



Safe Celebrations

Some Guidelines for Teenage Parties

Parents will often face the issue of their son wanting to attend or organise a party. Due to the significance of this type of event there is always the opportunity for arguments to develop as all too often there is little focus on the wider aspects of what can happen during a party. Trinity Grammar School cannot, and does not, take any responsibility for parties organised by parents prior to, or after the end of, a School function or to celebrate other School events. Having said this, it is important the School provides some general assistance in terms of guidelines to help ensure an organised party can be a success for all.

The guidelines set down below are gleaned from discussions with other schools as well as advice from the NSW Police Service. The Police have also pointed out that regardless of the amount of pre-planning involved, there is always the chance that any party can get out of control. They therefore are supportive of any requests for advice, or even input into, the organization of the event. You can contact your local Police Station, or the NSW Police Service website - www.police.nsw.gov.au.

1. Attending a Party

One of the most important things in successfully running teenage parties is when all parents taking an active interest in the various arrangements for the party. Parents should feel comfortable in phoning the host(s) to discuss the various arrangements for the party and talk about expectations so that everyone has a clear understanding. This co-operation between families can make a big difference in reducing any anxieties felt beforehand. Some questions parents can ask include:

- whether your teenager is invited;
- the number of expected guests and the level of adult supervision;
- security arrangements if applicable;
- the serving of/or the permitting of alcohol at the party;
- the commencement and finishing time of the party;
- transport arrangements.

Some other things to consider include:

- Drive your teenager to the party and introduce yourself to the host and the host's parents
- You may wish to take the opportunity to see the venue, the level of adult supervision, the presence of alcohol and drugs, the age of the guests, familiar faces, check the pick up time with the hosts and confirm this time with your teenager before leaving the party.
- Ensure that your son has your contact phone number during the party and that this number is accessible.
- Confirm pick up and transport arrangements.

2. Hosting a Party

Most parties that go wrong are often poorly planned, disorganised, non-structured, or they become chaotic and/or out of control. This is when the wrong signals are sent out and when trouble starts. Parents who want to have a safe and enjoyable party should plan it properly. Good planning can reduce the risk of potential problems before the party begins, saving yourself difficulties later on.

The more structured and controlled your party is, the safer and more enjoyable it will be for everyone. For instance, have you thought of invitations, a controlled entry/exit point, non-alcoholic drink alternatives, structured timings throughout for activities (cake cutting, speeches, presents, etc), adult/parent supervisors, cleaning up as you go, dedicated finishing time, exit/transport strategy? There are a great number of things to think about, but remember, pre-planning is the best policy to make your party a great success. Using a 'checklist', like the one below, can assist you in providing a safe environment for people at the party and save yourself the stress of having to deal with a party that has become out of control.

Talk with your son about the issues indicated above in the initial stages of planning so that he can understand that he has an important role and responsibility in organising a safe party. He may be aware of other parties that worked, or did not, and so can assist the planning.

Checklist

For your information, we have listed some suggestions for you to consider when hosting a party. By following the advice below, you can minimise (but not prevent) the risks and help make your party a successful, enjoyable and safe time for everyone.

Before the Party

- Notify the Police that you are having a party by completing the Safe Party Notification Form. This form can be downloaded from their website www.police.nsw.gov.au, or picked up from a Police Station. The form should be lodged at the Police Station closest to the party venue at least 7 days prior to the party.
- Consider how the party will be advertised. Don't use the internet, SMS or e-mail distribution lists/noticeboards etc. If word of the party spreads, you will need to take extra preventative measures (ie. change of venue, more parent supervisors, hire a security guard, ask neighbours to notify you of any youths/groups congregating nearby).
- Guest lists should be kept to a manageable size. If the guest numbers are large, ask other parents/responsible adults to assist with supervision or consider hiring security personnel.
- Consider numbering your invitations. Enforce an RSVP and/or the need for guests to produce their invitation at the door. Notify guests up front that you will only admit people who comply.
- Encourage officially invited party guests not to disseminate information about the party to other people.
- Personally hand out invitations and discourage people from bringing extra friends - that way there will only be people you know and want at the party.
- Make sure your party has a definite start and finish time, and that these times are clearly displayed on the invitations.
- If your party is to be held in a public hall or sporting facility, contact your local council or community group regarding the hiring conditions imposed on public halls/surf clubs etc. Visit the location beforehand and inspect it inside and out, identifying the entrance(s) and exits(s) to the facility. It is wise to avoid buildings with multiple entrances.
- Talk to your neighbours and give them a contact number and/or name of the party host should a problem occur. Ask them to tell you if groups gather out the front or nearby.
- Find out about local noise regulations (contact your Local Council or Police if in doubt).

The Venue

- Think about the party size and venue. Is your home too small? Would a hall/function centre be a more appropriate and controlled environment?
- Consider appropriate lighting (particularly any dark hidden-away areas you may have).
- What about first aid? Have you planned what you are going to do if someone becomes sick or drunk?
- Are there sufficient toilets so people don't go outside?
- Are there enough garbage bins?
- What about parking and nearby public amenities?
- How many entry/exit points are there and how will you control them?

- Where will people put their valuables when they arrive and during the party? Allocate a lockable room for valuables and close off rooms you do not want guests to use.

Transport to and from the Party

- Consider how your guests will get there and get home.
- Encourage parents to pick up their teenagers at the end of the party. This reduces the chances that neighbouring properties will be damaged as guests walk home.
- Have a dedicated exit/transport strategy to get people out of the area and safely home immediately the party finishes (ie. additional parents, shared taxi plan, courtesy bus, etc).
- Have taxi and bus details handy (Transport Info Line 131 500 or www.131500.com.au).
- Organise a lift or car pool.
- Designate a driver and ensure alternative transport for people who have had too much to drink.

During the Party

- If gatecrashers arrive, act quickly by refusing them entry and asking them to leave immediately. If they won't leave, tell them the Police will be called. Gatecrashers are less likely if admittance is by invitation only. Remember, you have the right to refuse entry to your property. It is an offence for people to trespass if you have refused them entry.
- Have emergency numbers handy and carry your mobile phone.
- Don't spend all night in an area of your house away from the party (ie. in the kitchen). Consider having food pre-prepared or hiring professional caterers. This will allow you more time to supervise/mingle with your guests, and quickly deal with problems before they get out of hand.
- Ensure that food is available during the party and, if alcohol is being served, non-alcoholic drinks are also available as an alternative.
- Locate bands and speaker systems as far away from neighbours as possible and restrict noise after midnight. Excessive noise is most likely to be the reason that Police will be called to attend a party.
- Structure the party - have food being served, have dedicated timings throughout for activities (cake cutting, speeches, presents etc), have numerous people supervising, clean up as you go.
- Plan a wind-down time leading up to the finish, turning down music, etc.
- Make sure the family dog is secured and comfortable, to avoid excessive barking during the party.

Remember the Golden Rule - "Plan Ahead"