

How Parents Can Help with College and Drinking

(Taken from: U.S. Department of Education. Alcohol, Other Drugs and College: A Parent's Guide. 2000)

<http://www.edu.org/hec/pubs/parents.html>

Campus climate is important, but ultimately it is up to your son or daughter to make responsible choices. Studies show that parents remain a key influence on college students. Your opinions and guidance can make a difference.

Listen. Ask your child to talk about alcohol and other drugs. Find out what concerns he or she has.

Make your expectations clear. College is a huge investment of time and money. Set clear expectations that your student will focus on academic work and personal development. Underage alcohol consumption can impact learning. For those under 21 years of age, drinking and being in possession of a fake I.D. is illegal.

Offer information. Alcohol poisoning is a real medical emergency that happens to a number of college students each year. Discourage dangerous drinking such as drinking games. Encourage your son or daughter to have the courage to intervene when someone else is engaging in at-risk drinking.

Help them take a stand. Every student has the right to a safe academic and living environment. Discuss ways to handle situations ranging from interrupted study time to assault or unwanted sexual advances. Help your son or daughter think about whether to approach the offender directly or whether to notify residence hall staff or other college or law enforcement officials.

Get and share facts. Students grossly overestimate the use of alcohol and other drugs by their peers. Young adults are highly influenced by peers and tend to drink in amounts they perceive to be the norm. Realize that the drinking you might have done in college and the reasons for it are not the same as what is done in college today. Twenty years ago, 20% of males and 15% of females drank to get drunk. Today, 40%+ of males and 30%+ of females drink to become drunk (NASPA. A Parents' Guide to College and Drinking by R. Chapman, 2004). Drinking socially and to have fun does not equate excessive use of alcohol. You can play a vital role in providing accurate information.

Encourage community service. Students who volunteer are less likely to abuse alcohol and other drugs. Point out the benefits of volunteer work – forming relationships, developing job-related skills, and knowing the satisfaction of helping others.

Be a good role model. Evaluate your own use of alcohol, tobacco, prescription medications and even over-the-counter drugs. Consider how your attitudes and actions may be shaping your son or daughter's choice about whether or not to use alcohol or other drugs.

For additional information visit: <http://www.edc.org/hec/parents>

What to Do if you have concerns about your student and alcohol/other drugs:

Familiarize yourself with resources on campus. Who is available to help your son or daughter if their drinking is impacting their academics, motivation, mood or relationships?

Explore the university's policy regarding a parent's right to know. Federal legislation protects a student's right to privacy – i.e. academic performance. However, ask about the policies on "parental notification" regarding disciplinary proceedings.

If your child is involved in an alcohol/other drug violation, avoid the temptation to react to the violation itself. Instead, use it as an opportunity to talk to your student about their relationship with alcohol and how it fits into their personal

development, social scene, etc. Communicate about what they learned as a result of the violation and what they plan to do differently in the future.