

**STOP  
DWI** New  
York

Community  
Focused.  
Saving Lives.

# Teens and Alcohol

What  
Parents  
Need to  
Know!

## When Your Teen is Going to a Party ...

Plan in Advance. Discuss the party plans with your teenager. Know the guest list, so you can prevent an "open party" situation & avoid electronic mass emailed invitations.

Set definite starting and ending times. Plan an activity such as swimming, skating or renting movies. Consider a daytime party.

Agree to the rules ahead of time:

- No alcohol or other drugs.
- No smoking.
- No leaving, then returning to the party.
- No gate crashers allowed.
- Lights will be left on.
- Some rooms are off limits.

Know your responsibilities! Be visible and aware. You are legally responsible for anything that may happen to a minor who has been served drugs or alcohol in your home.

Invite another parent or couple as company for you during a long evening, and to help if there are any problems. When parents deliver their teens to your house, invite them in to get acquainted, if only briefly.

**Q:** May a parent serve alcohol to teens and their friends at a parent supervised party?

**A:** No, the law applies to all situations in which an underage person is served alcohol by anyone but his or her parents. A parent serving the young friends alcohol would be committing a Class A Misdemeanor under Penal Law §260.20, which allows a parent or guardian to furnish liquor or beer to their own child only. The Social Host Law also applies, exposing the parent to civil liability for any injury caused by the minor as a result of intoxication.

## When Your Teen is Going to a Party ...

Make sure there will be parental supervision and that no alcohol will be served. A tactful call to the host may be advisable.

Know where your daughter or son is going and with whom. When taking your teen to parties, go to the door and introduce yourself. If you already know the family, at least wait until your child is inside the house.

Make it easy for your teen to leave a party. Agree that they can call you (or another adult) to come for them if there is any reason why staying is uncomfortable.

Urge your teen **NEVER** to ride home with a driver who has been drinking.

Be awake to greet your teen when they come home.

**Q:** What will happen to an underage person who gets caught drinking, purchasing, or possessing alcohol?

**A:** In New York State, if you're under 21 years old, it is a violation of the law to possess alcohol with the intent to consume. If caught, youth can be fined, required to complete an alcohol and drug education seminar and/or required to complete community service. Any person who presents false identification to purchase alcohol beverages can receive a fine of up to \$100 and/or community service not to exceed 30 hours. In addition, there can be a 90-day suspension of the driver's license of anyone who has used it to illegally purchase or attempt to purchase alcoholic beverages.



**Q:** What is the Social Host Law?

**A:** Under General Obligation Law §11-100, any person who is injured by a minor who is intoxicated, or whose ability is impaired, may sue for the resulting damage whoever knowingly provided the alcohol to the minor.

**Q:** What does the 21 legal purchase age law mean?

**A:** It means you must be 21 years old to buy alcoholic beverages in bars, taverns, restaurants, and clubs or to buy those beverages in liquor stores and supermarkets. It is also illegal for any person, over or under 21, to buy alcoholic beverages for, or give them to, anyone under 21 (except their own child).

**Q:** May children drink at home with their parents, or be served wine as part of a religious service?

**A:** Yes. A parent or guardian may serve alcohol to his or her own child under 21 only at home or as part of a religious service. The Social Host Law applies here also.

**Q:** Can a parent or legal guardian buy his or her underage child an alcoholic beverage in a licensed establishment, ball park or private club?

**A:** No, since that would amount to the parent misrepresenting the age of the child. The law applies to all licensed facilities.

**STOP  
DWI** New York | Community  
Focused.  
Saving Lives.

TM



# What Parents Need to Know!

**Q:** May 19 and 20 year olds enter bars?

**A:** Yes, though some bars may protect themselves by prohibiting underage persons from their premises. A bartender who serves alcohol to someone under 21 could suffer criminal penalties plus civil liability if the person becomes intoxicated and causes injuries or damage. The bar could lose its license if alcohol is served to underage patrons.

**Q:** May underage persons work in bars?

**A:** Yes, a person 18 years of age or older may serve as a bartender, waiter, waitress, hostess or bus person, under the supervision of someone 21 or older.

**Q:** What are the benefits of the 21 purchase age?

**A:** The benefits of the 21 purchase age are a 25-30% decrease in alcohol related crashes involving 19 and 20 year olds, who are responsible for over 100 deaths and 3,500 injuries each year, and an expected savings of \$40 million in societal costs annually.

If you have information about a teen alcohol party, any adult who serves alcohol to minors or information about stores or bars that regularly sell to minors, please call:  
The Sheriff's Office, Local Police Department or New York State Police



[www.stopdwi.org](http://www.stopdwi.org)

Funded by the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration with a grant from the New York State Governor's Traffic Safety Committee.