol use can change how their adolescent brains develop—impairing memory and learning capabilities while increasing their risk of addiction. Take a moment to sit down with your children and together establish rules about not drinking.

3 Monitoring

At some level, most kids appreciate parental monitoring. It's very real proof their parents love them enough to care about their well-being.

Having friends who drink is the single greatest risk factor for underage alcohol use. As a parent, it's imperative that you know whom your child is with, where they are, and what they're doing.

Make it a habit to ask questions as your child leaves the house. Get to know his or her friends, and ensure that alcohol isn't available to them at your house or their friends' homes. Checking in with your child can be as easy as sending a text message, and if alcohol shows up at a party or event, being ready to pick your child up.

Don't forget to monitor your child's online activities, too. Today, teens spend more time interacting with each other on social media sites like Facebook than they do talking on the telephone.



Start early and stay involved.

Like many parenting skills, monitoring your children's online activities is easiest when you establish clear rules early.

Although the tendency is for parents to become less involved as their children age, even older teens need their parents' help to stay alcohol-free.

New brain res

and the effects of alcohol

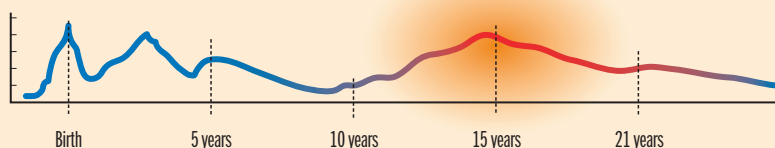
Brain plasticity

During peaks of plasticity, the adolescent brain is “wiring” two important brain areas: the **prefrontal cortex** (responsible for planning, decision-making, good judgment and impulse control) and the **hippocampus** (involved in memory and learning). During this period of development, the brain must make the key neural connections to wire itself to become a responsible, thoughtful adult. Alcohol, which acts as a depressant, slows down brain activity and hinders development.

Neural plasticity refers to the ability of circuitry in the brain to physically change and grow new dendrites as a result of new learning and experiences.

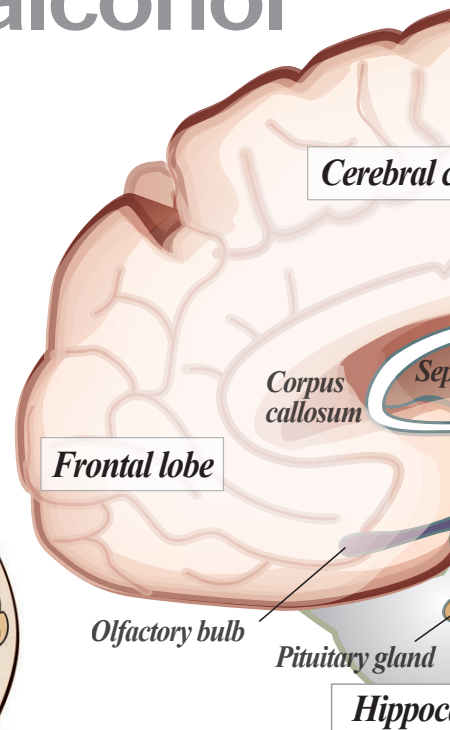
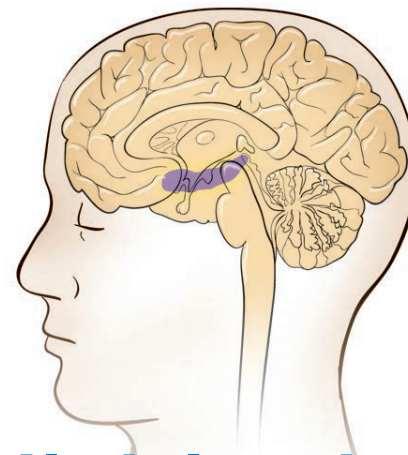
Peaks of brain plasticity

Drinking alcohol during times of peak plasticity can damage brain wiring.



Alcohol affects a teen brain differently than a mature adult brain. The brain goes through rapid development and “wiring” changes during the ages of 12 through the early 20s. Teen alcohol use can damage this brain wiring, which is essential to become a mature, thoughtful, responsible adult.

The brain's **hippocampus** (responsible for learning and memory) can be **10% smaller** in underage drinkers.



