



Dear Parents and Guardians,

In the fall of 2006, Eckstein Middle School received a grant from the Washington State Division of Alcohol and Substance Abuse (DASA) to form a coalition to prevent underage drinking. The Northeast Seattle Coalition to Prevent Underage Drinking now consists of 30 community members and its mission is *to prevent underage drinking, substance use, and associated problems through education, advocacy, and networking with students, families, and the community.*

The coalition was formed to battle the high underage drinking rates in our community. According to the 2006 *Healthy Youth Survey*, by the time Roosevelt and Nathan Hale High School students reach 10th grade over 30% drink alcohol on a regular basis and in 12th grade that rate increases to over 50%. Both of these rates are higher than the Seattle, King County, and Washington State averages. The time for prevention is now, before our children reach high school.

Among other activities, the Coalition is working to support parents/guardians in creating and sustaining a safe and healthy home and community for their children through parent/guardian networking meetings; *Guiding Good Choices* parenting workshops; and a Drug Free Homes Parent Pledge & Directory.

Attached to this letter you will find a **Drug Free Homes Parent Pledge**. By signing the **Drug Free Homes Pledge**, parents/guardians are letting other Eckstein families know that they intend to supervise their child's social gatherings in their homes to ensure that they are alcohol and drug free. It also indicates that they can be contacted by other parents about parties and get-togethers. This pledge sends a clear message that as parents and as a community we believe that underage drinking and drug use is unacceptable.

You may sign and return the pledge to Eckstein (Attn: Susie Petersen) or send an email stating your support to Susie at psufan56@comcast.net. **Please reply by February 15.** A directory of all parents/guardians who sign the pledge, or state their support for it, will be developed and distributed among Eckstein parents/guardians this spring.

If you have questions, please see the attached "FAQ" or contact Inga Manskopf, the Coalition's Coordinator, at 206-396-0919 or inmanskopf@seattleschools.org.

Sincerely,

Carolyn Bernhard
Pledge Workgroup Chairperson

Kim Whitworth
Principal

Chris Kinsey
Coalition Chairperson

Parent Pledge

By signing this **Drug Free Homes Pledge**, parents make an effort to uphold the following:

- I/we will actively supervise all gatherings or parties of youth in our home or on our property, or ask another responsible adult for help to do so.
- I/we will not allow the possession or use of alcohol, marijuana, other drugs, or violence by youth in our home or on our property.
- I/we will set expectations for my/our child(ren) that I/we know where they are going, whom they are with, what their plans are, and when they are to return home.

This pledge is NOT a legally binding contract, but rather an agreement between the parents who sign it.

Please sign below and include your phone number and/or email address if you wish to be included in the **Eckstein Drug Free Homes Directory**.

Name 1 (printed):

Signature 1:

Phone & Email 1:

Address 1:

Name 2 (printed):

Signature 2:

Phone & Email 2:

Address 2:

I prefer to receive a copy of the directory:

Electronically, my email address appears above.

On paper (distributed through homeroom) – my child's homeroom teacher is:

Please return this pledge to:

Eckstein Middle School, Attn: Susie Petersen

or email a message of support to Susie Petersen at psufan56@comcast.net

Drug Free Homes Pledge FAQ

1. Why should I sign a pledge to declare that I have a Drug Free Home?

Signing the pledge is a way of letting other parents/guardians know that you support the ideas in the pledge and are making efforts to uphold it. The pledge is NOT a legally binding contract. As a parent/guardian, you cannot control absolutely everything related to your children, but you can demonstrate your commitment to the pledge ideas and encourage other parents to do so.

2. Why do I need to list my name and phone number in the Drug Free Homes Directory?

Being listed in the guide is optional, and you are welcome to sign the pledge without being listed. Putting your name and number on the list lets other parents know that you welcome phone calls when their children will be socializing with yours. It is one step toward making communication among parents easier and a creating a stronger community.

3. If I sign the Drug Free Homes Pledge and youth drink at my house without my knowledge, will I be removed from this list?

No, the pledge and directory are there to support parents in their efforts, not to punish them. We hope that if something like this happens, you will be able to turn to other parents for support and to help you in working to ensure that teen social gatherings at your house are substance free.

4. If I sign the pledge, does that mean that I cannot drink at home?

No, this is not the intent of the Drug Free Homes Pledge. It is, however, important for parents to model appropriate behavior (not necessarily abstinence) to their children. This includes showing that adults of legal drinking age may drink moderately, if they choose. Think carefully about how your behavior will be perceived by your children. Make sure you communicate that the drinking age exists to postpone use of alcohol by young people until they reach an age when they are less likely to develop a drinking problem. It is also important to show that excessive drinking is not appropriate at any age.

