



PARENT ENGAGEMENT KIT FOR SECONDARY SCHOOLS

Working with parents to reduce alcohol-related harm among young people

ABOUT US

The Alcohol, Tobacco and Other Drug Association ACT (ATODA) is the peak body for the alcohol, tobacco and other drugs sector in the ACT. ATODA seeks to promote health through the prevention and reduction of the harms associated with alcohol, tobacco and other drugs.

ATODA has partnered with ACT Health and the Government of Western Australia Mental Health Commission to develop the Impact Alcohol program for the ACT. This initiative is based on the Western Australian program Alcohol: Think Again and aims to provide a comprehensive approach to health promotion and reduce the level of alcohol-related harms and ill health. The initiative is supported by a website (www.impactalcohol.org.au) that provides a range of resources and information related to health, young adults and the community.

In addition, as part of this project ATODA has collaborated with the ACT Department of Education, ACT Council of Parents and Citizens Associations, The Association of Independents Schools of the ACT and the Association of Parents and Friends of ACT Schools, and Companion House to present alcohol information forums to various community groups.

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Supported by



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CONTENTS

BACKGROUND	3
PURPOSE OF THE KIT	3
WHO IS THIS KIT FOR?	3
HOW TO USE THIS KIT	3
ABOUT THE MESSAGE	3
WHAT CAN SCHOOL COMMUNITIES DO	4
IMPLEMENT CAMPAIGN MATERIALS	5
INFOGRAPHIC	7
IMAGES	8
EMAIL SIGNATURE	10
FLYER - TIPS FOR PARENTS	11
IMPLEMENT NON-CAMPAIGN MATERIALS	12
ALTERNATIVES TO USING ALCOHOL TO RAISE FUNDS OR AS PRIZES	13
SCHOOL EVENT PARENT LETTER TEMPLATE	14
NEWSLETTER ARTICLE	15
FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS	16
ALCOHOL GUIDELINES	17
ALCOHOL LAWS - LICENSED PREMISES/PRIVATE SETTINGS	18
ALCOHOL LAWS – PRIVATE SETTINGS	20
ALCOHOL HARMS	24
QUESTIONS COMMONLY ASKED BY PARENTS	25
USEFUL CONTACTS	29

BACKGROUND

This kit has been developed by the Drug, Alcohol and Prevention Services Division (DAPSD) of the Mental Health Commission in consultation with School Drug Education and Road Aware (SDERA) and has been adapted to the ACT context by ATODA and their partner organisations.

Drinking alcohol is widely accepted as being part of Australian culture. Experts report that when young people are exposed to alcohol use the message sent is that alcohol is an important, necessary part of everyday life. This 'cultural ease' around alcohol encourages young people to drink, drink at an earlier age and want to be part of the drinking culture they see around them, which in many instances is one of harmful drinking.

There are a number of strategies currently underway to reduce alcohol-related harm that challenge the existing drinking culture in Australia. This includes mass reach campaigns, school alcohol education, enforcing alcohol legislation and local community action.

Programs that help inform parents about alcohol-related harm and the influence they can have on their child's drinking intentions or behaviours should be part of a comprehensive approach to preventing and reducing alcohol-related harm. Clear drinking guidelines for young people, which recommend no alcohol is the safest choice for people under 18 years of age, helps parents/guardians in the decision not to provide alcohol to their children.

Evidence shows that what parents do, how they communicate their expectations, and whether they supply alcohol, can influence their child's choices about alcohol.

PURPOSE OF THE KIT

This kit has been developed to assist school communities to deliver key information about alcohol to parents/guardians of 12 to 17 year olds, and to encourage parents/guardians to continue educating and talking with their children about alcohol.

**FOR CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE UNDER 18 YEARS OF AGE,
NOT DRINKING ALCOHOL IS THE SAFEST OPTION.**

WHO IS THIS KIT FOR?

The kit is for use by secondary school:

- Teaching staff
- Support staff such as the Student Services, Head of Learning Areas, School Nurse, School Psychologist, School Chaplain and Youth Worker
- The P&C/P&F and School Board
- Other Professionals who support school staff.

HOW TO USE THIS KIT

The kit includes resources, templates, a letter and digital images along with an explanation of how to use them. These materials are in formats that are easy to use and can be downloaded from the *Impact Alcohol* website.

Click here to access the page.

ABOUT THE MESSAGE

This kit supports the *Impact Alcohol* Parents, Young People and Alcohol message, 'No one should provide alcohol to under 18s'. The campaign aims to increase parents' awareness of the National Health and Medical Research Council (NHMRC) Alcohol Guideline to reduce alcohol-related harms for young people under 18 years of age.

- Parents/guardians should be advised that children under 15 years of age are at the greatest risk of harm from drinking and that for this age group, not drinking alcohol is especially important.
- For young people aged 15 to 17 years, the safest option is to delay the initiation of drinking for as long as possible.

WHAT CAN SCHOOL COMMUNITIES DO?

IMPLEMENT MATERIALS

INFOGRAPHIC

IMAGES

EMAIL SIGNATURE

FLYER - TIPS FOR PARENTS

There are a number of activities and resources for school communities' to use to inform and engage parents/guardians, of 12 to 17 year olds, to continue educating their children about alcohol at home.

Consistent messages about alcohol at school and at home can help to reduce alcohol-related harm among young people in school communities.

These activities can be conducted any time of the year, and a sample calendar of events is included, which can be adapted for your school.

