

## Power of Parenting

As your student prepares to come to {School Name}, talk to them about alcohol use with the help of these resources and valuable information.

[{Link to video available upon request}](#)

### **Talk isn't cheap.**

Research has found that parents can have a powerful influence on a student's successful transition to college life. Talk to your student about alcohol and cannabis/marijuana before they start college, and keep talking to them while they're here. Your input matters — and helps us set the trend for responsible use of alcohol and abstaining from cannabis/marijuana.

As a parent, you have already done a great job helping your child make better choices. However, your responsibility doesn't stop just because they're headed to college. Studies have shown that college students give parents a great deal of credit for guiding them towards less drinking or abstaining from drinking and cannabis/marijuana.

### **You can ease the transition.**

When young adults begin their college experience, they'll face a number of life changes and new experiences like:

- managing finances,
- attending class,
- balancing academics with social activities, and
- deciding whether or not to drink alcohol or use cannabis/marijuana.

You can help your student during this transition by communicating your expectations and encouraging them to think through the outcomes of different choices.

Parents also can have an impact on the misperceptions of college life, including alcohol and cannabis/marijuana use, while providing information about campus resources to their student.

### **Risks, Consequences, and Choices:**

An arrest record today can impact people in many ways it did not when modern parents were young...but that's just one of the risks related to alcohol and marijuana.

College students navigate many changes during the first year of college, but alcohol and marijuana use is often one of the most challenging to deal with.

Students who believe that most of their peers are drinking alcohol or using marijuana often feel pressure to use up to the same perceived levels, which may result in unwanted and/or dangerous consequences.

Having accurate information helps parents start the conversation with their student and allows parents to speak with confidence and credibility. It is important to share information with students that dispel the perception that all their peers are using marijuana, drinking, and drinking excessively.

- 30% of college students across Nebraska report never having consumed alcohol\*
- Of those respondents who had drunk in the past year, 70% of them did not Binge Drink (defined as 5 drinks for men and 4 drinks for women within a 2-hour period)\*

- Only 25% of Nebraska college students reported using marijuana (in any form) over the past year, compared to the perception that 92% of college students use marijuana (in any form) at least once per year\*

When students realize that they're not alone in either abstaining from or controlling their consumption of alcohol and marijuana they feel more comfortable declining the invitation to use substances.

\*2022 Nebraska Assessment of College Health Behaviors survey {Update with 2024 NACHB data when available}

Watch these videos to find out some students' impressions of the college drinking and cannabis/marijuana scene.

[{Links to videos available upon request}](#)

### **Drinking at {School Name}:**

Before coming to campus, students and parents should be familiar with {School Name}'s policies relating to alcohol. **Alcohol is not allowed in student housing, even for legal-age residents.** Please see the {link to Student Housing Handbook} for specific details.

{School Name} is a drug and tobacco-free campus. This includes all buildings, parking lots, athletic events, and any {school name} sponsored student activity (on or off campus). For a complete review of {School Name}'s policies, please visit the {School's Alcohol and Drug Policy}.

Students should also be aware of local laws and policies practiced in {City Name} which may differ from their home communities. The {Local} Police Department regularly conducts patrols to identify and ticket parties causing disruptions. {City name} police regularly issue tickets for MIP, DUI, and procuring alcohol to minors. Not following campus and community policy could result in a campus code of conduct violation and/or legal ramifications.

On August 30, 2015, Nebraska's Good Samaritan law took effect. This policy encourages individuals to call 911 for medical help when witnessing or experiencing acute alcohol intoxication without the fear of prosecution for minor in possession. The policy provides limited immunity for both the caller and the acutely intoxicated person. The Good Samaritan law is essential to ensuring that people can stay alive and receive help when they are in trouble. Please encourage your child to become familiar with the new law and take swift action whenever they are concerned about another person's well-being.

### **Communication Tips:**

Research shows that as parents understand the characteristics of the drinking scene young adults will be exposed to and talk with them about healthy ways to safely navigate that scene, parents can have a profound influence on their student's decisions. If conversations do not go well, then the relationship may need to be strengthened and different communication skills attempted.

