



Milford Public Schools

Questions and Answers about the Safe Homes Network

What are Safe Homes?

Homes where parents agree to cooperate with schools, law enforcement, other parents, and young people to create a healthy atmosphere where the illegal use of alcohol and other drugs is not acceptable. Safe Homes' parents are taking a stand against the alarming increase in alcohol and drug use among our youth.

What makes the Safe Homes Program effective?

Safe Homes is effective because it helps bring together parents who share a desire to help their children enjoy their teen years drug and alcohol free. By signing a pledge to supervise get-togethers and prohibit the use of drugs and underage drinking, parents are teaching their own children about their values, as well as participating in a network of parents in whom other parents can have confidence. In our mobile society, such networks are needed and require more organizing than perhaps they did in the past.

What are the benefits to signing a pledge form?

When adults join together and take a united stand against alcohol and drug use, they are more effective than when they act separately. Parents benefit from the support of other parents because of the help they receive in resisting pressure from others who do not set these limits on their children's behavior. Your children will know that parents are working together and talking regularly to each other. In addition, parents can be reassured when their kids attend a party at a Safe Homes location because Safe Homes members have access to a Safe Homes Directory listing families who support this program. Parents know they can contact hosts to a party at a Safe Homes location.

Is there a cost to join Safe Homes or be a member?

No! It is a free program open to any adult who signs the Safe Homes Pledge and lives by this agreement in their home.

But I trust my children completely. Why would I need to be involved?

One of the valuable aspects of the program is that it provides information for each family about the rules and limits set by other families with whom their children interact. This can make it easier to ensure that your own child will enjoy social events without being put in uncomfortable positions because of a lack of parental supervision. In addition, it can help children, who might feel self-conscious that perhaps their parents are stricter than others, to know that many parents have the same rules.

I can't imagine that parents would permit their children and their friends to drink or use drugs at parties in their homes. Why is signing a pledge needed when these rules seem so obvious?

To some, they are obvious. To others, substance use may seem like normal behavior for teenagers so they allow it in their homes. However, parents who choose to sign a pledge are making a commitment to be active in their supervision as well as in their communication with their teens. This sends a message to their own children about the importance they attach to this issue as well as to the community. The goal is, in fact, to strengthen the idea of drug and alcohol free teens as a norm that IS supported by everyone in our community.

My children are in high school--of course they are going to experiment, that's only natural. I'd rather they did it in my home where they are safe than out somewhere they could get hurt.

Won't this program just make them more secretive?

Maybe, but it provides them one fewer place to experiment. In addition, teens won't receive mixed messages about alcohol/drug use. Teens need to hear consistency in the messages they receive from adults. Clear messages from parents have been shown to help most teens resist the temptation to experiment in this hazardous way. While we know that few teens are going to avoid making mistakes, we are trying to give them the tools they need to make wise decisions in as many situations as possible.

What will happen if I join the pledge and something happens--the kids sneak it in or my child drinks at someone else's house?

Again, Safe Homes is about parents taking a stand against alcohol and drug use by teenagers. Not all teenagers take that same stand even if their parents do. Remind them that there will be consequences for their behavior. Some of those consequences can be severe involving law enforcement. Remember that you are part of a network of people committed to helping you create a drug and alcohol free environment for the teens of your community.

What is my liability if I host or provide alcohol?

There are several things you must know. Drinking under the age of 21 is against the law and those who provide alcohol can be held liable for anything that happens to an underage consumer. Meaning you could be charged with a criminal offense for procuring alcohol and/or be sued for damages or injuries caused by the underage drinking. The adult is held responsible, NOT the underage drinker.

Who will know I am a member or have my phone number?

The Safe Homes project coordinator and member parents who have also signed the pledge will have your name and phone number. However, your phone number is never given out unless you have first signed the approval to do so on the Safe Homes Pledge form.

If I sign the Pledge, does it mean I can't have alcohol in my home?

The Pledge states you will not allow anyone under 21 to have alcohol in your home or on your property. Your decisions about alcohol use as an adult of legal age is up to you.

What are we asking you to do?

- Get a copy of the pledge from Milford Public Schools (or print your own copy from the Milford Public Schools Website.)
- Read over the 5 points on the Safe Homes pledge.
- Sign the pledge and provide your contact information.
- Return the pledge to your child's school.
- Receive your copy of your child's school's Safe Homes directory.
- Use the directory to find the names and phone numbers of homes where your child will be visiting.
- Call ahead to make sure parents know your child is coming and to make sure that they will be supervised by an adult.
- Allow other parents to contact you when you will be hosting their children in your home.

Safe Homes is not a program designed to address adult alcohol consumption. Safe Homes is concerned with underage substance use and abuse.

The Safe Homes pledge is NOT a legally binding contract. It is an "Agreement" among the network of parents.

Every two years the Nebraska Department of Health and Human Services administers the Nebraska Risk and Protective Factor Student Survey that is designed to assess adolescent substance use. Data from the most recent survey (2007) suggests that in a 30 day span, just over 40% of the seniors in southeast Nebraska had consumed alcoholic beverages – more than just a few sips.

That same survey indicated that 30% of sophomores from Milford (now seniors) consumed alcoholic beverages. For Milford eighth graders (now sophomores) the number would have been just over 13%.

