

**B-CASA (Brookline Coalition Against Substance Abuse)  
B-PEN (Brookline Parent Education Network)**

# PARENT RESOURCE NETWORK NEWSLETTER

**Vol. 23, SPRING 2010**

The Brookline Coalition Against Substance Abuse (B-CASA) is an organization of parents, students, educators, health professionals, and community members dedicated to addressing the prevalence of teen alcohol/drug use and associated high-risk behaviors.

## SPECIAL ISSUE FOR ALCOHOL AWARENESS MONTH

### DID YOU KNOW THAT...

- \*Roughly **40% of Brookline teens** admit to drinking alcohol within the last 30 days.
- \*Alcohol not only **lowers inhibitions**, it can impair parts of the brain that control **motor coordination, impulse control, memory, and judgment/decision making**, luring the vulnerable teen brain into risky behavior.
- \*Alcohol use by teens is a strong predictor of both **sexual activity** and **unprotected sex**.
- \*According to a survey of last year's Brookline High School freshmen, their **top source of alcohol** is from unsuspecting **parents** without their permission.
- \*Though they are not legally old enough to drink, young adults aged 18-20 have the highest rate of alcohol dependence in the U.S.

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## APRIL IS ALCOHOL AWARENESS MONTH

April is **Alcohol Awareness Month**, an annual public awareness campaign that encourages local communities to focus on alcoholism and alcohol-related issues, including the pervasive problem of underage drinking, which includes nearly **11 million American teens** today. The campaign calls for parents, school, communities and organizations to take a stand against a problem costing the U.S. nearly

\$200 billion a year. Across the country, communities are hosting a variety of events and initiatives that call attention to the issue of underage drinking's impact on public safety as well as the often devastating effects alcohol can have on the development of the growing body.

In Brookline, BHS Peer Leaders work with B-CASA (Brookline Coalition Against Substance Abuse) and B-PEN (Brookline Parent Education Network) to raise awareness of the dangers of underage drinking with a variety of projects targeting both students and their parents. A current initiative strives to alert parents to the different ways in which students obtain access to alcohol, often from their own homes without parental knowledge or approval. Read on...

## PREVENTION STRATEGIES:

### BE AWARE OF WHERE TEENS OBTAIN ALCOHOL

The corner liquor store isn't the only place where teens get alcohol—many times they get it at home. According to a survey of last year's Brookline High School freshmen, their top source of alcohol is from unsuspecting parents without their permission. Factors that contribute to underage access in the home include unlocked liquor cabinets and wine cellars, beer in the fridge and alcohol at family events. It's important for parents to be aware that alcohol availability in the home can contribute to underage drinking. Here are steps to help parents make alcohol-safe choices for their children:

#### **At Home:**

1. Be a role model – parents establish the family norm on alcohol use and alcohol-related expectations for their children. Be aware of the choices you make and how they can impact your child.
2. Availability – reducing teens' access to alcohol is important and should be part of a parent's approach to keep alcohol from their children. There are laws, such as social host liability, that hold people liable for providing alcohol to underage youth who are not their own children.
3. Consider an alcohol-free home – the simplest way to prevent young people from accessing alcohol in the home is to not store it in the home.

#### **Away From Home:**

4. Alcohol providers – ask older siblings or other young adults where local teens may be obtaining alcohol. If they are purchasing the alcohol themselves, try to identify the retailers and report them to local police.
5. Build alliances – to ensure that your child doesn't end up in an environment where alcohol is readily available, know your child's friends and their parents. Don't assume anything—ask other families if they allow young people to drink in their homes.

*(Excerpted from The Marin Institute Newsletter.)*

## TEENS AND ALCOHOL: BASIC TIPS AND STRATEGIES

The teenage brain is still developing, which makes underage alcohol use a serious issue with potentially devastating consequences. Each year approximately 5,000 young people under the age of 21 die as a result of underage drinking, more than all illegal drugs combined. Many kids start drinking in middle school -- one out of two 8th graders has already tried alcohol. However, research shows that when parents talk to their kids about alcohol, and send a clear message about the risks involved, kids are less likely to

abuse alcohol and engage in unsafe behaviors. For some specific information to help talk to your teen about alcohol use, check out our [Tip Sheet](#) of facts and strategies.

## **BHS TEENS SPEAK OUT ON DRINKING AND DRIVING**

*Advice from Former Brookline High School Peer Educators*

Many parents wonder how to reinforce safety strategies for teens when they find themselves in situations where alcohol may be present. Here are some tips from BHS Peer Educators to review with your teen on ways to avoid drinking and driving:

- Know ahead of time what your plan is for getting home from a party.
- Make sure that your ride home has not had any alcohol, and have an alternative back-up plan.
- Know where the closest T-stop is, what hours they run, and have money.
- Have the local cab company number in your cell phone and have taxi fare set aside in the house.
- Have an emergency backup number, such as an older friend, older sister/brother, family friend, etc.

