

## Kids and Summer: Are They Drinking?

By Jenn Boulay and Kim Rodrigues

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Fall River —

How 'bout those lazy, hazy days of summer? Hot fun in the summertime?

Did you know that a young person's brain is not fully developed until age 23 to 25? Kids say they "know it all." But, they don't. It's our job to protect them from underage drinking.

According to the Massachusetts Bureau of Substance Abuse Services, alcohol interferes with brain development. Brains go through dynamic changes throughout adolescence. Adolescents need only drink half as much as adults to suffer the same negative effects. Rather than "outgrowing" alcohol use, young abusers are significantly more likely to have drinking problems as adults. Those who drink before 15 are four times more likely to become dependent on alcohol than those who wait until age 21.

Most children first try alcohol between ages 10 and 14. Half who drink get their alcohol at home.

Youth who binge drink (four to five drinks) once a week may have problems attaining the goals of young adulthood — marriage, educational attainment, employment, etc..

BOLD and BSAS suggest:

- Be the first to talk to your children about underage drinking; keep teens thinking, not drinking.
- Adults who drink alcohol can model good choices by not going above the American Heart Association's limitations for alcohol use — one drink a day for women, and no more than two drinks a day for men.
- Be involved in your kids' lives and support positive choices.
- Avoid having unlocked or unmonitored alcohol at home.
- Do not ask youth to serve drinks.
- Do not provide youth with alcohol. It's against the law, and if your child shares it with another teen, you can both be charged.
- While viewing beer commercials on TV, talk with your children about the ads to raise their awareness of the tactics advertisers are using.

Together we will create a healthy community for our youth.

*BOLD, Building Our Lives Drug-free, is a substance abuse prevention coalition comprised of community volunteers, agency representatives, educators, city government, school representatives and youth.*

*Jenn Boulay is a parent, a columnist, a member of BOLD's Drug Paraphernalia Awareness Committee, a member of the Bank Street Neighborhood Association and a Bristol Community College student trustee.*

*Kim Rodrigues is a parent and founder of Soldiers in Our Hearts, a local networking initiative for loved ones of military personnel. She is pursuing a degree in communications from Bristol Community College.*