



August 1, 2016

Dear Be the Influence ("BTI") Marin Parents:

Welcome! Welcome to the 2016-2017 School Year! For those parents who are new (*especially those in the Freshman Class of 2020 and to parents in our new partnering schools!*), thank you for joining our community of parents who seek to positively "Be the Influence" in their teen's lives with respect to alcohol, marijuana and other drug use.

BTI Growing and With a Combined Tam District Parent List. Be the Influence has expanded this year and has been adopted by 8 schools, including The Branson School, Marin Catholic and San Domenico High Schools. This year, Redwood, Tam and Drake, Tamiscal and San Andreas have joined forces and in the Fall there will be a combined Parent Participant List for all five Tam Unified High School District schools. The Parent List will also contain parents from San Domenico High School. This makes sense as our teens often attend the same parties! We are now called "Be the Influence Marin".

Newsletters. As a BTI Marin Parent, you will be receiving Newsletters such as this throughout the school year with resources, parenting tips and information about upcoming events. As a BTI Marin Parent, please know that **YOU ARE NOT ALONE** in dealing with the tricky issues surrounding keeping our teens healthy and safe from the harmful effects of alcohol, marijuana and other drugs.

This Welcome Newsletter contains the following information:

- Save the Date for Parent Ed Event on Today's Marijuana on October 18th
- Additional Information on Be the Influence
- Redwood's Back to School Dance on August 19th
- Parenting Tips, including a word on Party Buses.
- Campus Safety Anonymous Tip Line at Redwood
- Additional Resources

Please read on!

SAVE THE DATE FOR "TODAY'S MARIJUANA" PRESENTATION: Jennifer Golick, LMFT & Clinical Director of Muir Wood Treatment Center will present with a panel of teens on **October 18th** from 7-8:30 pm in Redwood's Small Gym. The presentation will be on what parents and their teens need to know about today's marijuana. Teens are encouraged to attend. With the ballot initiative to legalize marijuana in the California being likely to pass this November, marijuana use will become even more normalized for teens. The event is open to all BTI schools.



You can view videos of last year's presentations on marijuana on YouTube: [Weed 101](#) and [How to Speak with Your Teen About Marijuana](#).

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION ON BE THE INFLUENCE

Remember that the BTI Commitment is Neither a Legally Binding Contract nor a Guarantee. While not legally binding, the BTI Commitment represents a serious and important community effort and support system signifying parents' intentions and best efforts not to "facilitate" or "enable" teens to use alcohol and other drugs. The steps outlined in our BTI Commitment represent common sense "best practices", supported by research, in parenting teens. Yet nothing, including following the BTI Parent Commitment, can guarantee against your teens drinking or taking other drugs.

Today's Drug Culture. The BTI Commitments measures can substantially help teens navigate our culture in Marin that is not "drug-free", but rather can be "drug infested". Our teens are growing up in a culture where the level of partying is extreme: vodka shots instead of beer, sake bombing and binge drinking to the point of blacking out. Today's marijuana is way more powerful than the marijuana around in our youth with new ways to consume through edibles and dabbing. The partying we adults may have done in our youth is tame by comparison.



Be a Parent, Not a Pal. It can be a challenge for parents to consistently adhere 100% to the BTI Commitment throughout the high school years. The older a teen gets, the trickier parenting in this area can be, especially when your teen starts driving. Parenting a junior or senior is very different than parenting a freshman or sophomore. Yet teens in high school want and need limits from their parents. We may not be able to control our teens but we *can* control the way we parent. Make your teen's health and safety your responsibility. Don't confuse being a "pal" with being a "parent".

TIPS ON REDWOOD'S "BACK TO SCHOOL" DANCE

This popular event, widely attended by students of all grades, will be held on Friday, August 19th from 8-11 pm. While it is a spirited and fun evening, there have been issues in the past with students in attendance being under the influence of alcohol and other drugs. Accordingly, please consider taking the following measures:

- Review the Letter from Principal emailed to parents regarding school policies and discuss the consequences with your teen.
- Discuss the fact that there will be a police presence at the dance, bags will be searched and students will be randomly tested for being under the influence.
- Make clear your own rules and expectations that your teen will be sober and discuss your consequences for violating your rules in advance.
- Know how your teen is getting to and from the dance.
- Expect your teen home soon after the dance is over (be aware of local 11 pm curfew laws, especially for new drivers).
- Be wary of last minute sleepover requests
- Don't hesitate to connect with any parents whose house your teen is going to before or after the dance. Join Be the Influence and use the online BTI Parent Participant List!