Watch these videos to find out some students' choices related to alcohol and cannabis/marijuana, and possible parental impact.

[{Links to videos available upon request}](#)

### **Relationships**

You will be most effective and influential if you remember that talking to your student about alcohol and marijuana use is not a one-time conversation — it's a series of conversations that

occur over time. You will need to keep the conversation going throughout their entire college experience. Remember, this is a marathon, not a sprint. The effectiveness of your communication about alcohol and cannabis/marijuana is reflective of the relationship you have with your student. Is there a pattern of open communication in your relationship? Have you discussed difficult issues with them (i.e. sex, drugs, friends, and especially alcohol and drug use)?

## **Communication**

Accurate information about the current drinking and marijuana scene at {SCHOOL NAME} is vital to help parents' credibility when talking to their students. If students know their parents are informed, they're more likely to take what their parents say seriously and talk honestly about drinking and marijuana use.

## **Harm Reduction**

Not all drinking and substance use is the same. Successful conversations must be intentionally focused on drinking and other risky behaviors. Parents help prevent high-risk drinking and substance misuse when they talk directly and openly about alcohol and marijuana, and their expectations for their student's behavior.

**Scare tactics don't work:** Most young adults are hardwired to defend against negative messaging, and they're smart enough to realize when others are trying to manipulate them. Scare tactics don't address misperceptions about the benefits of alcohol and substance use. Pressure to fit in, the desire to relax after finals, or wanting to forget unpleasant emotions are all reasons why your student might try alcohol or other drugs. When parents recognize factors that may influence their students' decisions and understand the characteristics of the college drinking and marijuana scene young adults are exposed to, they can effectively talk with them about healthy ways to safely navigate their environment.

{School name} offers a variety of resources and screening tools to support your student and encourage them to stay on track because college shouldn't be an experience your student has to "recover" from later in life.

- **Year One College Behavior Profile**
  - The Year One College Behavior Profile is intended to be used as a pre-matriculation prevention program for entering first-year students to help correct the misperceptions that students have about the prevalence of alcohol and marijuana use before they begin their college careers. This is a web-based program designed using the principles of brief motivational interviewing and personalized normative feedback to reduce high-risk drinking, marijuana use, and related harms among college students. The Year One College Behavior Profile (Y1CBP) is one way for UNL to educate new students about the choices, risks, and consequences of drinking, marijuana, and other high-risk behaviors during college. We want you to know the strategies your student will be taught so you can add to them and reinforce the ones you feel are important for your student. The Y1CBP tailors information to the situations students will experience. You as the parent know your student better than anyone else. You can take these strategies and adapt them specifically for your student, making the teaching more personal than we ever could.
- **College Behavior Profile**
  - The College Behavior Profile (CBP) is a web-based brief intervention program designed to reduce high-risk drinking, marijuana use and related harms among college students.

- **CHOICES**

- CHOICES is a brief alcohol abuse prevention and harm reduction program for college students involving use of an interactive journal. CHOICES engages students in a self-reflective process where they independently choose to change high-risk alcohol and drug behaviors using the information provided, the risks associated with excessive use and available alternative coping strategies.

### What to talk about:

#### Family Values About Drinking

When drinking is and isn't appropriate:

- Is alcohol involved in family get-togethers? If so, how is safe drinking modeled by adults?
- What messages about drinking did you send to your student as they were growing up?
- What are the family beliefs about drinking socially?
- What are some family values that may be affected if unhealthy drinking occurs? Some families have concerns that drinking may lead to problems related to sexual activity, physical health, productivity in school, and careers.

#### Underage & High-Risk Drinking Dangers

The first section of this site explained some of the risks that your children will be exposed to at {school name}. We encourage you to use that information to talk knowledgeably to them about how that info relates to where they'll be living.

#### Why People Choose to Drink

- Peer pressure
- Escape from the stresses of college life.
- Misperception that everyone is drinking, or it's just part of college life.

