

What Do You Say to Your Kids?

Your parents may have pulled you aside for the “sex” talk. But did they ever give you the “this is how **NOT** to drink” talk? Most parents don’t, leaving their kids to learn about drinking from beer commercials, MTV, and drinking stories of family and friends.

Parents can turn the tables on teens’ use of the strategy: “But all my friends are doing it!” The results of survey research in Kent County allow parents to say with great authority: “Most teens (60%) are **NOT** using alcohol.”

Conversations about alcohol and other drug use shouldn’t be confrontational. Both you and your teen need to know what the norms for drinking are and the reasons why it is dangerous for teens to drink. It should be clear to your teen that you disapprove of underage drinking.

Trace and Share Your Family History

Addiction is a genetic, hereditary disease. Trace your family history (parents, aunts, uncles, cousins, and grandparents) and share the findings with your children. Children of one addicted parent have a 1 in 3 chance of alcoholism. Solution: Tell your teen to not use and why.

ADD and ADHD

“Childhood ADHD is as important for the risk of later substance use problems as having a history of family members with alcoholism.” The solution for a teen with ADD/ADHD is **NOT** to drink or use drugs.

— Journal of Abnormal Psychology

The More Teens Drink, The More Consequences They Experience

Percentage of Kent County students who experienced consequences after or while using alcohol.

	USED 6+ TIMES	1 TIME
Got into a Fight or Argument	66%	30%
Drove under the Influence	53%	15%
Missed School	33%	10%
Got in Trouble with the Police	33%	7%
Unwanted Sexual Contact	26%	16%

How to read the table: For example, 66% of students who used alcohol 6+ times in the past 30 days got into a fight.

Where Do These Kent County Stats Come From?

Student Survey

From 2003-2007, high school students completed anonymous surveys to gauge their use of and attitudes towards alcohol and other drugs (AOD). The surveys were filtered to exclude “liars,” resulting in over 1,600 surveys. Statistics from the student survey are scientifically valid.

Parent Survey

In 2006-2007, groups of Kent County parents completed online, anonymous surveys about their attitudes towards teen AOD use. Over 490 surveys were completed. Though not a large enough sample to be scientifically valid, we are reasonably confident the results are close to the overall attitudes of other Kent County parents.



Parents are HEROES

Creating dialogue between parents and kids about alcohol and other drugs.

Making Sobriety Attractive Project

For more information contact Dr. Nancy Harper, ALERT Labs
(616) 560-5247 • www.alertlabs.org

Funded by
SAMHSA of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services

The Social Norms APPROACH

Most high school students (and their parents) have misperceptions about student drinking. The facts are almost always quite different from the perceptions—the norms are actually much lower!

Kent County students think 95%
of their classmates use alcohol...

In reality
60% **DO NOT** use alcohol!

Essentially, most students believe that “everyone,” except maybe themselves and a few close friends, drinks excessively and often. This misperception creates what we call “phantom peer pressure.” These misperception make students believe that they “need” to drink if they want to be “normal.”

Upon learning that only a minority of students drink, students are relieved of this phantom pressure. The result is that they begin to abstain or reduce how much and how often they drink.

**Talking to Your Kids and
Publicizing Drinking Norms
Reduces Underage Drinking!**

Common Questions

Q. Why is it ok for adults to drink, but not teens?

A. You may have noticed that teenagers exhibit three important characteristics in their approach to life:

- Omnipotence (“I’m all-powerful”)
- Invulnerability (“I cannot be harmed”)
- Infallibility (“I am never wrong”)

There is a reason for this. The brain does not finish developing until the mid-20s. During the teenage years the frontal lobe of the brain, where decision making and priority setting takes place, is actively developing. Dousing the brain with alcohol directly affects this area, causing damage to judgment, especially in reference to risky behavior. Alcohol also damages the part of the brain where memory and learning take place.

Q. Teenage drinking is inevitable, isn’t it?

A. No. Contrary to popular belief, parents remain their kid’s most respected and influential source of beliefs, attitudes and values—even into their college years. While some students may experiment, their decision to keep using will largely be based on expectations that you set.

“If you look at two subsets, young people with good parental monitoring and those without, the difference in alcohol use is staggering. Among kids whose parents stay on top of their behavior, only about 10% drink at all, never mind drinking excessively.”

— Dr. Hoover Adger, professor and pediatrician
Johns Hopkins University, *TIME*

You’re Not the Only One

97% of Kent County parents surveyed **DO NOT** approve of high school students using alcohol, even at home under parental supervision.

99% of parents would welcome a call from another parent to ensure no alcohol will be served to teens in their home.

74% of parents have talked with their teen about alcohol and other drug use within the last month.

What about the “Other” Drugs?

82% of students **DO NOT** use marijuana.

76% **DO NOT** use tobacco.

95% **DO NOT** use other illegal drugs.

**If they Talk,
will you Listen?**