Safe Communities Prom Time Tips

Enjoying Prom Season Rather Than Worrying About It
How Can Parents Make a Difference?

As teens across the country ready themselves for a celebratory night that they hope to cherish for years to come, parents often face prom season with a mix of excitement and dread.

Disturbing statistics from the U.S. Department of Transportation indicate that an average of 48 teens is killed and 5,202 injured in car crashes during a typical prom weekend.

As a parent, what can you do to help keep your teen safe on prom night?

- Be clear about your expectations and rules. Parent disapproval is the number one reason why teens choose not to drink. Remind them of where you stand!
- Do you know where your teen will be and with whom on prom night? Will there be adults present?
- Talk to the adults who will be present and make sure you understand and are comfortable with their approach is to alcohol at a party.
- Be aware of the dangers of drowsy driving, in addition to drunk driving. Teens will not get a lot of sleep on prom night. Make sure they realize that drowsy driving can be just as dangerous!
- Help your teen develop strategies to get out of uncomfortable situations they may face on prom night. Without a plan of action, or at least a practiced answer to a question such as "Do you want a beer?" many kids end up making choices they don't want to make. It is ok to say, “No thanks.”

Visit the ParentTeenMatters website for additional tips on communicating with your teen.

Resourced from the www.SADD.org national newsletter.

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Prom Time Tips for Parents Talking to Teens

As prom and graduation season approaches, parents' drunk-driving fears escalate and schools' activism against such activity increases. Though teens continue to be the ultimate decision-makers in their own safety, it doesn't keep parents from waiting up at night. When it comes to teens and drunk driving, it's good news-bad news.

The good news is that teen drunk driving nationwide is down by 54% since 1991, according to an October 2013 report from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

The bad news is that car crashes are the leading cause of death for teens, and about a third of those are alcohol related, according to Mothers Against Drunk Driving (MADD).

Compared with a sober driver of the same age, a driver age 16 to 20 years old with a blood alcohol level of at least 0.08 percent is estimated to be 32 times as likely to die in a single-vehicle crash and 13 times as likely to be in a crash in which the young driver lives but someone else dies.

MADD offers a Parents Handbook at http://www.madd.org/underage-drinking/the-power-of-parents to help parents talk to their teens about alcohol.

Here are some of its talking points:

• Emphasize the fact that drinking is illegal for teens and for very good reasons.

• Let your teen know that not everyone their age is drinking. Teens often overestimate how many of their peers are drinking or have tried alcohol.

• Talk about how drinking affects the brain. Teens need to know how drinking will affect them and that a person who is drinking is not a good judge of how impaired they are.

• Explain your own position concerning your teen's drinking. Discuss your family's rules about alcohol and agree on the consequences for breaking the rules.

• Talk about what sometimes motivates teens to drink and discuss alternatives for achieving those goals.

• Discuss reasons for NOT drinking and the bad consequences that can result from drinking.

• Help your teen brainstorm ways to resist inappropriate peer pressure.

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