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Parents Matter

Havana Area Prevention Team

Special points of interest:

- Bullying Prevention Month
- Communication is Key
- HAPT Contact Info

One of the goals of the Prevention Team is to promote healthy, happy, and responsible lifestyles for area youth and families. One way of reaching this goal is by sharing important prevention information with parents and guardians.

This month's *Parents Matter* newsletter focuses on Bullying Prevention. Starting and continuing the conversation with your student is key when it comes to discussions around sometimes challenging topics such as bullying, alcohol, and drug use. Start small. Having small talks can help build a foundation with your student for future conversations. Starting the conversation tips can be found on the other side of this newsletter.

October is Bullying Prevention Month

Bullying is unwanted, aggressive behavior among school aged children that involves a real or perceived power imbalance. The behavior is repeated, or has the potential to be repeated, over time. Both kids who are bullied and who bully others may have serious, lasting problems.

In order to be considered bullying, the behavior must be aggressive and include:

An Imbalance of Power: Kids who bully use their power—such as physical strength, access to embarrassing information, or popularity—to control or harm others. Power imbalances can change over time and in different situations, even if they involve the same people.

Repetition: Bullying behaviors happen more than once or have the potential to happen more than once. Bullying includes actions such as making threats, spreading rumors, attacking someone physically or verbally, and excluding someone from a group on purpose.

How to Talk About Bullying

Parents and other caring adults have a role to play in preventing bullying. They can:

- Help kids understand bullying. Talk about what bullying is and how to stand up to it safely. Tell kids bullying is unacceptable. Make sure kids know how to get help.



- Keep the lines of communication open. Check in with kids often. Listen to them. Know their friends, ask about school, and understand their concerns.
- Encourage kids to do what they love. Special activities, interests, and hobbies can boost confidence, help kids make friends, and protect them from bullying behavior.
- Model how to treat others with kindness and respect.

Help Kids Understand Bullying

Kids who know what bullying is can better identify it. They can talk about bullying if it happens to them or others. Kids need to know ways to safely stand up to bullying and how to get help.

- Encourage kids to speak to a trusted adult if they are bullied or see others being bullied. The adult can give comfort, support, and advice, even if they can't solve the problem directly. Encourage the child to report bullying if it happens.
- Talk about how to stand up to kids who bully. Give tips, like using humor and saying "stop" directly and confidently. Talk about what to do if those actions don't work, like walking away.
- Talk about strategies for staying safe, such as staying near adults or groups of other kids.
- Urge them to help kids who are bullied by showing kindness or getting help.

Information cited from—stopbullying.gov

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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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Early Communication is Key

The first key strategy is to talk early. Starting a conversation with your student as a pre-teen will help build a solid, familiar foundation as you continue conversations throughout their teen years.

Chances that children will use alcohol increase with their age. About 10% of 12-year olds say they have tried alcohol, but by age 15, that number jumps to 50%. The sooner you talk with your children about alcohol, the greater the chance you have of influencing their decisions about drinking.

Some children may try alcohol as early as 9 years old. Most 6-year-olds know that alcohol is only for adults. Between the ages of 9 and 13, children start to view alcohol more positively. Many children begin to think underage drinking is okay. Some even start to experiment. It is never too early to talk with your children about alcohol. Starting the discussion by age 9 is a good idea.

If you do not talk about it, you are still saying something. What you say to your children about alcohol is up to you. But remember, parents who do not discourage underage drinking may have an indirect influence on their children's alcohol use.

Let your teen know you disapprove of any youth use of alcohol.

"57% of Mason County 8th graders reported that in the past year their parent/guardian talked about not using alcohol." Compared to the state the percentage of students in Mason County reporting that their parent talked about not using alcohol is lower. Compared to other rural counties, Mason County parents are talking more to their 8th graders. State- 60% Rural- 55%

This same trend is shared with other substances too. Here is what 8th grade students reported for other substances.

Parent Communication about Tobacco in the past year.

Mason County- 53% State- 54% Rural- 51%

Parent Communication about Marijuana and other illegal drugs in the past year.

Mason County- 54% State- 58% Rural- 53%

Based on these statistics, there shows a great need for Mason County parents to not only start talking to their child, but to continue the conversation. In upcoming issues of *Parents Matters*, we will highlight steps to increase the frequency of communication.

Data taken from Illinois Youth Survey, Mason County 2014 report, Statewide Report, and Rural Sample Report.

A link to the reports can be found at <https://iys.cprd.illinois.edu/results/county>