

## **Planning for the Prom Means More Than Just Dinner and Flowers**

Each year Eden Prairie High School holds a formal dinner and prom. Helping you child plan for this special event can take a great deal time and energy. There are so many things to remember; hair appointments, a dress, tux or other formal wear, flowers, pictures, dinner, and, of course, a date. Amid all the planning and excitement it is easy to overlook what may be the most important thing you can do to prepare your child for a safe, fun and healthy prom - talking to them about alcohol and drugs.

Recent statistics show that prom night is a common time for adolescents to use alcohol. We also know that some adults may choose to look the other way or indulge in underage drinking around these special events. Some even feel they have little to worry about as long as their young person isn't driving. However, we know the risks of underage alcohol use are real, even if kids do not drive.

Minnesota Student Survey results show that about 1/3 of high school seniors report binge drinking (5 drinks or more in a row) in the last month. Almost the same number report generally drinking this much at one time. We also know that alcohol plays a role in nearly 3/4 of all date rape cases and that almost one in four U.S. teens who were sexually active reported having unprotected sex while using alcohol or drugs.

Research shows that parents have the greatest influence over a teen's decision to drink. Although discussions and limit-setting around alcohol consumption need to take place throughout childhood and adolescence it is especially important that parents set clear expectations regarding alcohol use before prom in order to ensure a safe, healthy and fun event.

Please consider these ideas as you and your teen prepare for prom.

- \*Make sure your child has a plan for the evening and that you know it.
- \*Know all the hotspot destinations.
- \*Take stock of any alcohol in your home.
- \*Discuss the school's prom rules with your child and the consequences of violating them.
- \*Know who is driving - if it is a limo, check their policy on allowing alcohol in the vehicle.
- \*Encourage seatbelt use - the best accessory.
- \*Do not rent hotel rooms for prom-goers.
- \*Communicate with other parents and school officials.
- \*Stay up for prom-goer's return home.