

Article Submitted by Deanna Felts, Prevention Specialist  
Seven Counties Services, Inc.

### **Do you know what your teen knows and thinks about alcohol?**

It is summer time and your teens may have more free time on their hands. Most of our teens are making healthy choices this summer – like not drinking alcohol. Unfortunately, there are many who choose to drink. Most young people who start drinking before age 21 do so when they are about 13-14 years old. That is why parents and all adults should send a strong message that underage drinking is **not** okay.

The greatest influence on a teen's decision to begin drinking is the world they live in. Parents are the most important influence and best able to safeguard them from underage drinking, as well as other risky behavior. Alcohol use by teens is often made possible by adults since teens cannot get alcohol legally on their own.

Before summertime comes to an end, don't guess what your teen knows and thinks about alcohol. Ask them. Keep the lines of communication open and monitor your teen's activities and behaviors by getting to know their friends and their parents. Know who else and what else is influencing your teen.

It may be difficult to stay involved in your teen's lives when they have more freedom and are spending more time with friends, but it is vital to maintain the family connection.

Here are some other tips for parent's to help prevent underage drinking:

1. Spend time together regularly.
2. Listen and talk with your teen - this will help you understand their pressures and beliefs.
3. Keep track of where your teen(s) are.
4. Get teens involved in community service, community activities and / or after school activities. Don't rule out doing a family community service project.
5. Praise your teen when they are making healthy and positive choices. This will help your teen have better self confidence and better resist peer pressure.
6. Be a positive role model yourself by not abusing alcohol or drugs.
7. Set clear rules regarding underage drinking and clear consequences if rules are broken. Tell them the rules are set because you love them.

For more information on reducing underage drinking, contact Seven Counties Services, Inc. Regional Prevention Center at 502-589-8600 or visit <http://www.sevencounties.org/prevention.html>.