

R. Joseph Ebel, R.S., M.S., M.B.A.  
Health Commissioner



(740)349-6535  
(740)349-6474 WIC  
(740)349-6475 Environmental  
(740)349-6476 Nursing  
(740)349-6510 FAX  
[www.lickingcohealth.org](http://www.lickingcohealth.org)

## Licking County Health Department

675 Price Road

Newark, OH 43055

### FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

### Prom & Graduation: Don't Let the Celebration End in Tragedy

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CONTACT: Kate White

[kdwhite@lickingcohealth.org](mailto:kdwhite@lickingcohealth.org)

(740) 349-6535

LICKING COUNTY, OHIO - The Licking County Safe Communities Coalition wants all teenagers to be safe this prom and graduation season. Spring is a time for our youth to celebrate, but it can quickly end in tragedy from poor decision making. "Too often one poor decision will result in a tragedy, and sadly, it not only affects that child but their friends, family and community," said Licking County Health Commissioner, Joe Ebel. "It is unfortunate that some of our youth choose to make the decision to participate in risky behaviors." Drinking alcohol is dangerous for underage youth and when combined with vehicles and other risky behaviors (speeding, cell phone use and deciding to not wear a seat belt) the consequences can be devastating.

According to the 2009-2010 Pride Survey of Licking County Youth, alcohol is the most commonly used drug among teens in Licking County. The study also stated "61% of 10th and 12th graders reported it is "fairly" or "very" easy to get alcohol." The place they most commonly use alcohol is in their own home or at a friend's house.

The key to stopping underage drinking and other risky behavior is parent involvement. Parents worry they have little control over their teen's habits, but experts say that it is not the case. Some parents think letting their children drink with their friends at home fosters responsible alcohol use and makes alcohol less alluring. However, the data strongly contradicts this idea and other studies have shown that teens who get alcohol from a parent are twice as likely to drink and to binge.

According to the Drug Free Action Alliance's *Parents Who Host Lose the Most* Campaign, adults who provide alcohol to teens can be prosecuted under the law, facing a maximum sentence of six months in jail and/or a \$1,000 fine. Everything associated with a violation, such as personal property, can be confiscated. In addition, they can be sued for any damages that result.

#### Things you can do as a parent:

- Make sure your child has a plan for the evening and you know what it is.
- Take advantage of how teens like to communicate. Text message your child reminding them to make smart decisions and not to drink alcohol (ie: "Have fun 2night. Stay safe. Don't drink. Love u.").
- Do not allow your teen to have parties with alcohol on your property.
- Network with other parents; let them know you don't want alcohol available to your child.
- Tell your teen that it is against family rules for them to drink alcohol while underage.
- Talk and listen to your child. Be straightforward with them about the impact of alcohol.
- If you choose to use alcohol, use it responsibly. Remember, you are your child's role model.
- Notify law enforcement about any establishments or people providing alcohol to minors.

**If your teen is having a party:**

- Establish basic ground rules. Stress responsibility and stick to a guest list.
- Stay home during the party to provide adequate supervision and make sure you know what is going on.
- Ask people to leave if they bring alcohol onto your property.
- Contact parents of anyone who arrives under the influence. Don't allow anyone to drive home under the influence.

**When your teen is attending a party:**

- Call the host. Know where your teen will be, how long they will be there and what will be happening. Verify that the party will be chaperoned.
- Know how your teen will get to and from the party. Tell your child never to ride with a driver who has been drinking.
- Set the time your teen is expected to be home.
- If your child plans to stay with a friend overnight, verify the plans with the friend's parent(s).
- If something seems suspicious, check it out for yourself. If you still have concerns, call your local law enforcement.

For more information visit: [www.stopimpaireddriving.org](http://www.stopimpaireddriving.org), [Community Mental Health & Recovery Board](#) and [Drug Free Action Alliance](#)

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