

Talking With Your Student about Alcohol and Drinking

Sending your son or daughter off to college can be an exciting time. It is important that you talk to your student about drinking and the social pressures they may face in college. The most important thing to remember is that open and honest communication is the key to you and your student's success when it comes to alcohol consumption. When students know that their parents care and are concerned about their alcohol consumption, they are more likely to be more responsible in their behavior.

The following guidelines can help you help your student when it comes to alcohol and drinking:

1. Continue the conversation: keep the communication lines open with your son or daughter by discussing drinking and how he or she can continue to make smart choices at college.
2. Create shared expectations: set goals and consequences if goals are not met for your student's performance both academically and socially at college.
3. Know and respect the law: understand the penalties for underage and/or abusive drinking and share them with your son or daughter.
4. Focus on "true norms": let your son or daughter know that the majority of college students don't abuse alcohol. Moderate or infrequent drinking is the true norm.
5. Share the facts: thanks to discussions as your child was growing up, he or she understands the effects of alcohol, but you can also share responsible drinking tips for when he or she is of legal age and ways to help friends who may be abusing alcohol.
6. Take advantage of campus resources: colleges and universities offer a variety of services from academic support to alcohol treatment assistance. Encourage students to take advantage of the appropriate resources, especially if they or their friends may be abusing alcohol.

Other tips...

- Talk openly about alcohol
- Empower your student to say "no" when something doesn't feel right
- Learn all you can about alcohol, date rape drugs, and other substances
- Don't glorify your own "youthful drinking days" if you had them
- Help your child learn from their mistakes

Here are some helpful conversation starters to talk about drinking with your student:

- Discuss your family's values relating to alcohol and/or family history of alcohol abuse.
- How will you decide whether or not to drink at college?
- What will you do if your roommate really enjoys drinking and partying?
- What will you do if you find yourself at a party with only alcohol to drink?
- What else is there to do on campus besides go to parties on weekends?
- What will you do friends wants to drive home and they are intoxicated? What if they don't want to listen to you?
- How can you participate in the social activity of going to parties, but not drink?
- What are the resources on campus for you or a friend if you have concerns about alcohol?
- If you do plan to go out and drink, how to you plan to stay safe?
- Do you know what the consequences are for violating the school's alcohol policy?
- If you bring a friend home from a party, and they are really drunk, what will you do?
- What plan are we going to make so you can feel free to call us if you are in trouble or don't know how to handle a situation?

Adapted from Central College