



Fact Sheet

Girls ARE Drinking and Their Moms Are Underestimating How Much

- FACT:** An estimated 8.5 million 12-20 year old girls report consuming alcohol in the past year (Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration, 2007).
- FACT:** Research shows that about 39 percent of 9th grade girls—usually about 14 years old—report drinking in the past month. Even more alarming is the fact that about 21 percent of these same young girls report having had five or more drinks on a single occasion during the previous month. (National Institute on Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism, 2005).
- FACT:** Nearly 17 % of girls ages 12-20 reported binge drinking (5 or more drinks in a row) in the past month (Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration, 2007).
- FACT:** 16% of 13-15 year old girls say they drink with friends, only 5% of their mothers think their daughters are drinking (The Century Council and Teenage Research Unlimited, 2005).
- FACT:** 30% of 16-18 year olds girls say they drink with friends, only 9% of their mothers think their daughters are drinking (The Century Council and Teenage Research Unlimited, 2005).

Background

The incidence of underage drinking remains unacceptably high among our nation's teenage girls. A survey commissioned by The Century Council, a national not-for-profit organization funded by distillers, found that mothers of teenage daughters underestimate and misjudge the seriousness of their daughters underage drinking. Additionally, nearly 50% of mothers believe it is acceptable for their teenage daughters to drink alcohol under some circumstances, showing disengagement on the mother's part that underage alcohol consumption is a serious problem. Much of this is based on lack of effective communication between mothers and teenage daughters.

Mothers are the most important influence in a teenage girl's decision to drink or not to drink alcohol. In middle-school girls go to their mothers for advice on topics ranging from friends, to boys, to school; the topic of alcohol is not off limits. However, as the girls move onto high school, the lines of communication are less open. It is not too early to start talking with daughters about the

dangers of underage drinking as early as age 11. Ongoing and frequent conversations about this subject should begin at ages 12 and 13, and should continue throughout the daughter's high school years and beyond as peer pressure to drink increases with age.

This communication gap between mothers and daughters can be minimized by developing tools that increase awareness, educate mothers and daughters, and help facilitate conversation about the dangers of underage drinking. While it is clear that early parental intervention can significantly delay the age of first consumption among youth, often parents struggle with how to best start an effective conversation about the consequences of underage drinking with their kids.

Also important is providing girls with accurate, youth/girl oriented information to help them make the right decision when faced with making decisions about alcohol.

The Century Council launched, *Girl Talk: Choices and Consequences of Underage Drinking*, to address this gap in knowledge and lack of effective communication between mothers and teenage daughters. *Girl Talk* aims to help mothers initiate and sustain conversations about alcohol.

The comprehensive program tailored specifically for mothers and daughters includes:

- **A website, www.girlsanddrinking.org**, for mothers with information on how to begin the underage drinking conversation and links to additional resources related to underage drinking.
- **Brochure for mothers**, detailing how to begin the conversation, sustain the conversation and have an impact as well as information explaining the facts about alcohol, and addressing issues such as peer pressure and creative ways to say “no” to drinking.
- **A website, www.grlthk.org**, provides teen girls with information about the dangers of underage drinking and the specific risks facing teenage girls. [Grlthk.org](http://www.grlthk.org) encourages girls to live healthy and active lifestyles by providing them with the resources to do so.

The Century Council

The Century Council's mission is to promote responsible decision-making regarding drinking or non-drinking of beverage alcohol and to discourage all forms of irresponsible consumption through education, communications, research, law enforcement, and other programs. Recognizing nearly fifteen years of progress, distillers have promoted The Council's mission by investing over \$175 million in its programs to fight drunk driving and underage drinking. For more information about *Girl Talk* or The Century Council, please visit www.girlsanddrinking.org, www.grlthk.org or www.centurycouncil.org.