



## Code of Social Conduct

### To Parents of Independent School Students

The Principals of AISSA Schools are united in their conviction that parental interest, supervision and support are essential as adolescents seek greater freedom and independence.

Adolescence has always been a turbulent time. Today's teenagers are facing an increasingly complex society. The media and the communication revolution have created additional pressures and influences for our children to navigate as they take their first steps into the adult world. As parents, you face the challenge of encouraging teenagers to become independent but of also setting boundaries so they can learn the lessons of life in a safe and secure environment. It is a joint responsibility to assist them to grow to be self-reliant men and women even though there will be times when they rebel against the rules adults set.

A primary development task of teenagers is to seek independence. Teenagers go through rapid physical and emotional changes. Parents and adolescents must make changes in their relationships to adjust to this new stage. Teenagers go backwards and forwards between wanting freedom but we all need the security of the family. We have to allow for some risk taking so they can learn. However, it is important that risks are taken in an environment where there are clear rules and boundaries to protect them.

Making the decisions that are best for teenagers can sometimes be very difficult and will often cause more conflict than giving in and allowing them to engage in behaviours that they are not yet mature enough to cope with. Although seldom publicised, surveys show that most teenagers appreciate it when their parents set boundaries and establish expectations that are fairly enforced.

Parents need to make the decisions that are in the best interests of their children. Children will not always agree. There will be situations where they need to understand there will be no more discussion and you are making a decision in their best interest. Adults must be brave enough to maintain a decision in the face of pressure and disappointment. Discipline enables children to become self-disciplined.

School Principals urge parents to maintain close contact with their children, to establish and maintain clear guidelines of behaviour and expectations regarding frequency and nature of social activities, use of motor vehicles, and consumption of alcohol, spending money and other matters.

Parents are asked to pay particular heed to the following:

## 1. Parenting and Behaviour

One common battlefield is the issue of teenage parties. Students, parents and the police regularly report incidents where parties get out of control, often with serious consequences for hosts and guests. Problems occur during 'Before' and 'After' parties, and consequently, Principals suggest the following.

Whilst your school is concerned about the welfare of staff and students at all times, its legal responsibility does not extend to private parties including before and after parties in connection with school formals and parties following official school functions. However, when things go wrong, invariably your school can extend its care to those who are affected. From speaking to parents regularly about this issue, we know they appreciate guidance from the school.

It is important to acknowledge from the outset that parties are an important social experience for teenagers. However, a friendly and often-repeated warning: large parties for young people can go horribly wrong. Where is the value in a birthday party which gets gate-crashed, where guests are physically assaulted, alcohol misuse arises, illicit drugs are present, the house is damaged, neighbours are disturbed and the police are required to intervene?

For many parties, whilst there has been no disaster, illicit drugs, cigarettes and alcohol have been present. Inquiries sometimes reveal some naivety on the part of teenagers who seem to have little idea of the possible consequences of their behaviour. Therefore, at this stage it is appropriate to reiterate some beliefs of Independent School Heads in relation to such matters:

- For each individual student, social functions should be few leading up to and including Year 10 and infrequent during term time thereafter. School aged students should not smoke cigarettes or drink alcohol. Like voting, they are rights of adults over 18, who should then accept the consequences. The laws of South Australia support this view and also make other drugs, such as Marijuana or Amphetamines, illegal.
- We often hear adults say “we all know kids will drink”, implying that it is naive to expect otherwise. This is no reason to negate parental responsibilities so parents need to be understanding but firm. There will often be differences between different family values and freedoms. It is ok to say no. There will always be other parents who feel the same way.
- Please note that recent research confirms that adolescent brains have not fully developed and alcohol or any drugs are not recommended. An adolescent can become physically addicted to alcohol in six months. Alcohol use may lead to deterioration of grades, inappropriate sexual behaviour, depression, and to other drug use. Many studies have concluded that alcohol can have significant effects on brain development. This, in turn, has an enormous impact on the brain being able to reach its optimum functional potential.
- Your teenager's school shares with parents the responsibility for the development of young people and their ability to make sound choices. If either avoids responsibility, the other becomes relatively powerless to provide effective influence. Alcohol and drug use is appreciably lower among teenagers with parents who make their expectations for alcohol and other drug use clear.
- In recent interviews with senior students who have not used alcohol, every student said that the primary reason they have not used it is the fact

