

SAFE Inc. encourages parents to talk about underage drinking with children

SAFE, Inc. PRIDE Project Coalition encourages parents and caregivers to become actively involved in preventing underage drinking among youth by talking about the dangers. Not talking about this important issue sends the wrong message to children and teenagers.

"According to the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA), children begin thinking alcohol may not be just for adults by age nine," said Dr. Sharon Harris, Director of SAFE, Inc. "And the children who start drinking by age 15 are five times more likely to have alcohol problems as adults."

SAMHSA's underage drinking prevention campaign provides parents and caregivers with the tools to start talking

to their children early. Their "Talk. They Hear You" campaign empowers parents and caregivers to talk with children early about the dangers of alcohol and offers answers to some of the tough questions parents face.

One question frequently asked by children is whether a parent engaged in underage drinking. Some parents may be uncomfortable with this question and avoid it. SAFE Inc. encourages parents to instead be honest. Then tell their children that it was risky for them to drink back then too but the dangers that we know now about underage drinking was not available. And a parent should not be afraid to admit any unfavorable outcomes that happened to them as a result of making the wrong choice.

Another question that parents may not be sure how to answer is when they are questioned as to why they drink. Explain to children that there is a big difference between an adult and a child drinking and then parents should share the reasons why they do drink. Perhaps the parent enjoys a glass of wine with dinner or to celebrate a special occasion. Parents should stress that it is often all right for an adult to drink in moderation, but also that some people should not drink at all. Most importantly, children should know it is o.k. to discuss drinking with their parents.

Children are asking their parents at an increasingly younger age if they can go to parties. It's never too early for a parent to ask if an adult will be present and if the child believes there will be drinking at the party. Additionally, they should remind their child that if they are at a party and there is drinking, even if they are not drinking, they can get into a great deal of trouble. Parents can use this moment as a time to reinforce their expectations for their child and remind them that they will pick them up if there is underage drinking going on at the party.

"Children may need help knowing how to say no to peer pressure," said Aimee Abraham, PRIDE Project Coalition Coordinator Prevention Director. "Discuss options with them on how to say no to their

friends who are encouraging them to drink."

SAFE Inc. reminds parents that it's important to be consistent when sending home the message that underage drinking is harmful and unacceptable — and to keep talking.

For further information on any SAFE, Inc. PRIDE Project Coalition and their initiatives contact Coalition Coordinator Aimee Abraham at 516-676-2008. SAFE Inc. is a not for profit tax-exempt substance abuse education and prevention agency located in Glen Cove. Visit our website at www.safeglencove.org and follow us on Facebook at www.facebook.com/GlenCovePrideCoalition.