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## 'Tis the Season...

Do you let your kids have a drink on special occasions? Were you raised in a household where a sip of wine with dinner was normal?

On holidays that call for cheerful gatherings, many parents wonder whether to allow their underage children a celebratory sip of beer or wine. U.S. government agencies insist no amount of underage drinking is acceptable. "If parents have a liberal idea about alcohol, kids may get the wrong message," says Dr. Vivian Faden, director of the Office of Science Policy and Communications at the National Institute on Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism at the National Institutes of Health. "Underage drinking can lead to injuries, fatal car accidents, risky sexual behavior, and there's also potential risk to the developing brain."

Dr. Westley Clark, director of the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration's Center for Behavioral Health Statistics and Quality, says, "Statistics show children who start drinking at a younger age have more problems later on. We also know that, particularly for males under 21, they are still developing what we call executive function -- meaning, how they make decisions and how they deal with risk. At 21, the brain is simply more mature and the ability to control impulses is much stronger. The legal age is 21. The message to parents is to buy time and delay the onset of any consumption."

More parents are allowing their teenagers to attend parties where alcohol is served. Some parents might think that battling underage drinking is a futile effort, but the study showed that parents who had zero tolerance for drinking were the top reason that teens did not drink. Other parents allow their teens to drink at home because it stops them from drinking elsewhere. This is more of a myth because 57 percent of high school students who were allowed to drink around their parents also drank outside of the home.

\*source: [www.nih.gov](http://www.nih.gov)

Underage drinking can be a dangerous precursor of things to come. Studies show that the earlier a teen begins to drink, the more likely they will develop other substance abuse problems.

When it comes to underage drinking and driving, 13 percent of young people admitted to lying to their parents about driving under the influence. If caught driving drunk, a teen could be subjected to strict and life-altering punishment.

Red Rock Regional Prevention Coordinator's (RPC) primary focus is to serve as a prevention community liaison. Red Rock RPC educates and informs communities through multiple strategies including community based services, environmental strategies, early recognition, and referral. We take a proactive approach in reducing substance abuse among communities. Red Rock RPC is funded through the Oklahoma Department of Mental Health and Substance Abuse Services. For more information about the Regional Prevention Coordinator please visit [www.redrockrpc.com](http://www.redrockrpc.com) or contact the Red Rock RPC at (405)-422-8873.