

## THE FACTS ABOUT UNDERAGE DRINKING

- Among DC middle school students, the average age of first alcohol use is age ten.
- Nearly 19 percent of DC high school students report having their first alcoholic drink before age 13.
- Among DC high school students, the age of first alcohol use is age 12.
- More than 20 percent of DC high school students drank alcohol in the past month.
- During the past three months, more than 18 percent of DC high school students drank alcohol or used drugs before their most recent sexual encounter.

Source: DC Youth Risk Behavior Survey, 2015

## SIGNS OF USE:

Not sure if your child or the teen you are caring for is drinking?

### Keep an eye out for these warning signs:

- Behavioral indicators like unusual/uncharacteristic behavior, slurred speech, coordination problems, and memory and/or concentration problems.
- Changes in school performance. Alcohol use is often linked to poor academic performance.
- Social indicators like changes in friend groups or disinterest in activities that the young person once enjoyed.

## THE CONSEQUENCES OF UNDERAGE DRINKING ARE STAGGERING.

### Youth who drink are more likely to:

- use drugs,
- have academic problems,
- suffer injury or death,
- engage in risky sexual activity,
- make bad decisions,
- experience changes in brain development that may have life-long effects, and/or
- have mental health problems.



## TALK TO YOUR KID ABOUT UNDERAGE DRINKING

### Below are some helpful tips:

- Be open and honest with your child or teen about why you believe it's too early for him or her to start drinking.
- Share your experiences with your child or teen.
- Use positive reinforcement to encourage your child or teen.
- Discuss the consequences of underage drinking.
- Know where your kids are and who they are hanging out with.
- Be creative so your child or teen actively and willingly engages with you.

Visit [www.theresareasondc.com](http://www.theresareasondc.com) for more tips for parents.

## Talk. They Hear You.

DC DEPARTMENT OF BEHAVIORAL HEALTH



*This campaign is part of the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration's (SAMHSA) Underage Drinking Prevention national media campaign, "Talk. They Hear You."*



# THERE'S A REASON TO KEEP YOUR CHILD OUT OF THE MIX WITH ALCOHOL

Have you talked to your child or teen about underage drinking?

[www.theresareasondc.com](http://www.theresareasondc.com)

## WHY "THERE'S A REASON"?

The District of Columbia's Department of Behavioral Health (DBH) is addressing the underage drinking problem in Washington, DC, with the help of the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Administration's (SAMHSA) national parent-focused campaign,

**"Talk. They Hear You."**



According to youth in DC, access to alcohol for underage youth is easy. However, the issues of underage drinking haven't been effectively addressed because youth do not feel comfortable discussing alcohol and drugs with their parents.

Through these efforts, DBH's goals are to increase parents' and caregivers' awareness of the prevalence and risk of underage drinking, equip them with the knowledge and skills to prevent underage drinking, and empower them to talk with children early about the dangers of alcohol and underage drinking.

## WHY IS IT IMPORTANT TO PREVENT UNDERAGE DRINKING?

Research shows that youth who start drinking before the age of 15 are five times more likely to develop alcohol dependence or abuse later in life than those who begin drinking at or after the legal age of 21. Aside from being illegal, underage drinking is a widespread public health problem that poses many risks.

DC has a zero-tolerance policy for underage drinkers.

Learn more about Washington, DC's laws on underage drinking by visiting the "Alcohol 101" section of the [www.TheresAReasonDC.com](http://www.TheresAReasonDC.com) website.



## PARENTS AND CAREGIVERS: YOUR VOICE IS IMPORTANT FOR OUR YOUTH

DC youth say they identify with conversations that are honest, based in reality, visually engaging, and relevant to their lives. You play an important role in preventing youth from drinking alcohol. Start the conversation early by providing them with honest, relevant, and accurate information about the dangers of alcohol and the skills to refuse alcohol.

For tips, ideas, and strategies to help your child or teen steer clear of underage drinking, visit [www.theresareasondc.com](http://www.theresareasondc.com).

The "Parent Center" section on the website lists local community resources that also help support youth in staying alcohol and drug free.