#### How to Stay Safe if Drinking

- This section (explored in greater detail to come) presents:
- Students who choose to drink can take steps to stay safe.
- This section presents strategies for dealing with different situations in greater depth.

#### Knowing When to Talk

Parents might be unsure about when and how to initiate conversations with their students. In these videos, students and campus professionals share their insights on the warning signs parents can look for to know if their student is struggling and offer some sound advice for students who may begin to struggle while in college.

[{Links to videos available upon request}](#)

#### Build a Strong Relationship:

Parents have a great capacity to influence their students' drinking behavior. The key characteristics of a successful dialogue include communication, understanding the university environment, and a positive relationship with your student. Remember, it's a marathon, not a sprint. You'll need to try multiple times and may need to use different methods over time.

The following 12 conversation strategies will help you tackle common issues in communicating with your student, build trust, and understand how to have meaningful and productive conversations with them.

### **Win-Win**

When conflict arises, the healthy outcome is two winners. A person's natural tendency is to fight to win. Remember, talking about alcohol with your student should not be a fight or a battle of wills, or a conflict with opposing sides. It should be a discussion about values, safety, love, and respect. When this happens, there are only winners - regardless of what is said. When a parent goes into a conversation with this in mind, it creates the kind of environment where there will be only winners.

### **Appeal To Common Goals**

Your student needs to be reminded that you're on their side. Because they're adults and moving on to college, family rules are more difficult to enforce. Setting one-sided rules and punishments is counterproductive. Engaging in a dialogue about common goals and how each of you can help attain these goals will be more effective for your student's transitions into adulthood than rules and punishments would be.

### **Take a Break**

Agree to temporarily disengage from interacting if either person becomes emotional or punitive. Wait until both of you can talk in a calm, direct fashion. When the discussion turns into an argument or becomes emotional, explain that it's best to calm down and start the discussion later.

### **Listen**

Permit your student to speak without interruption. Listen to what they say, and don't go into the conversation with an agenda. Be open and receptive to what's said and respond to the things that you're hearing — not the things you think need to be talked about.

### **Use Open-Ended Questions**

College-aged students are notorious for one-word responses. Using closed-ended questions encourages those. Instead, use questions that begin with words like, "What do you think...?" or "How...?".

### **Steer Clear of Vulnerabilities**

Judiciously avoid talking about vulnerabilities or emotional sensitivities. If a conflict arises, it's sometimes tempting to point out past behavior. However, now is not the time. This ruins communication and ultimately hurts your relationship with your child.

### **Verbalize Respect**

Whenever you can and whenever it's appropriate, convey respect to your student. Phrases like "I'm proud of you the way you..." or "I've always admired that about you." are great ways to confer respect. By conferring respect, you are acknowledging that your child is becoming an adult while you are developing an adult relationship with them.

### **Own your Mistakes**

Be willing to admit you are wrong and apologize. No one is perfect. If you're willing to acknowledge a mistake or be self-critical, students see that as a sign of strength and

approachability. Saying you're sorry is a way of showing that you care. Don't blame others, rather accept responsibility for your actions.

### **Offer Affirmations**

When opportunities arise, don't hesitate to give genuine compliments to your student. This is also a good time to verbalize respect. When students feel good about themselves, they're more likely to open up and confide in you. This also shows them that you believe in them and trust them.

### **Avoid Debate**

Sometimes conversations become structured so that people must defend their positions. The entire conversation degenerates into a mini-debate in which each person is looking for weaknesses in the other person's argument. Try to keep the conversation productive and goal-directed. Don't get side-tracked by the details of each other's statements.

### **Stay Focused**

Limit discussion to only the issue at hand. Make good eye contact and show that you are listening.

### **Timing is Everything**

Choose an optimal time to bring up and discuss issues. Don't do it when either of you is rushed or has another commitment at the moment.

