



**Growing  
With  
Your  
Teen**

**A High School Guide for  
Parents and Teens**

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# Growing With Your Teen

## A High School Guide for Parents and Teens

I don't recognize  
this person anymore...

*A feeling of invincibility takes hold of your teenager. All the good habits and beliefs that were developed throughout elementary and middle school might evaporate during the high school years. Instead of lecturing you about nicotine or alcohol, he or she might defend a friend's (or his or her own) right to smoke and drink. After years of automatically putting on a seat belt, your teenager might stop using seat belts when riding with peers.*

*If your son or daughter did not start challenging you in middle school or earlier, high school might be the onset of parent-teen confrontation. Help your teen learn to use good judgment and take acceptable risks so that both you and your child survive—literally and figuratively.*

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**For Help:**  
*(Helpful Telephone Numbers)... inside back cover*



# How can I know the answers if I don't know the questions?

**A**s parents of teenagers, we don't have all the answers—but we do know a lot of the questions! And in many cases, parents find that asking the right questions is the beginning of understanding what's really going on with teenagers.

When and how to communicate with your teen on important issues is the purpose of *Growing With Your Teen: A High School Guide for Parents and Teens*. This reference offers suggestions that have *actually* worked for local parents.

Most kids make good choices most of the time. However, we all need to be aware of the outside pressures facing our teens so we can give them guidance. Our influence as parents is ever present, even if it seems to be ignored!

So, how do we make the most of this influence? What magic words could we say—*what questions should we ask?*—to encourage conversation with our teenagers in the hope that they will heed our warnings, and act responsibly! Some tips in this handbook may not seem realistic to you; others may seem worth a try.

The challenge is to keep a sense of humor and to really listen to one another.



# Transitions

## Questions for Discussion:

When is the curfew for nights with no school the next day?

Can the teen change the curfew in a particular situation? How?

If the teen has a change of plans during an evening, is he/she expected to let the parent know? Is there a set time for this?

Are there consequences for the teen being out past curfew? What are they?

Is the teen allowed to attend parties where alcohol and/or drugs are available?

What should the teen do when he/she arrives at a party and finds alcohol and/or drugs are being used?

Adolescence is a time of many transitions for both teens and their families. Throughout your child's high school experience, you will notice and encounter many changes. Support, embrace and try to understand these changes—they are part of growing up. Keep the lines of communication open with your adolescent as they experience these changes.

During the teen years, adolescents experience changes in their physical development at a rate of speed unparalleled since infancy. Some of these changes include: rapid gains in height and weight, development of secondary sex characteristics and continued brain development. During this time be supportive by encouraging and modeling healthy eating habits and physical activity, be patient with excessive grooming habits, and provide honest answers about sex.

Most adults recognize that teens have better thinking skills than younger children. Your teen will be developing more advanced reasoning skills. Encourage this by asking leading questions; "What could happen if you did this?" "What if this doesn't work?" Remember teens typically reject ready made solutions provided by adults—they want to find solutions on their own and they should. Support this process, but also encourage your teen to accept the consequences associated with their solutions and choices. You will notice that your teen will be moving from concrete to abstract thinking and will enjoy playing with ideas. They will have a wonderful sense of humor and will make you laugh often.

High school is a time for adolescents to explore independence. Your teen will enjoy participating in activities away from the home and the family. Encourage this, but remember that developing guidelines and rules is important. Give teens an

opportunity to establish their behavioral guidelines and consequences. Allow teens to have input into curfew and other family rules. Their advanced cognitive skills coupled with their need for autonomy makes this a perfect time for them to provide suggestions and to demonstrate responsibility for their own behavior.

Establishing an identity has been called one of the most important tasks of adolescents. The question of “Who am I?” is not one that teens think about at a conscious level. Instead, over the course of the adolescent years, teens begin to integrate the opinions of influential others (e.g., parents, other caring adults, friends, etc.) into their own likes and dislikes. The eventual outcome is people who have a clear sense of their values and beliefs, occupational goals, and relationship expectations.

The teen years are a time when young people can begin to see the relationship between their current abilities and plans and their future vocational aspirations. They need to figure out what they are currently good at and areas in which they are willing to strive for success. Encourage involvement in multiple groups or activities both within school and after-school. Realize that teens are trying to gain a sense of achievement—a sense of being uniquely good at something.

What might work freshman year may have to be adjusted when they become a junior or senior. Included on these pages are examples of some questions that you may want to work into conversations with your child. Some of the questions are appropriate early on in their high school experience and others may be more appropriate later on. Remember your child is growing and so are you!

Source: *Moving Ahead, Preparing the Youth Development Professional*, 4HCCS, 2000.

In your family, do parents plan or help to plan a party for/with the teenager? How is that done?

What should the teen do if lots of kids show up at your house and there is no parent at home?

What limitations are placed on the teen’s driving?

In your family, do parents share views with the teen on abstinence, premarital sex, and birth control?

In your family, have you talked about depression or eating disorders? What should a teen do if he/she thinks a friend is suffering from an eating disorder?

What is your family’s policy on the teen’s employment/volunteering?

## How can I really talk to my teen?



Your child needs to hear these words often:

- **I love you.**
- **I think you're great.**
- **I am proud of you.**
- **I care about what happens to you.**
- **I respect your need for privacy and independence.**
- **I want to know your opinions and experiences.**

**O**ur teenagers use the phrase “I know” all the time, but they don’t know as much as they think they do. Parents have lived longer. They *do* know more than teenagers, and they can still have positive influence on their teens’ actions.

Ideally, there is a wonderful parent and teen dialogue and the teen implements the parent’s sage advice immediately! Sometimes, however, discussions may seem more like monologues—the adult talking and the child sitting in stony silence. Even so, remember that *your teen can still hear you*. And sometimes, if you wait long enough, something *you* said will come back through your teenager as his or her opinion.

While it’s not easy to get beyond the one-way discussion—or no discussion at all—it’s not too late to start, even for families that haven’t established a pattern of meaningful communication. Here are some helpful ground rules when talking about difficult or sensitive issues:

- **Watch your timing.**  
Try to have discussions at times other than when your teenager has broken the rules, is preoccupied, upset, or with friends. Find times which are good for both of you to talk privately and without interruption.
- **Listen.**  
To get started, try an open-ended question—like “What’s your plan for after the dance?”—rather than telling your teen the plan. Give your teen a chance to express opinions and to say what he/she knows.
- **Don’t make speeches.**  
You might not be able to cover everything you want to say in one conversation. If more than one minute has gone by and you are still the only one talking, it’s time for some open-ended questions, such as “What do you think is going on here?”

- **Take one subject at a time.**  
When diverted, try getting back to the subject at hand by saying things like “I hear what you are saying and we should talk about that, but right now we’re talking about this issue....”
- **Agree not to be mean to each other.**
- **Be willing to apologize for mistakes and admit when you are wrong.**  
This makes it easier for your child to do the same.
- **Aim for cooperation.**  
Everyone appreciates hearing “Let’s work together on this” rather than “I will tell you what to do and you will do it.”
- **Don’t substitute fighting for talking.**  
Avoid having winners and losers. This will happen if you, the adult, are willing to give some ground and compromise. True, some points are not negotiable, but there should be very few of these. Ask yourself: “How important is this?” Hold your ground on essential matters of safety.
- **Accent positive behaviors and ideas.**  
Any good thoughts, decisions, or insights your teen is expressing should be reinforced: “You really thought this through well” or “I hadn’t thought of that. You’re right.” This powerful tool encourages more good behavior.
- **Respect secrets.**  
Your teenager needs to trust that you won’t “blab” sensitive or personal information. However, consider discussing how you and your teen would handle confidential information that might have harmful consequences for your teen’s friends.
- **Try some non-verbal communication.**  
Sometimes a hug works better than words.

## Tips to try:

- **One mother and daughter have a habit of staying in the car after pulling in the driveway to talk about things.**
- **Some parents find eating out or doing errands creates time for talking and bonding.**
- **One family talks with their teens about their friend’s behavior. They ask if their friends are smoking? This allows the parents to know what their child may be facing in their peer group.**
- **Ask your teenager to describe other teens’ experiences. This allows the discussion to shift away from the minefield of your teen’s own experience.**
- **If you are recounting your own escapades, be sure to describe the consequences. You don’t want to give your teen a green light to misbehave, but rather the opportunity to learn from your experience.**

# How can I avoid conflict with my teen?



One of the developmental tasks of adolescence is to separate from their parents. Conflict is a natural part of life. After all, each family member is unique and has different ideas and opinions. While we can't avoid conflict, we can learn to "fight fair."

