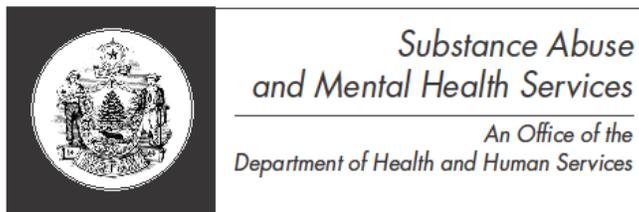


“Table Talks”

Parents Connecting for Alcohol-Free Youth

How-To Guide*

October 2012



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*Previously titled *Connecting for Alcohol-Free Youth: A Parent Discussion Facilitator Guide*

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I. Introduction

Underage drinking is a serious problem in Maine, and parents can be a powerful influence in preventing youth from drinking. In fact, teens are far less likely to drink alcohol if they believe their parents would disapprove. They're also far less likely to drink if they believe their parents would find out about it. Yet alcohol can be a tricky subject, and all too often, parents are unsure about how to talk about it with other parents.

The *Table Talks: Parents Connecting for Alcohol-Free Youth* model was developed to provide parents with a comfortable opportunity to communicate openly with each other about underage drinking and how to prevent it. Each discussion is meant to be friendly and relaxed, held in a home or a similarly comfortable community setting (for example, a local coffee shop or a meeting room in the public library).

While designed primarily for parents of 5th- 8th graders, these discussions are appropriate for parents with younger children as well as older teenagers. The Table Talk discussion questions and supporting materials are relevant to all parents who will, at some point, encounter tough questions about alcohol and their kids.

This How-to Guide provides instructions for holding Table Talks in your own community, including preparation steps, guidelines for parent hosts and discussion facilitators, discussion questions, activities, and post-meeting follow up. The guide includes useful information for sponsoring groups, facilitators, and hosts to use in the planning and preparations for the Table Talks.

Goals & Objectives

We hope that parents who participate in Table Talks will:

- **Connect** with other parents who care about underage drinking prevention
- **Learn** new information about underage drinking and how to prevent it
- **Share** challenges and ideas for preventing underage drinking
- **Get** practical tips to use at home and share with other parents

Free resources developed for parents from the Maine Office of Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services (SAMHS) are a key element of the Table Talks, and can be downloaded at the MaineParents.net web site:

<http://www.maineparents.net/Media/Materials.htm> or ordered from the Information and Resource Center (osa.ircosa@maine.gov or 1-800-499-0027)

Please note: While the Table Talks do include an educational component, they are *not* meant to serve as a formal parenting “class.” Rather, they’re intended as a way to connect concerned parents in a setting that is friendly and accessible. The discussion can then serve as a jumping-off point for parents to become involved in different ways, depending on their interests. For example, they may be interested in hosting a Table Talk in their own homes; helping to distribute brochures and handouts in their workplaces, clubs, or faith organizations; signing up to receive Action Alerts to advocate for prevention; or joining a planning committee or task force to plan prevention activities in their community.

Acknowledgements

This guide was a joint effort of Maine’s Office of Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services (SAMHS), 21 Reasons, and Maine’s Environmental Substance Abuse Prevention Center (MESAP) at Medical Care Development.

Special thanks go to the dedicated committee of parents from the town of Cumberland who helped to design, write, and pilot this guide. We also thank PROP Communities Promoting Health Coalition and Greater Waterville Communities for Children and Youth for piloting the guide in their communities.

As a result of feedback from these pilot meetings, the Table Talk format was revised to allow more time for discussion, tip-sharing, and connection. We hope that the new format has a good balance between educational components and time for free flowing discussion of ideas and concerns.

II. Planning

Here are some tools to help you organize your own Table Talks. Most of the information in this guide is for the facilitator, but there are useful tools for hosts and sponsoring groups as well.

Roles and Responsibilities

Every Table Talk will involve a sponsoring group, a facilitator, and a parent host. While all three are responsible for making sure the discussion is a success, they each have very different roles to play.

1. *The Sponsoring Group*

The overall role of the sponsoring group is to provide guidance and support to the facilitators and hosts. Many different types of organizations can be a sponsoring group—for example a local community coalition, parent association, non-profit agency, school, or neighborhood group. The sponsoring group may provide financial support (such as food, supplies, and possibly facilitator stipends and host incentives – see Sample Budget Worksheet in Section IV: Planning Tools) and administrative support (such as mailings, printing/photocopies, and making handout packets). This group is also responsible for recruiting hosts and facilitators, pairing each host with a facilitator so that they can work together to plan their Table Talk, and providing training to facilitators if needed.

To assist in training facilitators, a *Table Talks Facilitator Training Manual* was developed as a companion to this How-to Guide. The manual provides step-by-step instructions on holding a training workshop for Table Talks facilitators. The *Facilitator Training Manual* and accompanying PowerPoint Slideshow can be found at:

<http://www.maine.gov/dhhs/osa/prevention/adult/tabletalks/facilitators.htm>

The sponsoring agency is also responsible for determining what kinds of follow-up actions they may be able to support after each Table Talk, based on available staffing and resources. This includes specific activities that may be offered to parents during the “Next Actions” portion of the Table Talk agenda (Section III: Discussion Guide), as well as what to include in the “Count Me In!” Sign-Up Sheet (Section V: Facilitator Tools).

In addition, it is the Sponsoring Agency’s job to collect and submit event tracking information (Table Talks Tracking Form, Section IV: Planning Tools) and copies of Participant Feedback forms to MESAP for documentation and evaluation purposes.

Notes:

- In some cases, a staff person from the sponsoring group may be the facilitator for these Table Talks, and will then take on the responsibilities of both roles.
- If there is no sponsoring group involved, the facilitator would take on the responsibilities of the sponsoring group.

Tasks for Sponsoring Group:	Suggested Timeline	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Recruit a host and a facilitator for each meeting <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A Sample Host Recruitment Handout is included in Section IV: Planning Tools 	At least 1 month before	
Provide How-to Guide to facilitator and review with them; hold training for facilitators if needed <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Determine what follow-up actions your agency is interested and able to support following each Table Talk. Use this information to edit and finalize the “Count Me In!” Sign-up Sheet (Section V). Provide this information to facilitators as part of their orientation and training. 	At least 1 month before	
Pair each host with a facilitator and provide each others’ contact information so that they can begin planning together	1 month before	
Order optional handouts. To view the most up-to-date parent materials from the Maine Office of Substance Abuse, go to http://www.maineparents.net/Media/Materials.htm	1 month before to ensure arrival	
Print and photocopy Participant Handouts from Section VI: Create a Handout Packet for each participant, including any optional handouts that you ordered from OSA	1 week before	
Purchase any necessary supplies and give to facilitator: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pens • Index cards for discussion questions and next steps • Optional: Flipchart paper for agenda/objectives/ground rules 	1 week before	
Provide host with gift certificate to purchase snacks (if budget allows)	1 week before	
Send a thank you to the facilitator, if not a paid staff member	Within 1 week after	
Collect Participant Feedback Forms and Facilitator Feedback Forms (including Table Talks Tracking information) from the facilitator. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Make copies of Participant Feedback Forms and mail to MESAP at Medical Care Development, 175 Lancaster St. #220A, Portland ME 04101. Keep originals for your own evaluation. • Complete Table Talks Tracking Form (Section IV: Planning Tools) and return to SAMHS 	Within 1 week after	

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Optional:</i> Send copies of Facilitator Feedback Forms to SAMHS, along with any general comments or suggestions about the Table Talks program and materials. 		
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2. The Facilitator

The role of the facilitator is to organize, present, and moderate these Table Talks. The facilitator is responsible for using this guide to prepare all materials and information for the discussion ahead of time. An effective facilitator will know the topic and be comfortable moderating group discussions. Possible facilitators might include prevention professionals; community members, such as health educators, teachers, or coalition members; and other experienced group leaders.

Notes:

- The host and the facilitator should not be the same person for a single event to avoid the awkward position of a parent host telling their friends and peers “what to do.” For this reason, it is best to use a neutral outside facilitator for each Table Talk.
- Youth should not be used in the role of the facilitator so that parents can talk openly about parenting.
- Consider the literacy level of your group in planning the discussion format. For example, if you think that some participants may not be comfortable reading out loud, you may need to change the activities slightly. Suggestions are included in Section III: Discussion Guide.