Each of the resources in this kit has instructions on how they can be used.

This kit includes:

- A calendar of events.
- An infographic for use in print and digital media.
- A flyer that provides tips for parents.
- A suite of *Impact Alcohol* images for use in digital media.
- Email 'signature insert' instructions.
- A school event parent agreement letter template.
- An article for use in newsletters.
- Ideas on how to raise funds other than using alcohol.
- Frequently asked questions and answers.

WHEN IS THE BEST TIME TO RUN MATERIALS IN MY SCHOOL?

This calendar highlights some times of the year where school events occur that may be associated with alcohol use by young people. These events provide an opportunity for schools to use the materials in this kit to promote key messages to parents about alcohol and young people, and are often a good prompt for parents to discuss alcohol with their children at a relevant time.

MONTH	KEY DATES
JAN	NEW YEARS EVE AUSTRALIA DAY
FEB	
MAR	SCHOOL BALLS
APR	TERM 1 BREAK RIVER CRUISE
MAY	SCHOOL CAMPS
JUN	
JUL	TERM 2 BREAK
AUG	
SEP	
OCT	TERM 3 BREAK
NOV	YEAR 12 DINNER
DEC	TERM 4 BREAK CHRISTMAS

Ask parents to sign an agreement not to give alcohol to their children or their children's friends on the night of the school ball. Use template on page 14.

When sending out information about school events such as a river cruise, school camp or Year 12 dinner, include one of the *Impact Alcohol* images on pages 8 and 9.

In the lead up the celebrations, place the TIPS FOR PARENTS' on page 11 of this kit, on school or P&C/P&F websites and in newsletters.

INFOGRAPHIC

PURPOSE

This infographic can be used in a variety of ways, to highlight important statistics and information about alcohol and young people.

WHERE CAN YOU USE THE INFOGRAPHIC?

Place on school and P&C/P&F websites, Facebook pages and/or in newsletters.

- Display on school notice boards.
- Display at school events, particularly those which parents are likely to attend.



IMAGES

PURPOSE

The images of the following 5 key messages are aimed at parents of children aged 12 to 17 years.

WHERE CAN YOU USE THE IMAGES?

- Place on school and P&C/P&F websites, Facebook pages, newsletters and/or on letters to parents.
- Display at school events, particularly those which parents are likely to attend.
- Insert under your email signature and change periodically to deliver a new message. Instructions on how to do this are on page 10.



IMAGES

Alcohol contributes to young people making poor decisions.

Impact Alcohol

Alcohol affects the developing brain.

Impact Alcohol

Talk to your child about your expectations regarding alcohol.

Impact Alcohol

To help children reach their full potential, no one should supply alcohol to under 18s.

Impact Alcohol

For under 18s, NO alcohol is the safest choice.

Impact Alcohol

EMAIL SIGNATURE

PURPOSE

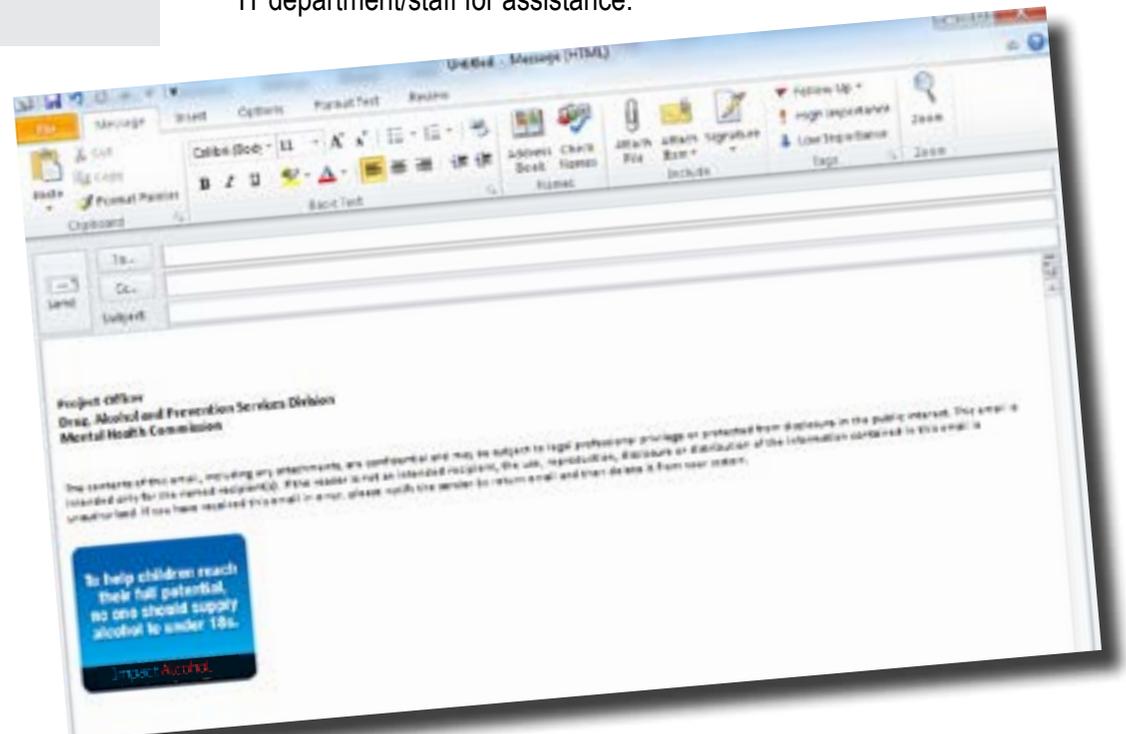
Remind people of the message everytime you email.