- **Identify the problem.**  
Start by having each person state the problem from his/her point of view.
- **Focus on the problem.**  
Attack the problem, not the person. Speak to the issue, not personalities.
- **Listen with an open mind.**
- **Treat a person's feelings with respect.**  
Eliminate words and actions which attack people (name-calling, sneering, getting even, threats, blaming, not listening, hitting, bringing up the past, not taking responsibility, pushing, put-downs, making excuses, bossing).
- **Make sure each person has the opportunity to explain how he/she feels.**
- **Discuss possible solutions.**  
Creative ones could arise and surprise you.
- **If tempers flare, take a break.**  
Cool off and make a date to deal with the problem at a better time when everyone can think clearly.

Remember, put conflicts in perspective: "Is this really worth being upset about?" e.g., hair grows back ... tattoos can't be easily removed.

Try to find humor in the situation, and don't be afraid to laugh at yourself or admit you are wrong.

## How can I set limits?

**W**hile parents may rarely have to verbalize “rules” for young children, with teenagers it is advantageous to state your values, limits, and expectations so there is no room for misunderstanding. It’s easiest when both parents agree on these limits.

### A joint venture

It is important to have a dialogue and really listen to your teenager, rather than setting rules without consideration for “the other side of the story.” In fact, having the teenager participate in setting consequences for non-compliance to limits you have *jointly set* should increase the chance that he or she will follow these guidelines.

On many matters, be willing to negotiate and compromise. The tricky part is being neither too permissive nor too strict. Consider this true story:

*The father of a seventeen-year-old girl refused to let her go to parties, ever. She countered by climbing out her window, doing as she pleased. Because she couldn’t admit to her father that she was out, she depended for transportation on other teens, who were sometimes under the influence of alcohol or drugs. She put her life at risk rather than confront a rigid parent.*

Parenting should not be viewed as exerting power over your teenager. Rather, the objective of setting limits together is to help your teen develop the ability to make sound decisions now and when he or she leaves high school for the workforce or college. That’s why it’s important for young people to practice making the many small decisions that control their lives. They *will* make mistakes. However, while they are living at home, we can help them learn from their errors.



**How can we expect our children to be brave and say “no” to peer pressure that could lead to a dangerous outcome when we, as parents, do not have the courage to say “no” to our children because we fear their response?**

## Tips to try:

- **Pick your battles carefully. Be strong on issues of health and safety—alcohol, drugs, sex, driving with irresponsible teens, unsupervised gatherings. Lighten up on issues that are not that significant—clothes, hair, or a neat room.**
- **Don't be a dictator; ask questions. Nobody likes to be lectured. When your teen misbehaves, ask questions like "Why do you think this is a problem for me?" By thinking and verbalizing how he or she has not met *your* expectations, your teen will gain understanding of your point of view.**
- **Set clear guidelines with your teenager's input. Let your teenager earn trust. It is okay to say, "Let's review your track record." Reinforce your teen's good behavior by offering appropriate freedoms. Help your teenager demonstrate maturity.**
- **When all else fails, write your teen a "love letter." Tell your intentions to keep your son or daughter safe and healthy, and what your hopes are for his or her future.**

## Safety issues

Safety issues are, of course, in a class by themselves, and we all need to address them with our high school students.

If your teen asks "Don't you trust me?" respond by saying "Yes, I do trust you, but not everything is a trust issue. I'm your parent, and I care about your well-being and safety. So let's discuss this from both sides and find an acceptable solution."

## Curfews

Curfews help parents feel more comfortable. Teens do understand that parents worry and usually comply with reasonable curfews.

While you will want to discuss specifics with your teenager, these times are recommended for both girls and boys by many BC parents for *nights with no school the next day*:

- **Freshmen & Sophomores**      **11 PM - Midnight**  
Something to consider: Is your teen's curfew affecting your ability to function the next morning? While teens may be able to sleep late on weekend mornings, you may need to get up for younger children, work, or other responsibilities. Make sure the curfew you set for your teen also works for you! Consider carpooling with other families whose teenagers are going to the same place.
- **Juniors & Seniors**      **Midnight - 1 AM**  
This is when you begin to deal with teenage drivers—negotiating the use of the family car, riding with other teens, not always knowing who is driving. Be sure to question whether the driver has an unrestricted night license, or by law is required to stop driving after 9 PM. Some parents allow their teen to drive after 9 PM even though it is illegal. Decide where you stand on this issue BEFORE your child begins to drive or is a passenger of a teen driver. If your teen is placed in an uncomfortable position, make sure he/she knows to call you for a ride home!

For *school nights* most parents recommend early curfews and minimum socializing.

Many parents require their teens to call them before 11 PM if plans are going to change and/or curfews need to be altered. Special events, however, can often be discussed in advance.

Know when your teen returns home. Some clever checks include:

- **Have your teen kiss you good night.** This is also a good breath test.
- **Ask him/her to turn off all house lights when in for the night.**
- **Request that your teen move a predetermined object, such as a paperweight or jewelry box, to your nightstand.** If you wake up during the night, you'll instantly know that your teen is home.
- **Ask your child to turn off an alarm clock set to go off 30 minutes after your child's curfew.** If the alarm goes off, you'll know that you should check to see if your child arrived home.

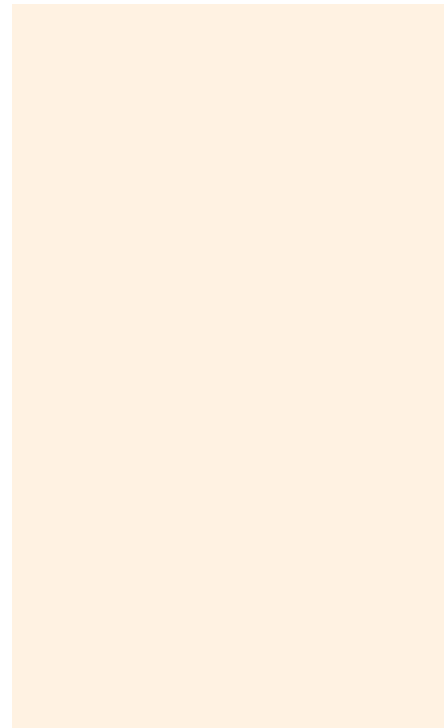
## A changing climate

As your teenager advances from freshman to senior, your discussions may lead to different "limits" on issues such as curfews or dating. Others, such as alcohol use, may be non-negotiable. (Questions at the front of this booklet suggest several topics for discussion.)

Even if you haven't established limits or a procedure for setting them, it's not too late to start. *A child never outgrows the need for parental approval!* Your opinions are heard, even if not always acknowledged. And praise—an effective way of promoting positive behavior—is always welcome.

## Consequences

Another way to promote positive behavior is to set consequences for your teen. Rather than disciplining by punishing, consider setting consequences which are the natural result of actions. For example, discuss with your teen what the consequences would be for coming home after his/her curfew.





- **Parents need to present a united front when a consequence has been determined. To reduce arguments, the consequences should be predetermined.**
- **Do not set consequences when you are angry.**
- **Do not set consequences in front of others.**
- **Do not make the consequences overly harsh.**
- **Apply consequences consistently.**
- **Do not make threats you will not or cannot carry out.**

## **Internet Safety**

The internet is a remarkable information and communication tool. Teenagers use the internet daily to do research, download music, and send and receive e-mail. Before your teen logs on, here are some tips to consider:

- The internet has many Web sites that are not appropriate for everyone. Parents should monitor a teen's activities on the Web. Ask your teen to show you the sites they visit. Also keep the computer in a public place.
- Talk to your child about your concerns. Not all information on the internet is accurate; people are not always who they claim to be; there are sexual predators and scam artists ready to lure victims into their schemes.
- Warn your teenager never to give out personal information such as: name, screen name, mother's maiden name (financial information can be obtained with this), name of school, home address, phone number or credit card information without your approval.
- Many teens are participating in web journaling, blogging and instant messaging. Remind your teen that they are responsible for anything they post to these sites. The content of some sites may be viewed as harassment by other students. Periodically, ask your teen to share what they are posting.