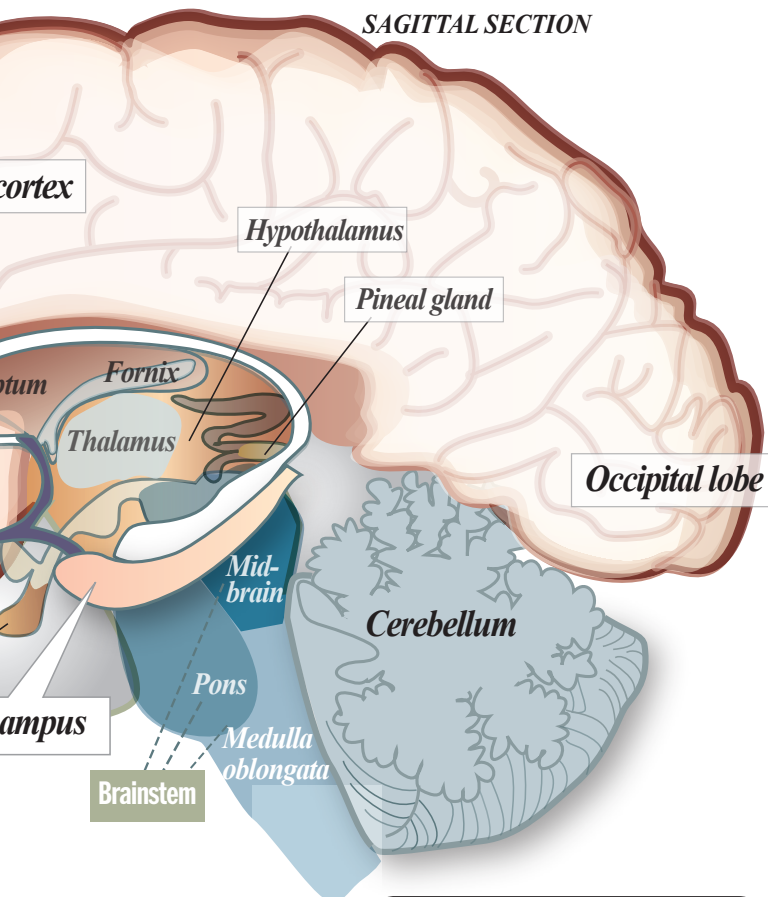
Alcohol can damage three key brain areas

1 “The **prefrontal** area (responsible for planning, good judgment, decision-making and impulse control) undergoes the most change during adolescence. Researchers found that adolescent drinking could cause severe changes in this area ... which plays an important role in forming adult personality and behavior. Damage from alcohol at this time can be long-term and irreversible.”

2 “The **hippocampus** (responsible for learning and memory) suffers from alcohol-related brain damage. Those who had been drinking and for longer had significantly smaller hippocampi (10 percent smaller). This can lead to short-term or moderate learning and memory problems, which are more severe than adults. Frequent drinking can prevent you from being able to catch up in school because alcohol inhibits systems for learning new information.”

American Medical Association

Search



Brain areas:

(involved in learning) suffers the worst damage in teens. Drinking more significantly smaller (percent). In addition, white matter drinking impairs far more in youths than drinkers may never adulthood, since white matter is crucial for storing

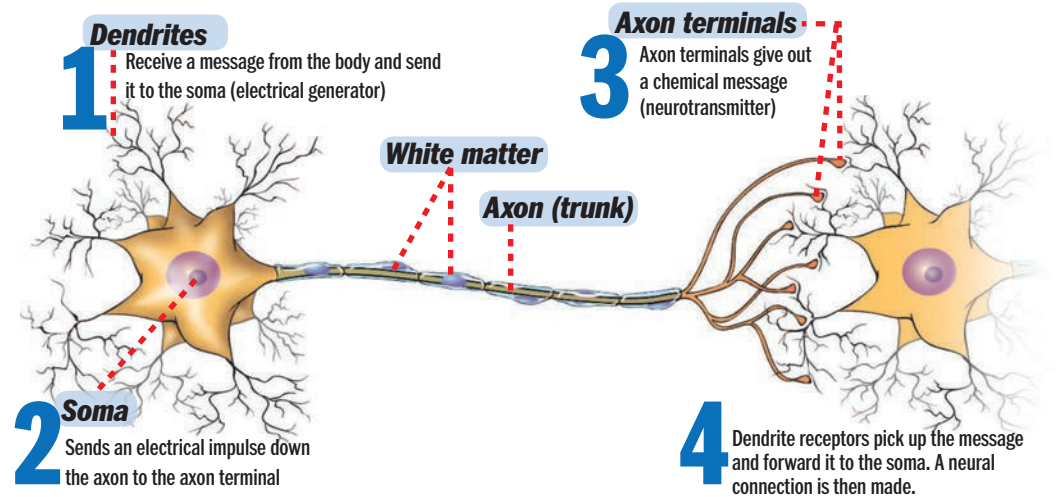
Initiation Fact Sheet, 2003

SAGITTAL SECTION

The **brain** is the major organ of the central nervous system and the control center for all the body's voluntary and involuntary activities. It is responsible for everything we think, feel, see, say and do.

