

Challenges Your Child Faces: Alcohol and Drug Use

Meth Strike Force

What to Do? It's Complicated!

Many parents wrestle with the issue of underage drinking or marijuana use. Ideally, no parent wants their teen to drink or use drugs, but it can be hard to know what to do. Some tips:

- **There is no "safe" level of alcohol or drug use** when it comes to teenagers. To keep your kids safe, adopt a "no use" policy. Make sure your kids know they are not allowed to drink at other people's homes as well.
- **As parents or caregivers, present a united front.** If you disagree, try not to argue or discuss your conflict in front of your teen. Remember that you all have your child's best interests at heart.
- **Try to talk when you are calm and be respectful.** If you still can't agree, seek out a third-party together (a trusted friend, minister or counselor) for guidance.
- **Don't send mixed messages by trying to "bargain" with your teen about drinking and other risky behaviors.** Trying to limit use to a parent's house or restrict driving sends a mixed signal puts him at risk.
- **Forget about being the "cool" parent.** Parents who are permissive have kids who are more likely to get into trouble, including traffic crashes and engaging in violence, sex and substance use.
- **Make sure you model responsible behavior** when it comes to alcohol. Know that you are breaking the law if you provide alcohol to underage kids in your home.
- **Monitor and address sources of alcohol and tobacco for teens in your community.** Speak up if you see a clerk fail to ask for identification. Speak up to other parents about how home parties are run.

Technology: Here to Stay

Cell phones, computers, Facebook and more. It's likely that your child is well connected!

Visit www.theantidrug.com and take into teens' technology world and learn about the dangers as well as ways you can use these technology tools.

Think You Need Help?

If you suspect your child may be drinking or using drugs and you need help, make a list and act on it. Many people get help from family, friends, and their church. Others may go to school: teachers or counselors. You may have coverage through your health care insurance. San Diego County also offers residential and non-residential services for teens throughout the County, based on a sliding scale. Call the Meth Hotline at 1-877-no-2-meth for local referrals.

Winter 2010

Partners on the Strike Force Education Committee:

Grossmont Union High School District

Institute for Public Strategies

Life Skills Training

San Diego County Office of Education

San Diego County Alcohol and Drug Advisory Board

San Diego County Health & Human Services Agency, Alcohol & Drug Services

San Diego Unified School District

San Diego County Probation Department

Signs of Possible Drug Use?

- Changes in friends
- Missing school, or declining grades
- Increased secrecy
- Use of incense or perfume to hide smoke or odors
- New fascination with clothes that highlight drug use
- More borrowing money
- Evidence of drug paraphernalia such as pipes, rolling papers, etc.
- New use of eye drops, mouthwash or breath mints
- Missing prescriptions

This information was borrowed from a terrific web site: www.theantidrug.com. You can sign up for newsletters, or simply browse for good advice and information

Collaboration Since 1996

Supervisor Dianne Jacob convened the Strike Force to study the meth problem and recommend a specific course of action to the Board of Supervisors. Four strategies have been critical: Prevention, Intervention, Treatment and Interdiction. For more information, visit the Strike Force website at www.no2meth.org

Sensible Tips

- **Be absolutely clear with your kids that you don't want them using drugs.** Ever. Anywhere. Don't leave room for interpretation. And talk often about the dangers and results of drug and alcohol abuse. Once or twice a year won't do it. Get more specifics on setting the rules.
- **Be a better listener.** Ask questions - and encourage them. Paraphrase what your teen says to you. Ask for their input about family decisions. Showing your willingness to listen will make your teen feel more comfortable about opening up to you.
- **Give honest answers.** Don't make up what you don't know; offer to find out. If asked whether you've ever taken drugs, let them know what's important: That you don't want them using drugs. Get the facts on drugs by visiting the *Drug Information* section of the www.antidrug.com site.
- **Use TV reports, anti-drug commercials, or school discussions** about drugs to help you introduce the subject in a natural, unforced way. Get more specifics on using teachable moments.
- **Don't react in a way that will cut off further discussion.** If your teen makes statements that challenge or shock you, turn them into a calm discussion of why your teen thinks people use drugs, or whether the effect is worth the risk.
- **Role-play with your teen** and practice ways to refuse drugs in different situations. Acknowledge how tough these moments can be. Get more specifics on using role-playing. Encourage them to be leaders, not followers and to resist peer pressure.

The Conversation (s)

Broaching difficult subjects with a teenager is never easy. See the antidrug site for sample scripts and role plays. Here are a few things to keep in mind:

- It's never too early to be concerned about risk-taking. Kids are exposed to alcohol, drugs and sex much earlier than you think.
- Be pre-emptive. Address potentially difficult issues before they emerge as a real problem so the conversation doesn't have to be an argument or perceived as an accusation.
- It's not a single conversation, but an ongoing dialogue. Keep the lines of communication going and be on the lookout for opportunities to engage your teen and reinforce anti-drug messages.
- The surest way to keep the dialogue going is to show that you respect and welcome your teen's opinions, thoughts and ideas.
- When it comes to setting rules, find a spot in the middle. Parents who are too harsh or too permissive have kids who are more likely to take risks.
- Set limits for protection and guidance, not for punishment or power. Young teens need more limits, but be flexible and renegotiate them as they mature.