



## **Parents are key to curbing underage drinking**

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Fairbanks, Alaska—Fairbanks Native Association will start a campaign to encourage parents in understanding the risks of underage drinking, especially if they are providing alcohol.

FNA's Strategic Prevention Framework program is using the national "Parents who Host, Lose the Most" campaign in Fairbanks. The goal is to remind parents that it is unsafe, unhealthy, and unacceptable—and, in Alaska, illegal—to provide alcohol for underage youth. They also plan to do a short survey with parents about alcohol and youth.

"Teens who begin drinking before age 15 are five times more likely to develop alcohol dependence or abuse later in life," said Brenda Hannah, SPF program manager. "Also, a teen's brain is still developing until the mid-20s. Alcohol damages areas of the brain that control cognitive reasoning, memory and learning."

Teen alcohol use increases the chance of risky behavior and alcohol poisoning. Youth who drink are more likely to have depression and anxiety disorders.

It's a legal issue, too, Hannah said. In Alaska, people under 21 who drink alcohol may face charges and fines.

It's more serious for adults who supply alcohol to young people. Anyone who is 19 or older who provides alcohol could be charged with a Class A misdemeanor for contributing to the delinquency of a minor. This also carries a fine and attorney's fees.

A report by the Centers for Disease Control says that 37.8% of Alaska youth drank alcohol provided by someone else, which is slightly below the national average. In Fairbanks, 8.1% of students in the Fairbanks North Star Borough School District say they are currently



drinking, according to state statistics. Yet, 57% reported they have tried alcohol at least once.

What is not clearly understood is parental attitudes about youth alcohol use. Hannah hopes to find out adult perceptions using a sticker with a QR code that will lead to a five-question survey.

The program is partnering with the Effie Kokrine Charter School, and The Alliance, an Alaska partnership of groups that recognize the impacts of alcohol misuse on individuals and communities. They are looking for more partners.

FNA SPF wants youth to find encouragement from the fact that most people don't use alcohol. The goal of FNA SPF is to prevent the onset of and reduce the progression of alcohol abuse among 9–20-year-olds in the Fairbanks North Star Borough. The program collaborates with a community coalition known as the Interagency Transition Council to effect changes in attitudes, policies, laws, and ordinances that limit access and harmful consequences of alcohol use.

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