Tasks for Facilitator:	Suggested Timeline	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Get to know what is in this guide: Read through the materials to become familiar with the Table Talks format and content.	1 month before	
Contact host: Set a date and place for their Table Talk and learn about the audience, including any special concerns or topics that the host would like to see addressed	1 month before	
Review the latest materials available on the SAMHS website: http://www.maineparents.net/Media/Materials.htm Let the sponsoring agency know if there are any additional handouts you would like them to print or order	1 month before	

(continued)

Provide host with necessary materials from Section IV: Planning Tools:	At least 3 weeks before	
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<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sample Table Talk Invitation • To-Do Checklist for Host 		
Contact host to confirm and finalize details, get an idea of how many people will be attending and what they are hoping to get out of the discussion	1 week before	
Obtain all supplies and materials, including handout packets, from sponsoring agency	1 week before	
Re-read the guide and materials. Based on what you have learned about the audience and their concerns, think about how you would like the discussion to go, and create a rough timeline	Within 1 week of Table Talk	
<p>Print and review the Facilitator Tools from Section V that you will use during the meeting.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Write Tough Subjects questions on index cards or print and cut • Review and practice going over the Fact Check Quiz Answers and Tough Subjects Responses (see Section VI: Participant Handouts for Tough Subjects Responses); bring these with you to help guide the discussion • Carefully review the Facilitator Tips, and visualize how you might handle challenging situations • Print the Facilitator Feedback form • Optional: Print the “Count Me In!” Sign-up Sheet 	Before the Table Talk	
Optional: Write agenda, objectives, and ground rules on flipchart paper	Before the Table Talk	
Return Participant Feedback Forms and “Count Me In!” Sign-up Sheet to your sponsoring agency; also follow up with sponsoring agency regarding any Next Actions resulting from the discussion	Within 1 week after	
Send a thank-you card to the host	Within 1 week after	
Complete Facilitator Feedback Form (including essential event information on Table Talks Tracking Form) and return to Sponsoring Agency	Within 1 week after	

3. The Parent Host

The parent host is the person who provides a location for the Table Talk. This can be their own home or another comfortable community space. The parent host is responsible for sending out invitations and reminders—basically, making sure that people will come. Depending on the space available, aim to have 5-10 parents or so at each discussion. The parent host may also be the one who purchases and serves

refreshments, sometimes using a gift certificate provided by the sponsoring agency. During the discussion, the parent host is responsible for making sure that participants feel welcome. After the Table Talk, the parent host may want to write thank you notes to participants.

Notes:

- The participants invited should be local parents who the host knows well, or is acquainted with in some way. You can also invite other adults in a child’s life, for example a grandparent, aunt, or uncle.
- Think about how to get both men and women involved. How will you reach out to the dads in the community?
- In order to ensure an atmosphere where parents can talk openly about parenting, we recommend that youth not be present at these Table Talks. We understand that hosting an event at home while keeping the children out of the room may pose a challenge. Hosts and facilitators are encouraged to work together to come up with creative solutions—for example, you might decide to recruit one parent or community volunteer to engage youth in a fun activity elsewhere. Or, you may decide to hold the Table Talk at another location, such as a community center, where childcare can be provided.
- Due to the subject matter, it is not appropriate to serve alcohol at these events.

Tasks for Host:	Suggested Timeline	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Talk with facilitator to set a date for the Table Talk; talk with the facilitator about who you plan to invite and any special concerns or topics that participants might like to see addressed	1 month before	
Send out invitations & track RSVPs	3 weeks before	
Send out reminder	1 week before	
Talk with facilitator to confirm and finalize details	1 week before	
Purchase food for Table Talk	Day before	
Set up meeting space	Day of Table Talk	
Send thank you note to all participants	1 week after	

Recruiting Hosts

Hosts can be any parent living in the town or community in which the sponsoring group is working. Here are some ideas for recruiting hosts:

- Hold a meeting for potential parent hosts, and ask each member of the sponsoring group or committee to invite three people. Explain the program and give parents a chance to sign up to host a meeting.
- Use other local events, such as a community forum or school-sponsored parent night to ask for parent host volunteers.
- Provide incentives or prizes for hosts. This can be helpful both to encourage participation and to thank people for their involvement in the Table Talks. (If paid staff members will not be serving as your facilitator, an incentive for the facilitator may be appropriate as well). A sample budget worksheet is included in Section IV: Planning Tools. Here are some ideas for incentives:
 - Provide each parent host with cash or a gift certificate to purchase food for their Table Talk.
 - As an incentive for the host to recruit enough parents to attend these discussions, any parent host who has five or more people attend their discussion can be entered into a raffle for a prize. Examples of possible prizes are gas cards, restaurant gift certificates, or movie passes.
 - A bonus prize can be given to any parent host who has a participant at their Table Talk who signs up to host a future Table Talk.
- Create a recruitment flyer or handout that helps to explain the benefits of hosting a Table Talk. A sample host recruitment handout is included in Section IV: Planning Tools.

III. Discussion Guide

The following provides detailed instructions on what a Table Talk looks like and how to facilitate each activity. Also included throughout this section are sample scripts that the facilitator can use to help guide their Table Talk.

Table Talk Supplies:

The following are items that facilitators should bring to each Table Talk. Most items should be obtained from the sponsoring agency.

- ✓ Participant Handout Packets (materials from Section VI: Participant Handouts)
- ✓ Tough Subjects discussion questions (written on index cards or printed/cut to hand out)
- ✓ Blank index cards and pens/pencils for each participant
- ✓ Blank paper to write down “Next Actions” for the group
- ✓ Materials from Section V: Facilitator Tools for the facilitator to have on hand
- ✓ Optional: “Count Me In!” Sign-up Sheet
- ✓ Optional: Flipchart paper and markers for posting the agenda, objectives, ground rules, Next Actions, and “parking lot”

Discussion Format:

We recommend that facilitators prepare for each Table Talk by creating a rough timeline for the discussion, practicing the questions that they will ask to participants, and thoroughly reviewing all materials.

For a checklist of things to do to prepare for a Table Talk, refer back to the “Tasks for Facilitator” checklist in Section II: Planning.

For a list of tips to deal with some common challenges that come up in facilitating discussions, please refer to “Facilitator Tips” in Section V: Facilitator Tools.

A Table Talk should take 1.5-2 hours.

Discussion Agenda:

1. Welcome (5-10 minutes)
2. Introductions/Icebreaker Activity (10-15 minutes)

3. Fact Check (20 minutes)
4. Tough Subjects (45 minutes)
5. Next Actions (15 minutes)
6. Feedback (5 minutes)

Setting up:

- a) Place a Participant Handout Packet on each chair so that parents can look through them while waiting for the Table Talk to start.
- b) Help host to set up food for participants.
- c) Organize all materials that you will need for the Table Talk so that you know where everything is and can access it easily.
- d) Optional: Put newsprint of agenda, objectives, and ground rules on the walls or an easel.

1. Welcome (5-10 minutes)

- a) Make a note of the number of participants present on the Facilitator Feedback Form (see Section V: Facilitator Tools).
- b) Begin the Table Talk by welcoming participants, thanking them for attending, and thanking the host for their hospitality. Introduce yourself to the group, including, if appropriate, a brief statement about the organization that you represent.
- c) Provide participants with a brief overview of the Agenda/Objectives handout (Section VI: Participant Handouts). It is very important that the facilitator review the agenda and discuss ground rules with the group *before* the meeting begins, so that participants know what to expect and are able to stay focused.

Suggested ground rules:

- Respect the diverse experiences and viewpoints that everyone brings to this meeting
- Let everyone have a voice in the discussion (Step Up/Step Back: If you're not hearing your voice a lot in the meeting, step up. If you are hearing your voice a lot, step back)
- Engage with the material by thinking critically about how it applies to our own lives
- Ask questions!
- Participate fully in activities
- When describing real-life situations, please don't use names—we don't want this session to turn into finger-pointing

- Respect confidentiality

Note: Ask the group if they have any additional ground rules to add to the list.

Optional: Write them up on the flipchart or newsprint for posting.

- d) Optional: Assign a timekeeper to help keep things moving.
- e) Optional: Using a flip chart, set up a “parking lot” to be used for the rest of the discussion. The “parking lot” can be used to write down ideas and topics that don’t get to be fully explored during the Table Talk but could be addressed in a future meeting, event, follow-up email, or conversation.

After completing the welcome information, move on to introductions.

2. Introductions/Icebreaker Activity (10-15 minutes)

Next, lead the group in quick introductions. Here is a sample script:

“Let’s start with some brief introductions. Before we begin, reflect for a moment about why you attended this Table Talk today. What is one thing that you would like to get out of the discussion? If you like, write it down – you can use the back of your agenda handout. Let’s take one minute to do that. *[pause, allow one minute]* Great! Now let’s go around and introduce ourselves – We’ll have time for discussion later, so for now, please take just *half a minute* to share your name, the ages of your kids, and one thing that you would like to get out of our discussion today.”

- Optional: It may be helpful to you as facilitator to write down the “one thing” each person wants to get out of the discussion—either up on newsprint for the group to see, or on a piece of paper for your own reference. That way, you can use the list to guide your focus and use of time during the remainder of the discussion.
- Note: When you introduce the activity, it is important to kindly emphasize that this is only an icebreaker and that each participant is invited to speak for half a minute. This will help to keep the icebreaker from turning into a larger discussion.

Once the icebreaker is completed, thank participants for sharing, and move on to the “Fact Check” activity.

3. Fact Check (20 minutes)

To begin this activity, ask participants to take out the “Underage Drinking: Fact Check Quiz” from their Handout Packets. Give everyone five minutes to take the quiz. Here is a sample script to introduce the activity:

“Underage drinking is a tough topic for many reasons—and it doesn’t help that there is so much conflicting information out there. To get us started, here is a POP QUIZ! Don’t worry – These are for your eyes only and will not be graded! Please take *five minutes* to fill it out as best you can. A lot of these questions are challenging...We’ll go over answers together when you’re done. Ready, set, go!” *[pause and allow up to five minutes, letting folks know when there is one minute left – Or, if it looks like everyone is done, ask if they’re ready to move on]*

- Note: It is important to let the participants know that this quiz is solely for their own benefit and knowledge. Before they begin, let them know that they will be correcting their own answers and that nobody else will see their quiz.

