

NORTH BETHESDA MIDDLE SCHOOL **PARENT/GUARDIAN GUIDELINES FOR STUDENT PARTIES**

Students are often invited to their first "boy-girl" parties during their middle school years. It is important to know the family hosting the party, what their rules are, if they are going to be at home during the party and that they are concerned about safety. The following are guidelines for parents dealing with parties and party invitations. They are adapted from those recommended by the Family Resource Center in Bethesda, Maryland.

WHEN YOUR CHILD IS HOSTING THE PARTY:

Set ground rules:

Your child needs to know what you expect and why you are setting ground rules.

Know your responsibilities as parents or guardians:

It is illegal to offer alcohol to guests under the age of 21 or to allow guests to use drugs in your home. You risk criminal charges and/or monetary damages in a civil lawsuit if minors use alcohol or drugs in your home. Remove alcohol from areas where minors will be partying. You also should prohibit smoking by minors.

Limit party attendance and times:

Large groups and open ended parties are difficult to control. They can easily get out of hand. Have your child draw up a guest list and communicate an invitation which includes the start and ending time of the party.

Be visible:

If there is a large number of guests, consider asking other parents to help you chaperone the party. Greet guests at the door. People who come uninvited should be politely but firmly sent home. Be alert to guests who may try to bring cigarettes, alcohol, drugs, or weapons. You are responsible to see that such items are not used in your home. Be prepared to call parents of any guest who arrives under the influence of alcohol or other drugs, who has brought a prohibited substance into your home, or who otherwise has behaved in an unacceptable manner. Remain visible throughout the party.

Do not allow guests to come and go:

This will discourage guests from leaving the party to smoke, drink, or use other drugs elsewhere.

Be sure guests leave with a parent or other responsible person:

Never let a guest be driven home by an older teen or adult who is under the influence of alcohol or drugs.

WHEN YOUR CHILD IS A GUEST AT A PARTY:

Contact the parents to verify the facts:

Know the occasion, time, and that a parent or guardian will be present. Be sure that cigarettes, alcohol, and other drugs are not permitted.

Be sure that your child knows how and when to return home:

Instruct your child to call if there is any change in location, departure time or how he/she will return home.

Discuss how to handle difficult situations:

Reinforce your family's guidelines against smoking, alcohol, and other drugs. Help your child to come up with ways to handle peer pressure and other uncomfortable situations. Some families have adopted a "code" for their child to communicate his/her desire to leave the party. Examples of a "code" might be, your child calls to complain that his allergies are making him feel terrible. Or, your child calls to ask if you have forgotten her early sports practice the next morning. A "code" is whatever you and your child agree upon. Make sure your child knows where to reach you.

Check arrangements for sleep over invitations:

If your child calls asking to stay overnight with a friend after a party, check with the parents of the friend to confirm that they have approved the spontaneous sleep over and that they will be home.

If you have any questions or comments regarding these guidelines, please call NBMS Counselors Cindy Drucker or Judy Robinson at 301-897-2260, or Guidance Advisory Committee Co-chairs Kathy Beland at 301-493-5305 or Julie Shoemaker at 301-530-9235.