ADDITIONAL PARENTING TIPS: HOW TO HELP PREVENT TEEN ALCOHOL AND OTHER DRUG USE

While you may not want to be a hovering parent, now is the time to "lean in" as a parent, especially during the freshman and sophomore years. Below are additional tips to pick and choose from, depending on your teen's age, temperament, maturity level and proven trustworthiness.

- **Parents are their Teens Most Important Influence.** The BTI program is premised on the simple fact that parents have a lot more influence with their teens than they think they do. Parents are still their teens' number one influence. It is further based on research that shows that increased "supervision", an "engaged" parenting style and "modeling" healthy behavior by parents with respect to their own alcohol and drug use can all positively impact teen behavior and help delay early experimentation and use.
- **Know the New Adolescent Brain Science and "Delay, Delay, Delay".** We now know so much about the effects of alcohol and other drugs on the developing teen brain. And the research is very clear that the longer teens "delay" using alcohol and other drugs, the less likely they will have addiction and



substance abuse issues later in life. Teens who experiment with alcohol and other drugs at age 15 or younger are five times more likely to have addiction or substance abuse issues as adults.

With each year your teen delays regular use, the better off and more successful they will be - not only in high school but in life. The longer your teen delays use, the longer his or her brain will develop normally and your teen will learn to deal with the stresses and ups and downs of life without self-medicating.

- **Teens who are Allowed to Party in their Homes have Higher Risks.** Some parents cling to the false notion that their children will be “safer” and off the road if they allow them to “experiment” in their homes or “look the other way” when they use. They hope their teens “will get it over with” in high school, and be “better prepared” for college so they will not “go crazy” then.



The research shows otherwise. Studies show that teens who are allowed to party at home have higher rates of drunk or drugged driving. Studies further show that in our culture, the theory that parents can teach their teens to party responsibly by allowing it at home is misguided. Additionally, it is irresponsible of parents to allow other kids to party in their homes, especially if the parents of those teens are unaware of their permissiveness.

Finally, the reality is that many of our teens likely will go a little crazy in college anyway! Another reality is that, growing up in Marin County, by the time our teens graduate from high school, the majority of them will have experimented with alcohol or other drugs and either they or their friends will have unfortunate experiences to learn from, thus “preparing” them for college.

- **Be Wary of Parties with Older Teens and Sleepovers.** Parents of younger teens (especially freshman) should say “not yet” or otherwise discourage their teens from attending large parties with teens from more senior grades. The world of a 14-15 year old is very different from that of a 17-18 year old. Additionally, the fact is that parents are often absent from these parties, or the parties are loosely supervised or worse, drinking and other drug use is tolerated. Similarly, parents should be wary about last minute sleepover requests and should use the BTI Parent Participant Listing to reach out to the hosting parents.
- **Know Where Your Teen is Going and With Whom, Especially if Driving.** Consider using “Find My Friends” or other app on your phones to verify your teen’s whereabouts. This also applies to what your teen is doing after school, especially on Friday afternoons and on

weekends. Also know who your teen is driving with. Get to know your teens' friends and their parents by reaching out to them and using the on-line BTI Parent Participant List.



Do not enable your new teen driver with a "provisional" restricted drivers license to drive other teens. This greatly increases the risks of an accident and can result in substantial liability. Say no to your teen getting a ride with a new driver, even if it makes life more convenient for you as a parent. Get to know your teens' friends and their parents by reaching out to them and using the on-line BTI Parent Participant List.

- **Trust your Teen ... to be a Teen!** Teen brains are wired for risk taking. A common refrain of teens to parents is "You don't trust me!" The response? "We trust you to be a teenager!"
- **Set a Reasonable Curfew and Check-Ins.** There is no reason for teens to be allowed out at all hours of the night when nothing good happens. Local curfew laws are at 11 pm and the CHP strictly enforces this curfew and issues citations when teens have their "provisional" drivers license.



For freshman and sophomore parents, think about what time is okay for a senior to come home at night. Then count backwards for curfews. Realize that every year, you will want to move your teen's curfew a little later to reward good behavior and acknowledge growing maturity and freedom. Then work backwards four years. If you start 9th grade at midnight, you will soon find yourself in trouble.

Regarding check-ins, having some face to face contact is best and a phone conversation is even better than texting. Trust ... but verify such as through a landline or Find My Friends or similar app.

