

Joliet Township High School – District 204

Re: Underage Drinking

Dear Parent(s)/Guardian(s):

Your child's wellbeing in and out of school is important to us. One area of concern for parents/guardians and educators across the country is underage drinking. Alcohol use can cause destructive behavior that has consequences for your child's health, behavior, and school performance regardless of when and where consumption takes place. It can also lead to increases in risky behavior.

According to the National Institute of Health (NIH), in cases of alcohol-involved drivers, the rate of fatal crashes for drivers between 16 and 20 years old is more than twice that for drivers older than 20. The NIH and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention indicate that regular alcohol consumption by minors also corresponds to increased rates of suicide, sexual assault, high-risk sex, fighting, crime, and alcohol dependence. No one fully understands the lifetime consequences of alcohol consumption on the developing brain, but studies have shown weakened memory, and worsening of school performance due to increased truancy and learning impairments.

It is illegal for any person under 21 years of age to acquire, possess, or consume alcoholic beverages. District policies prohibit alcohol use by students. District policies also prohibit your child from (a) alcohol use, possession, distribution, purchase, or sale at school or school functions, and (b) attending school or school functions under the influence of alcohol. Below is a listing of some relevant Illinois laws that apply to underage drinking.

Zero Tolerance

Any person under the age of 21 who has consumed alcohol and operated or been in actual physical control of a motor vehicle may be requested to submit to tests to determine alcohol content. If that person refuses the test or has an alcohol concentration greater than .00, his or her driver's license will be suspended for 3 months to one year (625 ILCS 5/11-501.1(c)).

Consumption of Alcohol by Minor

Consumption of alcohol by a minor is a Class C misdemeanor. Minors convicted of alcohol possession in a public space face up to six months in jail and a \$500 fine, plus court costs and court-ordered evaluations and counseling. If a person under the age of 21 pleads guilty to, or is found guilty of, consuming alcohol while under the age of 21, he or she will lose his or her driving privileges for at least 3 months, even if the person was not driving, and even if he or she gets court supervision (a non-conviction sentence) (235 ILCS 5/10-1(e) and 625 ILCS 5/6-206(a)(43)).

Fake Identification

Conviction for using a fake ID to obtain alcohol is a Class A misdemeanor. Punishment carries a fine of not less than \$500 and requires at least 25 hours of community service. It may also affect driving privileges. If possible, any community service must be performed for an alcohol abuse prevention program (235 ILCS 5/6-16(a)(i) and 625 ILCS 5/6-206(a)).

Criminal Liability for Parent(s)/Guardian(s)

Any parent/guardian or other adult who furnishes alcohol to a minor, or who allows his or her residence to be used for the unlawful possession or consumption of alcohol by minors, may be charged with a Class A misdemeanor punishable by a fine and/or jail for up to 1 year. Where a violation directly or indirectly results in great bodily harm or death to any person, the crime is a

class 4 felony, punishable by 1 to 3 years in prison and up to a \$25,000 fine (235 ILCS 5/6-16(a-1)).

Civil Liability for Parent(s)/Guardian(s)

Any parent/guardian or other adult who provides alcohol (such as at a home party) may be liable in a civil action for monetary damages totaling up to \$100,000. The action may be sought by someone who suffers personal injury, loss of support, or property loss through the actions of an intoxicated minor whose intoxication resulted from a parent/guardian or another adult giving the minor alcohol (235 ILCS 5/6-21).

Driving Under the Influence (DUI)

Driving while under the influence of alcohol is a Class A misdemeanor punishable by fine and/or jail for up to one year. By driving a motor vehicle anywhere in Illinois, a person gives *implied consent* to a test to determine the alcoholic/drug content of his/her blood. If a person refuses to submit to the test, his/her license will automatically be suspended (625 ILCS 5/11-501).

Illegal Transportation of Open Liquor

It is unlawful for any person to transport, carry, possess, or have any alcoholic liquor within the passenger area of any motor vehicle except in the original container and with the seal unbroken (625 ILCS 5/11-502).

In conclusion, our District encourages you to partner with the school community to prevent underage drinking by our students. For more information on underage drinking and how to talk to your child about it, please see the following links:

pubs.niaaa.nih.gov/publications/MakeADiff_HTML/makediff.htm

www.centurycouncil.org/underage-drinking/parents

www.samhsa.gov/underagedrinking/