WHERE CAN YOU USE THE EMAIL SIGNATURE?

- Place images found on pages 8 and 9 within the footer of staff emails.
- Encourage parents to place on the base of their emails.
- These images can be rotated periodically to deliver varying key messages to parents.

HOW TO INSERT IMAGE INTO A MICROSOFT OUTLOOK EMAIL SIGNATURE

1. Open a new message.
2. Select 'Signatures' under the 'Message' tab (in the 'Include' area on the toolbar).
3. From the drop down menu, select 'Signatures'.
4. Click on the image then 'COPY' and 'PASTE' it into the desired section of your signature.
5. Click 'OK'.
6. If you do not use Microsoft Outlook as your email provider, please contact your IT department/staff for assistance.



FLYER - TIPS FOR PARENTS

PURPOSE

This flyer provides parents with tips to support them to delay their child's alcohol use and can be distributed or utilised in a variety of ways.

WHERE CAN YOU USE THE FACT SHEET?

- Place on school and P&C/P&F websites, Facebook pages and/or in newsletters.
- Display on school notice boards and/or send out with other correspondence to parents where appropriate.
- Display at school events, particularly those that parents are likely to attend.

CLICK HERE
TO ACCESS
PDF FILE
OF FLYER



IMPLEMENT MATERIALS

ALTERNATIVES TO USING ALCOHOL WHEN FUNDRAISING

SCHOOL EVENT PARENT LETTER TEMPLATE

NEWSLETTER ARTICLE

ALTERNATIVES TO USING ALCOHOL TO RAISE FUNDS OR AS PRIZES

PURPOSE

Find ways to raise funds other than using alcohol. Using alcohol as a drawcard to raise funds or as prizes can send a message to young people that alcohol is a commodity valued by adults and further normalises its use.

WHEN CAN THIS BE INTRODUCED?

- Find alternatives to using wine sales as a fundraiser.
- Make quiz nights that might involve students or other children, alcohol-free, no sales and no alcohol prizes.
- Make events such as film nights or BBQs alcohol-free.
- Don't conclude P&C meetings with alcoholic drinks.

School communities can reduce young people's exposure to alcohol by making any school-based events alcohol-free and not using alcohol in fundraising activities or as prizes. This will also help change Australia's current alcohol culture.

When alcohol is consumed and promoted at places where young people play and socialise and where adults socialise accompanied by their children, it can re-enforce to young people that alcohol is a normal part of their environments and everyday life (otherwise known as 'normalisation'). Experts advise that this normalisation of alcohol sends a message that alcohol is not harmful, which can encourage favourable attitudes towards alcohol use.

There are many alternative fundraising activities and for ideas on what you can do, the "Healthy Choices Healthy Futures" website has resources that can be accessed by visiting <http://hchf.com.au/resources>. Two publications are available that provide a range of activities and ideas for prizes:

- **Healthier Fundraising: A Guide**
http://hchf.com.au/system/resources/resource_assets/000/000/021/original/0398_HCHF_Fundraising_Guide.pdf?1396837401
- **Healthier Gifts & Rewards: Alternatives to Wine & Chocolate**
http://hchf.com.au/system/resources/resource_assets/000/000/022/original/0398_HCHF_Gifts_and_Rewards.pdf?1396837336

SCHOOL EVENT PARENT LETTER TEMPLATE

PURPOSE

Many parents don't want to give their child alcohol on the night of the school event but feel pressured by their child and the perception of what other parents are doing.

HOW TO USE THE PARENT LETTER?

To assist them to keep their child safe before, during and after the school event, ask parents to:

- Sign an agreement not to supply alcohol to their child or their child's friends on the night of the school event using the template letter.
- Collect this letter in person or alternately ring a designated person to request the agreement be emailed to them. This can help prevent student's forging their parent's or guardian's signature.
- Advise parents that any students without a signed agreement will not be allowed to attend the school event. Signing this agreement gives parents a reason to say 'no' when their children asks them to supply alcohol.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

Thank you to Ocean Reef Senior High School for allowing us to promote their successful school event strategy, where written agreement was obtained from Year 12 parents not to supply alcohol to their child and their friends on the night of the school event.

[CLICK HERE TO ACCESS WORD FILE OF THIS LETTER](#)

Dear Parents/Guardian,

As you may be aware, the Year ___ event is fast approaching. This is an event where students can celebrate and have fun together with their peers in a safe and welcoming environment.

While there is a lot of excitement and anticipation for this event amongst the students, it's important as a parent to be aware of possible negative outcomes that may occur on the night of the ball.

There are often pre and post ball parties/gatherings taking place on this night, which can be perfectly harmless although this is not always the case. Alcohol consumption at these parties can result in negative outcomes for your child and/or other students.

Alcohol consumption among young people can result in accidental and violent injury, risky sexual behaviours, antisocial and/or embarrassing behaviour.

Drinking alcohol can affect a young person's problem solving skills and performance at school, as well as potentially affecting their body, mood and mental health. For these reasons the national health guideline for children and young people under 18 years of age, states not drinking alcohol is the safest option. More recently, a new law was introduced making it illegal for anyone to supply under 18's with alcohol in a private setting without parental permission.