Perhaps more startling, the survey suggests that in a given two week period in 2007, 28% of southeast Nebraska seniors had consumed 5 or more drinks in a row - that is to say, had engaged in binge drinking. For Milford sophomores the number would have been almost 15%. When asked, the overwhelming majority of the children who drank reported that it was parents who were procuring and that their drinking was being done in someone's home. Imagine that, if a class had 60 children in it then nearly 17 of them would have been drunk in the last two weeks in someone's home.

Is that okay? Of course not. But what can be done? Milford Public Schools, along with the Milford Ministerium Association, the Milford Police Department, and the Seward County Sheriff Department is encouraging all parents to band together to stop, interrupt, disallow and discourage underage drinking and illegal drug use in this community. In other words, make our homes safe for our children. We ask you to support and join Milford Public Schools as they form a Safe Homes Parent Network. You can do this by signing a pledge form.

The Milford Public Schools Safe Homes Parent Network is designed after the national Safe Homes substance abuse prevention program developed by parents to support parents.(www.safehomes.org) The program has been successful nationwide in reducing youth alcohol and substance use in communities.

Its mission is to help parents establish a clear “NO USE” message for children in their home when it comes to the consumption of alcohol, tobacco, and illegal drugs. One way it does this is by establishing a community of parents who share the same desire to keep their underage children drug and alcohol free. This network of parents strengthens the message that the illegal consumption of alcohol, tobacco, and drugs will not be tolerated.

Families are the key to sending that message because they are the most powerful influence in a child's life. Our youth face intense societal pressure to use alcohol, tobacco, and other drugs. Safe Homes is unique in that it helps bring together parents who share a desire to help their children enjoy their teen years drug and alcohol free. Parents are empowered to join together to give their children clear, consistent messages about underage drinking and drug use.

By signing a pledge, parents agree to cooperate with schools, law enforcement, other parents, and young people to create a safe and healthy atmosphere in which student use of alcohol and other drugs is prohibited. As a Safe Homes Parent, you are enforcing the law and taking a stand against the alarming increase of alcohol and drug use among our youth.

The signed pledge is not asking you, the adult, not to have alcohol in your home but signing the pledge does assure other parents that you are supervising student get-togethers and prohibiting underage drinking and the use of drugs. Parents who sign are making their expectations known to their own children as well as communicating those same expectations to other parents in the network. This communication strengthens both relationships—the child and parent relationship as well as the parent-to-parent relationship.

Many parents are looking for support in setting boundaries for their teens when it comes to socializing and following the law. Too often, parents are deceived into thinking that partying with alcohol and drugs is acceptable so they feel pressured to allow it when they know it's against the law. Safe Homes provides a support system to all parents who wish to abide by the law and keep their children alcohol and drug free. This program encourages parents to openly communicate with other parents about their parenting decisions as well as to seek assistance and guidance from them for their own parenting decisions. As a community of parents setting the same expectations for our children, we strengthen each other as well as the message. Won't you please sign the pledge not only to help your children remain alcohol and drug free, but also to help other parents encourage the same in their children? Together we can reduce the use of alcohol and drug use in Milford.

Safe Homes Pledge

1. I will actively supervise all gatherings of youth in our home or on our property, or ask another responsible adult for help to do so.
2. I will not allow the possession or use of alcohol, tobacco, or other drugs by youth in our home or on our property, acknowledging Nebraska laws governing such activities.
3. I will set expectations for my children by knowing where they are going, whom they are with, what they are doing, when they are to return home and I will visit with them about their activities when they return home.
4. I will invite and encourage contact from other parents whose children are gathering in my home or on my property; additionally, and I will feel free to contact members on the Safe Homes Network if my child(ren) are going to their home.
5. I wish to be informed, confidentially and without judgment, by any parent who has personally observed my child using alcohol or other illegal drugs; conversely, I will make every effort to inform, confidentially and without judgment, the parents of a child whom I have personally observed using alcohol or other illegal drugs.

This is not a legally binding contract, but rather an agreement of concern and intent among members of the Safe Homes Parent Network.



**Milford Public Schools
SAFE HOMES Parent Agreement/Sign Up Form**

Milford Public Schools along with the Milford Ministerial Association and the Milford Police Department are all committed to providing a safe environment for our students – particularly, one that is free from illegal alcohol and drug use. Creating this environment requires cooperation among parents and other community members. This cooperation, when made public, can help create this safe environment.

To achieve this goal, Milford Public Schools is implementing a SAFE HOMES Parent Network to help establish that cooperation and to provide parents with the names of other parents who wish to cooperate. This program encourages parents to sign a pledge indicating their willingness to cooperate fully with the law, the school, and other parents, as well as to uphold community standards. To support this program we encourage parents to sign and return to the school the attached *pledge. Together we can protect the children of Milford from the influences of illegal alcohol and drug use. They deserve to be safe from these influences during their youth.

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Name(s) _____

Address _____

Home Phone _____ Work Phone _____

Cell Phone(s) _____

Email Address _____

Child(ren)'s Name(s) and Grade(s)

Check those that apply:

_____ Yes, you may publish my phone number.

_____ Yes, you may publish my address.

_____ Yes, you may publish my email address.

Parent(s) Signature(s) _____

Please return to the School Office