

The Guide Line

April 2010

April is Alcohol Awareness Month

What Educators Can Do About Underage Alcohol Use

Although underage drinking is widespread, underage alcohol use is not inevitable. Schools and teachers have a significant impact on an adolescent's life. The climate and cohesiveness of a school can play an important role in the development of an adolescent's self-identity. Schools and teachers can help change attitudes about teen drinking and help replace environments that enable underage alcohol use with environments that discourage it.

Educators can help create an environment that can protect youth from underage drinking.

- ◆ Encourage student involvement in school, a factor in reducing underage alcohol use.
- ◆ Create an environment that helps students explore their talents and follow their passions, whether academic, musical, sports, or social or community causes.
- ◆ Provide students opportunities for validation and belonging.
- ◆ Increase positive outcomes for adolescents by being a mentor, a valued teacher, or other caring adult.
- ◆ Provide information to parents on the consequences of underage alcohol use, school policies and practices on alcohol use, and local sources for more information.
- ◆ Recognize that significant social transitions (such as graduating to middle or high school or getting a driver's license) are accompanied by increasing responsibility, freedom, social pressure, and/or more demanding academic requirements, all of which may increase the likelihood of alcohol use. At such times, teachers and staff can be particularly alert and supportive. Consider making a special effort to connect students with an adult who can serve as a mentor and confidant.
- ◆ Recognize that children who mature earlier or later than the majority of their peers may be at increased risk.
- ◆ Provide and promote multiple venues where adolescents can get together with their friends.

Educators can decrease the risk of adolescent alcohol use and the associated negative consequences.

- ◆ Discourage violation of alcohol rules by consistently enforcing them.
- ◆ Provide students with the developmentally appropriate knowledge, skills, and motivation to resist peer and other pressures to drink.
- ◆ Identify and refer students using alcohol for appropriate interventions. Ensure that school nurses are trained to recognize alcohol-related problems, to intervene appropriately when problems are found, and to be familiar with the referral network.
- ◆ Work with the community to ensure that the necessary infrastructure is in place so students in need of services and treatment can be referred to appropriate personnel or health care providers.
- ◆ Establish and enforce strict policies against alcohol use on school property and at school events.
- ◆ Only sponsor interventions that research has confirmed are effective in preventing and reducing underage alcohol use.

Content taken from <http://www.surgeongeneral.gov/topics/underagedrinking/EducatorGuide.pdf>.

The Guide Line is a publication from The COAD Group through funding from the Chester County Department of Drug and Alcohol Services. If you have something you would like to share with others in The Guide Line, please contact Jacquelyn Taylor, Director of SAP Services at jtaylor@coadgroup.com.

Did you know?

Did you know that 24% of Chester County Middle and High School Students report having used alcohol at least once in the past 30 days? And 54% of Chester County High School Seniors report consuming alcohol at least once in the past 30 days. (2007 PAYS Survey)

These alarming statistics pose the question: What can we do about underage drinking?

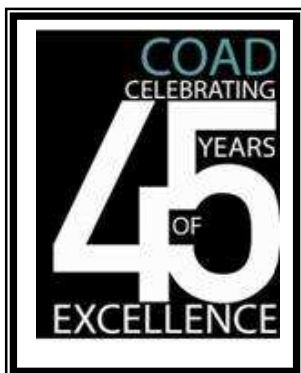


Research has shown that positive role models can have a major impact on children's lives and their decision making. As an educator, you can help change attitudes about underage drinking, create an environment that can protect youth from underage drinking, and decrease the risk of adolescent alcohol use and the associated negative consequences. Our young people today are much more likely to delay drinking when they feel they have a close, supportive tie with a positive role model in their life. (www.stopalcoholabuse.gov)

As an educator, you can make a difference:

- Provide your students with factual information about the effects and consequences of underage alcohol use.
- Encourage your students to use critical-thinking skills to make healthy decisions and to express themselves effectively.
- Build student's confidence in their decision-making skills by providing them with opportunities to succeed and to share that success.

For more information about alcohol and other drugs call 1-866-286-3767 or visit www.coadgroup.com.



**Saturday, April 17th
Penn Oaks Country Club
6 - 10pm**

**Call The COAD Group
for more information
about supporting this
event – 610-363-6164.**

Signs of Underage Alcohol Use

Most of those working in America's educational systems already know the facts about underage drinking. Underage drinking is harmful:

- It can result in death and disability, poor academic performance, high-risk behaviors, and more.
- It adversely affects the adolescent developing brain.
- It increases the likelihood of chronic alcohol problems.

Warning signs can help educators spot an alcohol problem, especially if the behavior occurs suddenly or seems extreme. Concern should be even greater if several warning signs occur at the same time.

Behavioral Changes

- School problems, poor attendance, low grades, and/or recent disciplinary action
- Rebelling against family rules
- Switching friends, along with a reluctance to let you get to know the new friends
- Sloppy appearance
- A lack of involvement in former interests

Emotional Changes

- Mood changes, flare-ups, irritability, and defensiveness
- A "nothing matters" attitude

Mental Changes

- Memory lapses
- Poor concentration

Physical Changes

- Low energy
- Bloodshot eyes
- Lack of coordination
- Slurred speech

Taken from: <http://www.toosmartostart.samhsa.gov/educators/signs/>

Chester County visualizes a unified system of care that maximizes all resources around an individual or family. This system of care includes child and adult serving agencies and community partners that join with an individual or family to meet their goals.