

Morris County Anti-Drug Task Force is advising against loosening the rules about underage alcohol use with a ***“Lock Up Your Liquor”*** request for all parents.

In addition to the recent education on the social hosting laws and the call for parents to make a pledge to keep their homes safe for their children, the task force asks parents to keep their alcohol secured to reduce access by young people. In addition to parents *unknowingly* providing a supply of alcohol, some adults provide an excuse to overlook or allow the use of alcohol by youth. The coalition wants all parents and youth to know that underage drinking is not a rite of passage.

The potential consequences of underage drinking, including assault, date rape, sexually transmitted diseases, legal trouble, automobile accidents and other injuries, can be permanent and life-altering events. Scientific research has shown that if a young person stays away from tobacco and alcohol until he or she reaches 20, the likelihood of ever suffering a chemical dependency problem is dramatically reduced.

Parents hold the key to the prevention of alcohol, tobacco and drug use by youth by staying actively involved in their children’s lives and by talking AND listening to them. Prevention takes more than a single conversation. Parents **can** and **do** make a difference in their children’s lives. Parenting IS prevention.