

Parent's Guide To Teenage Parties

"For A Great Party With A Great Ending"

When your teen is giving a party Plan In Advance! Check party plans with your teenager and know the guest list. If you agree with who is invited, you can curb the "open party" situation. Set a time limit. Set a definite start and ending; not too long. Consider daytime parties as an alternative to evening ones or plan an activity such as swimming, skating or renting movies. Agree to rules ahead of time. These might include: No drugs, including alcohol, No smoking, No leaving the party and then returning, No gate crashers allowed, Lights should be left on, some rooms in your house are off limits. Know your responsibilities. The responsible adult at a teenager's party is visible and AWARE. Remember IT IS ILLEGAL TO SERVE DRUGS, INCLUDING ALCOHOL, TO MINORS. You are legally responsible for anything that may happen to a minor who has been served drugs or alcohol in YOUR home.

When your teen is going to a party: Invite another parent or couple over. Other adults are company for you during a long evening and can be of help with problems. Also, if parents have driven teenagers to your house, you might consider inviting them in to meet you, however briefly. Call the host. Before giving consent for your teenager be allowed to attend a party, make sure of the basic rules, such as parental supervision and that no alcohol will be allowed. Check the party plans beforehand with your teenager. Know where your child is going and with whom. When taking your teenager to a party, wait to see that he or she is inside the house. If you do not know the host parents, introduce yourself. Make it easy for your teenager to leave a party. If there is drinking or drug taking or any reason your teenager wishes to leave a party, make an arrangement that your child can call you (or a designated adult) who will come and pick them up. You might have an understanding that there will be no punishments or restrictions for a call letting you know that things are getting out of hand. Urge your teenager NEVER to ride home with a driver who has been drinking.

Q. Are the police ever called out to assist parents when their child's party has gotten out of hand?

A. Yes. Most problems arise at parties involving high school age children and usually in situations where parents are absent. The two major problems at these parties are uninvited guests and the consumption of alcohol. I recall one incident in which a fifteen-year-old was rushed to the hospital near death because of the amount of vodka he had consumed. Again, this happened at a party where no adults were present.

Q. What are parents' responsibilities when their child has a party in their home?

A. Most parents are ignorant of the law in this regard, although many have called the police department to inquire about their responsibilities. Parents should know there are criminal charges that can be brought for serving alcohol to minors and for risking injury to minors. Penalties of up to one year in prison, fines ranging up to \$1,000, or both, may result if a parent is caught allowing minors to consume alcohol.



Q. What advice would you give to parents who want to allow their child to have a party?

A. First there must be parental supervision. Parents are legally responsible for what happens to minors in their home. Second, do not allow alcoholic beverages to be served. Limit the number of guests and let the party be "by invitation only". A word-of-mouth general invitation brings party crashers.

