



## **Youth Drinking, Holiday Safety, A Family Guide**

Holiday parties give people more chances to use drugs and alcohol. The result is an increase in drug- and alcohol-related tragedies. According to Mothers Against Drunk Driving, at least 50 percent of all deadly car crashes that take place during the holiday season involve alcohol. According to Virginia DMV, in 2005, JCC had 61 alcohol related crashes, 2 fatalities and 24 injuries, York County had 84 alcohol related crashes, 6 fatalities and 71 injuries.

Alcohol poisoning is common in children year-round. The incidence increases during the holiday season when they have access to leftover cocktails. Children often imitate adults and they will drink partially filled glasses regardless of the contents. Always empty beverage glasses and place them out of the reach of curious kids. Children are much more sensitive to alcohol than adults. Alcohol is found in beer, wine and distilled liquor, such as vodka, whiskey, rum or bourbon. It is also in perfumes, aftershave lotions, and mouthwashes. Vanilla and almond extracts also have high alcohol content. Make sure to keep all of these products out of the reach of children. These factors may mean that your child is more exposed to substance abuse—whether it's an uncle who drinks too much during your holiday dinner or a friend who offers your child pot at a New Year's Eve party. So, during this time, it is especially important that parents keep their children safe and talk with them about staying away from drugs and alcohol.

### **Holiday Celebration Tips:**

- Let your child know what you expect. Tell your child that adults may be drinking during the holidays but under no circumstances is she allowed to drink alcohol.
- At your holiday gatherings, offer plenty of nonalcoholic foods, drinks, and activities.
- To lower the risk of alcohol poisoning, be sure to throw out partly empty alcoholic drinks. Children love to imitate adults, and if they have access to leftover drinks, they may taste the contents.
- Have a plan in place about what you and your family will do if you are at a party where there are people who have had too much to drink.
- Model responsible behavior by making sure that guests who have been drinking do not drive.

Why not create some substance-free holiday traditions for your family? It's a great way to show your child that you can have fun during the holidays without alcohol or drugs.

### **Alcohol-Free Holiday Tips:**

- Plan a nonalcoholic holiday party with your child so children learn that they can have fun without alcohol. Send out invitations with alcohol- and drug-free

messages on them, and make sure the guests know that yours will be a substance-free event.

- For your holiday meal, let your child help you prepare and serve traditional drinks without alcohol. You can make nonalcoholic cider, eggnog, or punch. Look for recipes for nonalcoholic beverages like the ones found in these party planning tips.
- Make sure your holiday festivities involve lots of delicious—and nonalcoholic—food, which your child can help you make.
- If you're older child is going to a holiday event, call ahead to make sure that the event will be alcohol and drug free. Check in with the party planners to see what measures are in place to keep alcohol out.

### **Prevention Underage Drinking Parties**

- Report a planned underage drinking party on the 4-SOBRFN Tipline.

Quotes:

*“The holiday season offers an excellent opportunity for parents to communicate with their children about drinking, says Gina Thorne, Coalition Director for HTSAC.”*

*“Parents should keep in mind that children are very observant and may be more influenced by adult behavior than what parents actually tell them about drinking” says Thorne.*