

Westminster Area



"Building a Community Without Drugs"

**April 2002**

## **CASA REPORT ON UNDERAGE DRINKING:**

**More than five million high schoolers, or 31 percent, engaged in binge drinking – that is, consumed five or more drinks on one occasion – at least once a month.**

“Underage drinking has reached epidemic proportions in America,” says Joseph A. Califano Jr., CASA president and former U.S. Secretary of Health, Education and Welfare. “Alcohol damages the young brain, interferes with mental and social development and interrupts academic progress. Alcohol is the fatal attraction for many teens, a major factor in the three leading causes of teen death – accidents, homicide and suicide.”

### **Key Findings About Underage Drinking**

Underage drinkers are a critical segment of the alcohol beverage market. Since most heavy and problem drinkers began drinking before they reach 21, underage drinking is key to the profitability of the alcohol industry.

- 87 percent of adults who drink had their first drink of alcohol before age 21.
- Individuals who began drinking before the age of 15 are four times more likely to become alcohol dependent than those who began drinking at age 21.
- The prevalence of lifetime alcohol abuse is greatest for those who begin drinking at age 14.
- Underage drinkers and adult heavy drinkers combined consume 61 percent of the alcohol sold in the U.S.

Teens have easy access to alcohol. Parents are too often unwitting co-conspirators who see underage drinking and occasional bingeing as a rite of passage, rather than a deadly round of Russian roulette.

- One third of sixth and ninth graders obtain alcohol from their homes.
- Children cite other people’s homes as the most common setting for drinking.

The pervasive influence of the entertainment industry has glamorized and sexualized alcohol and rarely shows the ill effects of abuse.

- Out of 81 G-rated animated films, nearly 50 percent showed characters using alcohol, often
- without consequence (34% equated alcohol with wealth and affluence; 19 percent with sexual activity).

- Alcohol advertising often uses images that appeal to kids (e.g., Budweiser's talking lizards, Budweiser's Spuds MacKenzie Dog).
- 41% of teens have tried a new breed of sweet-tasting, colorfully packaged alcohol beverages (e.g., Tequila, Smirnoff Ice, Skyy Blue).
- GE subsidiary NBC has begun airing liquor advertisements, ending a 50-year voluntary ban by the networks and the liquor

*Teen Tipplers: American's Underage Drinking Epidemic*, a new report released by The National Center on Addiction and Substance Abuse at Columbia University (CASA). [www.casacolumbia.org](http://www.casacolumbia.org)

## Helpful Hints for Parents – Spring and Summer Parties

### *Party Guidelines for Child/Teen Parties*

#### **When your child/teen is going to a party...**

- *Call the host parent.* Make sure that your basic ground rules, such as parental supervision and no alcohol or other drugs, will be followed before you give your consent for your child/teen to attend a party.
- *Know where your child is going and with whom, including transportation arrangements.* Be sure to know when the party ends and when your child will be home. When taking your child/teen to a party, wait to see that he or she is inside the house. If you don't know the host parents, introduce yourself. Have the telephone number and address of the party, and ask your child/teen to call you if the location of the party changes. Also let him/her know where you will be during that time.
- *Discuss how to handle possible situations.* Make it easy for your child/teen to leave a party.

If there is drinking or drug taking or any reason that your child/teen wishes to leave a party, make sure that your child/teen can call you (or a designated adult) and will be picked up. Urge your child/teen NEVER to ride home with a driver who has been drinking or using drugs.

- *Be up to greet your child/teen when he or she comes home.* Be awake or have your teen awaken you when he or she arrives home. This can be a good way to check the time. It is also a good time to talk about the party, encourages communication and could alert you to a potential problem.

#### **When your child/teen is giving a party...**

- *Set the ground rules ahead of time.* Let your child/teen know what you expect of

him/her as a host.

Rules for the party should include:

Adult supervision

No drugs, including alcohol

No smoking

No leaving the party and then returning

No gate crashers allowed

Lights should be left on

Certain rooms of the house are off limits

- *Plan in advance.* Go over party plans with your child/teen and set guest list. A party “by invitation only” can curb an “open party” out of control situation. Keep parties small (10-15 guests per adult). Have plenty of snacks and non-alcoholic drinks. Encourage your child/teen to plan some organized group activities or games.
- *Set a time limit.* Set specific beginning and ending times for the party. Be aware of local curfew laws. Consider daytime parties as alternatives to nighttime parties: skating, swimming, rent a movie, etc.
- *Know your responsibilities.* Explain to your teen that you are legally responsible for anything that happens to a minor who has been served drugs or alcohol in your home. Include your teen in this feeling of responsibility. Guests who bring alcohol should be asked to leave. Be ready to notify the parents of anyone arriving intoxicated to ensure safe transportation home.
- *Be visible and available, but keep a low profile.* Pick out a spot where you can maintain adequate supervision. You can also bring in snacks and serve beverages.
- *Invite another parent or couple over.* Other adults are company and can help if you need it. If parents have driven their child/teen to your house, you might consider inviting them in to meet you, even briefly.

***HAVE SAFE AND DRUG FREE CELEBRATIONS!***