

An important aspect of substance abuse prevention has been to look at where teens obtain the substances. While students are reporting that obtaining alcohol is not always an easy thing to do, we do know they are getting it. In the past, there were many ideas of where teens were getting alcohol but most of this was rumor and gossip. In the last survey done with our students they were asked "If you drank alcohol in the past year, how did you usually get it?" Here is a summary of what the students reported.

The responses differed according to age of the students. Of the students who did drink in the past year in the 9th and 10th grade, the two highest answers were "someone I know under age 21" and "home without my parents' permission." Each had a total of 11.8% of respondents. The older students responded "someone I know age 21 or over" as the top response behind "I did not drink in the past year." This was followed by "someone I know under age 21." Fewer upperclassmen reported getting alcohol from the home. This could be interpreted that early and perhaps experimental use of alcohol is more dependent upon sneaking it from home while upperclassmen are looking elsewhere.

We know that the initial age of experimentation with alcohol is getting younger. Our survey puts the average age of initial use at 13 and national surveys are even younger. As a prevention specialist I urge all middle and high school parents to be careful with and aware of the alcohol in your house. Chris DePerno, a former police officer and now president of Integra Discovery Services, a Drug testing facility, cautioned our parents of the many ways teens could be sneaking alcohol or other drugs into or out of the home. He suggested parents use a fragile tape over both alcohol bottles and prescription bottles in the home. He also suggested locking up all substances. Knowing who your children are with and where they are is another tip for parents looking to prevent or delay experimentation with alcohol. Nothing is 100% effective but knowledge is probably a parent's best defense in the battle to keep your kids safe and sober.

If you have any questions or concerns please feel free to contact Marcy Weed Skaneateles Middle and High School Prevention Counselor, ADA-PEP.