

Planning + Supervision = SAFETY

Party Management 101



As our kids become teenagers, party management becomes critical, not only for smooth operations but also for critical aspects of safety. Predictably, teens want control of the event and its many details. However, parents who don't adequately involve themselves in all aspects of the process can end up confronted with a nightmare of chaos and dangerous behaviors.



The Problem

- Party planning often gets entangled in the struggles for control between parents and teens, resulting in parents not adequately influencing how the event goes down.
- Poorly planned and inadequately supervised parties are vulnerable to alcohol and drug abuse, party crashers, drivers under the influence, sexual assault or promiscuity, property damage and violence.
- In an effort to please their kids, or avoid conflict, many parents accommodate teenage drinking, believing that “keeping” the kids at their house provides adequate safeguards. Interestingly, there is **no** evidence that suggests “caging” intoxicated teenagers effectively manages for the types of damage listed above. It’s simply **more effective** to insist on a drug and alcohol free event.
- Poorly planned and inadequately supervised parties are vulnerable to mixed age attendance. Adding drugs and alcohol to this mix can result in physically and emotionally dangerous circumstances.
- Most teenagers feel socially awkward and inadequate. Parties raise the intensity of these feelings. The liquid courage in alcohol and/or the numbing effect of other drugs reduces these insecurities and inhibitions, inviting increasing use and abuse.

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Solutions

- Parents must insist on involvement in all aspects of party planning. Parents need not make all the decisions, but they must know and guide the details of who, what, when, where and how. Parents need to assert the limits that assure everyone's safety.
- Adequate supervision means having guest lists and sticking to them, setting specific time frames for the event, controlling entrances and exits, curtailing kids "coming and going", and not allowing backpacks or book bags or "mega" purses. Parents should randomly move in and out of the area where kids are gathered, not allow alcohol or other drugs, and recruit other parent's assistance. Safe practice includes limiting overnight guests to a very few, if any, same-sex friends.
- Age-appropriate "cabinet latching"- just as you did with household chemicals when your children were younger, keep alcohol and medications locked up and out of sight! Why risk a teen's impulsive act that could invite disaster?

Things to consider:

- Written invitations. There are many advantages to having an actual invitation such as a point of contact with the parents, people know it is invite only, gives a start/end time, and it sets expectations.
- Maybe set a fun theme to organize the food, decorations and attire around and take the focus off drinking alcohol or using drugs
- Keep guests entertained. Make sure you have things like games, karaoke, dance music or movies.
- Make sure your guests know the rules (no drinking/smoking)
- Have one entrance to the party so you can see/monitor who is attending (secure the side or back gates if necessary)
- Ask other adults to help you supervise the party
- Guests should not be allowed to come and go from the party
- Being a responsible host involves making sure your guests get home safely. Make sure all teens leaving have a ride home and are ok to drive.
- Phone police if unmanageable gate crashers arrive.