Let your teen know that they can call you in an emergency without getting in trouble, that safety and good judgment are ultimately more important than a curfew. However, make it clear that this is not giving permission for getting into risky situations, but rather a safety net not to be abused.

Parents need to be especially clear on the dangers and consequences of drinking and driving. Discuss family consequences for driving under the influence (i.e. grounding, loss of car privileges, etc.) as well as the legal ramifications (see article below). If you find out that your teen has been drinking and driving, act now. Do not wait for them to get caught by the "proper authorities" — by that point, it could be too late to save their lives or the lives of others. And if your teen does get stopped by the police, don't try to get him/her out of trouble. This sends a very mixed message and will come back later to haunt you. Teens need to understand that when you get in trouble, you live with the consequences.

Most importantly for both parents and children: Be honest with each other. It will build a trusting relationship that can last a lifetime.

## **UNDERAGE DRINKING: UNDERSTANDING THE LAWS**

Did you know that when Brookline Police show up at an unsupervised house party and find alcohol, EVERY STUDENT at that party is considered to be in POSSESSION?

Brookline students and parents are often unclear about what constitutes breaking the law regarding the use/possession of alcohol or other drugs. There are a number of common scenarios that can result in major consequences for BHS teens, and we should make sure our students are aware of what they may be giving up for a single night of partying.

1) Any student found under the influence of alcohol or marijuana will be referred to the Youth Diversionary Program for a substance abuse assessment and education. (The Diversionary Program, located at Brookline High School, is run by the Brookline Public Health Department.) The police also will notify the Athletic Director and head of Performing Arts at BHS about any violations of the Chemical

Health Rule. (See student handbook.) Students found in violation of the Chemical Health Rule will continue to attend practice but will be suspended from games for 25% of their season. For a second offense within the same year, students will be suspended for 50% of the season. In the Performing Arts department, students will be suspended from performances.

2) Students may be considered in possession of alcohol if they are knowingly in the presence of the illegal use or possession of alcohol. For instance, when police show up at an unsupervised house party and find alcohol, all students at that party may be considered to be in possession. For a first time offense, Police officers may refer students found in possession of alcohol to the Diversionary Program.

3) All second time alcohol offenses will be summonsed to court for a clerk's hearing. The clerk magistrate can issue a criminal complaint, refer the student to the Diversionary Program, or dismiss the charges.

4) Students who are criminally charged will have that charge on their record (which can affect student loans and job applications). They will have to appear in court in front of the judge, and their case could go to trial. The Registry of Motor Vehicles is notified, and the youth could lose their license for 90 days.

5) Any student convicted of alcohol possession will be placed on probation with the Court and will have a criminal record.

6) Anyone under 21 with a .02% blood alcohol content ratio (BAC) will be charged with "Driving Under the Influence." (For anyone 180 lbs. or less, BAC would be up to .02% for as long as an hour after just one drink.) Refusal to take an Alcohol Breath Test will result in an immediate 180-day license suspension. The Diversionary Program is at the discretion of the police — if recommended and successfully completed, it could help a teen avoid court action.

7) In case of alcohol poisoning, students should seek immediate care at a hospital emergency room. Students need to know that there will be no legal consequences in the as a result of a trip to the emergency room. Police may refer the student to the Brookline Substance Abuse Prevention Program for follow up services.

## **SOCIAL HOST LAWS PUT RESPONSIBILITY ON PARENTS**

The legal drinking age in Massachusetts is 21. Period. That not only puts underage teen drinkers at legal risk, but anyone who serves or provides alcohol to underage guests or allows them to drink alcohol in their home or on their property. Criminal penalties can include a fine up to \$2,000 and/or imprisonment for up to a year, and adults are at risk for a civil suit as well.

You are also accountable if you:

- knowingly allow a person under 21 to drink at your home, and he/she becomes very ill or dies from alcohol poisoning or other injuries.
- unknowingly have a child whose friends drink at your house and someone injures himself fleeing authorities.

- give permission for your underage child to drink in someone else's home and he/she injures or kills a third party.

It is vital that parents and older siblings take a stand against underage drinking. It is not a rite of passage, it is a problem. Don't unwittingly contribute to the problem. Make your expectations clear, follow through on consequences, and keep our teens safe.

