

May, 2008

Dear Parent/Guardian:

With prom season around the corner, we are approaching a celebratory time for students and their families. We want to send this letter to urge you to do all that you can to make it a happy, and safe, time for your child.

Each year, we lose far too many of our teenagers to motor vehicle crashes, with a dramatic increase in alcohol-related traffic fatalities on prom weekends throughout our county. Car crashes are the leading cause of death for young adults between the ages of 15-20, and the reality is that many of those deaths are caused by teenage drinking and driving.

As a parent or guardian, you have the opportunity to help ensure the safety of your children and those they may endanger should they choose to drink and drive. You, along with proactive education and tough law enforcement, are a key component to preventing alcohol-related tragedies. As you are well aware, it is a crime to provide alcohol to those under the age of 21, even at a supervised party at your own home. It is also important to know that if you choose to host a party where alcohol is served to minors, you can be held liable if one of your guests drinks alcohol and harms themselves or others by the negligent operation of a motor vehicle. .

It is important to stress to your children that driving with any amount of alcohol could potentially result in a driving under the influence offense. For those under the age of 21, driving under the influence in Massachusetts is defined by a 0.02 blood alcohol level. This level can easily be reached by just one drink and carries the very serious criminal penalties of an OUI offense.

With these dangers, we encourage you to take a number of steps to provide your children with alternatives to getting behind the wheel:

- **If you are able to, hire professional transportation for your children's prom night.** Make sure you have a discussion with the limousine driver prior to prom night about your expectations that the ride be alcohol-free. Sometimes these drivers will agree to purchase alcohol for their minor passengers; it is important to ensure that this will not happen by talking directly with the driver
- **Offer your children transportation alternatives.** Offer to provide your children rides or to have an older sibling or family friend provide rides for your children on prom night. If your child does not want you to pick them up, oftentimes a sibling or family friend is a great compromise.
- **Provide your child with the phone number of a local taxi company** with a reputable reputation and offer to pay for your children's taxi fare for the night. Remember, this is a small cost to keep your child safe.

We have seen first-hand the devastating impact that driving under the influence can have on parents, families, friends and communities and urge you to be proactive in preventing teenage drinking and driving. We believe these alternatives will help to discourage drinking and driving without infringing on your child's desire for independence.

This is an exciting time in our young people's lives and one that we hope will be marked by the celebratory occasion, not a preventable tragedy.

Thank you and please contact us with any questions that you may have or if you would like further information on teenage drinking and driving.

Be safe and enjoy this wonderful time of year.

Sincerely,

Gerry Leone  
Middlesex District Attorney

James L. Picone, Ed.D.  
Superintendent