

**Teens who drink alcohol are more likely than their peers to:**

- Get into frequent fights
- Smoke and abuse drugs
- Drop out of school
- Get arrested
- Get alcohol poisoning
- Have memory loss
- Be at higher risk for suicide and depression
- Get in car accidents
- Fall or drown
- Lose self control
- Be a victim of sexual assault

**Consequences of providing alcohol to minors**

- Risk of death or injury in your home
- Drunk driving accident which you would be held liable for
- Up to a \$2,000 fine
- Personal lawsuits
- Loss of your home
- Loss of your child or someone else's child
- **CRIMINAL PUNISHMENT**  
— possible criminal charge —

- Furnish alcohol for person under 21 (GL c. 138, §34)

**Consequences of having a criminal record:**

- Denied access to jobs
- Denied access to housing
- Expensive fines
- Retailers may also be fined or lose their liquor license

**What the Community Can Do**

- Enforce laws prohibiting sales to minors
- Support policy changes that make it more difficult for teens to buy alcohol
- Never purchase alcohol for minors
- Regulate the density of alcohol retailers allowed in your community
- Conduct alcohol server and retail educational trainings

**LEARN MORE ABOUT UNDERAGE DRINKING**

[www.niaaa.nih.gov](http://www.niaaa.nih.gov)

[www.samhsa.gov](http://www.samhsa.gov)

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

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

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

[www.cdc.gov](http://www.cdc.gov)

**Get the Facts!**

**WHERE TO TURN FOR HELP**

If you are looking for treatment options be sure to check out the treatment guide on our website for local resources.

Visit our "**Just for Parents**" page under RESOURCES at [www.bristolda.com](http://www.bristolda.com)

**MA Substance Abuse Helpline**

(toll free) 1-800-327-5050

TTY:617-536-5872

[www.helpline-online.com](http://www.helpline-online.com)

**Mass 2-1-1 Call Center**

(toll free) 1-877-211-6277 or dial 211

TTY:617-536-5872

[www.mass211help.org](http://www.mass211help.org)

OFFICE OF THE BRISTOL COUNTY  
DISTRICT ATTORNEY

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What Parents Need  
to Know About  
Underage Drinking



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**Bristol County District Attorney  
Thomas M. Quinn III**



**Underage Drinking is a Serious Problem**

*Bristol County District Attorney Tom Quinn is deeply committed to reducing underage drinking and drinking fatalities by educating students and their parents about the legal consequences. The office is actively involved with several prevention initiatives that look for ways to combat underage drinking and reduce access to alcohol.*

**Underage drinking is not a rite of passage...  
It can have serious consequences!**

According to NIAAA, underage drinking is a risk that attracts many developing adolescents and teens. When young people try alcohol, they often don't realize the damaging effects drinking can have on their own lives, their families, and their communities.

Not only is underage drinking illegal, it is also a widespread public health problem that poses many risks.

Teens who begin drinking before the age of **15** are **5x** more likely to become dependent on alcohol than those who begin drinking at age 21 or older. Younger teens are also at higher risk of becoming binge drinkers.

**What is Underage drinking?**

When a person under the age of 21 knowingly consumes alcohol.

**What is Binge drinking?**

When a person consumes 5 or more alcoholic beverages in 2 hours or less.

**One drink is considered as.....**

12 ounce beer

3 ounce glass of wine

1.5 ounce shot of hard liquor

**Signs to detect Underage drinking**

- Change in behavior at home and school
- Change in friend circle
- Loss of interest in activities
- Carelessness about appearance
- Empty or discarded alcohol bottle in belongings
- Smell of alcohol on breath and clothing
- Slurred speech
- Difficulty concentrating
- Poor balance or coordination
- Loss of memory about recent events

**Alcohol consumption may cause**

- Brain damage
- Cancer (many types)
- Cirrhosis of the Liver
- High Blood Pressure
- Stroke
- Depression
- Alcohol hepatitis

**What Parents Can Do**

- Do not host underage drinking parties. Taking the keys away does not make it okay
- Set clear expectations and consequences about drinking
- Monitor your child's activities and relationships with others, especially at times when observation is not expected
- Know your child's friends and their parents
- Be sure that the parents of your child's friends have similar rules around drinking
- Be a good example by drinking responsibly yourself
- Talk with your child to gather as much details and information as possible

**Tips on How to Start the Conversation**

When talking to teens Parents should have R.E.S.P.E.C.T....

**Real...**Have a real and open conversation with your child that does not seem to them like an interrogation. Establish a code word with your child so they can call you for help if they are at a party where underage drinking is taking place. This will give them an "out" without feeling embarrassed.

**Empathy...**Let them know you understand what they are going through regarding peer pressure and trying to fit in. Share a personal story about how you overcame peer pressure in a recent situation. Adults feel pressure too!

**Set boundaries...**Teens may not always agree with them but usually they will stay within the boundaries set by their parents. Be a parent not a pal. They will "Thank you" later!

**Positive...**Positive reinforcement and praise is a good way to encourage your child to make wise decisions. They will do their best because they won't want to disappoint you.

**Expectations...**Communicate what you expect when it comes to making choices in life. Encourage them to exceed those expectations to live a healthy and alcohol-free lifestyle.

**Consequences...**If your child does choose to engage in the use of alcohol or other drugs let them know what the consequences are for that behavior—both legal and in your home.

**Trust...**Trust your child enough by giving them some space to make decisions on their own. Clear rules will give them guidance to make wise choices when they are out alone with their friends.

**Communication IS** 