



December 15th, 2025

Parent Alert from the Westport Prevention Coalition

The Westport Police Department has seen a troubling rise in large, unsafe gatherings of youth where alcohol and other substances are present. As members of the Westport Prevention Coalition (WPC), we urge parents to talk with their teens now and make clear safety plans together.

Since September, police have responded to seven large-scale youth parties, drawing more than 100 attendees. One gathering was estimated to have several hundred teens, including middle school students. After parties were shut down, many teens walked in the dark to reconvene at other homes and local businesses. Several teens were hospitalized for severe alcohol intoxication, and arrests were made for assault and social hosting.

“This is a larger problem than just a year ago,” comments Captain Jillian Cabana. “Social media like Snapchat can quickly turn a small gathering into a large, unmanageable event. We encourage residents to call us for assistance when a situation is beyond their control.”

Westport Police highlight just a few of the risks youth face when attending these large gatherings. Risks may include driving under the influence, walking in streets in the dark, alcohol poisoning, potential for assault, and risk of property damage, among others. Kevin Godburn, Director of Westport Youth Services, recommends teaching kids refusal skills starting at an early age, adding, “It’s also critical to have an agreed-upon exit strategy for risky situations.”

Parents are also at risk. Connecticut’s Social Host Law holds adults responsible when youth consume alcohol or use cannabis on their property—even if the adults were unaware that it was happening. Social hosting can lead to a misdemeanor arrest, which is published in the police blotter and is punishable by up to a year in prison and potential fines of up to \$2,000 per youth involved.

“It’s not just about following the law,” explains Margaret Watt, Prevention Director at Positive Directions. “Research shows that early substance use can damage teens’ brain development and increase the risk of mental illness and addiction.”

Together with the Police, WPC encourages parents to create their own zero-tolerance policies for underage drinking and cannabis use. WPC can provide parents with free resources such as Operation Parent books, lockbags for safe storage of prescription drugs and adult-use marijuana, and liquor stickers to deter access to alcohol at home.

For more information, please contact Margaret at mwatt@positivedirections.org or Kevin at kgodburn@westportct.gov.

In partnership for a safer Westport,

- Kevin Christie, Westport First Selectman
- Tom Scarice, Superintendent, Westport Public Schools
- David Farrell, Chief of Police
- Elaine Daignault, LPC, Director, Westport Human Services
- Kevin Godburn, Program Director, Westport Youth/Human Services
- Luci Bango, MPH, RS, REHS, Director of Health, Aspetuck Health District
- Margaret Watt, Prevention Director, Positive Directions-The Center for Prevention & Counseling

About WPC

The Westport Prevention Coalition works to prevent substance misuse across the lifespan by using local data to guide effective education and community-based strategies. Westport residents and professionals can attend and participate in the Westport Prevention Coalition's meetings. The Coalition is led by parents and professionals, with representatives from the Aspetuck Health District, Positive Directions-The Center for Prevention & Counseling, the Westport Police Department, Westport Public Schools, and Westport Human/Youth Services. Positive Directions is the state-designated agency responsible for managing the coalition and serving as its fiscal agent.