

Drinking and Driving

THE FACTS...

- Alcohol-related car crashes are the leading cause of death among teen-agers ages 15 to 24.
- In 1996, over 17,000 people died in alcohol-related car crashes in the United States; 2,315 of them were between 15 and 20 years old.
- Alcohol is involved in almost half of all motor vehicle crashes that kill teen-agers.
- Every 31 minutes a person dies in an alcohol-related car crash.
- Teen-age drivers cause about five times as many motor-vehicle deaths as drivers ages 35 to 64.

Getting the Message Across

Driving a car while intoxicated is deadly for drivers of all ages, especially teen-agers. Teens are the most inexperienced age group on the road. They are subject to more peer pressure and risk-taking, less likely to wear seat belts and more likely to drink and drive than others. Unfortunately, they may also be the hardest of all age groups to reach with preventive efforts.

Various national, state, and local groups are attempting to reach teen-agers through the media, the schools, and their peers. Organizations like Mothers Against Drunk Driving (MADD) and Students Against Drunk Driving (SADD) continue their efforts to counteract peer pressure to drink and promote communication between parents and their children about the dangers of alcohol. Mandatory seat belt laws and lowering legal blood-alcohol levels are proven legislative methods that help save lives.

5 Ways Parents Can Help

1. **Teach** your child the risks associated with drunk driving and riding with a drunk driver. Open communication is crucial and can begin when your children are very young.
2. **Encourage seat belt use** and set an example by wearing one yourself.
3. **Delay licensing** until your teen is ready. Studies have shown that communities where driver education programs were cut for budgetary reasons, and fewer 16- and 17-year-olds got licenses, saw crashes for this age group decrease by 63%. Although the law allows licensing at 16, as a parent you can decide whether or not your child really is ready.
4. **Set curfews** and enforce them. Prohibiting teen driving at night can help avoid potentially dangerous situations.
5. **Offer "a free call home."** Let your child know that if he does drink or is with a driver who's been drinking, he can call home for a ride without fear of consequences that night. Next day, discuss the incident.

For more information contact:

Mothers Against Drunk Driving (MADD)
511 E. John Carpenter Freeway
Suite 700
Irving, TX 75062-8187
(214) 744-6233

Students Against Drunk Driving (SADD)
P.O. Box 800
Marlboro, MA 01752
(508) 481-3568

National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA)
Campaign Safe & Sober
400 7th Street, SW, NTS-21
Washington, DC 20590
Web site: www.nhtsa.dot.gov