Two excellent sources of additional information are:

[www.dontserveteens.org](http://www.dontserveteens.org)

[www.notnrhouse.org](http://www.notnrhouse.org)

## **MORE INFORMATION AT BROOKLINE PARENT EDUCATION NETWORK'S NEW WEBSITE, [WWW.B-PEN.ORG](http://WWW.B-PEN.ORG)**

B-PEN (Brookline Parent Education Network), the recent initiative dedicated to establishing ways in which parents can stay connected and help support each other around common social/emotional/developmental teen issues, offers a wealth of information on its new website at [www.B-PEN.org](http://www.B-PEN.org). The website features downloadable one-page Tip Sheets and lists of local and online resources to help parents navigate common developmental watersheds. The website also includes a discussion blog allowing parents to explore a range of topics by posting questions and comments and/or sharing strategies and ideas for connecting with our teens. Current discussion threads include hang-out hotspots in Brookline and the prevalence of teen stress. *Join the conversation!*

B-PEN co-coordinators June Harris and Karen Campbell also are working with the class PTO's at BHS, as well as with principals and guidance counselors for Brookline middle-schoolers, to help provide opportunities for parents to connect face to face with one another. Meetings are held in Brookline High School's Martin Luther King Room at 7 p.m. and are casual, drop-in style discussion groups. Come with questions, strategies and/or curiosity.

**May 24, 2010, 7 p.m. Freshmen Parent Network Meeting**  
**May 25, 2010, 7 p.m. Sophomore Parent Network Meeting**  
**May 27, 2010, 7 p.m. Rising Freshmen Parent Network Meeting**

### **Parent Advisory Committee Meets May 3**

B-PEN's **Parent Advisory Committee** meets roughly once each month to help target community needs and brainstorm ideas for the initiative. The next meeting is **May 3 at 7 p.m. Location TBD**. Volunteers, ideas and suggestions are always welcome.

**For more information on B-PEN, contact coordinator June Harris, [june\\_harris@brookline.k12.ma.us](mailto:june_harris@brookline.k12.ma.us), or Karen Campbell, [karencampbell4@rcn.com](mailto:karencampbell4@rcn.com).**

## STAY INVOLVED

As parents, we are still our teens' greatest influence, especially as they move through major life shifts. It's important to stay engaged, even when our kids push us away as they strike out for more independence. The B-CASA website offers a wealth of valuable information, from parenting tips on a wide range of issues to student-suggested ideas on safe local activities/entertainment ("What's Poppin'?") The website also offers opportunities to get involved in the community to help our kids stay safe as well as lists of local and national resources/websites. Check it out!

\* \* \* [www.BCASA.org](http://www.BCASA.org) \* \* \*

## LOCAL SUPPORT SERVICES

Looking for guidance in how to handle your concerns about your child's relationships with others? Brookline High School has many resources available to support parents, including, BSAPP Social Workers Mary Minott and Hope Schroy, and the BHS Pupil Support Services at Brookline High School headed by Jackie Browne.

Mary Minott, 713-5155, [Mary\\_Minott@town.brookline.gov](mailto:Mary_Minott@town.brookline.gov) (for grades 10 & 12)

Hope Schroy, 713-5149, [Hope\\_Schroy@Brookline.k12.ma.us](mailto:Hope_Schroy@Brookline.k12.ma.us) (grades 9 & 11)

Jackie Browne, 713-5017, [Jacqueline\\_Browne@brookline.k12.ma.us](mailto:Jacqueline_Browne@brookline.k12.ma.us)

### OTHER RESOURCES

The MA Dept. of Public Health's free "7 Ways to Protect Your Teen from Alcohol and Other Drugs" is an excellent little booklet to have on hand — call 1-800-952-6637.

The Partnership for a Drug Free America's *A Parent's Guide to the Teen Brain* is a fun and very informative link [www.drugfree.org/teenbrain/index.html](http://www.drugfree.org/teenbrain/index.html)

*Students Against Destructive Decisions* is another valuable resource for youth-related information, [www.saddonline.com](http://www.saddonline.com).

*Parents, TheAntiDrug* offers an informative and accessible website for a variety of factual info and parental advice, [www.theantidrug.com](http://www.theantidrug.com)

### USEFUL WEBSITES

[www.brooklinecenter.org](http://www.brooklinecenter.org)  
[www.health.org](http://www.health.org)  
[www.jointogether.org](http://www.jointogether.org)  
[www.teens.drugabuse.gov](http://www.teens.drugabuse.gov)  
[www.ParentlinkRI.org](http://www.ParentlinkRI.org)  
[www.abouthealth.com](http://www.abouthealth.com)  
[www.wordscanwork.com](http://www.wordscanwork.com)  
[www.myspace.com/teensleadingtheway](http://www.myspace.com/teensleadingtheway)  
[www.teenhealthfx.com/index.php](http://www.teenhealthfx.com/index.php)  
[www.plannedparenthood.org](http://www.plannedparenthood.org)

Referral programs:  
ASAP (Children's Hospital's Adolescent Substance Abuse Program) 617-355-2727

CeASAR (Center for Adolescent Substance Abuse Research), 617-355-5433 or <http://www.ceasar-boston.org/>

This newsletter is available in full on the B-CASA website: [www.BCASA.org](http://www.BCASA.org)

or sign up on the PTO webpage. <http://www.bhs-pto.org/email.htm>

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