



Berrien County Health

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



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 venues our children will be entering. With these new venues and experiences our children will be facing a whole new set of adult decisions and problems. Each parents 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.

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. The second flaw believing that teens are safe when the parent is able to monitor the underage alcohol abuse. 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.

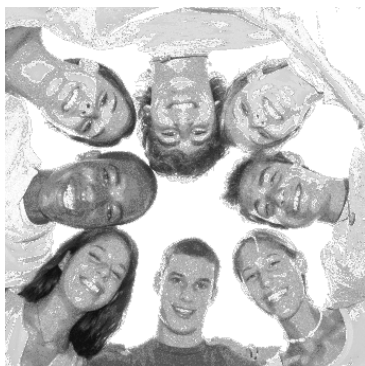
immaturity, and a distorted sense of judgment. These effects are in addition to the more immediate consequences of alcohol abuse, nausea, and alcohol poisoning.

With these facts in mind we should also look at the legal side of the skewed thought process. 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 they can be charged in that crime also.

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 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.



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 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

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

This year if your child or a 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.



Be the Solution: Report Underage Drinking

The Berrien County Alcohol Taskforce operates a completely anonymous Tip Line where concerned parents or teens can call to report if they suspect a party will be serving alcohol to minors. This call is not traced, and the caller does not have to give their name.

If you suspect a party this summer will be providing alcohol to minors, please call the **Tip Line at (269) 470-ITIP (4847)**. Also, you can call your local police department to report if you suspect underage drinking any time.



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

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

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

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

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