Visit the NYS Attorney General's Web site for more information regarding safety online at:  
**[www.oag.state.ny.us](http://www.oag.state.ny.us)**

## How do I network?

To find out what's going on, parents often rely on information their teenagers provide. There are ways to get up-to-date information from your teens without jeopardizing your relationship with them:

### WAYS TO GET INVOLVED:

#### Formal approaches

- **Attend parent/teacher organization (BCCO) meetings, held in the BCHS LMC.**  
Refer to the school district calendar or Web site for exact dates. Meet other parents, hear about school issues, and meet with the principal.
- **Attend functions of the groups your teen is involved with—sports, drama, music, etc.**  
Each offers an opportunity to talk and network with other parents.
- **Meet and get to know your teenager's high school counselor.**  
Call if you have questions. Schedule a face-to-face appointment even if you don't have concerns.
- **Read school publications.**  
The *High Flyer*, a joint BCCO/high school newsletter, is sent home on a regular basis; the *Eagle's Eye*, the student newsletter, is published periodically and distributed to students; and the high school supplies a student/parent handbook to freshmen, with extra copies available at the school.
- **And if you really want to see for yourself, chaperone a dance.**
- **Check morning announcements on the High School Web site: [bcsd.k12.ny.us](http://bcsd.k12.ny.us)**
- **Support Bethlehem Opportunities Unlimited activities (BOU).**  
BOU meets monthly and regularly awards grants for drug and alcohol education and prevention programs.



Realize you may be walking a fine line between prying, spying, and gossiping on the one hand, and being interested, caring, and helpful on the other. Still, with some simple networking, you will be prepared to reply to the perennial teenage cry:

“But everybody else is doing it!”



- **Participate in Parents for Excellence meetings held six times a year.** PFE focuses on the BCSD's academic programs and encourages innovative programs to motivate and challenge students to perform to the best of their ability.

## Informal approaches

- **Listen.**  
Your teenager's friends may tell you a lot more than they tell their own parents. Don't be judgmental.
- **Get to know the parents of your teen's friends.**  
Compare notes with other parents whenever and wherever you see them.
- **Volunteer to drive a carpool.**  
When two or more teenagers are in the back seat, a lot of information is forthcoming. Don't talk if you want the conversation to continue.
- **Encourage your teenager to have friends over when you're home and provide great snacks.**
- **Attend functions your teen may not be involved in ... with or without your teen.**

## Other ways to *stay involved* with the high school community

- **Always attend open houses at the high school.**
- **Use the school district calendar to note important dates.**
- **Volunteer to help teachers with displays or field trips.**
- **Volunteer to bake, clean up, fund raise, or make phone calls.**
- **Regularly check the school district website: [www.bcsd.k12.ny.us](http://www.bcsd.k12.ny.us).**

If you have questions, feel free to call the high school office at 439-4921.

## Parties, proms, and balls

**A**s the weekend social scene unfolds, it's important to ask your teenager what the plans are. You are entitled to know.

### Weekend “parties”

There's a party every Friday and Saturday night!!!  
*Does anyone ever plan these in advance?!* If there's a party, you should ask:

- **Where is the party?**
- **What time does it begin? end?**
- **Who's going?**
- **How are you getting to and from the party?**
- **Will a parent be at home during the party?**

Even if groups of friends get together informally, routinely ask: **“What's the plan?”**

If your teen can't answer questions like these, are you sure you still want him or her to go? It's helpful to reiterate your family's rules on a frequent basis. These rules may include:

- **Adult supervision—it's prudent.**
- **No alcohol—it's illegal.**
- **No drugs—they're illegal.**
- **No rides with drivers under the influence—it's stupid and life-threatening!**
- **Call me if you're going to another location—it's considerate.**
- **Call me if you will be returning home later than expected—it gives me peace of mind.**

Each time your teen calls home as requested, say thank you for calling and don't keep him or her on the phone.



Teach your teen to trust you.

Demonstrate that you will always be there for your teenager because his or her safety is your first concern.



There are active yet appropriate ways for you, as a parent, to insert yourself into the party scene:

- **Network with other parents to find out if they “share” the same rules as your family.**
- **Call a host parent and offer to bring something or to help and to confirm plans.**
- **Stay in town as many weekends as possible.**

This is especially important on weekends of major school dances. If you do have to be away, arrange for an adult to stay with your teen or for your teen to stay at a friend’s for the entire weekend.

(Sometimes, ingenious students will find out that you’ll be away or out for a long evening and will arrange a party *at your house without your teenager’s knowledge*. Or, your teen might take advantage of the situation. Therefore, you need to state your expectations clearly.) You are liable for what goes on in your home!

- **Make yourself available to your teenager.** Your teen needs to know that if he or she is uncomfortable with anything happening at a party or someone’s house, **you will come to get him or her no matter what time, place, or circumstance—no questions asked.** No penalty should be imposed for such a “rescue,” and discussion should take place after a good night’s rest!

## Fraternities and sororities

These are **not** school clubs and are not sanctioned by the high school. The purpose of these “underground” groups is purely social. It is “cool” to be invited to join, but be advised, the main focus is parties and drinking alcohol. There have been reports of hazing for the boy’s fraternities. Fraternities and sororities sponsor the annual Montreal ski trip which is just an excuse to drink in Canada, where it is legal at age 18.

## Formal, semi-formal, informal dances

There are several dances at Bethlehem Central High School during the school year. These dances are a lot of fun; encourage your teen to attend.

Many dances are listed on the school calendar, but others are scheduled as the year progresses. Most are sponsored by various school groups—Student Senate, Key Club, Students Against Destructive Decisions, Students for Peace and Survival, International Club, *Thinking Reed*, etc.

**Dances are chaperoned by BCHS staff and parents. Contact BCCO if you want to chaperone.**

The semi-formal or formal dances are Homecoming (October), Snowball (February), Junior Prom (May) and Senior Ball (June). With the exception of the Prom and the Ball, the dances are held at the school.

**Plan ahead.** Call the high school's main office to verify details. Usually, dances start and end at specific times, typically 8-11 PM. A non-BCHS student may attend as an invited guest *if registered at the main office in advance*. Admission is charged at every dance. Students must arrive by a certain time (usually by 9:30 PM), and re-entry is not permitted.

### After the dance—the party goes on

There are impromptu and organized after-dance get-togethers/parties. Some are short, some are long, and some are really long (overnights). You and your teenager have to decide what's okay for your family. Once again, it's important to ask: **"What's the plan?"**

This is an ideal time to reiterate your rules and family values. Networking with other parents is especially valuable here so that you will know otherwise if your son or daughter says: "Everybody is doing this..." "No one has a curfew..." "You're the only one with all these rules; you're ruining my life..."

**If a student appears to be under the influence of alcohol or drugs, he or she will not be permitted entry to a school event. A parent is called. (Don't worry needlessly; there are very few students who break the rules.)**

**If a student has been admitted to a school event and shows signs of alcohol or drug use, a parent will be called, and if there is concern about the teen's health and safety, an ambulance and the police will be called.**

**The consequence of attending a dance "under the influence" is suspension from school and may include penalties that impact on the student's participation in extra-curricular activities. Some college applications specifically ask if the student has ever been suspended.**

**Please refer to the *BCHS Student/Parent Handbook* and the *Parent/Student Interscholastic Athletic Guide* for more information.**



**Ask yourself if you are comfortable about having your teenager go on a trip with little or no supervision. Realize that not all parents are sending their teens on these excursions. It's okay to say "NO!" You will have to be strong, and ask other parents to be strong, too, because this is not an easy or popular decision. Network! Trust your instincts! If it sounds "fishy," then it is. Verify details with another adult.**

**Some parents find it helpful to announce their decisions about these trips even before the request is made, as in "Dad and I have already discussed it. We are concerned about your safety and well-being. We will not allow you to go."**

## **When the party is at your house**

You've been planning parties since toddler days, but now you need to take a few extra steps to insure a safe and sane experience. Here are a few suggestions:

- **Set ground rules.**  
Decide which rooms are on and off limits.
- **Limit attendance and hours.**
- **Agree on a guest list.**  
Don't allow party crashers.
- **Consider co-hosts.**  
Encourage your teen to plan the party with a friend, and invite some of your friends to share the hosting, too!
- **Be visible and aware during the party.**
- **Check what guest are bringing in.**  
For example: water bottles may be filled with alcohol.
- **Consider if guests can leave the party and then return later.**

## **Lake George and beyond...**

There are some common "trips" you should know about.