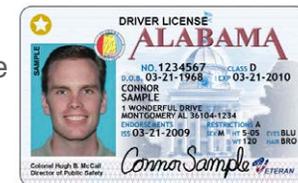
- **Be Aware of Local Social Host Ordinance Laws and Use Law Enforcement as Support.** Social Host Ordinances throughout Marin hold parents strictly and financially accountable for underage drinking in their homes. Some local police departments publish press releases about social host violations with your street named and if your teen is 18 or over, your family may be identified by name.

If you are leaving your house unattended for the evening or leaving town overnight, take precautions to ensure your house won't become "The Party Spot". Never hesitate to contact police for help if a party gets out of control. Local police can be contacted for drive-by "vacation checks".

- **"Teen Proof" Your Home.** Reduce easy access to alcohol, marijuana and prescription drugs by "teen proofing" your home to lock up or otherwise secure or keep track of any alcohol and other drugs. Don't make it easy for your teen to experiment with or use alcohol or other drugs - even if you think it is an inevitable "rite of passage".



- **Hidden Stashes and Fake Id's.** Periodically check for hidden alcohol, marijuana and other drugs or paraphernalia as well as "fake id's", all of which can be found in bedrooms, cars and wallets. Fake Id's are easy to obtain online and usually come in pairs. If you find one and destroy it, chances are a second one is around.



- **Know the Difference Between Experimentation and Use/Abuse.** Experimentation is trying alcohol or another drug once or maybe twice. More than that is "using", which can escalate into "abusing". The "worst" drug out there is the one that your teen experiments with and likes.

- **Have Regular Discussions about these Topics with Your Teen.** If you have not been talking about the hard stuff (drugs, birth control, sex, consent), this is the time to start. If you have been talking about these issues, double down. Talk early and often. Every family has its own mores and values and your teen should know them.



Over time they may discard some of what we say, and ignore our rules and defy us but they should never be unclear about both your values and rules. Agree to the rules ahead of time - no alcohol or other drugs, or smoking. Be present, ask open ended questions and listen to what they say. Be mindful of the language you use and make positive remarks about your teen's behavior outnumber any negative comments ("catch them being good".)

- **Establish Consequences if your Teen Violates Your Agreements.** Be a parent and not a pal. Local law enforcement officers often comment that when called, parents seem more concerned with the legal ramifications than on disciplining their teens. Set consequences which have a connection to the behavior or rule violation.

- **Give a Goodbye Reminder, Hello Hug or Good Night Kiss.** Be around when they leave for a night out, perhaps with a reminder of your rules and consequences. This will also ensure there is no "pre-gaming" at your home. After a teen's night out, parents should stay up to greet their child, look them in the eye and give them a hello hug or good night kiss (and a discreet sniff) when they come home. Have a conversation with them and try not to be asleep or out on the town yourself when they arrive.
- **Establish a Safe Ride/"No Questions Asked" Policy and an "Exit" Plan.** Tell your teen that they can always call you for a safe ride home and there will be "no questions asked" -- and then perhaps ask the next morning. Review excuses that your teen can use to exit a risky situation, e.g., "my parents will kill me" or "I have to get up early in the morning". Consider writing a letter such as the one posted at http://www.huffingtonpost.com/kathy-radigan/an-open-letter-to-my-teenage-son-about-drinking_b_5609429.html

- **Postpone or Keep Track of Uber, Lyft or Taxi Rides.** While certainly safer than driving drunk or drugged, these forms of transportation enable extreme levels of drinking and other drug use. Don't allow them for younger teens without driver's licenses when you can be driving them. For older teens, keep track of how frequently your teen is using them. Alarm bells should be ringing with regular use.



- **Don't Place Absolute Trust in Designated Drivers.** Our California Healthy Kids Survey (CHKS) results show that too many so-called designated drivers drive are simply less drunk or high than their passengers (28% of 11th graders admit to driving under the influence or being a passenger in a car with a driver under the influence). Moreover, many kids have the mistaken belief that driving stoned is slower and safer than driving drunk. Both are dangerous.

- **Stay Away from Party Buses.** Just say "no" to this one as there are significant risks to party buses. Party buses enable extreme levels of partying. This past summer, police intercepted a typical party bus loaded with young teens and copious amounts alcohol, marijuana and prescription drugs. Read about it [here](#). Note that this party bus incident was not an isolated one but rather was typical of buses rented in Marin for birthday parties, New Year's Eve and Prom.



Marin County's Superintendent of Schools Mary Jane Burke and Sheriff Robert Doyle said it best in their [response](#) to the incident: party buses are bad news. This opinion piece cites our BTI program and also has several excellent

common sense suggestions that parents may use before allowing their teens to participate in social activities.

