



Spring Break

Keep it fun by keeping it safe.

By Laura S. Otte

Spring Break is *supposed* to be a fun opportunity for young people to get away from the pressures of school and the doldrums of winter; but for many young people, Spring Break becomes a time when they choose (or feel pressured) to drink alcohol.

Of course youth need a break, and of course youth need to have fun, but if youth are drinking alcohol, they are putting themselves at great risk for physical harm and legal consequences. Research shows the human brain continues to develop into the mid-20s. Underage drinking (consuming alcohol before the legal drinking age of 21) impairs judgment, leaving the developing brain vulnerable to damage, and is a major cause of death and injuries among young people. Falls, burns, increased risk of sexual assault, drownings, alcohol poisoning, motor vehicle crashes, suicide, homicide are some of the many dangerous possible outcomes of underage drinking.

Youth, parents, retailers and residents can all work together to keep our young people safe and healthy with the prevention of underage drinking during Spring Break, prom and graduation season, as well as throughout the year. Below are suggestions to keep Spring Break fun by keeping it safe:

Under 21?

Ask yourself two important questions when making your Spring Break plans:

- Do I really know and trust who I'm going with?
- Is where I am going safe?

If you are faced with the temptation to drink alcohol and "party," don't forget that:

- There are stiff legal penalties for consuming alcohol if you under the legal drinking age of 21.
- Alcohol use could result in spending spring break in the ER, hospital or morgue, and a criminal record.
- Alcohol use can also lead to unplanned parenthood, sexually transmitted infection and disease.

Is your child going away for Spring Break?

If your child is travelling away from home for Spring Break, make sure you have the information you need to keep them safe. Here are some questions you should be asking yourself before your child travels:

- Have you talked with your teens about underage drinking and its consequences?
- Are YOU aware of the penalties and consequences of underage drinking?
- Do you know where your teen is going and who they are going with?
- Is there an adult chaperone?
- Do you have contact information for your child and the parents of who they are travelling with?
- Can your child reach you if they need your guidance or help?

Are you an Alcohol Retailer?

- Make sure your staff is properly trained to ID or “card” those purchasing alcohol.
- If you suspect someone is purchasing alcohol for someone under the legal drinking age of 21, refuse the sale.
- Work with local law enforcement to protect your business and the youth of our community from penalties associated with selling alcohol to minors.