

TEEN TOPICS

Legal Drinking Age Protects Kids

(NAPS)—The We Don't Serve Teens program, a national program targeting underage drinking, has developed a Web site, www.DontServeTeens.gov, summarizing the available information on teen drinking and the legal drinking age. The site reveals that over the past two decades—following adoption of the legal drinking age of 21—drinking by high school seniors has dropped substantially.

"This is important because teens who drink harm themselves and others," says Mary Engle of the Federal Trade Commission, the nation's consumer protection agency. "Our kids are a precious resource, and the data shows that the legal drinking age of 21 is a law that protects them." She points to a U.S. Surgeon General report showing that about 5,000 kids under 21 die each year from alcohol-related injury, including crashes, homicides and suicides.

Unfortunately, too many teens still say alcohol is easy to get—and a U.S. government survey shows that most of those who drink alcohol do not pay for it. Instead, they get it from older friends, from family members, at parties or they take it from home without permission. Further, once kids start drinking, most engage in "binge" drinking, meaning that



they have five or more drinks per occasion.

"This is why the We Don't Serve Teens program targets easy teen access to alcohol. Our message is, don't provide alcohol to teens because it is unsafe, illegal and irresponsible." Engle continues. "And most adults agree about this—in fact, only 9 percent of American adults think that it is OK for adults to provide alcohol to underage youth."

The DontServeTeens.gov site provides parents with things to do and say to reduce teen access to alcohol. It recommends that parents keep track of alcohol at home and speak up when underage drinking is discussed. "Be frank and tell other parents that you don't want them serving alcohol to your teen or condoning teen drinking," says Engle. "And talk to adults who host teen parties. Let them know that it is not OK to serve alcohol to someone else's teen."

Did You Know?

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