that their parents expect them not to use. Generally speaking, if parents expect and communicate the fact that alcohol is not to be consumed, the possibility of that being a reality is strong. If the parent feels that “kids will be kids,” and that their teenager will try alcohol or drugs, that is more likely to be the outcome.

## 2. Hosting Parties

- Courteous behaviour should be promoted at all times, including in public places, and at sports and social functions.
- Parties should be planned with your teenager well ahead of time. Many problems can be prevented by open communication between parents. There will be areas of agreement and others you will need to negotiate. It is important that you both understand and stick to the plan that you have devised together.
- Social functions should be kept simple and should finish at a reasonable hour. Elaborate functions tend to produce a spirit of competition and often cause embarrassment to teenagers whose parents are not in the position to reciprocate on the same scale. Large functions planned after an official school event detract from the purpose of that event. Smaller parties are easier to supervise.
- Consider the timing of the party. Parties during holidays are preferable, whilst it is not advisable to hold a party immediately prior to or following examinations, before or after the school formal or successive parties for the same children within the span of a few weeks. Consider other activities apart from parties which provide social interaction.
- To minimise the possibility of gate-crashers, establish a guest list and issue individual written invitations. Information on the invitations should include the address and contact phone number of the host parents, starting and finishing times, information about alcohol and an rsvp via telephone. Avoid invitations that can be reprinted and RSVPs being transmitted by sms or email. There should be a responsible adult at all points of entry throughout the night, armed with the guest list. Gate-crashes should be confronted and asked to leave immediately. Police assistance should be requested when needed.
- Check the guest list off at your door. Never permit gate-crashers or others whom you have not specifically invited to join in. The use of mobile phones and text messaging has made the problem of gate-crashing worse. For any function it is wise to have the assistance of friends and the services of a security firm for the purpose of supervision. Ask parents of other students attending to assist and willingly volunteer when other parents are hosting a party. The adults should move among the guests from time to time. As hosts, parents are responsible for the welfare and safety of other people’s sons and daughters. Never leave younger people in a house unsupervised.
- Make your ‘no alcohol or illegal substances’ position clear. You have a duty of care and may be liable if alcohol and drugs are served at your home. Work out how to manage the use of illicit drugs or excessive use of alcohol at your home. Your plans should include what is to be done in the event that someone becomes sick or intoxicated.

