

NDSCS, just like other colleges and universities, actively works to educate students regarding high-risk choices that could impact student success. NDSCS recognizes the important role parents, other family members and influential friends play in student decisions – from what new Netflix series to watch to what is the best academic program for them. The use of alcohol is not different. That is why NDSCS wants to partner with you to help students make informed decisions regarding alcohol and other drug use.

We know that decisions about alcohol and other drugs are something that every student will face.

In this publication, you will find some suggestions for how to start the conversation and some facts that may help guide your discussion with your students regarding alcohol and other drugs. We appreciate your involvement and your support on this important issue.



ARE YOU CONCERNED ABOUT YOUR STUDENT?

- Various behaviors could indicate that your student may have developed a serious drinking or drug problem.
- Indications that help may be needed:
 - Drop in grades
 - Switching friends
 - Defiance of rules and regulations
 - Mood changes
 - Trouble in school
 - Lack of motivation
 - Reduced self-esteem or self-confidence
 - Quitting or getting fired from a job
 - Never available or reluctant to talk with you
 - Unwilling to talk about activities with friends
 - Incidents resulting from high BAC
- When in doubt or if you have a concern, please feel free to contact our NDSCS Alcohol, Tobacco and Other Drugs Prevention Programs or Counseling Services at 701-671-2286. Refer your student to NDSCS Counseling Services for free and confidential help. Feel free to consult Counseling Services if you need help with making a referral. More information is available at NDSCS.edu/Counseling. To make an appointment, call 701-671-2286.
- If you think your student might have a drinking or drug problem, here are some suggestions for ways you can help:
 - Do not turn your back on the problem
 - Be calm when discussing the problem with your student
 - Let your student know you are concerned and willing to help
 - Do not make excuses or cover up for your student

Do not take over your student's responsibilities, but provide them with the means to take responsibility for their actions.

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

NDSCS Alcohol, Tobacco and Other Drug Prevention Team

For more information about alcohol and drug abuse prevention, visit our website at www.NDSCS.edu/alcoholinfo.

Parents LEAD

For more information about talking to your college-age student about alcohol, visit Parents LEAD at www.parentslead.org. Click on College/Young Adult on the home page for more helpful information.

PARENTS LEAD

FAMILY MATTERS: Talking to Your Student About Alcohol Use



NDSCS

NDSCS ATOD PREVENTION TEAM

WHY DOES NDSCS CARE ABOUT STUDENT DRINKING?

Underage drinking may impact student success.

- Research continues to illustrate that alcohol negatively impacts student success in college. Specifically....
 - Lower graduation rates, missed classes, career implications.¹
- About 1 in 4 college students report academic consequences from drinking, including missing class, falling behind in class, doing poorly on exams or papers and receiving lower grades overall.²

Underage drinking poses a range of risks and negative consequences.

- **Interferes with brain development.** Research shows that young people's brains keep developing well into their twenties. Alcohol can alter this development, negatively impacting brain structure and function. This may cause cognitive or learning problems and/or make the brain more prone to alcohol dependence. This is especially a risk when people start drinking heavily at a young age.¹
- **Impairs judgment.** Drinking can lead to poor decisions about engaging in risky behavior, including drinking and driving, sexual activity (such as unprotected sex) and aggressive or violent behavior.¹

- **Increases the risk of physical and sexual assault.** Underage youth who drink are more likely to carry out or be the victim of a physical or sexual assault after drinking than others their age who do not drink.¹
- **Alcohol dependence.** Research shows that people who start drinking before the age of 15 are 4 times more likely to meet the criteria for alcohol dependence at some point in their lives.¹

The prevalent view is that college students are old enough to leave home and be on their own. We have heard parents say, "It's just alcohol. They are grown adults!" or "They will do what they want anyway and don't care what we say." Such statements grossly underestimate the influence parents can have in providing information that can shape the behavior of their children at this point in their lives.