The **brainstem** controls vital body functions, such as breathing and digestion. The **cerebellum** maintains posture, coordination of body movement and provides long-term storage for memories of how to do things that involve our body — like riding a bike. The **cerebrum**, which consists of the right and left cerebral hemispheres, is the site of most conscious and intelligent activities.

How neurons communicate



Our brain is more complex than the world's most powerful computer. It is responsible for everything we think, see, hear, feel, smell or do. It even creates and directs all of our emotions. The brain is divided into different areas that direct different parts of our body. Like a complex computer, all the different parts of the brain work at the same time —like parallel processing.

of one neuron to the “branches” of another. If a thought or action is repeated often, the “roots” of one neuron send more chemical, and the receiving neuron makes more “branches” to receive it. The neural connection is strengthened until it begins to look like a bushy tree instead of a spindly tree. It becomes a dominant neural pathway.

White matter damage

3 The brain is made up of gray matter (neurons) and white matter. **Because alcohol suppresses brain activity, it prevents the teen brain from properly developing its essential “white matter”** — the fatty-waxy coating that insulates the part of neurons that send electrical signals.

Impaired white matter can negatively affect thinking and memory skills.

— Dr. Susan Tapert

(ref: www.npr.org/templates/story/story.php?storyId=122765890)

It does this through more than 100 billion brain cells called neurons. A neuron looks sort of like a tree, with “branches” called dendrites, a “trunk” called an axon, and “roots” called axon terminals. The tip of each “root” contains tiny sacks of powerful chemicals called neurotransmitters. At the top of the “trunk” is a tiny electrical generator called a soma.

The brain neurons communicate by sending electrical and chemical messages from the “roots”

“... it has become clear that, during adolescence ... the brain is highly plastic and shaped by experience. ... Alcohol appears to interfere with the changes in circuitry that occur during learning.”

—Dr. Aaron White, Duke University

Forty percent of our neurons are “wired” at birth. They perform automatic functions such as breathing, heart and lung functions, digestion, etc. The other 60 percent are waiting to be stimulated by our learning and experiences to make connections or “wiring.” When we learn new things, new “NEURAL CONNECTIONS” are made in our brain. This is referred to as “wiring” our brain. It is like loading new software into a computer so it can do more things. The more neural connections we make, the smarter and more capable we become. Alcohol suppresses brain development.

START TALKING BEFORE THEY START DRINKING

Sharing values and family history regarding alcohol will create an environment of trust and understanding.

If parents drink, they should:

Be clear that they do not want their children to drink alcohol until they are 21 years old.

Tell their children that some people should not drink alcohol beverages at all. These include:

- Children and adolescents
- Individuals of any age who cannot restrict their drinking to moderate levels
- Women who are pregnant
- People who plan to drive or take part in activities that require attention or skill
- People using prescription and over-the-counter medications

If parents don't drink, they should:

Explain their reasons for not drinking, whether they are religious, health-related or due to family history.

- Encourage children to talk about concerns and questions about drinking.
- Be clear that they do not want their children to drink.
- Explain that when their children are 21, if they should decide to drink, they should do so in moderation.

Parents

are the #1 reason kids don't drink



E DUCATION ALONE is not enough to deter teens from drinking as they enter difficult social transitions to adulthood, because there are many pressures and opportunities to drink. Parents who are actively involved can have a powerful influence on their child's decision to remain alcohol-free.

Teen perceptions of parental disapproval are great deterrents. What parents may not realize is that children say parental disapproval of underage drinking is the key reason they have chosen not to drink.

Research indicates that children are less likely to drink when their parents are involved in their lives and when they and their parents report feeling close to each other. Family conflict and lack of bonding are associated with an increased risk of drinking. Mixed messages and unclear rules and expectations also leave children more vulnerable to underage drinking.

