NO EXCUSES.

MYTH: *Drinking is just a harmless phase all kids go through; they'll grow out of it.*
FACT: Underage drinking is NOT inevitable, and research indicates that 56% of all high school students don't drink. However, for those that do drink, many don't grow out of it. People who begin drinking before age 15 are four times as likely to become alcoholics as those that begin after age 21. Many engage in dangerous binge drinking, which is drinking five or more drinks on one occasion. And, while we wait for them to "grow out of it," they're:

- getting hurt in accidents such as falls, burns, and drowning
- dying in car crashes (an average of eight American youth under age 21 die every day in alcohol-related crashes)
- contracting sexually transmitted diseases
- becoming teenage parents
- committing crimes (physical assault, sexual assault, vandalism, robbery, theft, homicide)
- becoming physical and sexual assault victims
- costing NH a considerable amount of money ($180 Million per year)

MYTH: *It's okay for young people to drink, just as long as they don't drive. The worst that can happen is they'll wake up with a terrible hangover.*
FACT: Wrong. Just taking the keys away does NOT protect your child. The worst thing that can happen is that they won't wake up at all. A person can drink enough to kill him or herself in a couple of hours by drinking a large amount of alcohol quickly.

MYTH: *It is OK for parents to serve alcohol to their underage children and their children's friends in the privacy of their own home.*
FACT: Underage drinking is illegal. NH has a "party host law" (RSA 644:18) that holds "hosts" of parties responsible for the action of underage participants. A "host" is a person who is at least 17 years old; owns, rents or has control of the site; knows about the party; and knows that persons under the age of 21 have a plan to drink alcohol or use drugs. A "party" means five or more people under the age of 21 (not related to the host) are present; and at least one person under the age of 21 has an alcoholic drink or an illegal drug.

MYTH: *We should be more like European countries where people learn to drink at an early age and thus learn to drink responsibly.*
FACT: Studies consistently show that teenagers in Europe drink more, and drink more often, than teenagers in the United States. Alcohol related diseases are twice as common in Europe as the rest of the world.

MYTH: *Underage drinking is a harmless "Rite of Passage."*
FACT: The use of alcohol by youth is the wrong "rite of passage." Underage drinking is associated with a number of health risks, including risky sexual activity, injuries, drowning, suicide, violence, crime, alcohol poisoning, and even death. New research from the American Medical Association (AMA) indicates that teenagers who drink alcohol may be permanently damaging their still developing brains. The damage from underage drinking may affect teens' memory, cognitive abilities, and decision–making skills for the rest of their lives.

MYTH: *Alcohol is not such a big deal, compared with illicit drugs.*
FACT: Alcohol is the NUMBER ONE youth drug problem in New Hampshire. Alcohol impairs functioning, is addictive, and underage drinking causes chemical changes that can "hardwire" the brain for addiction. Alcohol kills young people just like cocaine, heroin and other dangerous illegal drugs.

MYTH: *My teen is a "good kid" and knows everything about the dangers of alcohol, so we don't need to talk about it. Only "bad" kids drink.*
FACT: Stop thinking of your children and their friends as either "good" kids or "bad" kids. Good kids drink too! Many teenagers have dangerous misconceptions about alcohol–for example, they don't realize that some wine coolers can have the same alcohol content as a shot of distilled spirits. Talk to your child – parents are the most powerful influence on drug use. Not friends. Not School. YOU. Kids whose parents talk to them about the dangers of alcohol are 50% less likely to use alcohol. Remember–Silence isn't Golden. It's permission.

MYTH: *My teen does not have access to alcohol, which is why I'm not concerned that he or she is drinking.*
FACT: Young people use multiple sources for obtaining alcohol. "Social sources" include homes of friends, other teens, older siblings, friends, an unlocked liquor cabinet – even their own refrigerator. Most underage drinkers get their alcohol from adults. ON LOCAL LEVELS – Of Pemi-Baker, Newfound and Lin-Wood youth who drink, 8 out of 10 reported that beer, wine or liquor was EASY or VERY EASY to obtain:*

* Results of 2007 TAP Survey (Teen Assessment Project)

Lin-Wood • Newfound • Pemi-Baker
CADY
Communities for Alcohol- and Drug-free Youth

Underage Drinking Is Illegal Because It's Dangerous.

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PROJECT MONITOR
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