



*Aldersgate Youth Services "COVID-19 Weekly Tips & Activities" assists & supports parents, health care providers, employers & religious leaders who work with and care about children, teens, young adults and their families at this challenging time.*

## **Weekly Update & Parent Tip Sheet**

### **Underage Alcohol Use in a Covid World**

Teenage drinking is not new, but teenage drinking during the Covid-19 crisis is.



Teens give different reasons for alcohol use:

curiosity, peer pressure to fit in or a way to relax, and have fun. They also drink to deal with stress, anxiety, and depression. Right now, teens are dealing with stress related to boredom, isolation and loss. They are missing friends and important activities and milestones, while dealing with the anxiety and fear of an unknown future. Being away from friends and their normal routine of school, sports, and jobs; being confined at home, and having easy access to alcohol at home, contribute to the urge to use alcohol.

**Why is it a problem?** There are serious legal, physical, and emotional consequences. If caught drinking, teens can lose their license, be required to perform community service, pay a fine. In some cases, these incidents can even result in having a permanent legal record related to the underage drinking charge. A charge of underage drinking or possession of alcohol could impact their future re: sports, college acceptance and possible loss of scholarship, and future jobs. If a teen is behind the wheel, even if they have a low blood alcohol level, they could be charged with an underage DUI which has serious long-term legal and financial consequences.

Another very important negative consequence of underage alcohol use is the effect on the brain. The brain continues to grow until the mid-to-late twenties, and the part of the brain that is responsible for decision-making, self-control, and delayed gratification is the last part of the brain to be developed. Teens who start drinking at age 15 have a 4 times greater chance of developing a drinking problem than those who wait until the age of 21. Underage drinking can also cause alcohol poisoning that could result in a trip to the ER.

Making poor decisions about alcohol use can have a negative impact on family relationships such as the loss of parental trust. Teens need to learn more appropriate ways of dealing with stress, especially during this challenging time.

### How can parents help?

It is important for teens to learn positive coping skills to manage these stressors. They look to you as an example - they watch and listen. Parents should model appropriate adult alcohol use and try not to joke or talk about needing drink after a stressful day. As the Covid-19 restrictions and social distancing rules are slowly eased, teens may be tempted to celebrate a return to normal with friends by drinking to make up for lost time and lost experiences. Help your teens find positive ways to cope with stress, and fun, alcohol-free activities with friends.

Aldersgate is available for telehealth individual therapy and family counseling sessions. Please contact Aldersgate at 215-657-4545 or [info@aldersgateservices.org](mailto:info@aldersgateservices.org) to schedule.

**Pat Wilcke, MFT**  
**Clinical Program Coordinator**

### Important Message and Resources for Parents

Parents have a significant influence on young people's decisions about alcohol use. Communication, discussion of family values, and clear rules help teens have clear expectations. They really do listen to you. Coach your kids to prevention alcohol and drug use.



Parents can also find other supports and resources at:

[www.samhsa.gov](http://www.samhsa.gov) has fact sheets and information on how parents can talk to their children about the risks of underage drinking.

[www.underagedrinking.samhsa.gov](http://www.underagedrinking.samhsa.gov) download the "Talk. They Hear You." App

Parents: Check out area billboards on our local highways this month and the Public Service Announcements shared by Cheltenham CTC, Family Service Association of Montgomery County and the Montgomery County Office of Health and Human Services Office of Drug and Alcohol related to the "Talk. They Hear You":

[https://www.dropbox.com/sh/vhm8youskx3i5pf/AADZFYbUI\\_3V2fncJi7ZpJNAa?dl=0](https://www.dropbox.com/sh/vhm8youskx3i5pf/AADZFYbUI_3V2fncJi7ZpJNAa?dl=0)

[www.healthychildren.org](http://www.healthychildren.org) The American Academy of Pediatrics article "What's

Going On InThe Teenage Brain”.

Visit the link below to view additional Underage Drinking Video's on Aldersgate's You Tube Channel:

Underage Drinking Videos

If you are concerned about your teen’s initial alcohol use or marijuana experimentation, please contact Aldersgate. In some situations, county-funded support service and evidence-based intervention programs may be available to Montgomery County teens, young adults and their parents.

Aldersgate Welcomes Your Thoughts & Feedback

Survey

## We Create Success Stories



### Who We Are & What We Do

Aldersgate is a non-profit human services agency located in Willow Grove, PA. We offer counseling and other emotional, behavioral health supports and drug and alcohol prevention/intervention services. Social and emotional learning programs are also provided at the agency, in area schools and in the community.

Aldersgate is currently providing telehealth support services for adults and for children, teens, and their families.

Aldersgate provides support services to students in Abington, Bishop McDevitt, Cheltenham, Jenkintown, Lower Moreland, Springfield Township, Upper Moreland, and Wissahickon School Districts.

Contact us for more resources:  
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