



Tomorrow's News

Fall 2008

CAST: New Kid on the Block

PaShawnda Briley, Community Mobilizer

What is CAST?

Community Alliance for a Safer Tomorrow (CAST) is a risk-focused approach to reducing problem behaviors in youth through community mobilization and planning. As a recipient of a federally funded grant, we are working to acquire local residents and community leaders to identify the risk factors that increase the likelihood of problem behaviors developing, and enhance protective factors that can shield youth from problems. The risk and protective factors are used to implement a comprehensive plan to circumvent future problems now. This action plan can only be accomplished through your help and support.



How can I get involved?

CAST is in need of your expertise. If you have web site maintenance skills, MySpace design skills, time to offer for alliance events, recommendations for new members or projects, knowledge of community history, or fresh ideas that can be used to prevent substance abuse and violence in the Upper Merion Area, please sign up for CAST on our website. We would love to have you join our team for the betterment of the entire community. CAST welcomes those from all different types of backgrounds and fields of experience, because together we recognize the strength not just in numbers but also diversity.

Please join us as we determine the risk factors and protective factors most prevalent in our area. For more information on CAST please call 610-630-2111 or visit www.umacast.org.

Upper Merion

Curfew

In February 2008 the Upper Merion Township adopted a new youth curfew and has been in affect since then. Hours of violation are 10:30pm – 6 am Sunday through Thursday and Midnight – 6am Fridays and Saturdays. There are exceptions such as work, emergencies, or being with family.

Check out UMA Stats

Are you aware of the alarming trends in underage drinking? According to our recent survey (Pennsylvania Youth Survey) during the 2007-2008 school year, 1,105 students report the following behaviors over the past 30 days:

	<u>6th</u>	<u>8th</u>	<u>10th</u>	<u>12th</u>
Consuming alcohol (includes beer, wine, and hard liquor)	2.1%	11.0%	31.5%	41.8%
Binge drinking (5 or more drinks in a row within the past two weeks)	0.9%	3.7%	19.4%	26.5%
Being drunk or high at school	0.0%	4.4%	10.0%	13.1%

Talking to Your Children About Alcohol

The Pennsylvania Youth Survey taken by Upper Merion Area 6th, 8th, 10th, and 12th grade students during the 2007-2008 school year show that the drug of choice is by far alcohol. Consuming alcohol may seem to be acceptable behavior, but that is exactly the danger! Alcohol is a dangerous drug. Consuming alcohol as a minor can have augmenting and sometimes lethal effects on their developing body.

Talking to your children about alcohol can be difficult. But the sooner you begin to have these conversations as a family, the easier it will be for your children to turn to you with any issues they may have with alcohol when they are teens.

Preparing for the conversation: Remembering your younger years and how communication occurred between you and your parents might help in talking to your kids. If you recall feeling attacked and questioned, try not to make your child feel that way. Did your parents listen to you? Did they give you time to speak as well as listen?

Here are some quick tips on talking to your child about tough topics like underage drinking.

- **Be clear, direct, and specific – always.** Let your child know exactly what is acceptable and unacceptable when it



comes to alcohol.

- **Take advantage of the media to discuss alcohol– related issues.** Television, newspapers, movies, YouTube, Blogs, and even books and magazines can present openings for discussion.
- **Have a dialog about reasons why it is in their best interest not to drink.**
- **Always leave an opening for future discussion.**
- **Listen openly.** Be conscious that talking about alcohol can be sensitive for both you and your child.
- **Create an environment that makes your child feel comfortable.** Your child will look for signs such as the tone of your voice, facial expressions, and body language to react from.
- **Encourage your child to talk.** Use door– opening statements like “Let’s talk about ____.” that invite a response.
- **Give your child a chance to talk.** Your child will need to think

and process the discussion. Stop talking and let him/ her soak it in.

- **Show interest by asking appropriate questions.** Asking questions allows you to make sure that there is no misunderstanding.
- **Listen to the complete message.** Listen to everything before forming a conclusion.
- **Deal effectively with emotionally– charged language.** Refrain from using phrases like “Your never...” or “How many times do I have to tell you....”.
- **Be honest with your child!** You don’t have all the answers about alcohol, and its OK to say so. This could be a great opportunity to do some research with your child and learn something new together.