The out of town motels and campsites are a favorite destination after the Junior Prom and the Senior Ball. There is no adult supervision. There is a lot of drinking, and it is a great opportunity for using poor judgment. If you want more details, ask a parent who has "lived through" this experience.

When spring rolls around, the common cry is Myrtle Beach for senior "bonding" or for junior "fun" or whatever! It may seem as if every teenager will be going. The reality is very few teens actually make this trip.

## The opposite sex

**O**ur teens' generation has even put a new spin on some aspects of this!

### Dating, sort of...

If your son or daughter is a social kind of kid, you may have figured this out in middle school—kids don't always date the same way we dated. Oh, they may call it "going out," but sometimes they don't seem to do any more than talk on the phone.

As they mature from freshman to senior, some teens date as a group—a number of girls and boys get together for movies, for coffee, or to hang out at someone's home.

Still, some teens do couple off and therefore face the same issues you did as a teenager. Try to remember what that felt like for you. Tap into those memories, and discuss your views with your teenager. These relationships can be very intense and consuming. Discuss your expectations with your teen. Here are some questions you might ask yourself or your teen:

- **How much privacy will you give a couple?**
- **Do they understand what it means to be in a committed relationship?**
- **Will you place limits on how often your teen can see a boyfriend or girlfriend?**
- **Will this dating relationship impact on family obligations?**

### Sexual activity

As your young adult matures, he or she may be less willing to discuss sex. Even so, make it a point to openly present your values. Make sure that he or she is as educated as possible with a lot of information.

The high school health classes cover topics on sex. You might find that your teenager is actually comfortable having a dialogue with you since he or she has already discussed this in class. Two important subjects to include in your conversations are respect for the opposite sex





## Sexual harassment is illegal.

If your child is sexually harassed, even though it is difficult or embarrassing, she/he should tell the harasser she/he does not like it and demand that the person stop.

### IF IT CONTINUES:

- Write down times, places, witnesses and what happened.
- REPORT IT.
- School officials are required by law to check out all complaints.

and abstinence/birth control. Make it known that you are always willing to talk about these serious issues.

Given the fact that AIDS and other sexually transmitted diseases are rapidly infecting this age group, it is especially wise to have *continued* discussions about sex with your teenager. It is important for both you and your teenager to understand that it may take six months after infection for the HIV virus to be detectable by a blood test. Therefore, a negative test result will give false security and may place a loved one in grave jeopardy.

Many teens are engaging in oral sex and believe it is a safe alternative to intercourse. It is not! Sexual transmitted diseases can be passed this way. Stress the risks of performing and receiving oral sex to your child.

Meet with parents of your child's friends.

## Harassment

### *Sexual Harassment*

Sexual harassment is a serious problem of disrespect. Girls are the more frequent target. Sexual harassment may be physical, verbal, or non-verbal.

Physical harassment includes touching, grabbing, or purposely bumping or holding a person against his/her will.

Verbal harassment includes offensive comments about body parts, sexual suggestions or threats, sexual remarks, rating people's bodies, and sex jokes. Non-verbal harassment includes staring or pointing at a person's body, making obscene gestures, or displaying obscene materials.

Sexual harassment makes the target feel like a second-class citizen.

### *Bullying*

Bullying is a form of harassment and should not be viewed as an unavoidable part of growing up. Bullying may be direct — hitting, kicking, making insults or threats — or indirect — the experience of being excluded from a group or being prevented from making friends. Bullying occurs among girls as well as boys. If you suspect or it is obvious that your child is being bullied by other students, then it is important to contact the school principal immediately. A plan can then be developed to address the bullying. Don't ignore the bullying, even if your child asks you to. It is important to break the pattern of bullying for the sake of the victim but also for the sake of the bully.

# Substance Abuse

Substance abuse—alcohol and other drugs—is an issue in Bethlehem, just as it is in other communities around the country.

## Alcohol

The most important factor in predicting whether your teen will abuse alcohol or drugs is what *you* do. You are the role model. If you drink a lot, your teenager will assume “having a good time” requires the use of alcohol or that alcohol can be used as a problem solver.

- **Why do teens use alcohol?**

Teens use alcohol for basically the same reasons adults do—to reduce stress, to fit in with peers, to feel high, to relax in a social setting, and to get drunk. Additionally, teenagers use alcohol to feel grown up, to rebel against authority, to gain prestige with friends, and to escape from school, family, and social problems.

**The reality for teens in Bethlehem is that they cannot avoid peers who party with alcohol.**

There is a lot of pressure to attend and to host parties where alcohol is served. Whether or not it is an accurate perception, there is a sense there is “nothing else to do in this town.”

- **Where are teens drinking?**

Parties generally involve 10-30 young people at a home where the parents are away for the evening or longer. Occasionally adults—including parents—supply teens with alcohol or allow it to be served. They somehow believe they can supervise or monitor this illegal use. Hosting parties for teens where alcohol is available can be costly for everyone involved. It is illegal, unsafe, and unhealthy for anyone under age 21 to drink alcohol.

Young people who attend these parties usually hide this information from their parents. They may report that they are elsewhere, return home after their

## Fast Facts:

According to the Bethlehem CSD High School 2007 Youth Risk Behavior Survey:

- *78.6% of students reported having at least one alcoholic drink in their lifetime.*
- *32.2% of students reported having their first drink at 13 or 14.*
- *26.0% of students reported having their first drink at 15 or 16.*

If you use strong scare tactics to discuss alcohol use with your teen, your efforts could backfire; teens are often under the impression they can handle drinking on a regular basis. Let them know some potential consequences:

- *Alcohol depresses the brain, retarding its ability to control both body and mind. This is why alcohol is so dangerous. It acts like a sedative, slowing down muscle coordination, reflexes, movement, and speech. For an individual who drinks too much alcohol, breathing or heart rate can reach dangerously low levels or even stop.*
- *Alcohol loosens inhibitions. It's a common factor in date rape and other violence.*
- *Alcohol hinders communication. Teenagers using alcohol may think they are communicating better when, in fact, they are not! Relying on alcohol as a communication "crutch" can also undermine communication in situations where the "crutch" is not available, such as job or college interviews.*
- *Alcohol clouds judgment. Property destruction is a byproduct of many local parties that include underage drinking.*
- *Alcohol is a factor in a large percentage of automobile accidents.*

parents are asleep, or stay overnight at a friend's home. Additionally, teens meet to drink or smoke marijuana along the waterline, in local woods, behind schools, and even in their own backyard.

- **How do teens obtain alcohol?**

Local teens report that it is relatively easy to purchase alcoholic beverages. They buy it from a store clerk they know, use false identification, or find a store that rarely proofs anyone. Sometimes teens make friends with young adults who are at least 21 (the legal age in New York for buying and consuming alcohol) and who will make the purchase for the teenagers. Often, however, the beer or liquor comes out of the family cabinet or refrigerator. Therefore, it may be a good idea to change the location of your alcohol and consider locking it in a cabinet or limit the amount you have available in your home. Even if your child doesn't drink, their friends may help themselves.

### *Binge drinking and alcohol poisoning*

Parents need to be aware that there is always a possibility of alcohol poisoning when teens drink too much too fast. Because alcohol depresses the central nervous system, it can affect breathing, heart rate, and the gag reflex. Alcohol poisoning may lead to unconsciousness and even death.