Once everyone is finished, provide an overview of the correct answers (see Fact Check Quiz Answers Section V: Facilitator Tools) and have each participant correct their own quiz.

- Alternative activity: If you feel that some participants might be uncomfortable reading and writing, you may omit the individual written portion of the quiz, and simply do it out loud together as a large group. As facilitator, read the questions out loud, one at a time, and ask the group to guess the answer. Or, if you feel that one or two people in the group might be comfortable reading out loud, you can ask if anyone in the group would like to volunteer to read the questions.

If someone in the group gets an answer wrong, respond in an encouraging tone. For example, you might respond, **“I thought so, too! But the correct answer is...”** or, **“That is common knowledge, right? But the facts tell a different story.”**

As a facilitator, your tone and attitude in presenting the quiz answers is very important. You might start with acknowledging, **“As I mentioned, some of these questions are challenging. I was surprised myself by some of this information and new research, because some of it seems to go against what we think of as common knowledge. It just goes to show how deeply entrenched some of these ideas are in our society.”**

Before introducing each answer, it can be helpful to say something like, **“It is easy to see why this myth is so widely accepted, but new information shows...”** or **“This one is a very common belief – But the latest research has actually shown that...”** This keeps the information based in research and science rather than being a moral judgment and helps to keep from offending or embarrassing participants who may not have answered the questions correctly or who may disagree with the information provided.

If any participants are resistant to the information, it can be helpful to commiserate. For example: **“I know what you mean! It is surprising.”**

You might want to close this activity with a thank you and a statement that acknowledges how surprising some of this new information is. For example: **“Thank you for your openness to this information. So much of this goes against common beliefs that are deeply set in our culture. It’s only been in recent years that researchers have stepped back and looked at the actual statistics, or that scientists have been able to do these kinds of studies. A lot of this is new information, and to accept it can mean completely changing the way we think about alcohol and youth.”**

Inform participants that in their packets they have an “Underage Drinking...Myth vs. Reality” handout with other useful facts around underage drinking.

After finishing the Fact Check activity, move on to the “Tough Subjects” portion of the meeting.

4. Tough Subjects (45 minutes)

After finishing the Fact Check activity, it is time to open up the meeting for a discussion of Tough Subjects. Since there is a limited amount of time during the meeting, don’t worry if you aren’t able to cover every question—you can remind participants that all of the information shared in this section is also included in the handout packets they received.

BEFORE THE TABLE TALK

- Create Tough Subjects cards, with one question per card, using the list of discussion questions in Section V: Facilitator Tools. You can either write them out by hand on index cards or print out the document and cut with scissors so that there is only one question per slip of paper.
- For your own reference as a facilitator, use Tough Subjects Responses (Section VI: Participant Handouts), which has some suggested answers for each question.

When you get to this part of the agenda, pass around, or lay out on a coffee table, all of the question cards and let each participant take a turn choosing a question that they would most like to talk about. Or, you can shuffle the cards, pass them out, and have each participant choose from the cards they have received. Here is a sample script:

“In the last activity, we learned some new information that is changing the way many parents are thinking about alcohol and youth. Next, we have the opportunity to look at some of the tough questions that today’s parents are dealing with. Listed on these cards are some discussion questions. There are no right or wrong answers! We have 45 minutes for this activity so we probably won’t have time to get to *all* the questions—but all of the questions are addressed at least briefly by the information in your packets. For today, we’ll try to address at least one question chosen by each person. Please take a moment to review the questions – and choose 1 that you would like to discuss as a group. [pause, wait...] Great – In our discussion, please remember the ground rules that we set up earlier. Who wants to begin?”

- Alternative activity: If you feel that some participants might be uncomfortable reading out loud, don’t hand out the question cards. Instead, hang on to them yourself as facilitator, shuffle them, and select one at a time to read out loud and discuss as a group. Or, you can ask the group if there are any volunteers who would be interested in choosing a card to read out loud.

Optional (if you decide to do it this way, remember to add it to the instructions/set up script): Ask a time keeper or set a kitchen timer to allow up to five minutes for each question – When five minutes are up, call “time,” and ask the group if they want to continue on this question (thumbs up), or move on to another question (hands in rolling motion). If general agreement is to move on but there are one or two people that want to talk about the question some more, place the index card in a special “follow-up” pile or tape it up on the “parking lot”—this will serve as a reminder to continue the conversation one-on-one in person or email, or as a group in a follow-up meeting.

After 45 minutes of discussion, move on to the “Next Actions” activity.

5. Next Actions (15 minutes)

Now that parents have all of this information, how can they actually use it? The group will want to spend about 15 minutes brainstorming and discussing concrete actions that parents can walk away with.

On a large piece of newsprint (or, if you prefer, on regular sized paper), write “NEXT ACTIONS?” as a heading, and write down any ideas that are brainstormed. You may want to assign a note-taker to jot down ideas as well as any commitments from the group. After the meeting, you can type up meeting notes to send out to participants as part of a thank you note or follow-up. Here is a sample script:

“Now that we’ve learned some useful information and discussed many of the tough situations that parents may face, let’s wrap up our time together by thinking about how we can take action to prevent underage drinking, both at home and in our community. Let’s start with a brainstorm of possible Next Actions – there are no right or wrong answers. Who would like to start by throwing out an idea for a Next Action?”

As participants throw out ideas, make sure every suggestion is written down and acknowledged with a “Thank you.” After each suggestion, ask the group if anyone has anything to add to that idea, or if anyone has another idea to add to the list. Add checkmarks or stars to the items that seem to have the most enthusiasm from the group (For example, if a particular idea is met with silence from the group that may not be one to underline! If an idea is met with lots of head nodding or “Yeah!” from participants, you may want to draw one or more stars next to it, depending on level of enthusiasm from the group).

If the discussion is slow, or veers off in a different direction, you can bring people back by throwing out some of the ideas written below, or referring them to the handout in their packet, “5 Tips to Prevent Underage Drinking.” Depending on the literacy level of the group, you can have participants read through the handout individually on their own, you can ask volunteers to read the tips out loud, or you as facilitator can read through and summarize the tips.

If necessary, provide examples:

Quick actions to take:

- ✓ Thank store clerks when you see them card someone who is buying alcohol.
- ✓ Check out the “Writing a Family Contract” handout (see Section VI: Participant Handouts) in your handout packets and decide if your family would like to use it.
- ✓ Write letters to the editor in support of local prevention efforts.

- ✓ When your teen goes out, decide to wait up, or set the alarm for curfew time and talk with them about their night.
- ✓ Create a parent phone tree or network so that parents can stay in communication about what's going on.

Longer term actions to take:

- ✓ Join your local substance abuse prevention coalition. Become part of the bigger picture, working on policy issues, changing community norms around alcohol, and reducing youth access to alcohol in the community.
- ✓ Host a parent meeting at YOUR house! Speak to today's facilitator for more information.
- ✓ Create or join a town-specific Task Force where you can continue to get together with other community members and address underage drinking issues.

Note: Prior to the Table Talk, facilitators should work with their Sponsoring Agency to identify any priorities for "Next Actions." It is also important to find out what level of support the Sponsoring Agency will be able to provide for any follow-up activities, based on available staffing and resources.

Conclude the brainstorm by reviewing and orally summarizing the ideas that were presented. If time is short, just focus on the items that are starred or underlined.

Next, hand out a blank index card to each participant so that they can write down some Next Actions for themselves. Here is a sample script:

"Now we'd like everyone to take two minutes to fill out this card with your own Next Actions. These are commitments for your eyes only; a list of things that you will follow through on based on what you learned today.

- **On one side, please write down three things you will do when you leave this meeting to prevent underage drinking in your home or community.**
- **On the other side, please write down the names of at least three people that you will talk to in the next two weeks about what you learned today."**

(After two minutes) **"Would anyone be willing to share one of the commitments that you wrote down? Please be brief so that everyone who would like to has a chance to share. Would anyone like to go first?"**

Facilitator: Please write these down to include with your Facilitator Feedback Form (Section V).

“Thank you all. It’s nice to know we’re all in this together and want to make positive changes. Please put your card away in a place you’ll be sure to see later.”

- Alternate closing activity: If you feel that some participants might be uncomfortable writing, skip the part where you ask the group to write the commitments on index cards. Instead, simply ask them to reflect for two minutes on their own Next Actions, and then ask for any volunteers who would like to share.

6. Feedback (5 minutes)

To conclude the meeting, ask participants to take out the Feedback Forms from their handout packets. These are useful for the facilitator and the sponsoring agency to learn how participants honestly felt the Table Talk went, and what might be improved for the future. Here is a sample script:

“It’s important for us to know how useful this Table Talk was for you, and what we can change in the future to make them more effective. If you’re interested, please take a few minutes to complete this feedback form, and leave it (*somewhere away from facilitator*) before you leave. If you prefer to let me know yourself what you thought about the Table Talk, I would love your feedback. Thank you very much for your participation and your feedback!”

- Note: If you feel that some participants may be uncomfortable reading and writing, either choose not to do a written feedback form, or emphasize in your instructions that filling out the form is for any volunteers that are interested in providing feedback. Also provide an opportunity for participants to give you feedback after the Table Talk.

Optional: While participants fill out the evaluation, send around a “Count Me In!” Sign-up Sheet (See section V: Facilitator Tools) attached to a clipboard. Note: Facilitators should work with their Sponsoring Agency prior to their Table Talk to determine what information the Sponsoring Agency would like included in the “Count Me In” Sheet.