5. What happens if my child is going to someone's house that is not on the list?

It is a good idea to contact that family anyway. See if your child can get a phone number for you or look in the Eckstein Family Directory. Just because they are not listed does not mean they do not support the pledge. Direct communication is the best way to find out what will be happening at another family's house.

6. What if young people are at my house socializing and they want to stay up later than I can? Can I go to sleep and let them stay up?

The best solution is for you or another trusted adult to stay up as long as there are young people at your house, especially when you are less familiar with the kids attending. It is important to agree in advance with your child about how late you want friends to stay, and then be awake to stick to it when the time comes. To be able to provide late night supervision, getting some extra rest before the gathering and planning a restful day for yourself afterwards may be helpful.

7. Will there be other information included in the Drug Free Homes Directory in addition to the names and contact information of parents/guardians?

Yes! Included in the directory will be

- Tips on what to do when your child goes to a party;
- List of local drug and alcohol-related resources;
- Tips for hosting a fun and drug free party at your home;
- Tips for keeping your child alcohol and drug free;
- Signs of alcohol and/or drug use among youth.

8. What are some of the other coalition projects?

During the 2006-07 school year, the coalition completed a community assessment to identify the factors contributing to underage drinking in northeast Seattle and programs to be implemented to address them. In addition to this Drug Free Homes Parent Pledge & Directory, the prevention programs being implemented starting this year include:

- *Life Skills Training*: a middle school drug and alcohol prevention curriculum.
- *Guiding Good Choices*: parenting workshops offered in partnership with Seattle Public Schools, Children's Hospital, and the University Family YMCA.
- A media advocacy campaign to support law enforcement.
- Parent Networking Group enabling Eckstein parents to get to know the parents/guardians of their children's friends and share solutions to common parenting concerns.
- Enforcement & Consequences Roundtable: representatives from the Seattle Police Department, the Seattle City Attorney's Office, King County Juvenile Court Services, Seattle Public Schools, and the Washington State Liquor Control Board meet on a regular basis to increase communication and cooperation.

Why Taking the Keys is Not Enough

As children enter high school, some parents would rather have their children drinking at home, to keep them off the roads and protect them from car accidents. But there are many more risks associated with “supervised” alcohol use:

The Consequences

A person who begins drinking before the age of 15 is more than five times more likely to develop alcohol dependency than someone who waits until after age 21 to use alcohol.

Every year after age 15 that a young person delays use of alcohol reduces his/her risk of dependency by 14%.

Youth who drink alcohol are at higher risk for other drug use; damage to property; use of weapons; physical and verbal violence; alcohol poisoning; inappropriate social behavior; and risky sexual contact.

Sexual activity under the influence of alcohol or other drugs is most often unprotected, increasing the risk of unwanted pregnancy and sexually transmitted diseases.

Youth can suffer an alcohol overdose more easily than adults. Even though a young person may have the same blood alcohol content as an adult, he or she is far less likely to feel the effects of intoxication than an adult would. Because they don't feel impaired when intoxicated, they are more likely to keep drinking longer than adults, thereby increasing their risk of overdose.

The Law about Serving Alcohol to Minors

Criminal Liability

In Washington:

It is unlawful for any person to sell, give, or otherwise supply liquor to any person under the age of twenty-one years or permit any person under that age to consume liquor on his or her premises or on any premises under his or her control.

It is unlawful for any person under the age of twenty-one years to possess, consume, or otherwise acquire any liquor.

It is unlawful for a person under the age of twenty-one years to be in a public place, or to be in a motor vehicle in a public place, while exhibiting the effects of having consumed liquor.

These offenses are punishable by up to a year in jail and a \$5,000 fine.

In addition, there are numerous potential crimes that may also be associated with alcohol. For instance, if a minor is found driving and has a BAC between .02-.08, the crime is punishable by a maximum 90 days jail and a \$1,000 fine. If over .08, it is punishable up to a year in jail and a \$5,000 fine. Of course, there are also severe licensing consequences, insurance ramifications, and other financial consequences for any DUI offense. Parents or other adults could be held criminally liable for these offenses under a theory of "accomplice liability", even though they were not driving.

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 damages, the adult and 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 are responsible for injuries and damages.