**When under the influence of alcohol or other drugs, everyone reacts differently. These are some of the observable signs:**

- Stagger, fall down, cannot stand up
- Slurs words; spills or drop things
- No response to pinching or poking; difficult to wake up
- Skin is cold, clammy, pale, or bluish
- Breathing is slow or irregular
- Vomiting
- Dilated pupils
- Passing out or losing consciousness

Any time you suspect a teen is drunk you should seek immediate medical attention. Call 911. The trained experts will help with the physical needs. Also call the police at 439-9973. They will help

**determine if anyone else is at risk for poisoning. The police can also give you tips on how to talk to your teen about this incident.**

It is important to discuss the issue of alcohol poisoning with your teen. Explain that alcohol poisoning can lead to tragic consequences if left untreated. It is not a problem that teens can handle on their own and requires immediate medical attention. *It is never advisable to let someone “sleep it off.”*

### *Alcohol and the law*

Underage drinking poses numerous legal issues, and the laws are becoming stricter. The motor vehicle law now quickly removes a teenager’s license for driving under the influence. Liabilities for serving alcohol to individuals under 21 are much stricter as well. For an in-depth discussion about teens, alcohol, parents, and the law, refer to Bethlehem Community Partnership’s flyer, reproduced in this booklet in the “Resources” section.

Despite the laws, alcohol consumption is considered by many to be socially acceptable. Young people, aware as they may be of the negative consequences for alcohol use, do not think clearly in social settings.

When a drunken teen becomes sick, he or she can easily earn the title “the one who threw up at the dance,” a distinction never to be forgotten.

*Unfortunately, a percentage of the experimental drinkers of today will progress to more serious drinking problems later on. Current research shows that teenagers who begin drinking before the age of 15 are four times more likely to become alcoholics than those who begin at the age of 21.*

**In response to extensive “education” about drinking and driving, local teens often use a designated driver. Unfortunately, this may just be a person who drinks “less” or is “least drunk,” not necessarily an abstainer.**

### *Parents Who Host Lose the Most*

Providing alcohol to underage youth is illegal and can pose serious health risks and legal ramifications

**The best time to talk to your teen about drugs is before a problem develops, but if you discover your teenager is regularly using or experimenting with drugs, here are some suggestions:**

- *Parents should agree ahead of time on a course of action and provide a united front.*
- *Have an honest talk with your teen. Stress that you are not trying to blame or punish.*
- *Seek advice from guidance counselors, police, drug treatment programs, or your pediatrician.*
- *Have your teenager evaluated at a local drug treatment facility.*
- *Attend a self-help meeting or a family support group, such as Alanon.*
- *If you are a drug user, realize that your teen will model your behavior.*
- *Be willing to be honest and to ask for help—become informed.*



for everyone involved. Remember that parents who give alcohol to their teen's friends under any circumstances, even in their own homes, are breaking the law. Also, parents who knowingly allow a person under 21, other than their own child, to remain in their home or on their property while consuming or possessing alcohol can be prosecuted. If you break the law, you could face a maximum sentence of a year in jail and a monetary fine as well as risk the chance of being sued.

Remember providing alcohol to underage youth sends a mixed message to teens that they do not have to obey the law. Research shows that most teenagers appreciate it when their parents set boundaries and establish expectations that are fairly enforced.

## Illegal drugs

Illegal drugs are available in Bethlehem, and your teen knows who is selling them. Marijuana is the primary one, but there is a ready assortment of stronger drugs if a teenager really wants to try them. Drugs such as LSD, ecstasy and mushrooms are available in suburban communities.

### *Marijuana*

Marijuana is the most commonly used illicit drug. In a local survey, done in 2005, 42 percent of students indicated that they had used marijuana. Marijuana outpaces tobacco in its number of carcinogens. Research shows that using marijuana can lead to depression, anxiety, and panic attacks. For a female, every egg in her ovaries may be adversely affected. And using marijuana can lead to the use of other drugs.

If you want to find out more about marijuana use, its dangers, and its consequences, refer to the Bethlehem Community Partnership publication, *The Real Dope on Marijuana*, included in the "Resources" section of this guide.

### Fast Facts:

According to the Bethlehem CSD High School 2007 Youth Risk Behavior Survey:

- *42.4% of students reported using marijuana at least once.*
- *6.3% of students reported using cocaine.*
- *3.8% of students reported using steroids without a prescription.*

## *“Club Drugs”*

“Recreational” drug use has serious consequences. Recently there has been an increasing popularity of some very dangerous substances known collectively as “club drugs.” This term refers to drugs being used by young adults at some all-night dance parties known as “raves” or “trances,” dance clubs, and bars. Club drug is a vague term which refers to a variety of drugs. Some club drugs are colorless, tasteless, and odorless and so can be added unobtrusively to drinks to sedate or intoxicate others. Used in combination with alcohol these drugs can be even more dangerous.

**Ecstasy** is also known as XTC, X, Adam, Clarity, L and Lover’s Speed. Ecstasy was developed and patented in the early 1900s as an appetite suppressant. Ecstasy is taken orally, usually in a tablet or capsule. Effects last from three to six hours, though depression, confusion, sleep disorder, anxiety, and paranoia have been reported weeks after its use. Ecstasy can produce a significant increase in heart rate and blood pressure and a sense of alertness like that associated with amphetamine use. The effects of ecstasy may lead to dehydration, hypertension, and heart or kidney failure. High doses can cause increase in body temperature leading to muscle breakdown and kidney and cardiovascular system damage. Chronic use was found to produce long-lasting or permanent damage to neurons and consequent memory impairment.

Rohypnol is also called Roofies, Rophies, Roche and Forget-me Pill. It is not approved for prescription use in the U.S., although it belongs to the class of drugs known as benzodiazepines such as Valium, Halcion, and Xanax. Rohypnol is tasteless and odorless and dissolves easily in carbonated beverages. The drug can cause profound “anterograde amnesia”—that is, individuals may not remember events they experienced while under the effects of the drug. Rohypnol has been reportedly used in sexual assault. Other effects associated with the drug include drowsiness, dizziness, confusion, decreased blood pressure, and gastrointestinal disturbances.

## **Diversity & Tolerance**

**We encourage your family to discuss issues related to prejudice and discrimination. Prejudice has a negative impact on all of our lives whether it stems from bigotry based on ethnicity, disability, age, or sexual orientation.**

**While our high school community appears to be homogenous, our students are often confronted with attitudes and incidents of intolerance, sometimes subtle, sometimes not so subtle.**

**Through various programs, BCHS tries to promote understanding and tolerance, which are known antidotes to violence.**

**Acknowledge diversity and avoid stereotypical thinking. We have rich human differences and by placing negative value judgments on our differences, we deny people full humanity.**

- *Encourage behavior and language that are non-biased and inclusive of all*
- *Help raise your teen’s awareness of stereotypical thinking*
- *Avoid words and phrases that are hurtful to others*
- *Ask your teen what offensive words or phrases he/she hears*

## ***Steroids***

Anabolic steroids are the synthetic variants of the natural male hormone testosterone. They have legitimate medical uses and are a controlled substance. They can only be used with a doctor's prescription and it is a felony to possess them or distribute them. They can be purchased illegally through sales over the internet and by purchasing them in other countries.

Young people, especially athletes, are increasingly turning to steroids to assist in building muscle and body mass. They are also used to improve performance in sports that require speed, strength, and endurance. Their uncontrolled and unmonitored use can lead to heart, liver, and lung damage as well as changes in the reproductive system of both males and females. Behavioral changes like psychotic episodes, depression, and extreme aggressive behavior (roid rages) may result following chronic use of steroids.

Recent reports from the Mayo Clinic and the National Institute on Drug Abuse show that upwards of one million middle and high school-aged kids experimented with anabolic steroids in 2003. The fastest rate of growth in anabolic steroid usage is among young females.

## ***Supplements***

There are many different nutritional supplements that can be bought over the counter in food stores and pharmacies. Very few of them have been examined for their long-term effects upon human beings. Thus, the use of nutritional supplements by young people should be overseen by a physician.

# Mental Health

We would all like our children to be happy and carefree, but high schoolers, like all people, can experience mental health problems. These are issues that are beyond the usual ups and downs of life and that interfere with your child's ability to do the work of a teenager — that is, to complete school work, have satisfying relationships with family and peers, perhaps have a job, and think forward to a future. Common problems for teenagers are depression, self-injury, and eating disorders. Remember that these may also exist alongside substance abuse, learning problems, and other disorders.

## *Depression*

Everyone feels blue now and then. Clinical depression is a serious health problem which occurs when “low” periods last for more than a couple of weeks. It affects all parts of the individual's life and health. It is not a personal weakness but is a serious illness that can have serious consequences. Suicide is often linked to depression. If your child exhibits the symptoms listed at right, seek help from your physician, who can refer you to a mental health professional.