### **Strategies for Success:**

Prior to your student's first year, they'll be asked to complete an online program called the Year One College Behavior Profile (Y1CBP). This will provide them with some feedback about the choices, risks, and consequences of drinking, and using marijuana and other substances. It will also help to correct misperceptions about social norms and peer perceptions of acceptable behaviors on campus. Part of this training will offer specific suggestions about how to avoid high-risk drinking. We want you to know what they'll be taught here, so you can add to or reinforce those strategies. Review the strategies you can use to talk to your student about how they can manage situations to be safe. It is best to choose a couple of strategies based on what you know about your student.

### **STRATEGIES TO AVOID HIGH-RISK DRINKING** [\[expandable items\]](#)

#### **Suggest Alternatives**

Make sure your student has a plan to suggest some activities with friends instead of drinking or using marijuana.

#### **Use Humor**

If your student typically converses with a lot of humor, advise them to use it to think of things to say that can get them out of a bad situation. Encourage them to make humorous statements on their own, so it's something they feel confident in.

#### **Be a good actor**

Students often report holding a drink but not actually drinking it. This trick helps so others will leave them alone and not pressure them to drink something.

## **Share Responsibility**

Have your student talk with a friend before the party to share a plan to stay safe. Encourage them to ask their friend to help make sure they both stick to the plan.

## **Plan Ahead**

Most underage drinking occurs at parties, and in most cases, your student knows that alcohol will be at the party. Students may also be more likely to use cannabis/marijuana in social situations. They need to have a plan for how they're going to deal with the situation, so they'll stay safe.

## **Leave the Scene**

Suggest your student has a plan for how to get home if there's no one at the party who has not been drinking or using marijuana/cannabis or if they're in a situation they feel is unsafe.

## **Turn Pressure Around**

Question the other person about their intentions. Effective phrases to set clear and firm boundaries include:

- "Why are you trying so hard to make me do something I don't want to do?"
- "I told you, no. I'm not going to do that."
- "Stop pressuring me."
- "What kind of friend are you to keep pressuring me? Back off."

## **Encourage Assertiveness**

One of the most important ways for your student to stay safe is to develop assertiveness. Whether it's related to being assertive and standing firm in their plans for how to deal with being offered alcohol or in how much they'll drink, assertiveness will help minimize the risks they'll have.

College students often drink not because they have been pressured by their friends into drinking, but rather because they think everyone is doing it and that it's an appropriate thing to do. Talk to your student about how assertive they are now with their peers and how they can strengthen that assertiveness.

Watch these videos to find out about some tactics that students use to avoid high-risk behavior related to substance use.

Talk to your student about how assertive they are now with their peers, and how they can strengthen that assertiveness.

[{Links to videos available upon request}](#)

## **Situations Where Assertiveness Is Important**

Certain situations can be more challenging than others. Discuss how they would react in the following scenarios, and how they can safely navigate challenging situations:

- Your student is at an activity with friends. The host had not planned on serving alcohol, but someone else brought it.
- Your student is pressured into driving while drunk or under the influence of marijuana, or pressured into getting in a car with someone who is under the influence of alcohol or drugs.
- The designated driver for the group doesn't do his job and drinks at the party but says he's sober enough to drive. Your student feels pressure to ride with them.
- Your student goes to a party where alcohol is present. Your student is offered a drink but refuses. Their friends start teasing them about "needing to get used to college" or "needing to grow up."
- People pressure your student to play some type of drinking game.
- Your student is at a party and people pressure them to drink more than planned or wanted, or to try marijuana.
- Your student's fraternity brothers try to pressure him into participating in a hazing ritual.

It's very important to have open communication with your children so they feel like they can talk to you about their difficulties and successes.

However, open communication will not ensure that you get the opportunity to talk to them about alcohol and marijuana. Only direct conversations will give them the skills they need. Your input about risks and strategies coupled with your understanding of their beliefs will act as important protective factors throughout their college experience.

There are a few keys to successful communication, but none of them alone can accomplish the goal of helping your student navigate the risks associated with alcohol and marijuana at college. Only you know your student's strengths and which skills they need to work on. Your input can truly make a difference, especially if it is founded on accurate information that is effectively communicated and builds upon a healthy relationship.