- **Be Mindful about Your Own Use: Model Responsibility and Moderation in Your Own Behavior.** This may be the most important tip of all. While the BTI Commitment is about parenting teens and not policing adults, consider limiting your alcohol intake when around your teens (and younger kids). A glass or two with a meal isn't a parenting crime. Yet, when hosting or attending a child-related event, keep it alcohol free. Never drive while under the influence. Remember that while your teens may pretend not to hear you - they are listening and are watching your actions!



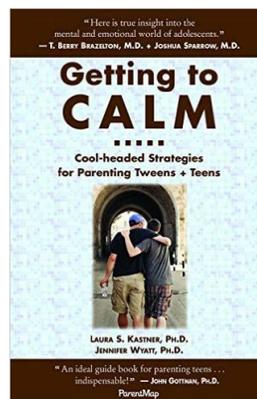
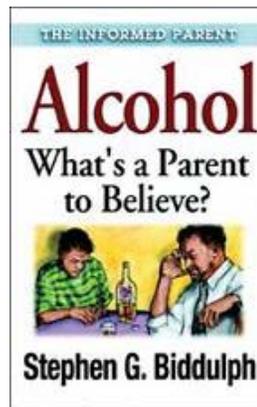
CAMPUS SAFETY ANONYMOUS TIP LINES. To keep our school Administration informed, parents and students may call Redwood's confidential tip line and leave an anonymous message with any information relating to the health and safety of students, including alcohol and other drug use and/or dealing on campus - from the time students leave for school until they arrive back home. The number to call is: **415-945-3693**.

JUST SAY "KNOW": HOW TO STAY INFORMED AS A PARENT

- **Attend Parent and/or Student Education Forums.** Learn the latest facts on alcohol and other drugs and prioritize attending events sponsored by your school's parent associations and PTSA, the Tam District's new Wellness Centers, the Twin Cities Coalition for Healthy Youth, the Ross Valley Healthy Community Collaborative and Mill Valley AWARE (all funded by a Marin County grant to reduce underage binge drinking, alcohol, marijuana and other drug use) and other community groups and schools.
- **Open Periodic BTI Email Newsletters.** Throughout the year, BTI Parents will receive updates with resources, the latest research and trends, and notice of upcoming events.
- **Check Out Our New Website.** Our new website at <http://www.betheinfluencemarin.com> has a blog containing excerpts from prior BTI newsletters.
- **Read Recommended Books.** Here are our recommended books for the Fall:
 - *Alcohol: What's a Parent to Believe?* by Stephen G. Biddulph

and *Marijuana: What's a Parent to Believe?* by Timmen Cermak, MD, contain valuable information about the effects of alcohol and marijuana on the developing teen brain.

- *Reefer Sanity: Seven Great Myths about Marijuana* by Kevin Sabet, Ph.D is relevant to the debate about legalization.
- *How to Raise a Drug Free Kid - The Straight Dope for Parents* by Joseph Califano urges parents to advocate for "drug-free" versus "drug infested" schools.
- *Getting to Calm* by Laura Kastner (Chapter 13 is entitled "When You Catch" Your Teen Drinking or Smoking") offers excellent preventative and "in the moment" advice beyond the "just say no" and "you're grounded!" approach. Pages 233-243 feature different scenarios and strategies, depending on your teen's age, as well as practical tips how to parent effectively and as a team.



- **Check out the Twin Cities Coalition for Healthy Youth** and Ross Valley Healthy Community Collaborative **websites** at <http://thecoalitionconnection.com> and <http://rvhcc.com>
- **Review last year's Be the Influence Newsletters.** These are reprinted on the [Redwood Be the Influence](#) webpage and excerpts appear in the blog pages of [Be The Influence Marin](#).
- **"Follow" our community partners on Facebook!**
 - Twin Cities Coalition for Healthy Youth at [The Coalition Connection](#).
 - [Ross Valley Healthy Community Collaborative](#).
 - Send a Friend Request to join the [Redwood High School Parent Forum](#) which was started by Redwood parents two years ago. It is a private FB group which is unaffiliated with the Tam HS District, Redwood HS Administration or Redwood PTSA. From academics to extracurricular activities to social issues, Redwood HS Parent Forum is a terrific forum for parents to share information.

Stay tuned for additional Newsletters throughout the year. Our October Newsletter will feature facts on teen use of marijuana, just in time for your vote on the California ballot initiative whether or not to legalize it. We wish you a healthy, happy, safe and

successful school year!

- **The Be the Influence Marin Committee**

Redwood High School PTSA

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