

# Parents guide Underage Drinking Prevention

Children look to their parents to provide guidance, information, nurturing, and expectations. Fifth grade is not too early to start talking with your child about underage drinking. Getting a dialogue going about underage drinking isn't easy, but this handout can help you and your fifth grader get started. You may be amazed by what you learn about your child and what your child can learn from you.

## Facing Facts

- A parents' disapproval of drinking alcohol is the **#1** reason children choose not to drink.
- 17% of Hawaii middle school students report drinking alcohol for the first time before age 11.
- Alcohol can damage the growing brain which develops from birth through the adolescent years and into the mid 20s.
- Children who begin drinking at age 13 have a 45% chance of becoming alcohol dependent.

## Media Literacy

Media literacy is being able to analyze media messages, understand the intent of the messages, and judge how the information is used. Today's youth are flooded with media messages with positive and negative meanings. Here are questions to help your child learn how to analyze media messages:

- What did you observe?
- What kinds of messages is it sending?
- What is the purpose of the advertisement?
- What are some of the consequences?

## Refusal Skills

In this activity, you and your fifth grader will role-play ways of refusing alcohol. Finding creative ways to say "No" requires lots of practice. Here are four techniques for saying "No":

- **Repeat:** "No, I don't want to." "No Thanks." "No, I can't."
- **Justify:** "I can't. I have to \_\_\_\_." [Make an excuse.]
- **Substitute:** "No, let's \_\_\_\_." [Suggest another activity.]
- **Walk Away:** "No. I have to go."

## Talk and Action go hand-in-hand

Whether you drink alcohol or not, you can take steps to lessen the likelihood that your child will engage in underage drinking:

- Talk about family rules about the use of alcohol. This may include a discussion of alcohol used in religious observance.
- Make it clear that alcohol use under the age of 21 is unacceptable and against the law.
- Consider not serving alcohol to adults at child-focused events, such as a graduation or birthday party.

## Know the law

- It is illegal to provide alcohol to minors under the age of 21.
- It is illegal to host teen drinking parties in your home.
- Parents and other adults can be prosecuted for giving alcohol to minors.
- Persons under the age of 21 can lose their license for drinking, buying, or holding alcohol, and they don't have to be driving.