### **Relationships Matter**

As parents, you can make a difference. You can prevent your sons and daughters from becoming yet another tragic statistic. Too many parents feel that they cannot influence young adults. Time and time again, parents say:

"What can I say now? They're grown adults." Or "There's just no use. They'll do what they want anyway and don't care what we say."

Such statements grossly underestimate the influence that parents can have in providing information that can shape their students' behaviors.

Watch these videos to get suggestions from students about how parents can talk to their college student about alcohol and marijuana/cannabis.

[{Links to videos available upon request}](#)

### **It's not a one-time conversation.**

You will be most effective and influential if you remember that talking to your student about alcohol and marijuana use is not a one-time conversation — it's a series of conversations that occur over time. You will need to keep the conversation going throughout their entire college experience. Remember, this is a marathon, not a sprint.

As a result, it's not expected that you'll browse this website once and have a masterful idea of all the information you'll need to have a convincing talk with your college student. This website is filled with ways for you to talk to your student about the dangers of alcohol **throughout the entire college experience**.

As you continually talk to them about alcohol, feel free to visit this site as often as you need to learn helpful strategies, to increase your communication skills and to gain additional helpful information.

#### ALCOHOL HARM REDUCTION TIPS [\[This can expand\]](#)

- Know what a standard serving of alcohol is.
- Know your limits, stick to them, and stay in control.
- Determine how many drinks to have and stop at your number.
- Eat right before and while drinking.
- Don't mix alcohol with marijuana or other substances.
- Limit yourself to one drink an hour. Remember, shots take about 20 minutes to hit.
- Drink a non-alcoholic "spacer" between drinks and stay hydrated.
- Check if any medications you're taking interact badly with alcohol.
- Don't drink if you have a strong family history of alcoholism.
- Drink for quality, not quantity (a 6-pack of imported or micro beer).
- Be aware of your situation. If you feel unsafe, leave.
- Watch your drinks while being made and after. Never leave your drink alone, even if you only have a soft drink.
- Don't drink and drive. Depending on your sex, body composition, and how much you consumed, it may take between 12-24 hours for your body to completely metabolize alcohol.

#### WAYS TO HELP FRIENDS [\[This can expand\]](#)

- Be the designated driver.
- Be a role model for your friends.

- Know and respond to alcohol poisoning.
- Never leave an intoxicated person alone.
- If you are concerned about the physical well-being of a friend who is overly intoxicated, call 911. The Nebraska Good Samaritan Law gives minors limited legal immunity if they call for medical assistance, remain on the scene and cooperate with law enforcement and the University Diversion Policy provides an option for the setting aside of the Code of Conduct violation.

#### MARIJUANA HARM REDUCTION TIPS [\[This can expand\]](#)

- Avoid using daily or almost daily.
- Be sure you trust your source. You might not know the purity or potency of the cannabis/marijuana you are taking.
- Don't mix marijuana/cannabis with alcohol or other substances. Using two or more drugs at the same time can amplify the impairing effects of each drug.
- Be honest with yourself about why you want to use marijuana/cannabis, especially if you are using it socially or to cope with stress. Talking with someone, such as a friend or counselor about what you are experiencing is a better alternative to using marijuana/cannabis to mask negative emotions.
- Find healthier ways to deal with stress, such as daily exercise, practicing yoga, listening to music, meditating, or learning relaxation techniques.
- Understand that marijuana/cannabis use can make anxiety and stress worse and lead to poor sleep quality, irritability, and depression. Marijuana/cannabis use may also increase the risk of psychotic symptoms for those with a pre-existing vulnerability to psychosis.
- Avoid using marijuana/cannabis, if possible, as marijuana/cannabis may result in DUIs, and problems with attendance as you may stop caring about the consequences of missing class or failing assignments. If you find that you no longer care about your performance in your classes, seek out a medical healthcare professional for support and guidance related to your use of marijuana/cannabis.
- Take your time. It can be hard to find the right dose with edibles or other derivatives. You may get much higher for much longer than you wanted to. To prevent this, use a small amount and wait at least one hour to feel the effects before using more.
- Remember: If you feel different, you drive differently. Marijuana/cannabis can impair your motor coordination, judgment, and other skills related to safe driving. Wait at least 6 hours after using marijuana/cannabis before driving, biking, or performing other safety-sensitive activities. Depending on the quantity you have used, you need to wait longer.
- Plan for a safe ride home. Driving impaired by any substance whether it is legal or illegal, is against the law in all 50 states and the District of Columbia, which means you can get a DUI if you are driving while impaired by marijuana/cannabis. You can designate a sober driver, give your keys to a trusted friend who is not under the influence, and/or use a ride-share service.