How parents can help their children remain ALCOHOL-FREE

- 1 Bond with your kids.**
Stay close to your kids and stay involved in their lives. Simple things like spending time together, playing one-on-one with them and eating dinner together as a family can make a huge difference.
- 2 Explain the risks.**
Learn and explain the risks of underage drinking. Emphasize that drinking alcohol is not a "rite of passage," but a dangerous drug for a teen brain.
- 3 Set clear rules.**
Set clear rules about no alcohol use. Be specific: "Absolutely no underage drinking in our family."
- 4 Know your children's friends.**
Get to know your children's friends and their parents. Help them choose friends who support your family rules.
- 5 Monitor your children's activities.**
Always know where your children are, whom they are with and what they are doing. For example: "If alcohol is at a party, call me and I'll come and get you."
- 6 Make alcohol unavailable.**
Ensure that alcohol is not available to your child at home or from others when your child is away. Ensure that your children's social environment is alcohol-free.
- 7 Be involved.**
Develop close bonding experiences and have daily positive interactions with your child. Express love often.
- 8 Stay in contact.**
Studies show children are more likely to drink between the hours of 3–6 p.m., when unsupervised by parents. Give your kids a call.
- 9 Eat dinner together.**
Studies show that kids who eat dinner with their family five to seven times per week are 33 percent less likely to drink alcohol underage.
- 10 Don't give alcohol to kids.**
Forty percent of kids who drink get alcohol from their parents with their parents' permission. It's against the law to supply a minor with alcohol.

Parents beat peer pressure.

Set clear no underage drinking rules.



Nearly 90% of youth residing in Cobb County report no alcohol use in past 30 days (2014 GA Student Health Survey).

Peers'

influence on alcohol use

IN ADDITION, students with high-refusal-assertiveness skills are less likely to drink underage. Decide on good ways to say “no” and practice them often in role-play situations. Some ideas are:



- “Sorry. Drinking is not my thing.”
- “No thanks. I need all the brain cells I’ve got.”
- “Actually, I’ve only got one brain. Why would I want to trash it?”

- If your child’s friends drink, encourage them to stop. There is a 24-hour parent help-line for youths who have substance abuse problems.

Call 1-800-662-HELP (4357)

The single most predictive risk for underage drinking is if your child’s peers drink. Encourage your kids to choose friends who support your family values and no-alcohol rules.

“If there is alcohol at a party, **leave.**”

Keep your kids’ social environment **alcohol-free.**”

Alcohol and judgment

The teenage brain is still developing. Alcohol can impair the parts of the brain that control the following:

Motor coordination

This includes the ability to talk, drive and process information.

Impulse control

Drinking lowers inhibitions and increases the chances that a person will do something he or she will regret when he or she is sober.

Memory

Impaired recollection and even blackouts can occur when too much alcohol has been consumed.

Judgment and decision-making capacity

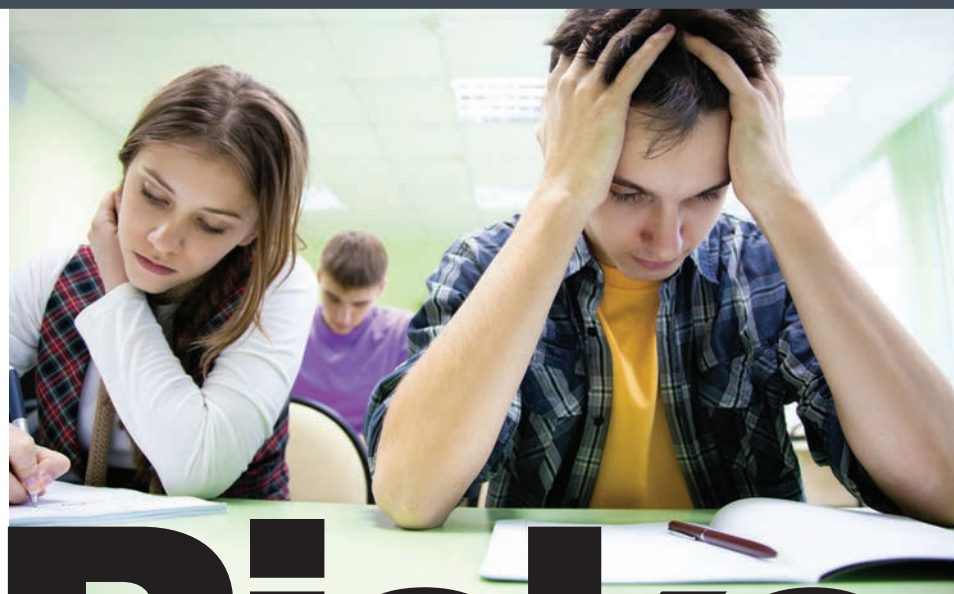
Drinking may lead young people to engage in risky behaviors, including getting into a car with someone who has been drinking. These behaviors can result in illness, injury and even death.

The law

Possessing, purchasing or drinking alcohol before age 21 is illegal.

The minimum legal drinking age of 21 has saved thousands of lives.

