

ST JOHN'S COLLEGE PARENTS' CHARTER

on underage and irresponsible drinking

Practise the five basic **As** for prevention:
*Be **Aware** of our children's attitudes; be **Alert** to the environment and trends;
be **Around** in our children's activities; be **Assertive** in our parenting;
be **Awake** when our children get home.*

PREAMBLE

Supporters of this charter seek to respond in a positive and constructive manner to concerns about the widespread phenomenon of underage and irresponsible drinking and its associated behaviour in South Africa, whether this be at homes, private parties or other social events.

This charter is an expression of shared values and guidelines for parents concerning underage drinking. The charter is intended to empower and support parents, and does not replace the code of conduct for boys or the school policy regarding drinking. In supporting this charter, we take note of the school policy which makes underage drinking unacceptable for St John's pupils either on campus or during any school-related activity. This charter aims to complement the school policy by reaching agreements among parents regarding our responsibility in respect of underage and irresponsible drinking. The charter also takes cognisance of the law which states that it is illegal to supply alcohol to minors. The law allows for parents to provide a moderate amount of alcohol to their own children to be consumed in the presence of and under their direct supervision, but alcohol may not be provided to other children.

The charter is intended to be a living document, one that will be held before parents from time to time, and one that may change with time and circumstance to reflect more usefully our shared values and concerns, and the resulting guidelines offered. Parents are encouraged to examine the charter and their own circumstances, and support it as conscience dictates. There will be no formal measurement or policing of this support. Rather support for the charter will be evident when the actions, example, attitudes and language of parents are consistent with the values espoused and the guidelines offered.

VALUES

Supporters of this charter seek to uphold and promote the following values:

- *Observance of the law* – we are mindful of and observe the law of the land in relation to providing alcohol to those in our care, and to other children;
- *Responsibility* – we take responsibility through our actions and example for the physical, emotional and mental wellbeing of minors under our care; in so doing, we also promote responsible behaviour among children in our care;
- *Accountability* – we will be accountable to society, other parents and our children when we create circumstances where underage drinking and undesirable behaviour may occur;
- *Support* – we offer support to other parents and children in dealing with issues related to underage drinking and in managing parties;
- *Communication* – we seek to maintain open channels of communication between ourselves and other parents, and between ourselves and those in our care;
- *Honesty and integrity* – we seek to inculcate a mindset of honesty and integrity amongst those in our care, while demonstrating honesty and integrity in the way we exercise our care;
- *Self-respect and self-esteem* – we seek ways to help those in our care gain self-respect and self-esteem;
- *Non-violence* – we promote non-violence.

CONCERNS

Research concerning underage drinking in South Africa and around the world reveals disturbing findings regarding the actual and potential problems associated with underage drinking, as summarised below:

- the increased potential for car accidents, promiscuity, unprotected sex, date rape, violence, sexually transmitted diseases, HIV-AIDS, damage to reputation, lost opportunities;
- health related problems, particularly on the developing brain, liver, pancreas, other organs; weight gain and associated poor nutrition; emotional instability; and skin problems;
- the increased potential for alcoholism as a result of early drinking; the long term physical effects of binge drinking; and underage drinking as a gateway to other drugs.

Supporters of this charter wish to find constructive and helpful ways to work with others to avoid, minimise and address the above potential problems by exercising our responsibility as parents and guardians.

GUIDELINES

Supporters of this charter undertake to deal in practical ways with underage drinking and encourage responsible drinking among those who are older, in practical ways. We thus agree to:

- ensure that parties for minors held at our homes are alcohol free;
- monitor the behaviour of our own children and their friends and take action to prevent the abuse of alcohol;
- speak openly about underage or irresponsible drinking and bad behaviour and contact parents of children who engage in underage or irresponsible drinking and who behave badly; and
- not condone the purchase of alcohol by adults for resale or distribution to minors.

Furthermore, we will seek to:

- play an active role in educating our children about the harmful effects of alcohol;
- educate ourselves on the subject of and problems with underage and excessive drinking;
- monitor our children's whereabouts, and don't assume that plans, venues and lift arrangements will not change;
- set, discuss and maintain rules and boundaries for our children;
- be alert to and deal with the phenomenon of binge drinking;
- seek professional assistance if there are concerns about physical and/or emotional dependence on alcohol;
- discuss the subject of underage or excessive drinking with other parents, sharing information about patterns of behaviour, concerns, signs or symptoms of problems and worrying situations;
- get to know our children's friends, their parents and their drinking habits;
- reach agreements with other parents about consistent and helpful ways of dealing with underage drinking;
- seek to provide and encourage opportunities for healthy and enjoyable social interaction between boys and girls in an alcohol-free environment;
- avoid hosting open parties and take caution when allowing our children to attend open parties;
- maintain sufficient parental visibility and control at parties, enlisting the support of other parents;
- establish a guest list when hosting parties and ensure there is a way of managing attendance according to the guest list;
- exercise care to ensure our children are not given lifts by those under the influence of alcohol and where applicable, that they do not drive when they have been drinking;
- avoid glamorising alcohol;
- set a good personal example for our children.