To ensure that the night of the Year ___ event is a safe one we would like to encourage you to sign an agreement to not supply alcohol to your child or their friends on the night of the school event.

Kind regards
(Insert name here)

----- (name) by ----- (date)

Please complete the below agreement and return to _____

I _____, parent(s) of _____ agree to the following:

- I will not supply nor will I allow anyone under the age of 18 to consume alcohol in my home or on my property as part of a pre and/or post event party/gathering.
- I will not supply my child or anyone under 18 with alcohol for consumption at any school event pre/post party, gathering or event.
- I will discuss this agreement with my child.

Parent(s) signature: _____ Date: _____

NEWSLETTER ARTICLE

PURPOSE

This article provides parents with some understanding of the context in which young people choose to drink alcohol. The way young people view alcohol can be a reflection of beliefs and behaviour of the broader Australian community.

WHERE CAN YOU USE THE NEWSLETTER ARTICLE?

- On school and P&C/P&F websites.
- On the school's Facebook page.
- In school and P&C/P&F newsletters.

**CLICK HERE TO
ACCESS WORD
FILE OF THIS
NEWSLETTER
ARTICLE**

Alcohol Education: At school and at home.

Alcohol use in the Australian culture is often considered normal. Over the past two decades, it has become available more hours of the day, with greater product varieties and in more places than ever before. Alcohol is promoted more prolifically, especially with the introduction of social media, and is cheaper and more affordable than ever before.

Experts report that even with responsible drinking by adults, the message sent to young people through exposure to alcohol use, is that alcohol is an important, necessary part of everyday life. This 'cultural ease' around alcohol can encourage young people to drink, drink at an earlier age and to want to be part of the drinking culture they see around them, which in many instances is one of harmful drinking.

Teaching about alcohol at school is an important part of a comprehensive approach to enable young people to make informed healthy choices. Education by parents at home is also important. Evidence shows that what parents do, how they communicate their expectations and whether they supply alcohol can affect their child's choices about alcohol.

To assist your children in making informed healthy decisions about alcohol, visit the Impact Alcohol website for information and tips on talking to young people about alcohol.

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

This information can be displayed within the school environment for example as part of a staffed poster display on parent/teacher nights as a conversation starter. They can also be used as inserts in school P&C/P&F newsletters and shown on school P&C/P&F websites and Facebook pages. You don't need to use all these questions at once; you could deliver them a segment at a time as a series e.g. one per week/month.

Digital copies of all the following questions are available electronically from the *Impact Alcohol* website in word documents. [Click here to access.](#)

ALCOHOL GUIDELINES

WHAT ARE THE GUIDELINES FOR YOUNG PEOPLE REGARDING ALCOHOL?

The National Health and Medical Research Council (NHMRC) recommend the following guidelines to reduce alcohol-related health harms: for children and young people under 18 years of age:

- For children and young people under 18 years of age, not drinking alcohol is the safest option.
- Parents/guardians should be advised that children under 15 years of age are at the greatest risk of harm from drinking and that for this age group, not drinking alcohol is especially important.
- For young people aged 15 to 17 years, the safest option is to delay the initiation of drinking for as long as possible.

WHY HAVE ALCOHOL GUIDELINES FOR YOUNG PEOPLE BEEN INTRODUCED?

The Guidelines provide guidance for parents, as well as for young people themselves, about the safest option to prevent alcohol-related harm for children and young people up to 18 years of age.

The Guidelines are based on an assessment of the potential harms of alcohol for this age group, as well as the evidence that alcohol may adversely affect brain development and be linked to alcohol-related problems later in life.

It is also based on evidence showing that:

- The risk of accidents, injuries, violence and self-harm are high among drinkers aged under 18 years.
- Drinkers under 15 years of age are much more likely than older drinkers to experience risky or anti-social behaviour.

Early initiation of drinking is associated with a higher frequency and quantity of alcohol consumption. This contributes to the development of alcohol-related harms in adolescence and adulthood.

ALCOHOL LAWS - LICENSED PREMISES/PRIVATE SETTINGS

WHAT ARE THE LAWS IN THE ACT ABOUT ALCOHOL AND YOUNG PEOPLE?

Young person (under 18 years) offences in the Liquor Act 2010 (ACT):

- It is an offence for a young person alcohol in a licensed/permitted place, or a public place (5 penalty units) – s115, s205
- It is an offence for a young person to possess alcohol in a licensed/permitted place, or a public place (5 penalty units) – s117, s206
- It is an offence for a young person to be in an adults only area in a licensed/permitted place (5 penalty units) – s121
- It is an offence for a young person to use false identification to obtain entry to or remain in an adults only area in a licensed/permitted place (5 penalty units) – s122
- It is an offence for a young person to buy alcohol (5 penalty units) – s202
- It is an offence for a young person to use false identification to buy alcohol (5 penalty units) – s203
- It is an offence for a young pevrson to fail to comply with a police officer's request to for identification, or to show to the police officer false identification (5 penalty units) – s208
- It is an offence for a young person to use false identification to obtain a proof of age card (10 penalty units) – s211

Other person offences in the Liquor Act 2010 (ACT):

- It is an offence another person to supply alcohol to a young person in a licensed/permitted place, or a public place (20 penalty units) – s112, s204
- It is an offence another person to send a young person to buy alcohol (20 penalty units) – s119
- It will be (from 19 August 2016) an offence to supply alcohol to a young person in a private place, unless the person supplying the alcohol to the young person is the parent/guardian of the young person or has permission from the parent/guardian of the young person AND supply is consistent with the responsible supervision of the young person (20 penalty units) – s204A

