

The Bedford Safe Homes Program

The Bedford Safe Homes Program is a support network for families with children in Grades 6-12 who are concerned about alcohol and drug use at pre-teen and teen parties. Families sign a pledge that commits them to provide a safe and supervised home in the event of a teen party or gathering. All families who return a pledge receive a Directory that includes the other families who have joined Safe Homes.

The Safe Homes Program is endorsed by the following Bedford community partners: Board of Health, Select Board, Youth and Family Services, Clergy Association, Bedford Community Partnership, School Parent Associations, Police Department, Public School and Recreation Commission.

Why Is This Program Needed?

The results of the Youth Risk Behavior Survey (YRBS) conducted biannually with middle and high school students can inform families about the trends of risky behaviors in Bedford. Alcohol continues to be the most popular substance among youth, with 4% of Bedford middle school students and 29% of high school students reporting current use (in the 30 days prior to the survey), according to the findings of the 2018 YRBS. You can view the findings of the YRBS Visit the Youth and Family Services website for current survey results: <https://www.bedfordma.gov/youth-family/pages/youth-risk-behavior-survey-1>

Benefits of the Safe Homes Program

In addition to receiving the Safe Homes Directory, generated in November, families who join Safe Homes send a message to their teens that they do not support underage alcohol consumption or illegal drug use. Parents continue to be a strong influence in the lives of teens. Families are encouraged to check with each other if there is a party hosted by a Safe Homes family.

Civil Liability - If an adult gives or allows alcohol to be consumed by anyone under 21, including one's own child, and that person causes personal injury or property damage, the adult and the minor are both civilly liable for financial damages. Therefore, if there is a party with alcohol in your home, even if you are unaware of it, you could be held responsible for injuries and damages.

A Message from Police Chief Robert Bongiorno

Parents who may have to be away for an extended period of time and have to leave their teenager(s) at home without another adult present may contact the Bedford Police Department to check their home daily for unwanted parties and guests. Parents wishing to take advantage of this service should:

- Fill out and sign the police department's "Away Book" at the police station. This form can also be found under Crime Prevention on the Police Department website at www.bedfordpd.org
- Discuss and explain the "Away Book" program with their teenager(s) prior to departure. This can provide some relief to the teen at home and alleviate "peer pressure" from their friends and other uninvited guests who may show up at a home wanting to party or engage in risky behaviors upon learning parents are away.
- Immediately notify the Bedford Police if they suspect any underage drinking or drug use in their home.
- For more information, call the Bedford Police Department at 781-275-1212.

In Massachusetts, it is a crime with possibility of arrest or criminal prosecution:

- To serve alcohol to anyone under 21 other than your own child, even in your own home, even with permission from other parents.
- For an adult to sell alcohol to or purchase for anyone under 21.
- For anyone under 21 to purchase alcohol.
- To borrow an I.D. or to falsely state to be 21 or older in order to purchase alcohol.
- To alter, transfer, or deface I.D. cards issued by the Registry of Motor Vehicles.
- For anyone under 21 to transport alcohol opened or unopened in a car.
- To drive under the influence of alcohol.
- For anyone, regardless of age, to have alcohol on public school premises, even in the parking lot.
- To consume alcohol, at any age, in a public place unless specifically authorized by law.
- For anyone 16 and a half to 18 to drive between 1:00 am and 4:00 am without a parent or guardian in the car.

Safe Homes Pledge

In submitting the online Safe Homes Pledge, when hosting a teen party or gathering at your home or on your property, you assert to comply with the following:

1. I will actively supervise all gatherings or parties of youth in my/our home or on my/our property, or ask another responsible adult, person or parent for help to do so.
2. I will not serve or allow the possession or use of alcohol, tobacco, or other drugs by youth in my/our home or on my/our property.
3. I will provide a secure storage place for all forms of alcohol, firearms and other potentially hazardous items in my/our home.
4. I will set expectations for my/our children by knowing where they are going, who they are with, what their plans are, and when they are to return home.
5. I will communicate with any Safe Homes parent of a child I personally observe using alcohol, tobacco or other drugs or appearing to be under the influence and if the child is observed to be in jeopardy, I will contact law enforcement and/or seek emergency medical care, if necessary.

How To Join The Safe Homes Program

To participate in the Safe Homes Program, parents or guardians can navigate to the Youth and Family Services website to read the non-legally binding agreement and register online - <https://www.bedfordma.gov/youth-family/pages/safe-homes> or to download a copy of the application and pledge to mail in. Directories are updated annually in late fall. Families of high school students who graduated in 2020 will be removed from this year's Directory. If you registered last year, you do not need to re-register. Should you wish your family's name to be removed from the Directory or you have other changes or additions to your information (e.g., new 6th grader or phone number), please email safehomes@bedfordma.gov.

Please consider taking a firm stand. Join the Safe Homes Program by thoughtfully signing the pledge. We ask that you follow through on your pledge because other parents will trust that you are. Talk with your child about this program and share your concerns regarding his/her safety.