- Define the party area. Ensure adequate lighting. Advise neighbours and the local police of the date, time, and supervision arrangements and that there may be some loud music and general noise. Check the regulations regarding permitted noise levels in your area.
- Be careful about the moral and legal implications of selling alcohol, which includes the requirement to hold a liquor licence. It is an offence to sell alcohol to minors (young people under the age of 18 years), supply alcohol to minors in a public place or serve alcohol to minors where they have paid an entrance fee. Minors cannot buy alcohol or drink alcohol in public places.
- When hosting a party for your child never allow BYO alcohol. It is unwise to serve alcohol at young people's parties and, as mentioned above, there are legal issues in relation to the sale and supply of alcohol, as well as the well-being of those consuming it. Parents must be the judge of that, taking into account the age of the guests, the size of the group and knowledge of their child's friends. Should you choose to supply alcohol, it is crucial that you limit the amount and make the fact widely known. Make sure that you have a responsible person in charge of the alcohol. Avoid open punch bowls and carefully monitor consumption by individuals.
- Do not allow backpacks into the party. Be vigilant about hip flasks. Never allow guests to leave the party and then return later. These guests may be using you and your function to disguise errant behaviour elsewhere.
- Negotiate rules about tobacco. It is illegal to supply cigarettes or tobacco to people under the age of 18 years. It is also illegal for someone under 18 years to smoke tobacco. We encourage you to make the whole party smoke-free. If not, then ensure you have smoke free areas.
- There are provisions under the criminal code relating to sexual offences and age restrictions. Parents must be mindful that when young people consume alcohol, their inhibitions decrease and the likelihood of them engaging in sexual activity, with or without consent, increases. As such, supervision of all areas of the premises is important.
- Accidents can occur, damaging both people and property. Parents need to check they have minimised the risks and that both public and house and contents insurance are up to date. Parents have a duty of care to make sure that guests at their home are safe. Failure to fulfil this duty of care can result in legal action being instigated against them.
- Make sure there are back-up plans in place for ways to get guests safely home. Prevent any person from driving who is under the influence of alcohol or drugs. Consider that some guests may have to sleep over if transport becomes a problem, or if the party finishes very late.
- Encourage appropriate forms of entertainment which include music and dancing. Boredom can lead to less desirable activities.
- If drinking and smoking are permitted, restrict them to certain areas.
- Provide a safe and quiet place where young people can slow down away from the action of the party.
- Serve plenty of water as well as soft drinks and finger food which is popular with teenagers.

- Check those who are driving are safe to do so.
- Have readily available a list of emergency numbers and a first aid kit. Act immediately if someone gets violent, or becomes injured or is severely affected by drugs or alcohol. If someone is ill, do not delay in calling in an ambulance. Deaths have occurred where teenagers were concerned about the legal, financial or disciplinary consequences, thus delaying their calls for urgent medical attention. Most children will be covered by ambulance insurance and, in order to encourage contact with the Ambulance, South Australian Police will not be involved if an Ambulance is called for drug or alcohol related illnesses.
- After the party, discuss what went well and what could have been done differently.

### **3. Attending Parties**

- Be sensitive about the strength of peer pressure and the desire of your teenager to be accepted and popular.
- Always check the supervision at the party. You should feel free to ask how the party will be run, what time it starts and finishes. Also ask if there will be alcohol and what plans are in place for dealing with situations such as gate-crashers or intoxication.
- Deliver your teenager to the party or event yourself, and always collect him/her at an agreed time. Principals recommend that parents pay close attention to transport and other arrangements made by their children for attendance at social functions. Reserve the right to enter the venue yourself. You won't be popular, but parents are not there to be popular, but to provide parental love, leadership and safe boundaries. Most young people will tell you that they are far more likely to drink or smoke or take illicit drugs if they think there is a chance they will not see their parents that evening. At the very least, always speak to your teenager after they arrive home.
- If you are not able to transport your teenager to and from the party, encourage him/her to go out with trusted friends and to leave the party together. Discuss the venues they intend to visit and which friend will be their buddy to keep them safe.
- Be sure that your teenager knows the strategies to avoid trouble and is knowledgeable about the risks of substances and situations. Encourage him/her not to be bullied or pressured into doing things against his/her will. You should always be immediately available by telephone if your teenager wishes to leave a difficult situation early. Encourage them to take a mobile phone and to telephone you if assistance is required. Prearrange a phrase they can use which will enable them to let you know they are concerned without having to alert their friends who may be listening.
- Ask your teenager to let you know of any changes to agreed plans.
- Discuss how the use of excessive alcohol and the use of illicit drugs such as marijuana, ecstasy tablets and amphetamines can affect people in social settings. Discuss the dangerous affects these substances can cause, both short term and long term. Practice in front of your children what you preach.

