

How Easy Prom Night can End a Good College Future or Career Before it Begins

For many teenagers, one of their most cherished nights will take place over one of the next few weekends. Prom night comes with the hope of memories that will be forever remembered, but one wrong move and an entire future can be tarnished. Criminal defense attorney Thomas Carr wishes to warn teenagers that one ill-conceived action could haunt them for the rest of their lives. "It starts out as an innocent night, and it can turn devastating in the blink of an eye. Raising this awareness allows parents to achieve a great deal in making sure that their children make wise decisions on that night," said Carr, a partner at Tully Rinckey PLLC.

Prom Night Penalties and Consequences

Offense: Drinking and Driving

According to the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration, one-third of alcohol-related traffic fatalities involving teens each year occur during what is referred to as "prom-graduation season" (April-June). The Traffic Safety Administration also reports that 53 percent of students surveyed admitted to drinking more than 4 drinks on prom night. A first-offense aggravated DWI

carries a minimum fine of \$1,000, up to one year in jail and loss of license for 90 days. A first-offense DWAI requires a minimum fine of \$300, possible 15 days in jail and loss of license for 90 days. "What also can't be forgotten is that anyone convicted of a DWI

in New York also must have an ignition interlock device installed in his or her vehicle for at least six months. The new penalties under Leandra's Law become even more severe if someone is found to be driving drunk with a minor in the car. Then you are looking at mandatory jail time," said Carr. Offense: Sex with someone under 17

According to a Centers for Disease Control (CDC) and Seventeen Magazine study, 14 percent of girls admitted to having sex on prom night. Carr reminds young adults that New York law defines sex with anyone incapable of consent, such as someone who is intoxicated as 3rd

degree rape which is punishable by up to four years in prison. Offense: Drug Possession and Student Loans

According to the Higher Education Act, any student who is convicted of the possession or sale of illegal drugs

becomes ineligible for federal student loan money. Federal Pell Grants, Perkins Loans, PLUS Loans, Stafford Loans and Work Studies are all denied after conviction. All students convicted

after already receiving the federal loans are required to pay all monies back and become ineligible for future loans. Those first-offense students convicted for drug possession become ineligible for one year while repeat offenders face indefinite ineligibility. First-time offenders convicted under the sale of illegal drugs face a mandatory two-year suspension of benefits while repeat offenders face an indefinite suspension. "Peer pressure can make teenagers do things they would not normally do. If those things include drinking and driving, sexual intercourse and drugs then even first-time offenders who have spent the last 17 or so years doing everything right will be in for a rude awakening with just one mistake," said Carr.