



Safe Graduation Parties

High School Graduation is a time to celebrate the accomplishments of our children who have worked hard to meet the goals and expectations set in front of them on their first days of school. It is also a time to celebrate these youth entering the adult world. College, trade school, and the work force are all adult options our children will be exploring. With these new adventures and experiences our children will be facing a whole new set of adult decisions and problems. Each parent hopes for the best when sending their child out into the world, and hopes to send them off with the ability to make good decisions. This year when our children graduate, let's remember that while they may be entering the adult world they are still our kids and need our guidance.



There is a skewed way of thinking held by some parents: "All teens drink and they are safer if they drink where I can monitor them." Some parents even go

the extra step of supplying the alcohol for their teens. This line of thinking is flawed in more than one way. **First, not all teens drink.** The Berrien County Youth Risk Behavior Survey (BCYRBS) produced by the Community Alliance Against Substance Abuse (CAASA) discover that 1 in 5 of Berrien County Youth are current users of alcohol, which means that 80% of our youth do not use alcohol. **Second, supervising teens while they drink alcohol to monitor the underage alcohol abuse does not keep teens safe.** Alcohol is a poisonous substance; the human body reacts to the consumption of alcohol the same way it reacts when other toxic materials enter the body- the body tries to expel it as quickly as possible.

Most people assume that human development ends at age 18, but this is untrue. The frontal lobe of the brain continues to grow and develop until a person reaches between the ages of 21 and 25. The frontal lobe is the part of the brain that causes human beings to be logical, analytical, and creative. It is also the emotional, moral and ethical center of a person. By abusing alcohol at a young age, the development of the frontal lobe is stunted, creating people with

poor decision making skills, emotional immaturity, and a distorted sense of judgment. These effects are in addition to the more immediate consequences of alcohol abuse, nausea, and alcohol poisoning.

Looking legally, "social hosting" laws hold home owners and tenants responsible for the activities that go on in their homes. This means if youth are abusing alcohol in a person's home, the person who owns the home can be held responsible not only for aiding to the delinquency of a minor, but if that minor goes on to incur damages or kill themselves or another person the home owner can be charged in that crime also. This year if your child or a

Youth who start drinking before age 15 years are five times more likely to develop alcohol dependence or abuse later in life than those who begin drinking after age 21.

youth in your life asks you to supply them with alcohol or a place to consume the alcohol say "No!". Instead of trying to make the environment where teens drink safer, we should assure that there is no environment where teens think it's safe to drink.

Berrien County Health

Department:
Preventing Disease,
Prolonging Life and
Protecting the
Health of the
Community.



May Is Summer Safety Month

Summer is coming!! May is Summer Safety Month, and the health department will have articles about food safety, water safety, skin cancer prevention, outdoor injury prevention, and safe graduation parties. For questions about any of these topics, call us at **926-7121**.

Youth who drink alcohol are more likely to experience:

- School problems, such as higher absence and poor or failing grades.
- Social problems, such as fighting and lack of participation in youth activities.
- Legal problems, such as arrest for driving or physically hurting someone while drunk.
- Physical problems, such as hangovers or illnesses.
- Unwanted, unplanned, and unprotected sexual activity.
- Disruption of normal growth and sexual development.
- Physical and sexual assault.
- Higher risk of suicide or homicide.
- Alcohol-related car crash and other unintentional injuries such as burns, falls, and drowning.
- Memory problems.
- Abuse of other drugs.
- Changes in brain development that may have life-long effects.
- Death from alcohol poisoning.



For more information, contact the Health Department at:

926-7121

Berrien to step up enforcement

Several new enforcement initiatives are scheduled to start in Berrien County this summer. One program will be an anonymous "party tip" line that concerned parents and teens can call if they suspect a party will be supplying alcohol to minors. For now (and always), if you suspect a party is serving alcohol to minors, call your local police department to report it.

For more information, or to take action against underage and problem drinking in Berrien County, contact Nate Hill, Coordinator of the Berrien County Alcohol Task Force at 927-5698. The next meeting of the taskforce will be held June 26- please call ahead for details!

Special thanks to Nate Hill, Prevention Specialist, for his help with this article!

The Berrien County Health Department has five locations to serve you:

Benton Harbor		Niles		Three Oaks
769 Pipestone	M-139 Office	School Based	1205 N. Front St.	21 N. Elm
P.O. Box 706	2106 S. M-139	870 Colfax Ave	684-2800	756-2008
926-7121	927-5623	925-4500		

Or visit us on the web at www.berriencohlthdept.org

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