



Charleston County News Release

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Charleston Center Involved in State Campaign to Combat Teenage Alcohol Consumption *"Parents Who Host, Lose the Most" campaign aims to teach parents about the legal consequences of letting their children drink alcohol*

Campaign Poster:

http://chweb.pire.org/scdocuments/documents/PARENTsPOSTER_7.pdf

Fact Sheet for Parents:

http://chweb.pire.org/scdocuments/documents/DAO070702FACTSHEET_5.pdf

Charleston Center Web site: <http://ccdaodas.charlestoncounty.org>

Parents who allow teenagers to have alcohol parties in their homes may find themselves in jail. That is the message of a new series of public service television spots now scheduled on both network and cable channels throughout the state.

The Charleston Center, a division of Charleston County Government, in collaboration with the S.C. Department of Alcohol and Other Drug Abuse Services, is currently launching a public awareness campaign to educate parents on the legal consequences of providing alcohol to anyone who is under the legal age of 21.

The "Parents Who Host, Lose the Most" statewide media campaign is designed to increase understanding of and compliance with South Carolina underage drinking laws.

"Too often, parents look the other way when it comes to teen drinking, assuming it is a 'rite of passage.' It is not unusual for well-meaning parents to provide alcohol to their teen's friends at home parties. We want to educate parents that providing alcohol to teens is illegal and irresponsible," said W. Lee Catoe, director of the S.C. Department of Alcohol and Other Drug Abuse Services.

Charleston's local director agrees. "Alcoholism is a chronic illness," said Mark Cowell, Director of Charleston Center. "Research has shown that there is a direct correlation between the percentage of people who become alcoholics and the age they first began experimenting with alcohol."

Charleston Center's Prevention Programs document that addiction is a chronic health problem that costs society billions of dollars per year.

The new campaign materials highlight the fact that parents can receive a 30-day jail sentence and \$1,075 in fines and fees for giving alcohol to others' children under any circumstances – even in their own home. The materials also explain that they can be sued if a teen hurts someone, hurts themselves, or damages property after being allowed to drink on their premises.

According to recent South Carolina high school surveys:

- 43 percent of high school students drink alcohol
- 25 percent binge drink (consume five or more drinks at one sitting)

- 25 percent took their first drink before the age of 13

In South Carolina, alcohol use is the major cause of loss of life for young people ages 15 to 24, accounting for 45 percent of fatalities, most of which result from alcohol-related car crashes.

Along with this media campaign, Charleston Center and the Kennedy Center in Berkeley County have recently partnered in a statewide initiative organized around Judicial Circuits to increase enforcement of underage drinking laws.

For more information on the Charleston Center, contact Charlie Stinson with the Charleston Center Prevention Department at (843) 958-3309.