In fact, **75.6 percent** of NDSCS students take their **parent's rules and expectations** about alcohol use seriously, and **81.8 percent** take rules and expectations about other drugs seriously.³

BEFORE THE CONVERSATION

- When the time and setting feels right, suggest to your student that you would like to talk with him or her about the topic. (Alone, in the car, face-to-face, etc.)
- Don't force the issue; the willingness to back off shows that you will be respectful when you do have the conversation.
- Structure the time of discussion so that neither of you will be distracted by other activities.
- Don't be surprised if your student initially responds negatively. Give them time and bring the issue up again when they are ready to talk about it.

THE CONVERSATION

■ Feelings to convey during your conversation.

- Caring about your student.
- Wanting to understand and help your student.
- Respecting your student's privacy and their desire to be independent.

■ Be open-minded and ask about their experiences.

- Recognize appropriate times to have these conversations. (e.g. Face-to-face is better than over the phone.)
- Use "I" statements such as:
 - ◆ "I am concerned about the impact alcohol could have on your development—especially your brain."
 - ◆ "I worry that you will get hurt or into trouble."
 - ◆ "I want you to be successful."

■ Speak honestly about your own experiences and opinions.

- Be careful—don't glamorize past use of alcohol or other drugs.
- As you begin to open up, so will your student.
- Avoid exaggerations and blanket statements (e.g. everyone drinks).

■ Try to ask more questions versus doing all the talking – it will help on getting them to open up.

■ Don't assume that everything needs to be talked about in a single discussion.

■ Try to avoid becoming angry or frustrated.

- These reactions can shut down communication and impair your ability to help your student effectively solve problems or deal with difficult situations.
- If you have concerns, remember to disapprove the behavior not the person.

■ Be specific about the behavior you want your student to change or to follow.

- Specific phrases that could be used:
 - ◆ "I expect you to wait until you are 21 years old to drink."
 - ◆ "Drinking impacts your brain development. As long as you are in college it is our expectation that you do not drink alcohol or use drugs."
 - ◆ "It might feel as if all students are drinking, but research at NDSCS shows that the majority of students don't drink in high risk ways."

INFLUENCING BEYOND THE CONVERSATION

- Model appropriate behavior with your own alcohol use.
 - Research indicates late adolescents who have seen one or both parents drunk are more than twice as likely to get drunk in a typical month.⁴
- Be consistent; uphold your expectations that you have set for your student. Research shows that parent's expectations matter. **64 percent** of NDSCS students report that their parents talked to them about their expectations regarding their alcohol use.³
- **Model/Minimize risk:** Although any amount of drinking alcohol carries at least a moderate risk, some ways to minimize risk and model appropriate use of alcohol include:
 - Never driving after drinking;
 - Spacing drinks to no more than one standard drink per hour;
 - Never mix alcohol with Rx and over-the-counter medications;
 - Not exceeding a BAC (blood alcohol content or concentration) of .05.
- Continue to check in with your student regarding their use – this will need to be an ongoing conversation topic.
- Indicate your willingness to answer your student's questions or offer to help them find assistance/resources, if needed.
- Offer to help your student find alternatives and stay informed of College events, such as:
 - NDSCS.edu/Events
 - Text Reminders for Student Events
 - NDSCS App
 - Wildcat Athletic Schedule
 - Community Resources

¹ National Institute on Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism (NIAAA). Underage Drinking. January 2016. Available at: <http://pubs.niaaa.nih.gov/publications/UnderageDrinking/UnderageFact.htm>

² Wechsler, H.; Dowdall, G.W.; Maenner, G.; et al. Changes in binge drinking and related problems among American college students between 1993 and 1997: Results of the Harvard School of Public Health College Alcohol Study. *Journal of American College Health* 47(2):57–68, 1998. PMID: 9782661 <http://www.tandfonline.com/doi/pdf/10.1080/07448489809595621>

³ ND University System. (2017). 2016 North Dakota State College of Science Alcohol and Other Drug Survey Report. Bismarck, N.D.: ND Higher Education Consortium for Substance Abuse Prevention.

⁵ The National Center on Addiction and Substance Abuse (CASA) at Columbia University. (2009). *National Survey of American Attitudes on Substance Abuse XIV: Teens and Parents*. New York: The National Center on Addiction and Substance Abuse (CASA) at Columbia University. Available at: <http://www.centeronaddiction.org/addiction-research/reports/national-survey-american-attitudes-substance-abuse-teens-parents-2009>.