



COUNTY OF SAN DIEGO NEWS RELEASE

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COUNTY OFFICIALS WARN OF DANGERS OF UNDERAGE DRINKING DURING SPRING BREAK Alcohol Present in 143 Young Deaths in San Diego County

Thousands of community college, high school, and middle school students will be on spring break, a time when underage drinking goes up. In an effort to keep alcohol away from minors, County of San Diego Health and Human Services Agency (HHS) officials are reminding adults that it is against the law to host underage drinking parties and to allow minors to drink.

“We are here today to ask parents to be aware of what their children are doing. We are here today to urge adults to act responsibly and not provide alcohol to minors,” said Board of Supervisors Chairwoman Dianne Jacob, a member of the Mothers Against Drunk Driving (MADD) Advisory Board, during a news event highlighting the dangers of underage drinking. “Minors are not allowed to buy alcohol, period. Whenever minors drink, one question must be asked: ‘Who provided the alcohol?’” Jacob was joined by Nick Macchione, HHS Director, and Beth Sise, Chair of the San Diego County Alcohol Policy Panel.

Minors get alcohol from older friends, strangers willing to buy it for them, store clerks who fail to check IDs, the internet, their friend’s parents and their own parents.

Underage drinking is having tragic health, social and economic consequences.

In the last five years, 143 people under 21 years of age in San Diego County had alcohol in their system when they died. Each year, about 2,500 San Diego County youth receive emergency room treatment as a result of alcohol-related injuries.

“Underage drinking is not a rite of passage. Giving alcohol to a minor can lead to criminal penalties or, worse, the loss of a loved one,” said Macchione. “We urge adults to act responsibly and to help us keep the teens in our community safe and sober.”

To help alleviate the problem of underage drinking, 17 incorporated municipalities and all unincorporated areas of the County of San Diego have adopted “social host” ordinances, making it illegal to host underage drinking parties. Any person who sells or provides an alcoholic beverage to a minor can receive a fine up to \$1,000, six months in jail or both.

According to the 2007 California Student Survey, 15 percent of 7th graders, 27 percent of 9th graders, and 42 percent of 11th graders had consumed alcohol in the past 30 days.

Parents who suspect their child might have a drinking problem are encouraged to call the County of San Diego Access and Crisis Line at (800) 479-3339 or 211.

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