



## PARENT POST

# Underage Drinking: Let's Talk About the Consequences

In the last newsletter, we talked about how to establish rules against underage alcohol use and your family's specific consequences of use with your child. This month, we're going to go over some of the other types of consequences of underage drinking that you can discuss with your child to deepen and expand your conversations. The impacts of alcohol use below are useful topics to learn about and explore on your own and, perhaps more importantly, along with your child. Keep reading to learn more about the academic, extracurricular, and legal consequences of use. Then, start up a conversation!

## Alcohol and Academics

Underage drinking can have an immense impact on a child's academic performance and school life. Compared to their non-drinking peers, children who use alcohol are more likely to miss class, receive poor grades, and experience behavioral issues that disrupt their learning. Youth alcohol use harms the adolescent brain, which can cause short and long-term impairments to many aspects of a child's cognitive functioning. These include their ability to use executive functioning skills required for academics, comprehend and interpret visual information, form memories, and learn new information. In fact, studies have shown that the brain's hippocampus, which is responsible for learning and memory, can be 10% smaller in underage drinkers.

## Effects on Clubs, Sports, and More

In addition to affecting their time in school, underage drinking can also have a negative impact on a child's extracurricular and out-of-school activities. Children who drink underage are more likely to be chronically absent from activities, lose interest in them, and withdraw from their peers. Alcohol's impact is particularly present in athletics, since underage drinking affects many of the skills required in sports. This because it impairs the brain, causing underage alcohol use to affect balance, fine motor skills, information processing, reaction time, and more—all of which will harm a child's athletic performance. Research shows that underage use also increases the likelihood of injury and the amount of recovery time needed.

## Underage Drinking and the Law

If a child is caught drinking underage, they can face serious legal consequences. Since 1988, it has been illegal for people under the age of twenty-one to purchase, possess, or consume alcohol in all fifty states. In Illinois, any underage person who does so, as well as any underage person who misrepresents their age to access alcohol, can be charged with a Class A misdemeanor. Penalty options available to the judge for a Class A misdemeanor include community service, supervision, a fine of up to \$2,500, and a jail sentence of up to 364 days.

## Prevention Starts With You!

Underage alcohol use can have consequences far beyond these. As a parent, the best way to prevent use is to have an open dialogue with your child so that they understand the risks and know that you care.

### Prevention at Your Child's School

Check out the latest Power of Choice Middle School vaping campaign poster! Students will see these posted, along with newsletters, throughout their hallways, reminding them that their health matters. Each sign provides facts and information on the potentially harmful effects that vaping can have on their growing bodies.



### Additional Resources

- [Substance Abuse and Mental Health Administration \(SAMHSA\)](#)
- [Illinois Liquor Control Commission](#)
- [Prevention First](#)
- [Partnership to End Addiction](#)

### Connect With Us!

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