We know in Bethlehem that our children are at risk for depression and suicide just as all teens across the country are. In the 2007 Youth Risk Survey, 23.7 percent stated they had felt “so sad or hopeless almost everyday for two weeks or more in a row” that they had stopped doing some usual activities. Even more alarming is that 14.7 percent of the students stated they had seriously considered suicide, and 10.9 percent actually had made one attempt.

Don't lose hope! Most forms of depression are mild or moderate and are treatable with the help of a mental health professional. Many therapies are a combination of treatments that may include med-

## **Symptoms of depression:**

- *Feelings of sadness and unhappiness*
- *Feelings of emptiness or hopelessness*
- *Feelings of worthlessness*
- *Lack of interest in surroundings and normal activities*
- *Withdrawal and isolation*
- *Trouble completing school work*
- *Change in sleep patterns — either insomnia or excessive sleep*
- *Change in appetite with weight loss or gain*
- *General body complaints of aches and pains*
- *Unusual fatigue or lethargy*
- *Difficulty making decisions*
- *Difficulty concentrating*
- *Restless, irritable behavior*
- *Use of drugs or alcohol*
- *Talk of death and suicide*

**Negative feelings, behaviors, and thinking with physical changes can be serious.**

**Depression, untreated, can be a factor in teen suicide.**

**SEEK HELP!**

ication, talk therapy, and behavior strategies. Know the symptoms, and don't be afraid to seek help.

Source: *NYS Suicide Prevention Education Awareness Kit*, NYS Office of Mental Health, 2004

### ***Suicide***

Suicide is the third leading cause of death in youth aged 15-24. Education, recognition, and treatment are the keys to suicide prevention. If your child appears suicidal, seek professional assistance immediately.

### ***Self-injury***

Self-injury is a way some teens deal with very difficult feelings that build up inside. The most common example is cutting, but some youth may bite or scratch themselves or even pull out their hair. Self-injury is often kept a secret, and teens will hide their wounds. If you feel that your child has a problem, seek professional help. Talk to a school counselor or nurse or your pediatrician initially. Eventually, you may want to contact a mental health professional to assist with identifying and treating the underlying causes of the self-injury.

### ***Eating disorders***

Society's pressures to be thin greatly affect our teenagers. If your daughter or son seems to worry excessively about gaining weight, it may be a sign of an eating disorder which requires medical attention.

### **KNOW THE WARNING SIGNS:**

- **Anorexia Nervosa**

A disorder in which a preoccupation with dieting and thinness leads to dangerous weight loss.

*WARNING SIGNS:*

- significant weight loss
- continuing to diet although thin
- feeling fat, even after losing weight
- loss of menstrual periods
- dry, brittle skin, depression, anxiety, shortness of breath

*MEDICAL CONSEQUENCES:*

- shrunken organs, bone loss, low body temperature
- low blood pressure, irregular heartbeat
- death

- **Bulimia Nervosa**

A disorder in which someone will rapidly consume food only to later purge that food from the body by vomiting, abusing laxatives, exercising compulsively, or fasting.

*WARNING SIGNS:*

- eating uncontrollably
- using the bathroom frequently after meals
- preoccupation with body weight
- bloodshot eyes, dental problems, heartburn, bloating
- sore throat, irregular periods, weakness

*MEDICAL CONSEQUENCES:*

- dehydration
- bowel, liver, and kidney damage
- electrolyte imbalance, irregular heartbeat, heart attacks

- **Binge Eating Disorder**

Also known as compulsive overeating, this disorder involves uncontrolled eating, usually kept secret. Binges are usually followed by intense feelings of guilt and shame.

*WARNING SIGNS:*

- episodes of binge eating, feeling unable to stop
- eating when not physically hungry, frequent dieting, awareness that eating patterns are abnormal
- obesity, feeling ashamed, weight fluctuations

*MEDICAL CONSEQUENCES:*

- high blood pressure, high cholesterol, gall bladder disease, diabetes
- heart disease, cancer

Source: The American Anorexia Bulimia Association, Inc.

# Gambling

Most parents have heard their children at one time or another say, “I’ll bet you that ...”. This statement may seem innocent enough, but some youth may experience gambling-related problems. Gambling is a popular social activity for youth and may include sports betting, cards, lotteries, and animal racing. According to the Gambling and Problem Gambling Among Adolescents in New York Executive Summary, 86 percent of New York adolescents (ages 13-17) responded that they had bet on one or more types of gambling at some time. Fourteen percent of the respondents were classified as gamblers at risk for developing gambling problems. Most adolescents report gambling on card, dice, and domino games with friends or parents.

During their high school years, adolescents may feel pressured by peers to participate in various activities (including gambling) to be part of the “in-crowd” and tend to look for quick, easy ways to get money and feel good. All of these characteristics make adolescents prime candidates for gambling addictions. If the adolescent is “lucky,” he or she will win at gambling, which will be reinforced by a boost in self-esteem, positive responses from peers, money, and sometimes even parental pats on the back. For most adolescents, this may be as far as it goes. But for a percentage of those adolescents, an addiction is developing and may progress. Youth who experience problems associated with gambling behavior may be at a greater risk of experiencing problems as an adult.

Studies suggest that teen gambling is part of a larger set of risky behaviors such as smoking, using marijuana, drinking, and drug use. As a parent, be aware of the activities that your child is engaging in and talk to your child about the dangers of gambling. Gambling may not be as innocent as they think.

Source: [www.nyproblemgambling.org](http://www.nyproblemgambling.org)



## Driving

**B**efore your son or daughter turns 16, everyone's thoughts turn to driving. This raises safety issues for your teen, any passengers, and everyone on the street.

Experience counts! A frequent error is underestimating the amount of supervised driving time needed to become a safe driver. There is no doubt that the more experience your teenager has with supervised driving, the better driver he or she will be. Once your teen gets a driver's license, the odds are that he or she will not tolerate more practice time. Visit [www.nydmv.state.ny.us](http://www.nydmv.state.ny.us) for more information.

If you are not yet familiar with the process for obtaining a driver's license, here are the particulars:

- **A permit is the first step.** Your teen must be at least 16, pass a written test at the Department of Motor Vehicles, and pay fees.
- **Having a teenage driver in the household will impact your auto insurance costs.** Check with your insurance company.
- **A course certificate is required prior to attempting the driving test for a license.** This five-hour in-class course is given at a variety of locations, including BCHS.
- **Drivers Ed is an option for gaining driving know-how and experience.** At BCHS there is limited enrollment for the after-school or summer course; only 40 students are admitted for each session, and there is a substantial fee. Other locations also offer this course. While not a requirement for getting a license, passing a Drivers Ed course does lower insurance premiums.
- **Drivers under 18 with a valid junior license can only drive after 9 PM for school courses and employment.** The driver needs to carry proof of enrollment in the school course or proof of employment.



## Tips to try:

- **You may want to consider requesting that your new driver not take riders for an agreed-upon time.**
- **As part of the driving lesson, have your teen practice asking all riders to fasten their seat belts before starting the car.**
- **You may want to set a time period or number of hours of supervised driving before allowing your teen to try for a license.**
- **In some families, teens earn the money to pay the increase in the insurance costs.**
- **If you decide not to be the family driving teacher—and many parents feel they cannot tolerate this role—be sure to spend some time driving with your teen. You should be satisfied with the quality of his/her driving before allowing a try for the license.**
- **In one family, responsibility for paying gas costs was shared; the teen ran errands for the family, so the parents helped pay for gas. The total gas money provided, however, was limited to a prearranged maximum to reduce cruising time.**
- **If you do not want your teenager to exceed the speed limit, set a good example!**
- **Consider holding your teen responsible for all costs associated with traffic tickets or accidents they cause to encourage safe driving.**

- **Supervised driving.**  
Your teen will need a minimum of 20 hours of supervised driving to obtain their license. A student certificate of completion issued by a certified driving education course is also acceptable.
- **Passengers riding with a junior driver.**  
A driver under the age of 18 cannot have more than two passengers under 21 without a parent in the car.