ALCOHOL LAWS - LICENSED PREMISES/PRIVATE SETTINGS

Licensee/permit holder offences in the Liquor Act 2010 (ACT):

- It is an offence for the licensee/permit holder to supply alcohol to a young person in a licensed/permitted place (50 penalty units) – s110
- It is an offence for the licensee/permit holder if a young person consumes alcohol in a licensed/permitted place (20 penalty units) – s114
- It is an offence for the licensee/permit holder if a young person possesses alcohol in a licensed/permitted place (20 penalty units) – s116
- It is an offence for the licensee/permit holder if a young person employed by the licensee supplies alcohol in an adults only area of a licensed/permitted place (50 penalty units) – s118
- It is an offence for the licensee/permit holder if a young person is in an adults only area of a licensed/permitted place (50 penalty units) – s120

Employee of a licensee/permit holder offenses in the Liquor Act 2010 (ACT):

- It is an offence for an employee of the licensee/permit holder to supply alcohol to a young person in a licensed/permitted place (10 penalty units) – s111



ALCOHOL LAWS – PRIVATE SETTINGS

The following questions and answers are about new laws on the secondary supply of alcohol. The ACT Government Justice and Community Safety Directorate are responsible for these laws and if you require more information about these laws please go to www.justice.act.gov.au/supply-of-alcohol-to-minors.

ARE THERE LAWS ABOUT YOUNG PEOPLE DRINKING ALCOHOL AT HOME?

New offences relating to supplying alcohol to people under 18 years of age in private places came into effect on 19 August 2016.

Changes to the Liquor Act mean that it is an offence for a person to supply liquor to a minor in a private place (such as a home) unless:

- the person supplying the liquor is the parent or guardian of the minor or has the permission of the parent or guardian of the minor AND
- the supply is consistent with the responsible supervision of the minor

The legislation provides some guidance by explaining that the following factors are relevant to whether the supply of alcohol to a minor is consistent with the responsible supervision of the minor:

- the age of the minor;
- whether the minor is consuming food with the liquor;
- the level of supervision the supplier has of the minor;
- the kind of liquor supplied to the minor;
- the quantity of, and the time in which, the liquor is supplied to the minor.

The legislation also clarifies that the supply of alcohol to a minor who is intoxicated is NOT consistent with the responsible supervision of minor.

The maximum penalty under the legislation is 20 penalty units - \$3000.

This means that an offence would be committed in the following scenarios:

- the parent or guardian of a minor provides the minor with alcohol, in a manner that is not consistent with responsible supervision of the minor;
- a person who has permission from the parent or guardian of a minor provides the minor with alcohol, in a manner that is not consistent with responsible supervision of the minor; and
- a person who is not the parent or guardian of a minor provides the minor with alcohol and does not have permission from the minor's parent or guardian. In this case it will be irrelevant whether the supply of alcohol was consistent with responsible supervision of the minor

DO OTHER ADULTS NEED VERBAL PERMISSION FROM ME TO GIVE MY CHILD ALCOHOL OR DO THEY NEED TO HAVE MY PERMISSION IN WRITING?

If an offence under the new secondary supply provision was prosecuted, it would be for the courts to determine if there was sufficient evidence to establish whether or not "permission" was established.

However, as a general comment, for an adult to demonstrate they had parental or guardian consent for the consumption of alcohol by a minor, it would be important to be able to produce evidence of the consent which is clear about the scope of the consent given. This could be written (for example an email) or other evidence that prior to the supply of the alcohol, that consent had been given.

ALCOHOL LAWS – PRIVATE SETTINGS

The following questions and answers are about new laws on the secondary supply of alcohol. The ACT Government Justice and Community Safety Directorate are responsible for these laws and if you require more information about these laws please go to www.justice.act.gov.au/supply-of-alcohol-to-minors.

I AM HAVING A PARTY AT HOME FOR MY SON'S 18TH BIRTHDAY AND SOME OF THE PEOPLE ATTENDING WILL BE UNDER 18 YEARS OF AGE. IS IT OKAY FOR ME TO GIVE THEM ALCOHOL IF THEY HAVE A NOTE FROM ONE OF THEIR PARENTS GIVING PERMISSION?

This is a matter for the courts to determine, in the case of an alleged offence against the secondary supply provision, whether or not "permission" was established. However, in general terms, if you had written permission from a parent and you were satisfied that the note was genuinely from the parent (and not, for example, written by the minor or one of his or her friends – you may wish to double check with the parent involved over the phone or in person), it may be acceptable under the Liquor Act to supply alcohol to the minor, provided it is in a manner that is consistent with the responsible supervision of the minor.

Keep in mind however that research has shown that alcohol may adversely affect brain development and lead to alcohol-related problems in later life. Alcohol consumption also contributes to the three leading causes of death among adolescents – unintentional injuries, homicide and suicide. On this basis, the National Health & Medical Research Council national guidelines state that children under the age of 15 should not drink at all as they are at the greatest risk of harm from drinking, and that for young people aged 15 to 17 years, the safest option is to delay the initiation of drinking as long as possible.