- Discuss with your teenager how some uninhibited venues make it harder for young people to maintain self-control eg raves, some discos and clubs and Schoolies week.
- If you make the decision that your teenager is permitted to drink alcohol:
  - set a limit to drinking in terms of types and quantity of alcohol and stick to it;
  - do not let them drive;
  - allow only trusted people to buy them drinks;
  - ask them to eat before leaving home;
  - space their drinks with non-alcoholic drinks and food. Encourage them to avoid shouts or top ups; and
  - do not leave drinks unattended.

#### **4. Use of Vehicles**

Cooperation with schools is urged in the observance of the school's rules relating to the use of cars.

This Code of Conduct has been developed by the AISSA and endorsed by the Schools listed below. It is intended for the guidance of parents and students. Parents are asked to note its contents and any additional requirements which Principals of individual schools may have for the pupils in their schools.

#### **Drug and Alcohol Education Programs at School**

Please check with your teenager's school about educational programs on drugs and alcohol.

Together parents and schools can take a strong stance against the use of alcohol, tobacco, drugs and other sources of difficulty for young people of school age. Parents are urged to work with their teenager's school on these matters at all times.

#### **Further Information**

Further information can be obtained from the following websites:

<http://darta.net.au/factsheets/>

(Drug and Alcohol Research and Training Australia)

[www.alcohol.gov.au/internet/alcohol/publishing.nsf/Content/guide-parent](http://www.alcohol.gov.au/internet/alcohol/publishing.nsf/Content/guide-parent)

(Alcohol and Your Kids – A Guide to Parents and Carers)

This Code of Conduct is endorsed by the following AISSA member Schools:

Annesley College	Maitland Lutheran School	St Paul Lutheran School
Bethany Christian School	Mid North Christian College	St Peter's College
Blakes Crossing Christian College	Mount Barker Waldorf School	St Peters Girls
Burc College	Muirden Senior College	St Peter's Lutheran School
Calvary Lutheran Primary School	Navigator College	St Peter's Woodlands Grammar School
Cedar College	Our Saviour Lutheran School	Suneden Special School
Concordia College	Pedare Christian College	Sunrise Christian School
Cornerstone College	Pembroke School	Sunrise Christian School, Whyalla
Crossways Lutheran School	Pilgrim School	Tanunda Lutheran School
Emmaus Christian College	Portside Christian College	Tatachilla Lutheran College
Encounter Lutheran College	Prescott College	Temple Christian College
Endeavour College	Prescott College Southern	The Hills Christian Community School Inc
Eynesbury International	Prescott Primary School, Northern	The Hills Montessori School Inc
Eynesbury Senior College Inc	Prince Alfred College	Torrens Valley Christian School
Faith Lutheran College Inc	Pulteney Grammar School	Trinity College
Garden College	Redeemer Lutheran School	Tyndale Christian School, Murray Bridge
Golden Grove Lutheran Primary School	Rivergum College	Tyndale Christian School, Salisbury East
Good Shepherd Lutheran School, Angaston	Saint Spyridon College	Tyndale Christian School, Strathalbyn
Good Shepherd Lutheran School, Para Vista	Scotch College	Unity College Inc
Harvest Christian School	Seymour College	University Senior College
Heritage College	Southern Montessori School	Vineyard Lutheran School
Hope Christian College	Southern Vales Christian College, Morphett Vale	Waikerie Lutheran Primary School
Horizon Christian School	Spring Head Trinity Lutheran Primary School Inc	Walford Anglican School for Girls
Immanuel College	St Andrew's School	Westminster School
Immanuel Lutheran School	St George College	Wilderness School
Immanuel Primary School, Novar Gardens	St Jakobi Lutheran School	Willunga Waldorf School
Investigator College, Goolwa	St John's Grammar School Inc	Woodcroft College
Islamic College of SA	St John's Lutheran School	
King's Baptist Grammar School	St John's Lutheran School Highgate Inc	
Kirinari Community School	St Mark's Lutheran School	
Lobethal Lutheran School	St Martins Lutheran College	
Loxton Lutheran School	St Michael's Lutheran School	