With your child as a driver, or friends as drivers, you should consider some ground rules, most of which are law anyway:

- **Wear a seat belt.**
- **Don't drive barefoot.**
- **Don't use headphones when driving.**
- **No drinking and driving.** Law enforcement demands zero tolerance. So should you and your teen.
- **Limit distractions.** This includes radio or tape/CD players, boisterous friends, smoking, car phones, beepers, and food.
- **Only hands-free cell phones can be used while driving.** It is the law in New York.

When your teen wants to be a passenger in a car driven by a peer, be ready with your responses to these questions:

- **"May I get a ride from a new driver?"**
- **"May I ride with an unknown driver?"**
- **"May I ride with someone who just wants to 'cruise'?"**
- **"May I ride with someone under the influence of drugs or alcohol?"**
- **May I ride if there are other passengers in the car?**

Stress to your teenager:

- **Drive defensively.**
- **Drive safely.**
- **Use good judgment.**
- **Call home for a ride for any reason at any time.**
- **Take advantage of local driving classes.**
- **Let me know where you will be driving.**

## Employment

**W**hat about a part-time job? Jobs provide extra income, real life experience, a sense of self-esteem, and a way to learn financial responsibility. On the other hand, many jobs available to youth may be boring and repetitive and may lead to negative attitudes toward work.

You and your teen should discuss and consider:

- **Part-time jobs use time currently spent in other ways.**  
If a teen has a specific job in mind, find out precisely what the time commitment would be. Satisfactory grades should be a condition of continued employment. Ask your teen if he/she understands that a job could limit involvement in after-school activities. Having a job should not exempt a teenager from home and family responsibilities. You may want to limit the hours your teen works or encourage only summer employment.
- **There should be some plan for allocating and spending the money earned from a job.**
- **Both of you need to understand the nature of any specific job.**  
There could be safety concerns.
- **To explore local job possibilities, call Bethlehem Youth Employment Service (Y.E.S.) at 439-4955, extension 1608.**

### Volunteering as an alternative to paid work

Volunteering in the community may be rewarding. It offers the opportunity to develop new skills, gain satisfaction through helping others, enhance self-esteem, have fun, and make new friends. Volunteering provides “job experience” for college applications and employment resumes. People who start volunteer work early in life tend to continue.



### Tips to try:

- **Volunteering as a family can be a great way to spend time together in a meaningful way. Family members may share new experiences and have a chance to see each other in a new way.**
- **For more ideas about finding volunteer opportunities, check:**  
[www.nationalservice.gov](http://www.nationalservice.gov)  
or [www.getinvolved.gov](http://www.getinvolved.gov).

## One last word ...

**N**egotiating through these teenage years, we are actually laying the foundation for our adult relationships with our children.

Our goal is to give them wings and roots—the wisdom and confidence to be independent and self-reliant coupled with the security and assurance of a supportive family.

As we define this relationship, we should think of being a guide rather than a boss, a wise consultant who is always available to help.

We know we do not have all the answers. We stated that at the outset. But if you and your teen ponder the issues presented in this guide, you should be a bit closer to understanding one another.

It is our hope that this guide helps you with the challenge of raising a responsible, caring young adult. And when he or she asks “Don’t you trust me?” you will smile and say “Of course, I do....”

*The following pages contain valuable reference materials for you and your teen. Take time to review and discuss them.*

*The flyers on alcohol and marijuana have been widely disseminated, and you may have seen them before. They serve as good reminders of the consequences of substance abuse.*

*Finally, on the inside back cover are important telephone numbers.*

# ... and yet another point about ... parent **LIABILITY**

Underage drinking raises the spectre of civil, as well as criminal, action. A successful civil lawsuit means the awarding of punitive damages—in other words, money. Parents, in particular, should understand the consequences of not only supplying alcohol to minors, but supplying their property as a place where alcohol is consumed. Parents need not be home to be sued for what happens there!

## A case in point . . .

In a current Capital District area case, parents were out of town, and the high school grapevine put the word out that there was to be a party at that home. Now, a number of boys, intoxicated at the party, are being sued for molesting a girl who had passed out from her own drinking. And because a kind of "everyone chip in" arrangement had been made to buy the alcohol, potential liability exists against any number of people—including the absent parents—who arguably helped to provide the liquor.

## A case in point . . .

In another actual case, parents hosted a graduation party where they provided the alcohol. A young neighborhood girl did some drinking and had a serious medical reaction. Claims were filed against the homeowners who provided the liquor.

## Now the most important point . . . **PREVENTION**

Points of law and questions of liability need never come into play if you alert the police whenever you have knowledge of a party with underage drinking—this can be done anonymously. Simply phone Bethlehem Police:

**439-1503**

## the Dram Shop Act

Any person who shall be injured in person, property, means of support or otherwise, by reason of the intoxication or impairment of ability of any person under the age of twenty-one (21) years, whether resulting in his death or not, shall have a right of action to recover actual damages against any person who knowingly **causes such intoxication or impairment of ability by unlawfully furnishing to or unlawfully assisting in procuring alcoholic beverages for such person with knowledge or reasonable cause to believe that such person was under the age of twenty-one (21) years.**

## The point is . . .

Often in cases involving intoxicated persons, insurance companies will raise legitimate reservations, refusing to pay for intentional acts. This leads to difficult questions about whether someone really meant to hurt someone else in situations confused already by a combination of alcohol and youthful bravado. Nevertheless, punitive damages are rarely—if ever—covered by insurance.

## The point is . . .

Even adequate homeowners' insurance may not spare defendants from substantial risk. Defending parents in this type of case is very difficult and often results in a substantial settlement to the person bringing the suit. The onus is on the parents to make sure alcoholic beverages—even those brought to the home by someone else—are not consumed by underage persons.

**The police will first try to contact the homeowners where the party is to take place. If that's not possible, they will try to head off the party before it happens. Your interest could save those involved from legal action, monetary damages, embarrassment—even tragedy.**

# The real dope on

# MARIJUANA

## IF YOU THINK . . . marijuana is harmless . . . THINK AGAIN

- Marijuana is 25 times more potent today than in the 1960's.
- It's often laced with other substances, and drug dealers package it with harder drugs—LSD, cocaine, crack, barbiturates—to further hook their clients.
- Marijuana outpaces tobacco in its number of carcinogens.
- Using marijuana can lead to depression, anxiety, and panic attacks.

## IF YOU THINK . . . marijuana is nonaddictive . . . USE YOUR HEAD

- An estimated 60,000 people per year (one every 10 minutes) seek professional treatment for marijuana-related problems.
- Marijuana creates a psychological dependence—over time, more and more drug is required to get the same effect.

## IF YOU THINK . . . marijuana has no long-term effects . . . BE AWARE

Effects of marijuana can linger in your body for more than 14 days and can be detected by drug tests 30 days after use. Long-term effects include:

- increased risk of infertility
- diminished or extinguished sexual pleasure
- an increased risk for cancer
- lower testosterone levels for men, higher levels for women (leading to more body and facial hair, plus acne)

Not proven yet, studies seem to indicate children of marijuana users show a higher incidence of Attention Deficit Disorder and increased incidence of birth defects, particularly to hands and feet.

## IF YOU THINK . . . no one gets convicted . . . KNOW THIS

- There are 15,000 people in federal prisons for marijuana-related offenses.
- In Albany County, 48 young people (ages 16-20) are serving sentences for drug-related crimes, including marijuana sales.

## IF YOU THINK . . . marijuana use is a victimless crime . . . BE CAREFUL

- The probabilities of car crashes double for marijuana users.
- Reaction time significantly decreases and vision is impaired, making marijuana users more likely victims—not only for car accidents, but also for accidental falls, burns, drowning, even suicides.

## IF YOU THINK . . . marijuana is fun, relaxing . . . GET REAL!

- Marijuana alters perceptions—your brain is not working right!
- Marijuana-impaired judgment can cause teens to make fools of themselves.
- Impaired perceptions make it hard to sustain relationships.

# It's not called "weed" for nothing!

## FACT:

Marijuana makes relationships **MORE** difficult. "Stoned" people are hard to talk to, hard to make plans with.

# MARIJUANA chokes out the good things in life.

## FACT:

Heavy marijuana use has a long-lasting effect on thinking.

## FACT:

In a local survey, **39.1 percent** of respondents said they use marijuana. The starting age peaks at **14-16**.