#### BYSTANDER INTERVENTION TIPS [\[This can expand\]](#)

The 5 D's will help you understand how to respond safely, early, effectively, and with kindness.

- **Direct:** Stop the person immediately if the behavior is dangerous. Take the substance away to keep them from drinking or using. Take their keys away to stop them from driving.
- **Distract:** If the person is in a risky situation, invite them to join you in a safer environment and stay with them.
- **Delegate:** Find someone else who can intervene – bar staff, an organization leader, or someone who knows the person better.
- **Delay:** If you're not able to intervene in the moment, and the problem isn't urgent, follow up the next day to calmly share your concerns about how substance misuse is affecting them. What specific behaviors worried you?
- **Document:** Take a screenshot if you see a concerning text or social media post and follow up.

### Why you need to talk:

There's a great deal of misinformation about alcohol, social drinking, alcohol abuse, and cannabis/marijuana. It can be a powerful thing for parents to talk with children about the potential risks associated with alcohol and drug use. As you talk to young adults, you'll be able to give them accurate information about drinking and drug use in college as well as share your beliefs and hopes for them.

Hear why campus professionals think parent/student communication about alcohol and marijuana/cannabis is important.

[{Links to videos available upon request}](#)

### You can dispel myths.

College students often begin drinking socially and think they can handle it on a regular basis while at the same time keeping things in perspective. There are long and short-term consequences of such experimentation. Most college students believe that drinking coffee will help sober you up, making you less drunk. This is not true and can lead to situations where your student may take dangerous risks (such as drinking more or driving drunk) because they have just had a cup of coffee.

Some students also believe that police can't tell if they're driving under the influence of cannabis/marijuana, or that they drive better when they're high. However, many law enforcement officers are trained Drug Recognition Experts (DREs) who have the ability to detect physical and psychophysical signs of drug impairment. DREs are viewed as one of the most effective law enforcement tools in efforts to reduce drugged driving. Research shows that cannabis affects the critical abilities needed to drive such as reaction time, decision making, and the perception of time and distance, along with several others.

Visit [FeelDifferentDriveDifferent.org](https://FeelDifferentDriveDifferent.org) to learn more.

Some students believe that "legal" substances such as Delta 8 are safe to use because they are not illegal. However, Delta 8 is a psychoactive substance that has not been evaluated or approved by the FDA for safe use. Delta 8 products may also show up on drug tests, and there is no way to differentiate between Delta 8 or Delta 9 (marijuana/cannabis) on positive drug tests.

We are not so naïve that we think parents talking with their college students about alcohol use will put an end to alcohol consumption. However, you should do everything in your power to discourage underage drinking or, at least, to encourage responsible behavior that does not put your student at risk of serious negative consequences.

**Hear why university administrators think parent/student communication about alcohol is important.**

[{Links to videos available upon request}](#)

#### **Resources:**

##### **Nebraska Collegiate Prevention Alliance**

This website provides support for campuses across Nebraska that are committed to reducing high-risk drinking, substance misuse, and related harms.

##### **College Parents Matter**

This website is designed to equip you with some tools and resources that will help you engage in effective communication with your student about alcohol and drugs.

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