

Questions and Answers about SAFE Homes

Q. What makes the SAFE Homes Program unique?

A. SAFE Homes is unique in that it helps bring together parents who share a desire to help their children enjoy their teen years drug and alcohol free. By signing a pledge to supervise get-togethers and prohibit the use of drugs and underage drinking, parents are making an important statement to their own children about their values, as well as participating in a network of parents in whom other parents can have confidence. In our busy world, such networks are harder to come by and require more planning than perhaps they did in the past.

Q. But I trust my children completely. Why would I need to be involved?

A. One of the valuable aspects of the program is that it provides information for each family about the rules and limits set by the other families with whom their children interact. This can make it easier to ensure that your own child will enjoy social events without being put in uncomfortable positions because of a lack of parental supervision. In addition, it can help children, who might feel self-conscious that perhaps their parents are stricter than others, to know that many other parents have the same rules!

Q. I can't imagine that anyone would permit their children and their friends to drink and use drugs at parties. Why is signing a pledge needed when this seems so obvious?

A. Parents who choose to sign are making a commitment to be active in their supervision as well as in their communication with their teens, which sends a message about the importance they attach to this issue to their own children as well as to the community. The goal is, in fact, to strengthen the idea of drug and alcohol free teens as a norm that IS supported by everyone in our community.

Q. My children are in high school--of course they are going to experiment, that's only natural. I'd rather they did it in my home where they are safe than out somewhere they could get hurt. Won't this program just make them more secretive?

A. While experimentation in adolescence IS natural, there are many ways for teens to experiment that do not involve illegal use of alcohol or drugs! Clear messages from parents have been shown to help most teens resist the temptation to experiment in this hazardous way. While we know that few teens are going to avoid making mistakes, we are trying to give them the tools they need to make wise decisions in as many situations as possible.

Q. What will happen if I join the pledge and something happens--the kids sneak it in or my child drinks at someone else's house?

A. If our children do break the rules, we will be on much stronger grounds with them in discussing their behavior and its consequences if we have stated our position clearly ahead of time. We will also have a support network of parents available to us to help us.

Just The Facts:

- As parents/guardians, you have a tremendous influence on the decisions your child makes. Your constant communication and caring may inspire your child to walk away from drugs and alcohol
- Young people who start drinking before age 15 are four times as likely to become alcohol-dependent as those who begin drinking at age 21.
- Research tells us that the human brain does not fully develop until around age 23, and consuming alcohol before that time can cause damage to parts of the brain that handle memory and cognition.

- More teens try marijuana for the first time in the summer months than any other time of the year. Supervised and occupied teens are far less likely to try marijuana.