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FAMILY GUIDE TO TEEN PARTIES HELPS PARENTS PREVENT UNDERAGE DRINKING

Parents do talk to their children about not drinking alcohol or using drugs. But too many are unaware of what else they can do to prevent underage drinking. “We talk to parents who want to prevent problems for their children and youth, and who want to do more to keep them safe,” stated Donnis Reese, Executive Director of ACHC: The Alliance of Coalitions for Healthy Communities. To help parents, ACHC community coalitions have collaborated to publish, “Parent Guide to Teen Parties.” Comcast has partnered with ACHC to print these guides for parents.

In 2005 twelfth grade students who said they drank alcohol within the past 30 days often got the alcohol from their own homes (48.7%), at a party (47.7%) or at a friend’s house (30.3%) reported the Oakland County Health Division Alcohol and Other Drugs School Survey. The Parent Guide to Teen Parties informs parents that parties are not just large gatherings, but can happen in their own homes when just one or two friends come to visit. Parents must be alert to where alcohol, as well as prescription drugs, is stored and make sure their children can’t get them for their own use.

The overwhelming majority of parents are willing to make sure teen activities do not include alcohol according recent parent surveys conducted by the Birmingham Bloomfield Community Coalition (BBCC). They are also willing to call another parent who is hosting a party to inquire about supervision and availability of alcohol, yet only 68% of high school parents said they have called another parent. “This is too bad,” according to Lisa Machesky, Executive Director of the BBCC, “because our surveys also show that 99% of parents would welcome a call if they are hosting the party.”

The Parent Guide to Teen Parties gives suggestions for parents who are hosting parties for teens, and for parents whose children are attending parties. “Alcohol use among youth is one of our top drug problems. Parents can play a vital role in preventing access to alcohol by monitoring house parties and communicating with other parents about expectations of not providing alcohol to youth”, according to Lisa McKay, Chief, Oakland County Health Division –Office of Substance Abuse Services.

When youth use alcohol, there are more harmful consequences than previously known. The American Medical Association reports that adolescent drinkers scored worse than non-users on vocabulary, general information, memory, memory retrieval and other tests. Information recall was most heavily affected with a ten percent performance decrease in alcohol users. Alcohol affects brain functions and the sleep cycle resulting in impaired learning and memory as well as disrupted release of hormones necessary for growth and maturation.

ACHC member coalitions will distribute the Parent Guide to Teen Parties as part of their 2007 Underage Drinking Prevention Initiative. Citizens are encouraged to find their coalition contact information by checking www.achconline.org. Copies can also be obtained by writing info@achconline.org, or through P.O. Box 210211, Auburn Hills MI 48321.

