



Prom & Graduation Safety Tips for Parents

As the school year comes to an end, many teenagers will attend high school proms, celebrate high school graduations, and take trips for senior week. The combination of alcohol and young people celebrating the end of a school year -- or the end of high school -- can lead to various problems. While many teenagers expect to have rules-free, fun-filled celebrations, they may very well engage in risky behaviors such as:

- **Underage drinking**
- **Drug use**
- **Promiscuity and unprotected sex**
- **Impaired driving**

In addition to the risky behaviors above, teenagers may be at an increased risk for becoming victims of crimes such as theft, violence, injury, and rape.

Tips for Parents:

- Communicate, Communicate, Communicate!
- Offer suggestions about how teenagers can enjoy prom and senior week without alcohol.
- Explain your feelings about substance use and allow your child to talk about any questions or concerns he/she may have. Remember that communication involves not only speaking, but also listening to your child's feelings and opinions.
- Let your child know that you do not approve of illicit drug and alcohol use because it is dangerous. Be firm but nonjudgmental.
- Be especially careful about letting your child drive or ride in a car with other teenagers during school-end events.
- Find out if the school will be holding after-prom or after-graduation parties. If so, offer to volunteer (chaperone) to ensure that the party will appeal to students. If your community does not offer these alcohol-free parties, find out from school officials if it is feasible to create a task force of parents and teachers to plan a party.
- Talk with your child's transportation provider and emphasize that you expect him/her to forbid drinking.
- Check school policies for underage drinking and relay the policies to the people in charge at all locations where your child will be during the activities/celebrations.
- If your child says he/she will be hanging out at a friend's house after prom, call that friend's parents to ensure they will be supervising and that they have a zero tolerance policy for alcohol and drugs.
- Emphasize the importance of watching out for careless, and possibly drunken, drivers and using the "buddy system" so that your child is with at least one friend at all times.
- Encourage your child to call you at any time if he/she needs a safe ride home or for any other reason.
- Stress to your child the need to keep an eye on his/her beverages while out, and never accept a drink from someone he/she does not know. "Date-rape drugs," such as GHB and Rohypnol, can be slipped into a person's drink in mere seconds. The drugs are tasteless and odorless and the victim may not even be aware he/she is being drugged.