Here is a sample script:

“On behalf of [Sponsoring Agency name], I am sending around a “Count Me In!” Sign-up Sheet. I invite anyone who wants to provide your contact information and check off any item you’re interested in, such as getting on the mailing list, joining a committee, or hosting a Table Talk of your own.”

*Facilitator: Congratulations on facilitating a great Table Talk! Please collect the **Participant Feedback forms** and share with your sponsoring agency. Also be sure to fill out your **Facilitator Feedback Form** (Section V: Facilitator Tools) and return to your sponsoring agency.*

IV. Planning Tools

You will find these planning tools on the following pages. Please feel free to copy and edit for your own use.

- Table Talks FAQ
- Sample Host Recruitment Handout
- To-Do Checklist for Host
- To-Do Checklist for Facilitator
- Sample Budget Worksheet
- Sample Table Talk Invitation
- Table Talks Tracking Form

Planning Tools: Table Talks FAQ

When organizing Table Talks around underage drinking, logistical issues may arise. Here are some common situations coalitions and individuals may find themselves in, as well as suggestions for solutions.

1. How do you find and recruit facilitators to run these Table Talks?

- Experienced group leaders in the community are often good people to approach about facilitating discussions. These may be health educators, teachers, or coalition members.
- Hold a facilitator training to make potential facilitators more comfortable with the subject matter and to go over common difficulties of facilitating.
 - A *Facilitator Training Manual* was made as a companion to the *Table Talks How-to Guide*. This Manual and accompanying PowerPoint Slideshow give step-by-step instructions on how to hold a facilitator training. To access the Facilitator Training Manual, go to <http://www.maine.gov/dhhs/samhs/osa/prevention/adult/tabletalks/index.htm>
- If the facilitators are not paid staff members of the sponsoring agency, it may be a good idea to provide an incentive to the facilitators. You could provide each facilitator with a small gift or hold a raffle for all of your facilitators.

2. In recruiting facilitators, you find an interested coalition member who is comfortable with the meeting content, but has no facilitation experience. What do you do?

- Hold a facilitator training that focuses on general facilitation skills.
 - To access the Facilitator Training Manual and accompanying PowerPoint Slideshow, go to <http://www.maine.gov/dhhs/samhs/osa/prevention/adult/tabletalks/index.htm>
- Require new facilitators to attend at least one parent discussion as an observer, or to co-facilitate a meeting before facilitating their own.
- Provide facilitators with a facilitator tips page that addresses common difficulties of facilitating.

3. How do you find and recruit hosts?

- Hold a meeting for potential hosts by asking each member of the sponsoring group or committee to invite three people. Use this meeting to explain the program and give parents a chance to sign up to host a meeting themselves.
- Use other local events, such as a community forum or school-sponsored parent night to present the program and ask for parent host volunteers.
- Provide incentive prizes for hosts. This can be helpful both to encourage participation and to thank people for their involvement in the Table Talks.

- Create a recruitment flyer or handout that helps to explain the benefits of hosting a Table Talk. These handouts can then be distributed throughout the community.
 - After each Table Talk, follow up with any attendees who were interested in hosting a Table Talk themselves.
- 4. You may find parents who are interested in hosting a Table Talk, but are uncomfortable holding the meeting in their home. How do you address this?**
- Though these discussions are meant to be small and intimate, they do not have to take place in a home. Another option is to find a community meeting space such as a room in a community center or library that can be used to hold the Table Talk. The host would still be responsible for securing the location and inviting parents, but they would not have to hold the Table Talk in their own home.
- 5. A barrier for some parents in hosting a Table Talk is the issue of childcare. What are some ways to provide options for parents who cannot obtain childcare but who would like to host a Table Talk?**
- Depending on the sponsoring agency's budget, it may be possible to hire a childcare service to watch the children while the Table Talk is taking place.
 - If the Table Talk is held at a community center, it is possible that children could play in another room while parents are holding the discussion.
- 6. After the Table Talk, participants were very empowered and interested in doing more work to prevent underage drinking. What are some next steps that the group could take?**
- Ask all interested parents to host their own Table Talk for another group of friends.
 - Hold a follow-up meeting with the participants to address any ideas that weren't explored fully at the first Table Talk or to address concerns that come out of the meeting.
 - Connect the participants with their local substance abuse prevention coalition. From there, they can learn how they can help out in the community.
- 7. After Table Talks have been completed, what do I as the Sponsoring Agency need to do for reporting?**
- For each Table Talk held, you should fill out a line on the Table Talks Tracking Form (See Section IV: Planning Tools). It may be a good idea to have facilitators bring this form with them to their Table Talk to fill out during their discussion.
 - Sponsoring agencies should email, mail or fax the Participant Feedback Forms to MESAP. Copies can be kept for the Sponsoring Agency's own records. Optional: Facilitator Feedback Forms can be sent to MESAP as well.

- Sponsoring Agencies are also responsible for completing any additional reporting that is required for their funding source for the Table Talks.

Planning Tools: Sample Host Recruitment Handout



INFORMATION FOR PARENT HOSTS

Why are these Table Talks important? Underage drinking is a serious problem in Maine, and research shows that parents can be a powerful influence in keeping youth from drinking. In fact, teens are far less likely to drink alcohol if they believe their parents would disapprove. They’re also less likely to drink if they believe their parents would find out about it. Yet alcohol can be a tricky subject, and all too often, parents are unsure about how to talk about it with other parents.

The Table Talks model was created to provide parents with a comfortable opportunity to communicate openly with each other about underage drinking and how to prevent it. Each Table Talk is meant to be small with a relaxed atmosphere, held in the parent host’s home or a similarly comfortable community location (for example, a local coffee shop, a meeting room in the public library, or a community center).

What are the goals of the Table Talks? Our hope is that participating parents will:

- ✓ Connect with other parents who care about underage drinking prevention
- ✓ Learn new information about underage drinking and how to prevent it
- ✓ Share challenges and ideas for preventing underage drinking
- ✓ Get practical tips to use at home and share with other parents

Who can volunteer to host a Table Talk? Any local parent who is concerned about underage drinking can be a host.

What does a parent host do? The parent host is the person who offers their home, or another community space, as the location for the Table Talk and invites other parents. Each host will be matched with a trained facilitator who will lead the meeting presentation and discussion. The parent host is responsible for sending out invitations and reminders—basically, making sure that people will come. Invited guests should be local parents who the host knows well, or is acquainted with in some way. During the Table Talk, the parent host can sit back and join in the discussion as a participant, while the outside facilitator does the work of leading the discussion. After the Table Talk, the parent host may want to write thank you notes to participants.

Notes:

- Due to the subject matter, it is not appropriate to serve alcohol at these events.
- We recommend that youth not be present at these Table Talks in order to ensure an atmosphere where parents can talk openly about parenting. We understand that hosting an event at home while keeping the children out of the room may pose a challenge. Hosts and facilitators are encouraged to work together to come up with creative solutions—for example, you might decide to recruit a parent or community volunteer to engage youth in a fun activity elsewhere.

Are there any special benefits to being a host?

We recognize that offering your home for a meeting place is a very generous act. As a thank you for hosting, you would receive the following incentives: *[List your host incentives here—gift certificates, etc.]*

Planning Tools: To-Do Checklist for Host

The parent host is the person who provides a location for the Table Talk. This can be their own home or another comfortable community space. The parent host is also responsible for sending out invitations and reminders—basically, making sure that people will come. Depending on the space available, aim to have 5-10 parents at each Table Talk. The parent host may also be the one who purchases and serves refreshments, sometimes using a gift certificate provided by the sponsoring agency. During the Table Talk, the parent host is responsible for making sure that participants feel welcome. After the Table Talk, the parent host may want to write thank you notes to participants.

Notes:

- The participants invited should be local parents who the host knows well, or is acquainted with in some way. You can also invite other adults in a child’s life, for example a grandparent, aunt, or uncle.
- Think about how to get both men and women involved. How will you reach out to the dads in the community?
- In order to ensure an atmosphere where parents can talk openly about parenting, we recommend that youth not be present at these Table Talks. We understand that hosting an event at home while keeping the children out of the room may pose a challenge. Hosts and facilitators are encouraged to work together to come up with creative solutions—for example, you might decide to recruit one parent or community volunteer to engage youth in a fun activity elsewhere. Or, you may decide to hold the Table Talk at another location, such as a community center, where childcare can be provided.
- Due to the subject matter, it is not appropriate to serve alcohol at these events.

Tasks for Host:	Suggested Timeline	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Talk with facilitator to set a date for the Table Talk; talk with the facilitator about who you plan to invite and any special concerns or topics that participants might like to see addressed	1 month before	
Send out invitations & track RSVPs	3 weeks before	
Send out reminder	1 week before	
Talk with facilitator to confirm and finalize details	1 week before	
Purchase food for Table Talk	Day before	
Set up meeting space	Day of Table Talk	
Send thank you note to all participants	1 week after	

Planning Tools: To-Do Checklist for Facilitator

The role of the facilitator is to organize, present, and moderate the Table Talk. The facilitator is responsible for using the guide to prepare all materials and information for the discussion ahead of time. An effective facilitator will know the topic, and be comfortable moderating group discussions.

