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Parents Matter

Havana Area Prevention Team

Talk Early, Talk Often

Special points of interest:

- Alcohol Awareness Month
- Resources for Talking with youth
- HAPT Contact Info

The need to provide meaningful education on the dangers of underage drinking and drug use here in Mason County has never been greater. And it is important to know that parents can play a significant role. As kids get older and alcohol and drugs enter the picture, parents are faced with a unique set of challenges. They can simply sit back and hope their kids will “get through it,” or they can take an active role in learning about alcohol and drugs and helping their kids do the same.

It can be daunting to talk with your children about drinking and drug use, but it will be well worth the effort you put into it. In fact, research has shown that kids who have conversations with their parents and learn a lot about the dangers of alcohol and drug use are 50% less likely to use these substances than those who don't have such conversations.

As a parent you can be a primary source of positive and reliable information and it is important to take advantage of “teachable moments.” It's not so much about “the big talk,” but about being there for them when the issues come up -- on TV, at the movies, on the radio, about celebrities or sports figures, or about their friends. Don't miss your opportunity to teach your kids. If you do, they will get their information from the media, the internet or other sources that not only misrepresent the potential negative impact of alcohol and drugs but actually glorify their use!

You have more influence over your kids' attitudes and decisions about alcohol than you think. So start early! Children go through many different stages as they grow up and what's ap-

propriate to tell an 18-year-old and a 9-year-old can vary quite a bit. Yet, it's never too early to begin the conversation. The more informed children are, the better off they'll be.

According to the National Council on Alcoholism and Drug Dependence, here are some basic guidelines to assist you:



Listen Before You Talk -- Encourage Conversation: As parents we want to have “all the answers.” And, sometimes we are so anxious to share our wisdom – or our opinion – that we don't take the time to listen. For kids, knowing that we are really listening is the most important thing we can do to help.

Talk to Your Child and Ask Open Ended Questions: Talk to your child regularly – about their feelings, their friends, their activities. As much as you can, and

sometimes it's not easy, try to avoid questions that have a simple “yes” or “no” answer.

Be Involved: Get to know your child's friends and continue to educate your child about the importance of maintaining good health – psychological, emotional and physical.

Havana Area

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Promotes comprehensive community-wide prevention efforts.

Empowers youth & families to develop and lead healthy lifestyles.

Havana Area Prevention Team is a non-profit organization that seeks to promote:

- Healthy, happy, and responsible lifestyles for area youth and families.
- Awareness of positive alternatives and support of positive actions and activities for youth and families in and around the Havana area.

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Set Expectations, Limits and Consequences: Make it clear that you do not want your child drinking or using drugs and that you trust them not to. Talk about possible consequences, both legal and medical, and be clear about what you will do if the rules are broken.

Be Honest and Open: Care about what your child is going through as they face and make decisions that will affect their lives now and for the future.

Be Positive: Many parents have discovered that talking about these issues with their children has built bridges rather than walls between them and have proudly watched those children learn to make healthy, mature decisions on their own.

Family History: Both research and personal experience have clearly documented that addiction is a chronic, progressive disease that can be linked to family history and genetics. So, if you have a family history of problems with alcohol or drugs, be matter of fact about it, as you would any other chronic disease, such as heart disease, diabetes or cancer.

“Alcohol and drug use is a very risky business for young people,” says Andrew Pucher, President and Chief Executive Officer of NCADD, “and parents can make a difference. The longer children delay drinking and drug use, the less likely they are to develop any problems associated with it. That’s why it is so important to help your child make smart decisions about alcohol and drugs.”

So, this April the Havana Area Prevention Team is celebrating Alcohol Awareness Month by sharing educational resources at various community events to raise public awareness about underage drinking and encourage parents to speak to their kids early and often about alcohol and other drugs.

April is Alcohol Awareness Month

April is Alcohol Awareness Month and the National Council on Alcoholism and Drug Dependence, Inc. (NCADD) and Havana Area Prevention Team want parents to know that progress is being made in the struggle to address underage drinking in our community. Research shows that kids who learn about the dangers of underage drinking from their parents are up to 50% less likely to experiment than kids who don’t.

If you think your child is drinking just to “have a good time,” think again: many kids drink alone because they are bored or depressed. This puts them at greater risk for developing alcohol-related problems later in life. So talk to your kids – get to know them. For information on underage drinking, visit

[samhsa.gov/underagedrinking](https://www.samhsa.gov/underagedrinking)

Talk Early and Talk Often with your kids about alcohol use – it’s worth it.