

An Urgent Call To Action Taking Steps to Combat Underage Drinking

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Fall River —

When children are exposed to danger, instincts tell us to warn them. We call out, “Look both ways before crossing the street!” Underage drinking is another danger that deserves equal warning. Many still view this as a rite of passage but we now know that the consequences are steep.

The Surgeon General’s “Call to Action to Prevent and Reduce Underage Drinking” reveals startling information. Alcohol is the single-most abused substance among American youth. Seventh and eighth grade is when they start. One of every two eighth-graders has tried alcohol; further, kids who begin drinking early are five times more likely than those who start drinking after age 21 to become addicted. The Ad Council finds that underage drinking has many risks including long-term learning and memory problems, poor judgment, addiction, accidents, injury and death.

Further, almost half of Massachusetts high school students report current alcohol use; almost a third report binge drinking in the past month (five or more drinks at a time). Those who binge drink are more likely to engage in risky behaviors, including sexual intercourse, violence, other drug use and drinking and driving.

What’s the good news? Parent communication is the most effective method to combat the negative influences that bombard our children. Stay involved in children’s everyday lives; they’ll be more likely to talk when faced with temptations and challenges.

What else can you do?

- Be a good role model. Children watch parents to for clues about what is acceptable behavior in families.
- Teach them to choose their friends wisely and what “good qualities” to look for in a friend.
- Know where your kids are and who they’re with.
- Understand that peer-pressure is powerful; take advantage of moments to hear your kid’s concerns.
- Set a no alcohol before age 21 rule. It helps kids to resist negative peer pressure.

Join us Tuesday, April 8, for a town hall meeting on underage drinking at Bristol Community College from 11 a.m. to 1 p.m. in the G Building atrium.

Together we can create a healthy community for the youth of Greater Fall River.