



Department of Health
Agency of Human Services



Health Department to Parents: You Are Not Alone

ParentUpVT.org offers tips, tools, resources and videos to help prevent underage drinking

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BURLINGTON – Conversations between parents and teenagers can be difficult and awkward, especially when the topic is how to keep them from drinking when half (51%) of Vermonters age 18 to 25 binge drink.

Knowing how to start the conversation and keep that dialogue open during the important developmental years is the primary reason the Vermont Department of Health created the *ParentUp* website and campaign.

ParentUpVT.org offers tips, tools, resources and a set of videos that demonstrate what to talk about and how to talk about drinking. On Vermont Prevention Day – Thursday, April 25 – and throughout Alcohol Awareness Month, the Health Department asks parents of middle and high school students to learn about their role in preventing underage drinking.

“As a parent you have a powerful influence on whether or not your child will drink, and the sooner you start the conversation about drinking, the better,” said Barbara Cimaglio, deputy health commissioner. “You are not alone – our role in public health is to make your job easier by offering resources that can help you prevent youth alcohol use.”

Since 2010, the *ParentUpVT.org* website illustrates simple, proven steps that prevent underage drinking, such as how parents of high school students should refuse to give alcohol to minors or host parties where alcohol is available.

Cimaglio has noticed a cultural shift in how underage drinking is perceived, similar to the change in attitudes about smoking. What was once rarely depicted as harmful in movies and the media is increasingly shown more realistically. We now see more often the major health effects that arise from risky alcohol use.

A common misperception is that middle school is too early to discuss alcohol use. Approximately 15 percent of Vermont students in grades 9-12 tried alcohol before the age of 13, and 35 percent report they drank alcohol at least once in the last 30 days.

Young adults who drink before the age of 15 are more likely to experience academic failure, engage in risky sexual behavior, become alcohol-dependent, and develop substance abuse problems.

Decreasing the percentage of youth who drink is a priority of *Healthy Vermonters 2020*, the state’s public health goals for the decade.

“Our purpose with *ParentUp* is to educate parents and help them understand that research proves early use of alcohol can cause great harm to your child,” Cimaglio said. “Underage drinking is something every parent should pay attention to and discuss with their child early, and throughout adolescence and young adulthood.”

For tools and resources go to www.ParentUpVT.org.

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