Conversation is a great tool in building trust between children and their parents. Multiple discussions regarding underage drinking should happen throughout the pre– teen and teen years because new concerns will arise as children grow older and are faced with different situations. Children are faced with many complex decisions, but do not let the choice to begin drinking be one of them.

Materials for this article taken from www.madd.org

High Cost of Social Hosting

In the state of Pennsylvania, a social host serving alcohol to underage youth can get in MAJOR trouble with the law. "Social hosts" include both private individuals and companies that hold parties or social events. Social hosts are legally liable to persons under the age of 21 to whom they knowingly serve alcohol, and they are also legally liable to anyone injured as a direct result of the underage drinker's intoxicated conduct. Social hosts can potentially face serious criminal and civil liability.

Underage Drinking and Hosts

Anyone under 21 years of age commits a criminal offense if he or she attempts to purchase, purchases, consumes, possesses, or transports any alcohol, liquor, or malt or brewed beverage, and an adult who furnishes any assistance is also criminally liable. A person commits a crime by serving any alcohol to a minor; it is not necessary that the minor have been served an amount sufficient to intoxicate him or her. Any person who serves minors "near beer" or mildly alcoholic beverages marketed as nonalcoholic is criminally liable. Most social

hosts probably assume that furnishing beverages with just a trace of alcohol to minors is perfectly legal, but doing so is banned by the Pennsylvania Liquor Code.

Preventing Underage Drinking as a Host

Social hosts can protect



themselves and their guests by

- Openly discouraging underage drinking, by clearly announcing that only adults may drink alcoholic beverages
- Stepping in and stopping any minor from drinking
- Preventing the minor from driving once you discover that underage drinking has occurred.
- Controlling what happens in your home or on the party premises and making sure

minors are not serving other minors

Dismissing a minor from a social event for drinking is risky, since his or her intoxication may not be apparent and sending the minor away may increase his or her exposure to danger.

A minor is considered incompetent under the law to handle alcohol and cannot be held liable as a social host for furnishing alcohol to another minor. And remember, unlawful social hosting is a crime in 24 states and can result in a civil lawsuit in 33 states!

The Pennsylvania Youth Survey results for the Upper Merion Area report that 2.1 % of 6th grade students and 11.0% of 8th grade students, 31.5% of 10th grade students, and 41.8% of 12th grade students had consumed alcohol within the 30 days prior to the survey. So as parents and other responsible adults in the community, let's make healthy choices not to enable under aged youth access to alcohol.

Materials provided by MADD, www.madd.org/Professionals/Social-Host/Social-Host-Liability.aspx



*Today is the day
we make choices about tomorrow!*



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Community Alliance for a Safer Tomorrow (CAST) is a risk– focused approach to reducing problem behaviors in youth through community mobilization, awareness, and planning. Upper Merion Area residents work together with representatives from all sectors of the community to identify the risk factors that increase the likelihood of problem behaviors developing and enhancing the protective factors that can shield youth from problems. The risk and protective factors are used to implement a comprehensive plan for a better tomorrow!

www.umacast.org

Warning Signs of a Drinking Problem

Some parents may suspect that their child already has a drinking problem. While it can be hard to know for sure, certain behaviors can alert you to the possibility of an alcohol problem. While the following behaviors may indicate an alcohol or other drug problem, some also reflect normal teenage growing pains. Experts believe that a drinking problem is more likely if you notice several of these signs at the same time, if they occur suddenly and if some of them are extreme in nature.

CLUES:

- **Mood changes:** flare– ups of temper, irritability, and defensiveness.
- **School problems:** poor attendance, low grades and/ or recent disciplinary action.
- **Rebelling against family rules.**
- **Switching friends, along with a reluctance to have you get to know the new friends.**
- **A “nothing matters” attitude:** sloppy appearance, a lack of involvement in former interests and general low energy.
- **Finding alcohol in your child’s room or backpack or smelling alcohol on his/ her breath.**
- **Physical or mental problems:** memory lapses, poor concentration, bloodshot eyes, lack of coordination, or slurred speech.
- **Trouble concentrating and staying focused on a task.**



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