

Keeping it safe on the home front

Ohio is one of 31 states allowing parents to serve their children alcohol and one of 30 states allowing minors to drink for religious reasons.

Last week on the "Today" Show featured experts discussing the issue; A Wall Street Journal article earlier this month also explored the subject. It's a debate we've heard before: parents teaching their kids to drink responsibly at the risk of exposing them to alcohol too early, paving the way to stunt brain development and potential alcohol abuse.

We know youth abuse alcohol. In fact, alcohol is the most commonly abused drug among Lorain County youth, according to a 2009 Youth Survey of more than 10,000 youth in grades 6, 8, 10 and 12 in the county's 14 public school districts. Some 21% of all youth reported having a drink in the past 30-days. Nearly 3% of the time parent provided the alcohol.

Underage drinking is also illegal, dangerous and unhealthy. Alcohol impacts the developing teen brain and causes long-term damage. Alcohol doesn't discriminate as to whether it's your child or someone else's. The physical impact is still the same. Drinking impacts memory, attention; among youth it's a major culprit that causes poor planning, decision making and impulsive behavior.

During the coming months, Communities that Care of Lorain County will be promoting the prevention campaign reminding adults that "Parents Who Host Lose the Most: don't be a party to teenage drinking."

Yes, there are exceptions as noted above. Regardless, adults are on a slippery slope if they allow their son or daughter's friends to drink in their homes. It's illegal. It's dangerous. It's costly.

The parent/caregiver hosting the event faces hefty fines (\$1,000), jail time and could have personal property confiscated. They are liable if their son or daughter's friends drink in their home - even if youth say their parents or caregivers said it was okay.

House parties where minors have access to alcohol aren't safe - even if you take the car keys away from the youth. Youth are resourceful. If they want to drive, they'll find a way.

They can get into other risky behaviors after imbibing (possibly at your house). They can die from alcohol poisoning, or choke on their own vomit. Now there's a great image. It happens. You might think you're providing a safer option, but you're providing a dangerous one for youth and yourself.

Would you want that weight on your shoulders? Ohio lets you decide for your kids, but won't let you decide for others. Parents Who Host Lose the Most: don't be a party to teenage drinking. It's against the law.

Need we say more? We will in the coming weeks.

Yard signs, banners, buttons and posters are available to help spread the message: Parents Who Host Lose the Most: don't be a party to teenage drinking. Contact Catherine Gabe, 440-282-9920 or cgabe@lorainadas.org.