Tasks for Facilitator:	Suggested Timeline	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Get to know what is in the guide: Read through the materials to become familiar with the Table Talks format and content.	1 month before	
Contact host: Set a date and place for the Table Talk and learn about the audience, including any special concerns or topics that the host would like to see addressed	1 month before	
Review the latest materials available on the SAMHS website: http://www.maineparents.net/Media/Materials.htm Let the sponsoring agency know if there are any additional handouts you would like them to print or order	1 month before	
Provide host with necessary materials from Section IV: Planning Tools: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sample Table Talk Invitation • To-Do Checklist for Host 	At least 3 weeks before	
Contact host to confirm and finalize details, get an idea of how many people will be attending and what they are hoping to get out of the Table Talk	1 week before	
Obtain all supplies and materials, including handout packets, from sponsoring agency	1 week before	
Re-read the guide and materials. Based on what you have learned about the audience and their concerns, think about how you would like the discussion to go, and create a rough timeline	Within 1 week of Table Talk	
Print and review the Facilitator Tools from Section V that you will use during the meeting. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Write Tough Subjects questions on index cards or print and cut • Review and practice going over the Fact Check Quiz Answers and Tough Subjects Responses (see Section VI: Participant Handouts for Tough Subjects Responses); bring these with you to help guide the discussion • Carefully review the Facilitator Tips, and visualize how you might handle challenging situations • Print the Facilitator Feedback form • Optional: Print the “Count Me In!” Sign-up Sheet 	Before the Table Talk	

(continued)

Optional: Write agenda, objectives, and ground rules on flipchart paper	Before the Table Talk	
Return Participant Feedback Forms and "Count Me In!" Sign-up Sheet to your sponsoring agency; also follow up with sponsoring agency regarding any Next Actions resulting from the Table Talk	Within 1 week after	
Send a thank-you card to the host	Within 1 week after	
Complete Facilitator Feedback Form and send to SAMHS	Within 1 week after	

Planning Tools: Sample Budget Worksheet

Below is a sample budget for sponsoring 10 Table Talks. This is provided for planning purposes for the sponsoring group or agency that may be able to cover the cost of the Table Talks.

Budget item	Cost per Table Talk	Total cost
Food (Gift cards for hosts)	\$25.00	\$250.00
Printing costs for supplemental informational and coalition handouts	\$10.00	\$100.00
Supplies (index cards, pens)	\$3.00	\$30.00
Prize for host raffle (gift certificates from local businesses)	n/a	\$75.00
TOTAL		\$455.00

Costs will vary depending on resources and needs. For example, if the Table Talk facilitators are community volunteers and not paid staff of the sponsoring agency, you may also want to include stipends or gift certificates for the facilitators (perhaps \$25 per meeting).

Planning Tools: Sample Table Talk Invitation

Note: The host should only invite parents that he or she knows. Aim for five to ten attendees based on space accommodations. The invitation should be sent from the parent hosting the Table Talk and not the facilitator. The host should invite parents at least three weeks prior to the meeting. Invitations can be by letter, email, phone call, or in person. Additional reminders can be sent by the host as the date gets closer.

SUBJECT: You're invited!

Please join us for an informal gathering at [enter meeting location here] to discuss underage drinking prevention in [enter your town's name here]. We have volunteered to host this important get-together for our friends and neighbors—knowing that like us, you are concerned about keeping our kids safe.

The discussion will be casual, and will be led by [insert name of facilitator here], who is part of the [sponsoring agency name here]. Using the format from "Table Talks: Parents Connecting for Alcohol-free Youth," [She/he] will share the latest research to keep our youth from using alcohol and other drugs and allow us to discuss our ideas with each other.

I hope you will be able to join us. Feel free to bring your partner or another concerned parent.

Date:

Time:

Place:

Please RSVP by [X date] to:



TRACKING FORM

Sponsoring Agency: _____

Contact Person Name & Title: _____

Address: _____

Phone: _____ Email: _____

Please fill out the information below for each Table Talk held. Make as many copies of this form as needed. Please send completed forms to Cheryl Cichowski, Maine Office of Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services, 41 Anthony Ave., 11 SHS, Augusta, ME 04333 or Cheryl.cichowski@maine.gov Thank you!

Date:	Town:	Facilitator :	# Parents Attended: # Male/# Female	Summary of results or “Next Actions” resulting from the Table Talk:

V. Facilitator Tools

You will find these facilitator tools on the following pages. Please print, review, and bring these pages with you to the Table Talk.

- Facilitator Tips
- Underage Drinking: Fact Check Quiz Answers
- Tough Subjects Question Cards
- “Count Me In!” Sign-up Sheet
- Facilitator Feedback Form

Facilitator Tools: Facilitator Tips

Facilitating a parent discussion is not always easy! Below are some common issues that may come up during Table Talks, as well as suggestions of how to effectively manage them.

1. How can a facilitator promote positive communication within the group?¹

- Set the appropriate tone: Have the room ready when parents arrive, greet everyone individually, be sincere and upbeat, and respect the mood/attitudes of the group.
- Keep in mind the importance of both non-verbal and verbal listening.
 - Good eye contact, relaxed body posture, and encouraging expressions (nodding and smiling, for example) are great forms of non-verbal listening.
 - Verbal listening tips include summing up what the speaker has just said, and identifying the speaker's feelings without including your own opinions. For example: "So, you're saying that..." "So, what I hear you saying is..."
- Ask clarifying or "peel the onion" questions, such as, "Let me see if I understand you, you...?" or "You say you're worried about X. Can you say more about that?"

2. There may be low participation by group members. How can a facilitator effectively encourage participation?²

- Create and review ground rules at the beginning of the meeting. This will remind participants to respect others' comments and opinions, as well as reassure people that their comments will be respected.
- Use ice-breakers as a way to increase participants' comfort level, and make people feel comfortable speaking in the group. For example – Before starting the discussion, go around the room and ask each person to say their name and what they hope to get out of the meeting.
- Recognize participation and encourage group members to share their thoughts.
- Go around the group, giving each person a chance to speak if they wish.

3. Discussions can easily get off topic. How can a facilitator bring things back to the task at hand?³

- Review the goals and objectives at the start of the meeting. Keep these posted in the room so that you can refer back to them if the discussion veers off topic.
- Set up a "parking lot." This is a large piece of newsprint, posted where everyone can see, where you list issues or ideas that you don't have time to fully explore at

¹ Answers adapted from Kelsey, D. & Plumb, P. Great Meetings! Great Results. Portland, Maine: Hanson Park Press, 2004.

² Answers adapted from "Leading Effective Meetings" training by Nancy Ansheles, USM Center for Continuing Education, October 6, 2009.

³ Ibid

that particular meeting. You can follow up on these items with a future meeting, event, follow-up email, or conversation.

- If there is a side topic that participants continue to bring up, you can consider asking participants if they would rather discuss that topic instead of what is on the agenda.

4. What can a facilitator do if the discussion is being dominated by one person?⁴

- Thank the person for their input. Restate what he or she just said and ask for input from other group members.
- Encourage participation from the rest of the group by making eye contact with other group members.
- Ask for opinions or input from “those who haven’t spoken yet” or ask for several opinions on a given subject or question.

5. People’s time is valuable. How can the facilitator make sure that the meeting or discussion begins and ends on time?

- Be sure to start when you say you will start. Waiting for lingering participants encourages tardiness.⁵
- At the beginning of the meeting, go through the agenda with the group so that everyone is aware of the time limitations of the meeting.
- Since it can be difficult to keep track of time yourself while you are busy facilitating, ask a participant to act as time keeper. Ask them to give you a five minute warning when you are coming close to the allotted time for each agenda item. They can use a hand signal or hold up a bright piece of paper that says, “5 MINUTES!”
- End the meeting on time. Though some participants may willingly stay and continue to talk, this will allow people who must leave to go without feeling as though they are interrupting the meeting.

6. When discussing highly personal and emotional subjects, the conversation can turn to personal storytelling or “war stories.” How can a facilitator make the best of these situations?

- While you don’t want the discussion to turn to storytelling, you also do not want to discourage people from taking part in the discussion. Therefore, it is important to be sensitive in how you handle the situation.
- If the personal story has an underlying theme that relates to the topic that you are discussing, identify the theme, and ask a question to the full group that brings your discussion back on track. For example, if a parent is telling a story about how they went to a neighborhood cookout and the beer was easily accessible to youth, you could respond with, “So, I’m hearing that access to alcohol can be a real problem.

⁴ Ibid.

⁵ Adapted from Facilitator’s Guide to Participatory Decision-Making, 2nd edition, by Sam Kaner with L. Lind, C. Toldi, S. Fisk, and D. Berger. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2007.

What are some ways that we can limit our kids' access to alcohol in our own homes and communities?"

- If the personal story doesn't tie in directly with the topic you are discussing, you can still try to find a central theme that segues back into the agenda. For example, if a parent is telling a story about their own troubles with alcohol as an adolescent, you could respond with, "So, I'm hearing that you did not receive the support you needed as a teenager. What are some things we can do to support our kids today in deciding not to drink?"