It is illegal for anyone to furnish or supply alcohol to a minor—punishable by up to a \$2,500 fine and 12 months in jail.



Risks

associated with underage drinking

ALCOHOL USE among children is strongly correlated with violence, poor academic performance and other harmful behaviors. Education alone will not keep your kids from using alcohol because there are constant pressures and opportunities to drink.

Further, the areas of the brain that encourage impulsivity and risk-taking develop early in a teen, while the areas that improve self-control don't develop until the very late teens or early twenties. You must stay actively involved as a parent in bonding with your teen, setting boundaries and monitoring to help your teen remain alcohol-free.

School failure

Teens who use alcohol have higher rates of academic problems and poor performance than non-drinkers. Among eighth-graders, higher truancy rates are associated with greater rates of alcohol use.

Violence

Children who start drinking before age 15 are 12 times more likely

to be injured while under the influence of alcohol and 10 times more likely to be in a fight after drinking, compared with those who wait to drink until they are 21.

Promiscuity

Alcohol use by teens is a strong predictor of unprotected sexual activity and unwanted sexual advances.

Illicit drug use

More than 67 percent of young people who start drinking before the age of 15 will try an illicit drug. Children who drink are 7.5 times more likely to use an illicit drug, 22 times more likely to use marijuana and 50 times more likely to use cocaine than children who never drink.



Monitoring

Be aware that studies show kids are more at risk for drinking alcohol between the hours of 3 p.m. and 6 p.m., while many parents are still at work.

Find ways to check on your kids when you are not around, either with phone calls, text messaging or through a neighbor dropping by.

Visit ParentsEmpowered.org to send a text message to your kids.



Social Host Ordinances

What is it?

A local law recently adopted by the City of Acworth and previously adopted by Unincorporated Cobb County and the Cities of Austell and Kennesaw; designed to support enforcement efforts and provide penalties for “social hosts,” those persons hosting or allowing an event on private property where persons under age 21 possess or consume alcohol, regardless of who furnished the alcohol to the minors.

Why is it needed?

Alcohol causes more harm and death for youth than all illegal drugs combined! There are also serious second hand effects of underage drinking that impact public safety and quality of life, i.e. crimes (assault, traffic, fraud, theft, vandalism, sex crime, etc.) and costs (pain and suffering, medical costs, criminal justice costs, work loss costs, etc.).

According to a recent Georgia Student Health Survey, Cobb County students report binge drinking at a friend’s house on the weekend more than other students in the state.

Private parties have repeatedly been identified as the primary source by which minors obtain alcohol; frequently lacking adult supervision and often a source of other drug use, risky sexual behaviors, violence and vandalism.

The current state law prohibiting the furnishing of alcohol to minors does not sufficiently address the problem of youth social access to alcohol. All too often law enforcement officers arrive at a party where underage youth are drinking alcohol, but they will be unable to determine who furnished the alcohol to the minors.

How is it enforced?

When officers respond to an event/location where underage persons are cited for alcohol possession or consumption, the individual host of the social event can be issued a citation and charged with violating the local county/city social host ordinance. Violators could be property owners, tenants, parents, older siblings, youth or whosoever is determined to be in legal and/or actual control of the event/location where underage drinking is found to occur.

What are the penalties?

In Austell, charges can be criminal, civil or administrative and penalties may include the following; fines up to \$1,000, restitution and community service, and confinement up to 12 months. In Cobb County, criminal misdemeanor cases are heard in Magistrate Court and penalties may include a fine not exceeding \$1,000 or 60 days imprisonment or both. For a first offense; person shall not be fined less than \$150.00 and second/ subsequent offense; person shall not be fined less than \$500.00. In Kennesaw, charges can be criminal or civil and penalties may include the following: first offense, maximum \$300.00 fine plus surcharges and/ or 6 months in jail; second and subsequent offenses, maximum \$1,000.00 fine plus surcharges. In Acworth, charges can be criminal or civil. For a first offense, the person shall not be fined less than \$1,000; for a second offense the fine shall be not less than \$2,500 and will include mandatory rehabilitation training. A third offense carries a fine of not less than \$5,000 and a mandatory referral to a professional therapist or institution licensed for assessment and treatment of alcohol abuse.



For additional information regarding local Social Host ordinances, contact City of Austell, City of Kennesaw, City of Acworth or Cobb County Government Offices. To learn more about how to take reasonable steps to prevent underage drinking from occurring on your property, visit www.cobbat.org or contact the Cobb Alcohol Taskforce at 404.791.7406.

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84% of
high school students

feel that their parents are the

#1 influence
on them — **be a good one.**

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