I AM HAVING A SMALL GATHERING AT MY HOME FOR MY DAUGHTER'S 18TH BIRTHDAY. A FEW OF HER FRIENDS HAVEN'T TURNED 18 YET; IS IT OKAY FOR ME TO SERVE THEM ALCOHOL IF THEIR PARENTS RING ME AND GIVE THEIR PERMISSION OVER THE PHONE OR PROVIDE PERMISSION BY TEXT?

As noted above, for an adult to demonstrate they had parental or guardian consent for the consumption of alcohol by a minor, it would be important to be able to produce evidence of the consent which is clear about the scope of the consent given. This could be written (for example an email) or other evidence that prior to the supply of the alcohol, that consent had been given.

MY SON, WHO IS 17, WAS GIVEN ALCOHOL BY HIS 17 YEAR OLD FRIEND WHILE VISITING HIS HOUSE. DOES HIS FRIEND NEED TO GET MY PERMISSION BEFORE HE CAN DO THAT?

Yes. It is an offence for a person (regardless of his or her age) to supply liquor to a minor in a private place (such as a home) unless:

- the person supplying the liquor is the parent or guardian of the minor or has the permission of the parent or guardian of the minor AND
- the supply is consistent with the responsible supervision of the minor.

ALCOHOL LAWS - PRIVATE SETTINGS

IF A YOUNG PERSON WHO IS NOT YET 18 YEARS OF AGE BRINGS THEIR OWN ALCOHOL TO MY HOUSE, IS THIS AN OFFENCE UNDER THE NEW SECONDARY SUPPLY OF ALCOHOL LAW?

The legislation setting out the secondary supply offence does not specify whether “supply” in this context includes the situation where an adult host allows minors at a private place to consume alcohol that the minor has obtained from some other source. It is likely that it would depend on the specific circumstances of the situation and ultimately, it would be a matter for the courts to determine whether the behaviour constituted an offence under the legislation.

It is however important to note that there may also be other legal implications for an adult who allows a minor to consume alcohol at a private place, regardless of how or where the minor obtained the alcohol. Under the common law, a host has a duty of care to take reasonable steps to prevent foreseeable harm to all guests. This means that if anything goes wrong and the host has not taken care to prevent problems, civil legal action may be able to be taken against the host.

In light of the above, and the health risks associated with young people drinking alcohol, it is preferable that you do not allow young people to bring alcohol to your house.

MY DAUGHTER IS HAVING HER 18TH BIRTHDAY PARTY AT HOME. ONE OF HER 17 YEAR OLD FRIENDS TOLD ME THAT HER MOTHER HAD GIVEN HER PERMISSION TO DRINK ALCOHOL. IS IT OKAY FOR ME TO GIVE HER A DRINK IN MY HOUSE?

No. You should obtain the permission directly from her parent or guardian, preferably in writing. Without their permission, you will be committing an offence under the Liquor Act and may be liable for a penalty of up to \$3,000.

Remember, research has shown that alcohol may adversely affect brain development and lead to alcohol-related problems in later life. Alcohol consumption also contributes to the three leading causes of death among adolescents – unintentional injuries, homicide and suicide. On this basis, the National Health & Medical Research Council national guidelines state that children under the age of 15 should not drink at all as they are at the greatest risk of harm from drinking, and that for young people aged 15 to 17 years, the safest option is to delay the initiation of drinking as long as possible.

I AM TAKING MY DAUGHTER AND A FEW OF HER FRIENDS OUT TO DINNER FOR HER 18TH BIRTHDAY. ONE GIRL IS NOT 18 YET. IF SHE HAS, HER PARENTS’ PERMISSION IS IT OKAY FOR ME TO GIVE HER ALCOHOL AT THE RESTAURANT?

No, if the restaurant is a licensed premise it is an offence under the Liquor Act 2010 for you to supply her with alcohol (penalty of up to \$3000). It would also be an offence for your daughter’s underage friend to consume liquor at the restaurant (penalty of up to \$750).

ALCOHOL LAWS - PRIVATE SETTINGS

IS IT OKAY FOR OTHER FAMILY MEMBERS TO GIVE MY CHILD SIPS OF ALCOHOL AT A FAMILY GATHERING, WITHOUT MY PERMISSION, IF IT'S IN A PRIVATE HOME?

No, it is an offence for anyone who is not the parent or guardian of your child to supply your child with alcohol without your permission, or the permission of another parent or guardian of the child. This offence carries a penalty of up to \$3,000.

MY 17 YEAR OLD DAUGHTER IS GOING OUT WITH AN 18 YEAR OLD AND I DON'T WANT HER TO DRINK. HOW DO I MAKE THIS CLEAR TO HER BOYFRIEND?

Explain to your daughter's boyfriend that you do not want your daughter to drink alcohol, there is a new law about secondary supply of alcohol to under 18's, and it is against the law for him to give alcohol to your daughter in a private setting such as a home without your permission.

You may also wish to tell him that the consumption of alcohol by young people may adversely affect their brain development and lead to alcohol-related problems in later life. Alcohol consumption also contributes to the three leading causes of death among adolescents – unintentional injuries, homicide and suicide. On this basis, the National Health & Medical Research Council national guidelines state that children under the age of 15 should not drink at all as they are at the greatest risk of harm from drinking, and that for young people aged 15 to 17 years, the safest option is to delay the initiation of drinking as long as possible.

MY 18 YEAR OLD SON IS HAVING SOME FRIENDS OVER TO OUR HOUSE FOR A FEW DRINKS WHILE WE ARE NOT AT HOME. SOME OF MY SON'S FRIENDS ARE NOT 18 YET. IS IT OKAY FOR HIM TO GIVE THEM ALCOHOL?

