



SAFE HOME, HEALTHY FAMILIES TOOLKIT



DCCCA

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This toolkit is for parents and caregivers on how to prevent underage drinking and substance use with their children.

Preventing Underage Drinking and Substance Use is a Conversation Worth Having.

As parents and caregivers, it can be difficult to know how to reinforce positive behavior when we engage with the young people in our life. This toolkit is designed to help you get accurate, reliable information that you need to begin having conversations to prevent underage drinking and substance use with your child early and often.

Did you know that the majority of youth don't drink alcohol or use other substances and think frequent use is risky? It's true. That means that the best time for parents and caregivers to engage with children to prevent or delay alcohol use and encourage healthy behaviors is right now.

Parents and caregivers are one of the biggest influences in their children's decision whether or not to use alcohol or other substances. However, the 2024 KCTC data showed that only 38.32% of youth in grades 6, 8, 10, and 12 had any conversation with a parent or guardians about the dangers of alcohol or other substance use. It is critical to understand that not talking about these substances still sends kids a message; if parents and caregivers don't talk about the risks, their children may not see the harm in experimenting.

Data shows children as young as nine years old already start viewing alcohol in a more positive way and the older youth get, the more likely they may try alcohol. By having conversations early and often, adults get the opportunity to engage children in conversations before they are exposed to alcohol or other substances.

Read on to learn how we can reinforce positive behavior in children, set clear rules and expectations about alcohol and other substance use, and support them in making healthy decisions.

Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration



HOW CAN I PREVENT UNDERAGE DRINKING WITH MY CHILD?

1

Know what may increase the risk of a child's alcohol or substance use.

- Significant social transactions like graduating from middle or high school.
- A history of social and emotional problems.
- Depression and/or other mental health challenges in the youth or caregiver.
- A family history of alcoholism and or substance use.
- Interactions with peers who use alcohol.

2

Be a positive adult role model.

- Refrain from using alcohol or use it responsibly; avoid drinking in excess and do not drink and drive.
- Reach out for help if you think you have an alcohol-related problem.
- Do not give alcohol to your children. Tell them that any alcohol in your home is off limits to them and to their friends.
- Set clear rules, including rules about alcohol use. Enforce the rules you set.
- Educate yourself on the health and safety risks of youth substance misuse to make sure the information you are sharing on alcohol and substance use is accurate so you can be their go-to person to learn more.

3

Engage with the community to protect children from underage drinking.

- Make sure schools and the community support and reward young people's decisions not to drink.
- Support schools and the community intervening with children engaged in underage drinking early.
- Ensure rules about underage drinking are in place at home, at school, and in your community.
- Establish agreements of acceptable behavior and make sure they are understood and applied consistently.
- Establish the norm that parties and social events do not allow underage drinking.



SUPPORT YOUR CHILDREN AND GIVE THEM SPACE TO GROW

- 🏠 Help your children avoid dangerous situations such as riding in a car driven by someone who has been drinking or is under the influence of other substances.
- 🏠 Don't let children go to parties with alcohol or allow alcohol at parties in your home.
- 🏠 Help them find ways to have fun without alcohol or other substances.
- 🏠 Help your children get professional help if you are worried about their mental well-being or are worried about their involvement with alcohol or substance use.
- 🏠 Create a pledge between yourself and your children that promises they will not drink alcohol or use drugs.
- 🏠 Be involved with your children and make
 - it easy for them to share information about their lives.
- 🏠 Encourage your children's growing independence but set appropriate limits.
- 🏠 Know where your children are, what they are doing, who they are with, and who they are friends with.
- 🏠 Make an effort to get to know the parents of your children's friends. Share your rules about not allowing alcohol or substance use.
- 🏠 Help set future goals and show how any substance use can affect those goals.



HOW TO HAVE A CONVERSATION ABOUT UNDERAGE DRINKING AND SUBSTANCE USE

Conversations about alcohol and substance use should start early and continue often. Why do these talks with your children matter? Because data shows that when conversations around alcohol and other risky behaviors go up, underage drinking and substance use rates go down. These talks should not be a one-time conversation and they don't have to be formal- the more natural the better.

A key ingredient of every conversation should be "responsibility." In fact, not every conversation needs to be about alcohol; a great place to begin is to communicate with kids about making healthy, responsible decisions. You can use current events or things you and your kids are seeing to start the conversation.

Youth also need to hear consistently that underage drinking and other substance use is illegal. And that underage drinking and driving under the influence of drugs or alcohol are both illegal and dangerous.

Parents are the #1 influence on their kid's decision to use- or not to use- alcohol or other substances. So keep talking; keep asking questions; keep modeling responsible behaviors; and keep listening.

source: responsibility.org

TIPS FOR HAVING THE CONVERSATION ABOUT UNDERAGE DRINKING

- For kids who find it tough to open up, face-to-face, text messages or emails are ways to engage in conversation.
- Be authentic.
- Be intentional about connecting when relaxing at home.
- Make them the expert by asking about something they are passionate about- a hobby, a school subject, a sport, or something else they enjoy!
- Try asking thoughtful questions with open-ended answers to spark conversations.
- Keep it positive, but realistic.

