



# Chatham Borough Police Department

## Traffic Safety Unit



The end of the school year represents a celebratory season which includes prom, graduation, and vacation. Unfortunately, this is also a deadly time of the year for some teens, when they get behind the wheel and engage in unsafe behavior like texting, participating in underage drinking and driving, speeding, and simply not paying attention. Sadly, automobile crashes continue to be the #1 cause of death and injuries for teens in the U.S. Many of these crashes are preventable. During this exciting and special time, please explain to your children the dangers of underage drinking and driving when attending both prom and graduation parties. Remember, be a parent rather than a friend.

**Here are some facts as they pertain to underage alcohol use:**

### **Alcohol Use Is Widespread Among Today's Teenagers**

- Nearly 70% of 8th graders perceive alcoholic beverages as "fairly easy" or "very easy" to get.
- By the time they complete high school nearly 80% of teenagers have consumed alcohol, 30% report having been drunk in the past month, and 29% report having 5 or more drinks in a row in the past two weeks.

### **Alcohol Use Increases Substantially From Middle To High School**

- Approximately 20% of 8th graders report having recently (within the past 30 days) consumed alcohol compared to 35% of 10th graders and almost 50% of 12th graders.
- A little over 20% of 8th graders report having been drunk at least once in their life compared to almost 45% of 10th graders and 60% of 12th graders.

### **The Consequences of Underage Drinking**

- A person who begins drinking as a young teen is four times more likely to develop alcohol dependence than someone who waits until adulthood to use alcohol.
- During adolescence significant changes occur in the body, including the formation of new networks in the brain. Alcohol use during this time may affect brain development.
- Motor vehicle crashes are the leading cause of death among youth ages 15 to 20, and the rate of fatal crashes among alcohol-involved drivers between 16 and 20 years old is more than twice the rate for alcohol-involved drivers 21 and older. Alcohol use also is linked with youthful deaths by drowning, suicide, and homicide.
- Alcohol use is associated with many adolescent risk behaviors, including other drug use and delinquency, weapon carrying and fighting, and perpetrating or being the victim of date rape.

### **The Law in NJ:**

In New Jersey, a person is guilty of drunk driving if he/she operates a motor vehicle with a Blood Alcohol Concentration (BAC) of 0.08 percent or greater. BAC refers to the amount of alcohol in your blood. Although the law refers to a 0.08 percent BAC, you can be convicted of driving while under the influence of intoxicating liquor even when your BAC is below 0.08 percent. Consuming even small amounts of alcohol dulls the senses, decreases reaction time, and hampers judgment, vision and alertness. If you consume any amount of alcohol and your



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driving is negatively impacted, you can be convicted of drunk driving. It is also a violation for a person to operate a motor vehicle under the influence of a narcotic, hallucinogenic or habit producing drug. You can also be convicted for allowing another person to operate a motor vehicle when that person does so in violation of the driving while intoxicated (DWI) law.