No, unless your son has been given permission by his friends' parents or guardians. Without their consent, he will be committing an offence under the Liquor Act and may be liable for a penalty of up to \$3,000.

If your son does gain permission to supply alcohol to his under 18 year old friends in your home, he must do so in a manner that is consistent with responsible supervision of the minors. If he supplies them with alcohol when they are intoxicated, he will be committing an offence under the Liquor Act, even if he has permission from their parents to supply them with alcohol.

This question is a good one to discuss with your Year 12 student, particularly those who have already turned 18 years of age.

ALCOHOL HARMS

WHAT ARE THE SHORT AND LONG-TERM HARMS OF ALCOHOL FOR YOUNG PEOPLE?

There are a range of social, economic and legal problems that can result from alcohol consumption by young people.

Short-term harms

In general, younger people are less tolerant to alcohol, and have less experience of drinking and its effects. The immediate harms can include:

- Reduced inhibitions and poor judgement.
- Poor coordination.
- Mood changes.
- Nausea and vomiting.
- Losing consciousness.

These effects along with behaviours driven by the still developing brain can lead to short term harms such as:

- Increased risk-taking (may make decisions without thinking about consequences).
- Unprotected or unwanted sexual encounters.
- Antisocial behaviour, violence, fights, abuse and associated crime.
- Injuries such as road crashes, pedestrian accidents, drowning, alcohol poisoning, suicide and homicide.
- Death due to suffocation from inhaling vomit.

The long-term harms

- Damage to the developing brain (decreased memory ability, lack of problem solving skills and decreased visual and spatial skills).
- Health problems later in life (cancer, liver disease, heart disease, stroke, dependence and mental health problems).

WHAT ARE THE IMPACTS OF ALCOHOL ON THE DEVELOPING BRAIN?

There is growing evidence that drinking alcohol is harmful to the developing brain in young people. Two areas of the brain that may be particularly vulnerable to the effects of alcohol consumption during the teenage years are:

1. The hippocampus – responsible for memory and learning.
2. Prefrontal lobe – important for planning, judgement, decision-making, impulse control and language.

Damage to these parts of the brain during its development can result in irreversible brain changes that can impact decision-making, personality, memory and learning.

While research tells us alcohol can damage the developing brain, it is not clear how much alcohol it takes to do this. For these reasons, it is recommended that for under 18s no alcohol is the safest choice and initiation to drinking is delayed as long as possible

WHAT HARMFUL BEHAVIOURS CAN OCCUR WHEN YOUNG PEOPLE DRINK ALCOHOL?

Harmful behaviours can include:

- Increased risk of accidental and violent injury. The occurrence of risk-taking behaviours increases in adolescence and the possibility of injury increases even more when alcohol is also involved.
- Alcohol consumption in young adults is associated with risky sexual behaviour, adverse behavioural patterns and academic failure.
- Adolescents are also more likely to be involved in a fight when they drink alcohol; compared to if they were sober.

Mental health problems including depression, self-harm and suicide.

- Alcohol use increases the risk for a range of mental health and social problems in young adults.
- Alcohol use may also contribute to poor mental health.
- Young people with poor mental health are more likely to initiate alcohol use in adolescence, and report drinking frequently. They are also more likely to drink with the intent to get drunk.
- Surveys show that heavier alcohol use among teens is associated with an increased probability of a suicide attempt.

QUESTIONS COMMONLY ASKED BY PARENTS

I'M CONCERNED ABOUT SENDING MY CHILD TO PARTIES WHERE ALCOHOL MAY BE AVAILABLE. WHAT CAN I DO?

While many parents strive to help young people make decisions to avoid drinking, the evidence shows that limiting access to alcohol can be a key factor in whether young people drink or not, how much they drink, and the related harm.

If you do choose to let your child go to a party there are some important things you can do to help keep your child safe.

- Contact the parents of the child holding the party to make sure there is going to be adult supervision and to make them aware that you do not want your child to be served alcohol.
- Explain to your child that you expect them not to drink alcohol, the reasons why and the consequences for them if they do choose to drink.
- Don't give your child alcohol to take with them.
- If you are unable to drop them off and pick them up, be aware of how they are getting to the party and who they are going with.
- Make an agreement about what time they need to be home and let them know they can contact you at any time if they get into difficulties or are feeling uncomfortable.

DON'T MOST PARENTS GIVE THEIR CHILDREN ALCOHOL? I WANT TO HELP MY TEENAGER FIT IN, SO I DON'T WANT THEM TO BE THE ONLY ONE AT A PARTY WHO IS NOT DRINKING.

Many parents do not give alcohol to their children.

Research conducted in ACT in 2011 with school students aged 12 to 17 who drank alcohol in the last week found that only 40% of parents supplied them their last alcoholic drink.

Sometimes parents feel pressure from their children or other parents to provide alcohol to their child. If you decide to delay your child's alcohol use, you will not be alone, as many other parents have made the same decision.

Talking openly with other parents about the importance of delaying young people's alcohol use will help to raise awareness and stimulate important discussions. You may be surprised how many other parents feel the same way!

Ongoing discussion with your child about alcohol is how you communicate your beliefs about alcohol and helps ensure they understand your expectations of their behaviour in relation to alcohol.