Sometimes conversations can flow better when you're having fun with an activity like taking a walk, playing video games, going bowling, or having a picnic.

Ask Listen Learn, Foundation for Advancing Alcohol Responsibility



TALKING TO KIDS ABOUT ALCOHOL AND SUBSTANCE USE: 5 CONVERSATION GOALS

Prevention science tells us that focusing on these five goals are most effective when preventing underage drinking and substance misuse in children.

- 1 Send a clear message that you disapprove of underage drinking and substance use.
- 2 Show you care about your child's health, wellness, and success.
- 3 Show you're a good source of information about alcohol and other substances.
- 4 Let them know you're paying attention and you discourage risky behaviors.
- 5 Build your child's skills and strategies for avoiding drinking and drug use.

FACTS FOR CAREGIVERS

Here are some facts you can share with your children when you have conversations early and often to prevent underage drinking.

1

Most kids don't drink.

383.6 million people aged 12-20 across the United States (85.4% of people in this age group) reported they have not drunk alcohol in the past 30 days

(NSDUH, 2023) (source: national institute on Alcohol abuse and alcoholism, updated October 2024)

92.51% of Kansas Youth in grades 6, 8, 10, and 12 did not drink once within the last 30 days as reported in the 2024 Kansas Communities That Care data.
(KCTCdata.org)

2

Most kids don't use Marijuana.

96.82% of Kansas youth in grades 6, 8, 10, and 12 did not use marijuana once in the last 30 days as reported in the 2024 Kansas Communities That Care data.
(KCTCdata.org)

3

Age matters.

Our brains are not fully developed until our mid-to late twenties. Drinking or misusing other substances during the teen years can negatively affect brain development and can cause short- and long-term damage.

4

It's ok to say no.

Remind your child they can call you if they need to get out of any uncomfortable situation. Work together to set up a code word or a text signal, practice ways to say "NO," and remind them to never get in a car with anyone who is impaired.

5

Most Kids don't smoke tobacco or vape.

94.78% of Kansas youth in grades 6, 8, 10, and 12 did not vape once in the last 30 days as reported in the 2024 Kansas Communities That Care data.
(KCTCdata.org)

99.08% of Kansas youth in grades 6, 8, 10, and 12 did not smoke a cigarette once in the last 30 days as reported in the 2024 Kansas Communities That Care data.
(KCTCdata.org)

6

Most kids don't misuse prescription drugs.

98.28% of Kansas youth in youth in grades 6, 8, 10, and 12 did not use a prescription medication that did not belong to them once in the last 30 days as reported in the 2024 Kansas Communities That Care data.
(KCTCdata.org)

7

Alcohol and Substance use can make mental health challenges worse.

Sometimes people use substances to cope with mental health challenges; however, substance misuse can actually make the problem worse and could even result in dependence or addiction.

10 Ways to Say No to Alcohol or Drugs

Help your child to pick the phrase that feels most natural to them and work together to practice it.



No, I'll pass.



No thanks, I'm not into that.

Nope, I'm going to go (insert activity here) instead.



No, that's not my thing.



No thanks.

Nah, that's nothing but trouble.

And get grounded for life? No thanks.



I've got to study.



Not today, I'll wait.

No, I have a big game (or other commitment) coming up.

No. Just no.

Here are examples of a family agreement and a youth agreement you can create with your child to establish clear expectations around underage drinking and substance use. Or write your own family agreement.

FAMILY AGREEMENT

As your parent/caregiver, I agree to do my part in helping to keep you alcohol and drug free. I promise to talk with you about the dangers and harmful effects of drugs and underage drinking. I will do my part to create an alcohol-free environment that is safe and fun for you and your friends. I agree to pick you up at any time or place if you find yourself in any uncomfortable situation where drugs or alcohol are involved. By signing this agreement, I agree to help keep you alcohol – and drug- free.

Parent/Caregiver Signature: _____

YOUTH AGREEMENT

As your child, I understand that alcohol and other drugs can harm my body and my mind and make me say and do things I might regret. I agree to avoid situations where my friends and peers are drinking alcohol or using drugs. I promise to call or text you to help remove me from those situations if they arise. I agree to NOT engage in underage drinking or drug use. By signing this agreement, I agree not to drink alcohol or use other drugs.

Parent/Caregiver Signature: _____ Child Signature: _____

Resources

Ask Listen Learn <https://asklistenlearn.org/>

Responsibility.org <https://www.responsibility.org/>

Talk. They Hear You Campaign

SAMHSA <https://www.samhsa.gov/talk-they-hear-you/parent-resources>

Own Your Limits: Responsible Drinking for Adults <https://ownyourlimits.org>

References

Ask Listen Learn, Responsibility.org, Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA)



The Kansas Prevention Collaborative and DCCCA have created a variety of free toolkits, e-learning modules, webinars, YouTube videos and other resources that are available to all communities and coalitions working with prevention. Many of these resources are available in both English and Spanish. Follow any of these links to access this toolkit and other prevention resources:

<http://www.dccca.org/prevention-resources>

<https://ispri.ng/mxVY1>

Or scan here:

