Frequently Asked Questions from Students & Parents

How do I prevent getting into a problem situation with alcohol in school?

Alcohol can be a dangerous drug if it is abused. You run some risk of legal and health issues if you choose to drink alcohol. There are several ways to reduce your risk while drinking and being familiar with them can help you be safer. Make sure you have all the facts and don't drink simply because it's expected or because it's what everyone else does. People who drink to cope with difficulties are at increased risk of experiencing problems. Remember, the legal drinking age is 21. If you are below this age and choose to drink, it will be difficult to avoid situations where you could get in trouble. Try to have fun without alcohol. Educate yourself regarding Marquette University's policies regarding alcohol and the potential consequences you may face should you choose to drink and get caught.

What is a blackout?

Blackouts are often confused with passing out. They do not involve the loss of consciousness. Blackouts occur because alcohol disrupts information processing in the region of the brain which controls the formation of memories of events. One of the main predictors of blackouts is the rate at which the drinker consumes alcohol. Inexperienced drinkers, drinking too much too fast and gulping drinks are related to blackouts. When a person's blood alcohol level rises extremely fast, they are more likely to experience blackouts.

Although blackouts are not a predictor of alcoholism, increasing numbers of blackouts can be an indicator of problem drinking which may progress to alcohol dependence. If someone is experiencing a blackout every time s/he consumes alcohol, it may be worthwhile to make some changes. People sometimes learn of behavior they engaged in while under the influence that they cannot remember and subsequently feel very guilty about it the next day.

Can you be addicted to something other than alcohol or drugs?

Yes, one can develop addictions or dependencies on things other than alcohol or drugs. Experts in the field of addictions now agree several key characteristics are present in both substance and non-substance addictions.

An addiction is defined as continued involvement with a substance or activity despite ongoing negative consequences. When one is addicted to something, one has a compulsion to continue doing activities or taking substances, even though logic may say otherwise and despite having multiple problems as a result. Addictions seem to share the characteristics of denial (*inability to realistically admit the negative consequences that result from the activity or the substance*), loss of control (*not sticking with limits that have been set regarding the substance or activity*) and negative consequences (*can include legal, relationship, money, school, work, self-esteem*).

If you think you might be addicted, there are many resources to provide support. You can contact the alcohol and drug counselor at the Counseling Center on campus who can meet with you to discuss your concerns. There are a variety of self-help groups in the community such as Alcoholics Anonymous, Narcotics Anonymous and Gambler's Anonymous which have web addresses with information on how to locate a local group.

Do people recover from substance abuse problems?

Many people are able to change their behavior without formal treatment, while others who are involved in treatment do have positive outcomes. Sometimes people get help from family members, faith organizations or self-help programs. People are able to remain abstinent or cut down their alcohol or drug use.

Formal treatment involves a thorough assessment and a combination of individual/group and/or family education and psychotherapy. There isn't one thing that helps everyone.

Is marijuana a safer drug than alcohol?

This is a frequently asked question, but there is no clear-cut answer. People assume that since you don't hear marijuana associated as often as alcohol with violence or physical diseases, it is safer. Acting out is not a major concern with marijuana users. The problems for marijuana user as often related to not doing things such as studying, going to class/work or completing daily tasks. Marijuana is a different drug and does have significant effects of its own. Like alcohol, marijuana can significantly affect a person's ability to drive and people can become dependent on it.

Marijuana interferes with the brain by slowing reflexes, making complex decisions more difficult, distorting perceptions of time and distance and causing drowsiness. People who are high are not aware that these effects are so dramatic. The most powerful chemical in marijuana is THC, but marijuana contains more than 400 other chemicals. It is still unclear what effects these other chemicals have on a person. Smoking marijuana can increase the risk of lung cancer and can exacerbate the problems for asthma sufferers. It has been shown to affect memory and motivation. Long-term effects of marijuana use are still being researched.

Is there help for people who are concerned about someone else's use of alcohol or drugs?

There are support group meeting for friends and family members who care about someone who is alcohol dependent and/or drug dependent. Some of the names of these meeting include Al-Anon, Alateen, ACOA and Gam-Anon. You can get current listing of these meeting around the community by looking on their websites or calling the local chapter office. Periodically, an Al-Anon meeting will run on campus.

Are students made aware of the reality of alcohol use?

This is a question that is often asked by parents, particularly after a student has had a conduct related issue resulting from alcohol use. Outreaches are done throughout the year in the form of health fairs, class presentations and educational programs to student groups. The Counseling Center is also involved in training resident assistants and freshman orientation staff who work with students on personal development issues. Counseling Center staff is available to do educational seminars on this topic or to consult with students/families if there is a concern about alcohol use.

There are a lot of misperceptions about alcohol use and college life. Most research indicates that students come to college with well-developed attitudes and habits in the area of alcohol use – most of which were already in place during the high school years. Having conversations early and often about the current and future expectations of a student can help provide them with information to make healthy choices. It is important that students hear from as many sources that high-risk alcohol use can lead to negative consequences that will interfere with their college experience.

What services are available to students?

The Counseling Center provides a range of services in the area of alcohol/drug education and treatment.

- Evaluations: Evaluations consist of an individual interview between the student and the certified alcohol/drug counselor. The goal is to determine what role alcohol/other drugs play in the student's life and how it is interfering with reaching their goals. The result of the evaluation is to determine what options are available and those that the student is willing to pursue. The options may include, but are not limited to individual sessions, participation in a group and/or short-term outpatient treatment. Students requiring assistance beyond the scope of what the Center can provide may be referred to other University or community agencies.
- Education/Outreach: The Counseling Center staff present workshops and provide training on a variety of alcohol/other drug issues upon request.
- Friends and family of students desiring support may consult with our staff. We can be contacted at 414-288-7172.