QUESTIONS COMMONLY ASKED BY PARENTS

I DRANK ALCOHOL WHEN I WAS YOUNG AND I'M OKAY. SO WHY IS IT DIFFERENT FOR YOUNG PEOPLE NOW?

We know a lot more about the harms associated with alcohol use than ever before, such as its impact on the developing brain and that alcohol is carcinogenic (causes cancer). It is important for parents to be aware of these risks so that they can discuss these with their children as they grow up.

We now know:

- The developing brain is particularly vulnerable to alcohol and can affect a young person's ability to learn, remember, think rationally, and regulate their emotions.
- Alcohol is classified as a Group 1 Carcinogen, the same as Asbestos and Tobacco.
- In the past two decades, alcohol has become more readily available. It comes in an increasing variety of forms, with some products tasting remarkably like soft drinks.
- Alcohol is cheaper and more affordable and with the arrival of social media is more prolifically promoted than in the past.
- Young people living in Australia now live in a culture in which many people have very relaxed views towards alcohol. Alcohol plays a part in many aspects of the Australian lifestyle such as socialising, celebrating, relaxing and commiserating. Alcohol is so much part of everyday life it is often not viewed as harmful, and this can encourage young people to drink at an earlier age to be part of the general drinking culture they see around them.

QUESTIONS COMMONLY ASKED BY PARENTS

THE NEXT THREE QUESTIONS HAS THREE DIFFERENT ANSWERS.

HOW CAN PARENTS INFLUENCE THE BEHAVIOUR AND CHOICES THAT THEIR CHILDREN MAKE ABOUT ALCOHOL?

ANSWER 1

Avoid providing alcohol to your children at home or to take to parties.

- Children who are supplied alcohol by their parents for use without parental supervision are four times more likely to drink in a harmful way.
- If you are feeling pressured by your child or other parents, the NHMRC alcohol guidelines provide a clear message that for under 18s, no alcohol is the safest choice.

ANSWER 2

Discuss alcohol with your children from an early age and explain your expectations about alcohol.

- If possible, start conversations about alcohol early in your child's life. This sets you up for easier discussions during teenage years and means they should already be aware of what your attitudes and expectations are about alcohol.
- Talk about the way alcohol is portrayed in the media and advertisements. Point out alcohol advertising and ask your child who they think the ad is targeting and why. Ask them what parts of the ad made them think it was aimed at the group they identified.
- Help them to think about the context the product (alcohol) is being portrayed in, and how this might make it appealing or desirable to them, or a particular age group.
- Explain the evidence about the harmful effects of alcohol on the body, particularly the effects on the developing brain.
- Discuss how other people's drinking might affect them and help them to develop responses, such as how to cope with pressure to drink, how to defuse aggression and how to avoid getting in a car with someone who has been drinking.

ANSWER 3

Be aware of places and situations where your children may be exposed to people drinking alcohol.

- Research shows that children who are poorly monitored tend to drink more. Young people, who take up drinking at an earlier age, tend to drink more and are likely to develop harmful drinking patterns.
- Be sure that your child understands that they need to keep in touch with you about where they are, and to seek your permission to be there. Also, reach an agreement on what time they need to come home and what will happen if they break the rules.
- Talk to other parents and let them know that you do not want them to provide alcohol to your child under any circumstances. This is especially relevant when teenagers are going to friends' houses for parties.

QUESTIONS COMMONLY ASKED BY PARENTS

MY CHILDREN ARE GOING TO START DRINKING SOONER OR LATER. ISN'T IT BETTER TO LET THEM DRINK AT HOME WHILE I SUPERVISE THEM?

There is no evidence to support parents introducing young people to alcohol in the home as a method of teaching responsible drinking.

- In fact, starting drinking at an early age has been shown to increase the likelihood of alcohol-related problems later in life, as well as more regular consumption of alcohol and in greater quantities.
- Research shows that children of parents, who give permission to drink alcohol at home and provide alcohol, are associated with greater levels of adolescent alcohol use, heavy use, drunkenness, and intentions to drink. Children who have had sips of alcohol by age 11 (compared to those who have not sipped) are clearly associated with later alcohol use. Those who had sipped and then asked parents for a sip of their alcohol showed elevated alcohol use.
- The good news is that the number of young people who don't drink has increased. However, those who do drink are drinking at more harmful levels.
- There is strong evidence to support parents in delaying their child's alcohol use for as long as possible.
- The longer young people delay drinking, the less likely they are to develop problems with alcohol later on in life.

USEFUL CONTACTS

USEFUL CONTACTS

IMPACT ALCOHOL WEBSITE

www.impactalcohol.org.au

24-HOUR PHONE LINE

ACT Health runs a 24-hour phone line that provides information on alcohol and other drug and associated issues, advice on assisting and managing people who may have alcohol and other drug issues and support to people affected directly or indirectly by alcohol and drug use.

Telephone: 02 6207 9977 and ask for the *Alcohol and Drug Services*

24-HOUR ONLINE COUNSELLING SERVICE

Turning Point Victoria provide a free service where people can communicate with a professional counsellor about an alcohol or drug related concern, using text-interaction.

Available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, across Australia. The service can be used anonymously or an individual can register for ongoing assistance.

Website: <http://www.counsellingonline.org.au/>

The Directory profiles are searchable by service type, setting type, age range and service name by using the top navigation menu. All profiles can be exported by PDF, downloaded in PDF, printed or emailed individually.

Website: <http://directory.atoda.org.au/>

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