7. What can a facilitator do when a participant disagrees with the information that is presented?

- Listen carefully to the opinion that is being expressed. Often, even though only one person is voicing the disagreement, it is an opinion that is shared by others in the room.
- Sometimes, disagreement is actually a sign that the information you are presenting is unclear or misunderstood. Listen carefully to figure out what is being misunderstood, and take the opportunity to re-explain the information using different words.
- Rather than engage in a debate during the meeting, which can be time-consuming and unproductive, respectfully acknowledge the difference of opinion. "I see that we have some disagreement on this point. I would be happy to continue this conversation at a later date, as well as put together any background information that might be helpful. Who is interested in a follow-up conversation on this topic?"
- Use the "parking lot" (see question 3) to jot down any topics for follow-up emails or conversation.

8. Participants often have questions about material that is being discussed or presented. However, the facilitator won't always know the answer to every question. How can facilitators handle this?

- As a facilitator, you don't need to know everything! Make a note of the question and tell the group that you will look into it. It is fine to say something like, "That's a very good question. I will see if I can find any information. I will let you know what I find out."
- After finding the answer (even if the answer is, "No data is available on this topic" or "The research is mixed") be sure to follow up with the group with an email or follow-up discussion.

Facilitator Tools: Underage Drinking: Fact Check Quiz Answers

1. True or False? Alcohol is safer than other drugs.

Answer: False. Alcohol kills more youth than all other drugs combined. ^{1 2}

2. What fraction of underage drinking deaths is the result of auto crashes?

- A.) 1/2
- B.) 3/4
- C.) 2/3
- D.) 1/3

Answer: D.) Only 1/3 of all underage drinking deaths involve auto crashes. The other 2/3 of youth alcohol related deaths involve homicides, suicides, and unintentional injuries such as alcohol poisoning, burns, drowning, and falls. ³

3. True or False? In Europe, youth drink more responsibly than in the U.S.

Answer: False. In all European countries except Turkey, European kids actually drink more often, drink more heavily, and get drunk more often than American teens. ⁴

4. What are the penalties for giving minors alcohol or a place to consume alcohol in Maine?

- A.) Up to 1 year in jail
- B.) A fine of up to \$2000
- C.) Both A and B
- D.) None of the above

Answer: C.) Both A and B. Not only that, but if the consumption of liquor by the minor causes serious bodily injury or death to the minor or any other individual, it becomes a Class C felony offense. AND if there is injury, death, or damage, you can also be sued under the Maine Liquor Liability Act for up to \$350,000 plus unlimited medical expenses! (Note: It is illegal for youth under 21 to have possession of alcohol, except at a home in the presence of the minor's parent/guardian⁵).

5. How old are most humans when their brain becomes fully developed?

Answer: 25. Drinking while the brain is still developing can harm young peoples' ability to make decisions as well as greatly increase their chances of alcohol dependence (double risk if before age 17, quadruple risk if before age 15!^{6 7}).

¹ Ninth Special Report to the U.S. Congress on Alcohol and Health from the Secretary of Health and Human Services. June 1997.

² Gruenebaum, J.A. *Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Report*, 2002.

³ Hingson & Kenkel, 2004. *Social, health, and economic consequences of underage drinking*. In *Reducing Underage Drinking: A Collective Responsibility, Background Papers*.

⁴ Pacific Institute for Research and Evaluation, 2005. *Youth Drinking Rates and Problems: A Comparison of European Countries and the United States*.

⁵ Maine Revised Statutes Title 28-1: Liquors. Maine State Legislature.

<http://mainelegislature.org/legis/Statutes/28-A/title28-Ach0sec0.html>

⁶ M.A.D.D. website article *Brain 101*, by Scott Swartzwelder, Ph.D reprinted from DRIVEN magazine, Fall 1998

⁷ National Institute on Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism, 1992 *National Longitudinal Alcohol Epidemiological Survey*.

Facilitator Tools: Tough Subjects Question Cards

Prior to the meeting, copy these questions onto index cards or print these pages and cut into strips so that the questions can be passed out to participants during the discussion.

Q: What are some examples of ways that you can limit your child's access to alcohol in your home or community?

Q: What are some examples of ways that you can connect with the parents of your teen's friends?

Q: What are some examples of ways to reinforce and enforce rules with your child?

Q: What are some examples of ways to check in and monitor what your teen is *really* up to?

Q: What are some examples of how parents can be up and ready when their teens come home?

Q: Imagine you are watching a football game with your son or daughter, and an advertisement for beer comes on. How could you explain to your child that alcohol advertising does not show a realistic picture of drinking?

Q: What would you do if your child told you of plans for an underage drinking party?

Q: What do you tell your teen if they ask you if you drank when you were younger?

Q: What would you tell your son or daughter if he or she asked you why it is ok for adults to drink, but not youth?

Q: What would you say to your son or daughter if his or her friends were drinking?

Facilitator Tools: Facilitator Feedback Form

Dear Facilitator: We would like to know how your Table Talk went. Within one week of your Table Talk, please return this form, along with Participant Feedback Forms, to your Sponsoring Agency. Thank you!

TOWN(S): _____

TABLE TALK DATE: _____ FACILITATOR NAME: _____

Please feel free to write on the back if you need more room.

1) Total # of parent participants at this Table Talk: _____

Female: _____ # Male: _____

2) Please provide a summary of any “Next Actions” or follow-up commitments that resulted from the Table Talk, either by individual parents or by the group as a whole:

3) What went well during the Table Talk?

4) What challenges did you face?

5) Did you receive Table Talks facilitator training prior to doing the Table Talk? If yes, what kind of training did you receive?

6) How effective was the Table Talks How-To Guide in preparing you to facilitate the Table Talk?

Very Somewhat Not at all

7) What suggestions do you have for improving the How-to Guide or other Table Talks materials?

VI. Participant Handouts

You will find these participant handouts on the following pages. The sponsoring agency should print copies of these documents for each participant. These documents, along with any of the optional handouts from SAMHS should be put into participant packets and provided to the facilitator prior to the meeting. Other resources such as the MAPSA (Maine Alliance to Prevent Substance Abuse) Parents and Advocacy handout or a handout listing local treatment and other referral resources can be included as well.

- Sample Agenda/Objectives Handout
- Underage Drinking: Fact Check Quiz
- Underage Drinking...Myth vs. Reality
- Tough Subjects Responses
- 5 Tips to Prevent Underage Drinking
- Writing a Family Contract
- Participant Feedback Form

“Table Talks”

Parents Connecting for Alcohol-Free Youth

Facilitator: _____

Agenda:

1. Welcome (5-10 minutes)
2. Introductions/Icebreaker Activity (10-15 minutes)
3. Fact Check (20 minutes)
4. Tough Subjects (45 minutes)
5. Next Actions (15 minutes)
6. Feedback (5 minutes)

Objectives:

We hope that parents who participate in these Table Talks will:

- **Connect** with other parents who care about underage drinking prevention
- **Learn** new information about underage drinking and how to prevent it
- **Share** challenges and ideas for preventing underage drinking
- **Get** practical tips to use at home and share with other parents

Ground Rules:

We agree to...

- Respect the diverse experiences and viewpoints that everyone brings to this meeting
- Let everyone have a voice in the discussion (Step Up/Step Back: If you're not hearing your voice a lot in the meeting, step up. If you are hearing your voice a lot, step back)
- Engage with the material by thinking critically about how it applies to our own lives
- Ask questions!
- Participate fully in activities
- When describing real-life situations, please don't use names. We don't want this session to turn into finger-pointing
- Respect confidentiality

Participant Handouts: Underage Drinking: Fact Check Quiz

Underage Drinking: Fact Check Quiz

Parents: Please take a few minutes to complete this sheet. Don't worry – this is for your eyes only!

1. True or False? Alcohol is safer than other drugs.

2. What fraction of underage drinking deaths is the result of auto crashes?
 - A.) $1/2$
 - B.) $3/4$
 - C.) $2/3$
 - D.) $1/3$

3. True or False? In Europe, youth drink more responsibly than in the U.S.

4. What are the penalties for giving minors alcohol or a place to consume alcohol in Maine?
 - A.) Up to 1 year in jail
 - B.) A fine of up to \$2000
 - C.) Both A and B
 - D.) None of the above

5. How old are most humans when their brain becomes fully developed?

Underage Drinking... Myth vs. Reality

- MYTH:** "If we changed the minimum drinking age back to 18 instead of 21, it would reduce problems with underage drinking."
- REALITY:** Researchers consider the 21 minimum drinking age to be one of the most successful public safety & public health policies in United States history. Since the minimum drinking age was changed to 21 in 1984, deaths from drinking and driving accidents have decreased by thousands, saving an estimated 20,000 lives.
- MYTH:** "Cracking down on underage drinking will only make kids want to drink more."
- REALITY:** Even though we tend to think of young people as naturally rebellious, research shows that the great majority of kids respond best to clear rules—both from their parents and society at large. For example, studies show that underage youth are significantly less likely to drink alcohol when they believe they'll be caught by police. They're even less likely to drink alcohol when they believe their parents think it would be "very wrong" for them to do so.
- MYTH:** "In Europe, youth drink more responsibly than in the US."
- REALITY:** According to data collected from 15- and 16-year-olds in 35 European countries, European kids actually drink more often, drink more heavily and get drunk more often than American teens. Only in Turkey are teen drinking rates lower than in the U.S.
- MYTH:** "At least alcohol is safer than other drugs."
- REALITY:** Alcohol kills 6.5 times more youth than all other illegal drugs combined.
- MYTH:** "It's okay as long as they don't drive. Most teen alcohol-related deaths are from drinking & driving."
- REALITY:** Only one-third of underage drinking deaths involve auto crashes. The remaining two-thirds involve alcohol poisoning, homicides, suicides, and unintentional injuries such as burns, drowning and falls. Taking away the car keys doesn't make underage drinking safe.
- MYTH:** "If we just educate kids about the dangers, they won't drink."
- REALITY:** Research shows that scare tactics just don't work, at least not for most people. That's because we all have a natural tendency to think, "That won't happen to me." In addition, research suggests that using scare tactics can actually do more harm than good, because they can normalize or glamorize the risky behavior.