This flyer was made possible with the help of Albany County STOP DWI and Capital District Physicians' Health Plan. Information was prepared by a task force of the Bethlehem Community Partnership, a coalition of community members dedicated to promoting healthy lifestyles for youth. Substance abuse details were provided by Denis Foley of Albany County STOP DWI and Office Mike McMillen of the Bethlehem Police. Layout and design is by Kristi Carr.

For confidential help for marijuana or other drug abuse, contact:  
**Albany County Substance Abuse Prevention Program, 447-4945**

**A Treatment Referral for Substance Abuse Hotline, 1-800-522-5353**

## A GOOD JOB

On a spring evening in Delmar, Joanne and her friends, bored, looked for the guys who made bonfires in the woods. The boys were happy to share their joints. Everyone was mellow and the evening progressed without incident to munchies and a giggly walk home. Joanne thought nothing more about this evening.

When school was out for the summer, Joanne saw a "help wanted" ad for a cashier in the garden department of Home Depot. She applied, her interview went well, and she was excited at the prospect of making good money in a pleasant atmosphere. Standard procedure at Home Depot is a urine test to rule out drugs. Joanne failed! The marijuana she smoked nearly a month before was evident, and her job prospect evaporated.

**Many companies now require drug testing before hiring. Since marijuana stays in the body for such a long time, it could cost you a job. As an adult with a history of drug use, you could be denied a job as a teacher, police officer, or have to forgo a military career.**

## A DRIVER'S LICENSE

On his way home from Crossgates, Kevin, 17, was driving erratically. He was pulled over by a police officer and charged with 1192.4, Driving While Ability Impaired—Drugs, of the New York State Vehicle and Traffic Law. Kevin had been smoking marijuana.

Upon arraignment, his license was suspended immediately, and he was charged with a misdemeanor. Kevin paid a \$500 fine, and had to serve one year's probation. Since he'd had a prior alcohol-related driving offense, Kevin will not be able to apply for a license until he is 21, and then may be required to have an alcohol/drug evaluation. In addition, Kevin's car insurance fees will skyrocket—if he can even get insurance.

**Marijuana cost Kevin his ability to be independent, gave him a police record, and made him accountable to a probation officer.**

## A PLACE ON THE TEAM

Local college football players attended a party where some of them took a few hits of marijuana; others were exposed to secondhand marijuana smoke. When told the next week of an impending test for performance-enhancing drugs, they became concerned and purchased from GNC a tea advertised to "clean up your system." What this tea actually did was thin their urine so that, when they were asked to provide a test sample, none could meet the required specific gravity (1.010) until about seven hours had passed. The athletic department investigated, and the players were suspended for two games, required to do community service, and required to submit to drug testing anytime the department requested.

**There are consequences for even casual use of marijuana!**



## Suggestions for Parents

### *If your teen is giving a party*

- Help your teenager plan the party. Make a guest list and invite only a specific number of people.
- Have your child pass out or send invitations and try to avoid the “open party” situation.
- Don’t send e-mail invitations. They can be forwarded to a large number of people quickly and you lose control of who has this information.
- Put your phone number on the invitation and welcome calls from parents.
- Set rules ahead of time like no alcohol, drugs or tobacco. Set a start and end time for the party.
- Let attendees know that if they leave, they can’t come back.
- Have plenty of food and non-alcoholic beverages.
- Plan some activities such as music, games, movies, etc.
- Let your neighbors know in advance there will be a party and that you will be there to supervise. Familiarize yourself with the noise ordinance in your area.
- Limit the party access to a certain area of the house/property.
- Have a plan for dealing with vehicles. Include parking information in your party invitation.
- Call parents of any teen who arrives in possession of alcohol or under the influence. If you can’t get in touch with the parents, keep them there or call the police if necessary. You can be civilly liable if you know they are intoxicated and you let them leave.
- Secure all forms of alcohol, firearms, and other potentially hazardous items in your home in a safe place.
- Make regular and unobtrusive visits to the party area with sensitivity to teens’ needs for privacy and independence.
- Invite some other parents to help chaperone if there will be a large number of teenagers.

### *When you're away from home or out of town*

- Set and communicate rules and standards to be followed in your absence.
- Do not allow underage youth to have unsupervised parties or gatherings.
- Remind them of their responsibilities and the consequences of their actions.
- Have a relative or responsible adult stay at your home during your absence, have your teenager stay with a responsible adult or ask a neighbor to watch the house and stop in while you are gone.
- If you are concerned that your child might have a party anyway, you can call your local police and ask them to drive by at some point over the time you are gone. Make it a point to tell your child that you have asked the police to do this.

### *If your teen is attending a party*

- Know where your child will be. Call the parent in charge to verify the occasion and location of the party and ensure there will be adult supervision.
- Ask how many teens are expected at the party and offer to help supervise or provide refreshments.
- Make certain that the host will not be serving or allowing alcohol. Ask how they plan to handle the situation if a teen shows up with alcohol or having drunk somewhere else.
- Indicate your expectations to your child and the parent hosting the party that if the teens plan to leave and go somewhere else, you will want to know.
- Set a curfew for your teen to be home and when they arrive home, have them check in with you.
- Know how your child is getting to and from the party. Reinforce the message to your teenager that they should never allow someone who has been drinking or using other drugs to drive them anywhere.
- Assure your child that they can telephone you to be picked up whenever needed.
- If the activity seems inappropriate, express concern and keep your child home.

### *Other ideas*

- Get to know your children's friends and their parents.
- Find out their policy on alcohol, drug and tobacco use.
- Remember, it is illegal to serve minors!
- Encourage alcohol-free and drug-free parties and activities for underage youth.

Brought to you by the "Capital Region Parents Who Host Lose the Most Coalition."  
Campaign developed by Ohio Parents for Drug Free Youth.  
Capital Region Sponsors: Channel 10, Albany Broadcasting and Stewart Shops.

# For help:

**Fire, Ambulance, Police  
9 1 1**

**Confidential help with any crisis,  
suicide prevention, overdose,  
poisoning  
9 1 1**

**Non-Emergency Police  
439-9973**

**To anonymously report  
drug/alcohol use/parties  
439-1503**

**BOU..... [www.bcsd.k12.ny.us/  
community/BOU/bou.htm](http://www.bcsd.k12.ny.us/community/BOU/bou.htm)  
BC Middle School .....439-7460  
BC High School.....439-4921**

## **Helpful Services:**

AIDS Hotline .....445-2437  
AA, Alanon, Alateen, ACOA .....292-0577  
Albany County Crime Victims  
and Sexual Violence Center .....447-7716  
Albany Co. Health Dept. ....447-4580  
Albany Co. Health Dept.,  
Mental Health Clinic.....447-4555  
CDPC Crisis Intervention Hotline  
and Mobile Crisis Unit for  
Albany County .....447-9650  
Capital Region Association for  
Eating Disorders (CRAED) .....452-3028  
Child Abuse Hotline .....1-800-342-3720  
Equinox Shelter (ages 13-18) .....465-9524  
Gay & Lesbian  
Community Council .....462-6138  
Narcotics Anonymous .....448-6350  
National Runaway  
Switchboard .....1-800-621-4000  
Planned Parenthood .....434-2182  
Poison Control .....1-800-222-1222  
St. Peter's Alcohol Rehabilitation  
Center (SPARC).....452-6700  
Samaritan Suicide .....689-4673  
Prevention Center .....1-800-273-8255

## **Hospital Emergency Rooms:**

Albany Medical Center .....262-3131  
Albany Memorial Hospital .....471-3111  
St. Peter's Hospital .....525-1318

**bou**

**BETHLEHEM**

**OPPORTUNITIES**

**UNLIMITED**

PO Box 492  
Delmar, NY  
12054

**Non-Profit  
Organization**

**PAID**

**Delmar, NY 12054**

**Permit # 29**

**This guide was originally produced by a Bethlehem Community Partnership Task Force. It has been updated by Bethlehem Opportunities Unlimited, a community organization that promotes prevention education and safe, healthy activities for the youth of the Bethlehem community. For more information, check [bcsd.k12.ny.us/community/BOU/bou.htm](http://bcsd.k12.ny.us/community/BOU/bou.htm).**