

## PARENT UPDATE TEENS & PARTIES

*From*

### *The Changing Landscape: Addressing the Challenges of Teen Substance Abuse*

Brookline's latest community Wellness Summit gathered Brookline Schools staff/administration, parents, students, health experts, police, and community members to explore current trends in risky adolescent behavior and brainstorm strategies. One of the goals was to examine the culture of teen socializing, especially with regard to the pervasive use of alcohol and marijuana.

**GOAL - What can we do to provide safe environments for teen socializing? Identify specific challenges of hosting parties or gatherings, and create suggested guidelines and ground rules for hosting safe parties, as well as advice on how to respond if incidents occur.**

#### **FACTS:**

- Kids say unsupervised house parties happen every weekend and can involve alcohol, MJ, and/or pills
- In past years, BHS has seen parties with significant property damage, injury, alcohol overdoses, fights, sexual assault, and sexual activity that teens later regretted.
- Adults in MA are accountable for serving or providing alcohol to someone under the age of 21, and allowing them (with or without your knowledge or permission) to drink alcohol in your home or on any property you control (including a rented hotel room). This means that if your child hosts a party while you are away and unaware, you could be held responsible for the "disorderly home" and if someone gets hurt. Criminal penalties for basic infractions can include a fine up to \$2,000 and/or imprisonment for up to a year, and adults are at further risk for a civil suit as well.
- Minors convicted of providing alcohol to other minors in any situation can face a fine and the loss of their driver's license for a year.

#### **STRATEGIES & RECOMMENDATIONS:**

- Educate parents how to talk to kids, publicize resources for good communication so there is good dialogue, mutual understanding, and parent/teen trust.
- Foster a safe place to hang out and other ways to deal with stress and unwinding.
- Create a written guide that helps parents establish ground rules for hosting safe parties – parents MUST be there, agree on rules before parties start (how many, who is coming, time limits, no drinking/smoking, what to do if they do smoke drink, unwanted guests, etc.) Parents must be ready with the courage to intervene, and host teen must be prepared, too.
- Teach moderation in drinking – we can't let teens go off to college without knowing the harms of drinking alcohol, binge drinking, edibles, etc., as substances will be much more available in college.
- Talk about how to enjoy socializing and drinking safely when off to college.

#### **CURRENT ACTION PLANS:**

Peer Leaders gave presentations to 8<sup>th</sup> Graders (Crash Course) and BHS sports coaches to encourage them to talk about healthy decision-making and the new Chemical Health rule

B-PEN is creating a two-page tip sheet on "A Basic Guide for Hosting an Alcohol-Free Teen Party"

**For more information, go to B-PEN's "[Underage Drinking](#)" page. If you or your organization would like to work with us on any of the above strategies, please contact Mary Minott, [mary\\_minott@psbma.org](mailto:mary_minott@psbma.org).**