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Underage Drinking... Myth vs. Reality

MYTH: "If we just give kids more things to do, they won't drink."

REALITY: Providing youth with positive and fun alternatives can be an important part of a community's strategy to prevent underage drinking—but it's not a cure-all. Research shows that positive community involvement serves as a strong protective factor against substance abuse. But this does not necessarily mean "having more stuff to do." Data shows that kids in urban areas drink just as much as kids in rural areas. And even in the most remote and isolated communities, there are many kids who don't drink at all.

MYTH: "Kids are going to drink anyway – It's a rite of passage."

REALITY: Contrary to popular belief, most kids don't drink. In Maine, anonymous student surveys show that the majority of teens—including 60% of 10th graders and 51% of 12th graders—have not consumed alcohol during the past 30 days. Research shows that misperceptions that "everybody's doing it" actually make young people more likely to drink alcohol. On the other hand, when these misperceptions are corrected, and kids realize that "NOT everybody's doing it," they are less likely to drink alcohol.

MYTH: "It's better for kids to start drinking young, so that they can learn how to handle it."

REALITY: Alcohol impacts a teenager differently than an adult because the adolescent brain is still developing—especially the part of the brain that deals with decision-making. Drinking before the age of 21 places kids at higher risk for academic failure, depression, suicide, and sexual assault. It also increases their risk for alcohol dependence: Young people who begin drinking before age 17 are twice as likely to develop alcohol dependence than those who begin drinking at age 21. Those who begin by age 15 are more than four times more likely to develop dependence.

Prepared February 2006 for the Maine Office of Substance Abuse by MESAP, Maine's Environmental Substance Abuse Prevention Center, Medical Care Development, Inc. (207) 773-7737; mesap@mcd.org

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Participant Handouts: Tough Subjects Responses

Today's parents are dealing with some very tough questions. Here are a few of those questions, along with some possible answers.

Q: What are some examples of ways that you can limit your child's access to alcohol in your home or community?

A: Possible answers:

- Rather than stocking your refrigerator with beer and wine, buy just what you need for an occasion.
- Get into the habit of keeping your alcohol in a secure place or locking it up before your children become teens.
- Thank store clerks when you see them card someone who is buying alcohol.
- Alert the police if you have information about where/how teens are getting alcohol in your community.
- Alert the police if you have information about where teens are drinking (i.e. party spots, pits, woods, camps).

Q: What are some examples of ways that you can connect with the parents of your teen's friends?

A: Possible answers:

- Ask for phone numbers and other ways to contact the parents of your teen's friends.
- Ask other parents what their rules are about underage drinking.
- Make sure the parents of your teen's friends know they can call you if they have concerns about your teen, and offer to return the favor.

Q: What are some examples of ways to reinforce and enforce rules with your child?

A: Possible answers:

- Tell your teen what behavior you expect from them while they are out.
- Anticipate questions from your teen before discussing family rules. Be prepared with honest, firm answers.
- Decide, before a rule is broken, what would be a fair and appropriate consequence; then be sure to communicate that with your teen.
- Enforce your rules consistently. Don't look the other way if your teen violates the rules.
- Catch your teen doing the right thing (for example, calling to check in with you, deciding not to go to a party that might have alcohol, deciding not to catch a ride with someone who shouldn't be driving) – and provide positive rewards.

Q: What are some examples of ways to check in and monitor what your teen is *really* up to?

A: Possible answers:

- Ask your teen for the address and phone number of the home they will be visiting.
- Be sure your teen knows how to reach you before they leave the house.
- Ask that they use a land line when they call you to check in, or have a parent talk with you on the phone for confirmation.
- Be aware of the use of cell phone text messages and instant messaging for planned drinking parties.
- Limit private access to the computer. Keep it in a living space that you'll walk through when they're online.

Q: What are some examples of how parents can be up and ready when their teens come home?

A: Possible answers:

- When your teen arrives home, look for signs of use. Teens who believe their parents will catch them are less likely to drink.
- Hug your teen when they arrive home so you would have a chance to notice odors of alcohol (and your teen will get used to this, which will help protect them from using).
- Keep the lights on and stay up until your teenager comes home.
- If their curfew is past your bedtime, ask them to wake you when they arrive and set an alarm for their curfew time.

Q: What would you do if your child told you of plans for an underage drinking party?

A: Possible answers:

- First, don't lecture or get angry. Instead, act calm and acknowledge your disapproval of the party in a caring way.
- If your child has come to you with the information, it is because they trust you to do the right thing. Tell them you are proud of them for sharing this information with you, and for giving you the opportunity to explain the reasons you don't want them to attend.
- If your son or daughter is embarrassed or angry that they cannot go to the party, tell them that your rules don't necessarily mean that you don't trust them. Even if they went to the party and didn't drink, they would still be putting themselves in a dangerous situation. Your job as a parent is to set limits and keep them safe.
- Your role as a caring adult includes preventing things like this from happening in the first place – so call the parents of the hosting teen if you think they might be unaware of the party, or anonymously call your local law enforcement agency and share with them what you know. They may be able to be on the scene before the party is underway.

Q: Imagine you are watching a football game with your son or daughter, and an advertisement for beer comes on. How could you explain to your child that alcohol advertising does not show a realistic picture of drinking?

A: Possible answers:

- The alcohol industry exists to sell alcohol – they need to produce ads that make people want their product. That is how the businesses make money.
- One way they make people want to buy their product is to make the actors in their ads look like they are having a great time, in addition to being sexy and attractive. They want people to think that if they drink, they will be fun, sexy, and attractive, too. Do you believe alcohol can do that for people?
- The alcohol industry would not make as much money if they had to portray the real effects of drinking too much – slurred words, passing out, throwing up, getting addicted, falling down and hurting yourself, getting in trouble with police, alienating friends, or doing embarrassing things. What do you think would happen if ads showed the negative effects of alcohol use?

Q: What do you tell your teen if they ask you if you drank when you were younger?

A: Possible answers:

- First of all, it is important that you not lie to your child. This can lead to a loss of trust between you and your child as well as a loss of credibility.
- However, you are not obligated to answer all of their questions, either. Tell your child that your history is not the issue, their future is, and what you expect of him or her is all you are

willing to discuss. Reaffirm that your job as a parent is to keep him or her safe, and therefore your expectations have nothing to do with your history.

- If you do share some of your experiences with your child, spare the details. Do not share wild drinking stories, even as cautionary tales, because they may backfire and glamorize the behavior. Instead, talk to your child in general terms about some of the negative consequences that you faced – including any negative impacts on relationships, friendships, school, work, or sports. Explain to your child why it’s important to you that he or she not drink alcohol. Children can sometimes learn from their parents’ mistakes.

Q: What would you tell your son or daughter if he or she asked you why it is ok for adults to drink, but not youth?

A: Possible answers:

- Alcohol affects youth differently than adults – and not in a good way.
- Youth brains are still growing – and alcohol can really damage growing brains.
- One thing that is known is that the earlier a person starts drinking, the more likely they will have an issue with substance abuse. The older a person is before they start to use, the less likely they will become addicted. I don’t want to take a chance with your future health.
- Actually, some adults drink too much and some adults develop addiction or dependence – many who do started drinking as teens and might have avoided problems if they had waited.

Q: What would you say to your son or daughter if his or her friends were drinking?

A: Possible answers:

- You are your own person, and you need to make your own decisions based on what is best for you. If you lose a friendship because you won’t drink, then that wasn’t a very good friendship. Real friends will like and respect you for who you are. Have you ever lost a friend because you wouldn’t do something that they wanted you to do?
- If you are ever concerned about a friend getting into trouble with alcohol or other drugs, I want you to know you can come to me and together we will figure out what to do. If something terrible were to happen to someone you cared about and you hadn’t taken action that would be tough to live with. It would be better for us to work together to try to help that person. That’s what friends do, even when it’s hard and even when it’s not the fun or popular thing to do. Do you have any friends you are concerned about?

For more parenting resources from the Maine Office of Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services, visit www.maineparents.net.

Find out *More* **Do More** ▶ 5 Tips to Prevent Underage Drinking
www.MaineParents.net

	TIP 1 <i>Limit Access</i>	TIP 2 <i>Network</i>	TIP 3 <i>Reinforce & Enforce</i>	TIP 4 <i>Check In Often</i>	TIP 5 <i>Be Up & Be Ready</i>
Start Here Then Try Do More	<p>GOOD</p> <p>If you have alcohol in your home, keep track of it – know what and how much you have, and keep it where it is not accessible to teens.</p>	<p>GOOD</p> <p>Get to know your teen’s friends.</p>	<p>GOOD</p> <p>Reinforce the rules and consequences of underage drinking before your teen goes out.</p>	<p>GOOD</p> <p>Before your teen goes to a party or out with friends, ask if adults will be present and if alcohol will be present.</p>	<p>GOOD</p> <p>Wait up, or set the alarm for curfew time – talk with your teen about their night.</p>
	<p>BETTER</p> <p><i>Start with above and then...</i> Thank store clerks when you see them card someone who is buying alcohol.</p>	<p>BETTER</p> <p><i>Start with above and then...</i> Get to know the parents of your teen’s friends. Know their rules so you don’t have to just accept the argument “everybody else is allowed to...”</p>	<p>BETTER</p> <p><i>Start with above and then...</i> Frequently explain the reasons behind the rules so your teen understands the rules are a protective measure, not just a restriction on their freedom.</p>	<p>BETTER</p> <p><i>Start with above and then...</i> Ask your teen to call you from the party or gathering; if you have caller ID, you can ask them to use a landline, not a cell phone so that you can tell where they actually are when they call.</p>	<p>BETTER</p> <p><i>Start with above and then...</i> When your teen arrives home, look for signs of use. Teens who believe their parents will catch them are less likely to drink.</p>
	<p>BEST</p> <p><i>Start with above and then...</i> Alert the police if you have information about where/how teens are getting alcohol in your community.</p>	<p>BEST</p> <p><i>Start with above and then...</i> Let the parents of your teen’s friends know your rules, and where you stand on underage alcohol use – no furnishing, ever.</p>	<p>BEST</p> <p><i>Start with above and then...</i> Enforce your rules consistently. Don’t look the other way if your teen violates the rules – they need to know that you are serious about the rules and that you will hold them accountable for violating them.</p>	<p>BEST</p> <p><i>Start with above and then...</i> Trust but verify – check in with other parents about your teen’s activities or drop by once in a while where your teen tells you they will be.</p>	<p>BEST</p> <p><i>Start with above and then...</i> Be prepared in advance for what you would do the FIRST time you discover that your teen has been drinking. Think ahead of time about how you want to react, who you would talk to, how you would enforce the consequences.</p>

(Over)

School Checklist for Parents

When it comes to underage drinking, all Maine kids are at risk. As a parent you can work with your local school system to help prevent underage drinking. Working together parents, teachers, administrators and coaches can be powerful influencers of teen behavior. This checklist can help as you talk with your school:

- Underage drinking is considered an important issue at my teen's school.
- I know the school policies about underage drinking.
- My teen's school will enforce the consequences of breaking those rules.
- My teen's school will help/intervene if there is reason to believe a teen is drinking.
- My teen's school requires parents to be kept informed of school policies regarding underage drinking.
- I will actively support school policies on underage drinking and the enforcement of them.

If you would like to encourage your school to do more to prevent underage drinking, here are some suggestions:

- Encourage your school to add information or a speaker on underage drinking to existing parent meetings – such as Open House, Athletic Kick-Off Meetings, Parent Nights, and more.
- Ask your school principal to include the Five Tips in a newsletter or mailing to parents.
- Encourage your school principal to write a letter to all parents about the school's policy on underage drinking and include information from www.MaineParents.net.
- Support your school system when they enforce alcohol policies.
- If you hear information from your teens about potential issues in school, share those issues with school authorities.

Community Checklist for Parents

All Maine kids are at risk for underage drinking. As a parent, there are things you can do in your community to help prevent underage drinking. This checklist can help you get started.

- When I see a clerk or waiter checking an ID, I thank them for their effort.
- My local stores and restaurants keep displays of alcohol and alcohol ads above eye-level of younger children.
- I've asked my local stores and restaurants to refrain from using alcohol ads and displays that appeal especially to youth.
- I support local law enforcement when they prosecute adults who furnish alcohol to underage youth.
- If I know where underage drinking is occurring or how teens are accessing alcohol I will inform local law enforcement.
- I support policies and laws that keep alcohol away from underage users.
- I write letters to the editor in support of local prevention efforts.
- I encourage other parents and community members to join me in these actions to prevent underage drinking.

(Over)

Participant Handouts: Writing a Family Contract

As a parent, you are the most influential person in your child's life. Building a close relationship with your children will encourage them to come to you for help in making decisions that impact their health and well-being. One way to help your child make healthy choices is to involve him or her in writing a family contract.

Possible actions

Every family and every child is different, and what works for one family or child might not work for another. Below are some ideas and suggestions to get you started.

- 1) Clearly state your position on why you don't want your child to use alcohol or other illegal substances; share your honest concerns with your child.
- 2) Tell your child you will always give them a safe, calm ride home with no discussion or questions until the following day.
- 3) Ask your child to name other caring adults in their life that they believe would help them if asked.
- 4) List all possible consequences if your child violates the contract. Consider rewards and incentives for your child to continue good behavior, which may be taken away if the contract is violated. These could be things like a weekly allowance, going out with friends, a later curfew, driving privileges, or use of phone, television, video games, and computers (other than for homework). You could also list activities that would replace the restricted activities, for example homework projects and chores—or even family-building activities like hikes or board games.
- 5) List the reasons why you would follow through with the consequences and enforce the contract. Make the contract mutual by asking your child to let you know if you aren't following through with what you promised.
- 6) Write out the contract with your child.
- 7) Make a copy for both you and your child—you both sign each and keep a copy.

Some Tips

- **Discuss limits and expectations.** Rules work best when teens help develop and understand them.
- **Don't lecture.** Constant reference to the contract may build anger and resentment in your child.
- **Be consistent.** On-again, off-again rules quickly lose their impact.
- **Have good reasons.** Rules mean more when they're based on facts and principles including fairness, kindness, and your desire to keep them safe.
- **Don't retreat.** Let kids learn by experiencing the consequences of their actions. Make sure their actions do not cause harm to themselves or cause damage.
- **Stay positive.** Let kids know that you value them and are proud of them. Reward them when they make good choices!

Sample Family Contract – *This is provided as a starting point. Please copy and edit as needed.*

We agree on the importance of trust and honesty between us. We understand the need to abstain from unsafe and illegal behaviors such as underage drinking. We also agree to the consequences associated with any failure to fulfill our responsibilities.

1. **We Agree** on the following no alcohol rules:

- Young people will not drink alcohol. At age 21, you may decide whether or not you choose to drink alcohol.
- Young people will not attend parties or other situations where underage youth will be drinking alcohol. Even if young people don't drink themselves, being in that environment would place them at higher risk for harm, including assault and unintentional injuries.
- Young people will not stay at parties/other situations where alcohol is being served to underage youth.
- Young people will not ride in a motor vehicle with a driver who has been drinking. Young people will also not ride in or drive a motor vehicle with underage passengers who have been drinking (unless the driver is a parent or other responsible adult). Driving with drunken passengers places people at higher risk for crashing.
- Young people will call parents for a ride if they are ever in a situation like those listed above, or any other situation that threatens their safety. If for some reason parents are unreachable, young people will call: *[insert name(s) of responsible adults]* _____.
- Parents agree to pick up their child at any time and will not discuss the event until the following morning.
- If parents pick up their child at a location where other youth are drinking, parents agree to take action based on their best judgment.
- Young people will not allow their guests to bring alcohol onto our property. No one in our home is to make alcohol available to anyone under age 21.
- Older brothers and sisters will not encourage younger brothers and sisters to drink and will not give them alcohol. Younger brothers and sisters will not accept alcohol from anyone.

2. **We Agree** that all discussions will promote mutual respect. Even if we don't agree, we will use our normal voice level, and our voice tone and language will show respect. We will keep communication channels open.

3. **We Agree** that failure to abide by these rules will result in firm consequences that will be decided jointly by all of us. Possible consequences include: _____

4. **We Agree** to jointly establish priorities for healthy behaviors and choices over the next ____ months. Parents and youth will agree on the type of support parents will give youth participating in fun, interesting, and healthy activities. Possible activities include: _____

Parent(s)/Guardian

The Child

Other Responsible Adult

Date: _____

Participant Handouts: Participant Feedback Form

Dear Parent: We value your feedback about the Table Talk and materials. Please let us know what you think by filling out this form. Thank you!

TABLE TALK DATE: _____ FACILITATOR NAME: _____

1) How many children do you have? _____ What are their ages? _____

2) During this Table Talk, I was able to **connect** with other parents who care about underage drinking prevention:

Strongly agree Agree Disagree Strongly disagree

3) This Table Talk helped me **learn** more information about underage drinking and how to prevent it:

Strongly agree Agree Disagree Strongly disagree

4) This Table Talk allowed me to **share** challenges and ideas for preventing underage drinking:

Strongly agree Agree Disagree Strongly disagree

5) How likely are you to **use** the information and materials you received today once you return home?

Very likely Likely Not likely Not at all likely

6) How likely are you to **share** the information and materials you received today with other parents?

Very likely Likely Not likely Not at all likely

7) What was the best part of today's Table Talk?

8) What part of today's meeting could be improved for future Table Talks?

9) What materials/activities did you find most useful?

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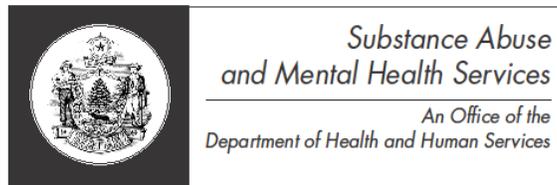
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October 2012



Paul R. LePage, Governor

Mary C. Mayhew, Commissioner

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