




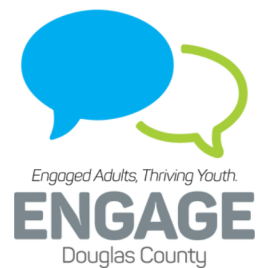
SAFE HOOMIES

Healthy Families

A toolkit for parents and caregivers on how to prevent underage drinking with their children.



January 2024



Preventing underage drinking is a conversation worth having.



As parents and caregivers, it can be difficult to know how to reinforce positive behavior when we engage with the young people in our life. This toolkit is designed to help you get accurate, reliable information that you need to begin having conversations to prevent underage drinking with your child early and often.



Did you know that the majority of Douglas County youth don't drink alcohol and think frequent alcohol use is risky? It's true. That means that now is the time for parents and caregivers to engage with children now to prevent or delay alcohol use and encourage healthy behaviors.



Parents and caregivers are one of the biggest influences in their children's decision whether or not to use alcohol. It is critical to understand that not talking about alcohol still sends kids a message; if parents and caregivers don't talk about the risks, their children may not see the harm in experimenting with alcohol.



Data shows children as young as nine years old already start viewing alcohol in a more positive way and the older youth get, the more likely they will try alcohol. By having conversations early and often, adults get the opportunity to engage children in conversation before they are exposed to alcohol.



Read on to learn how we can reinforce positive behavior in children, set clear rules and expectations about alcohol, and support them in making healthy decisions.

How can I prevent underage drinking with my child?



01. Know what may increase the risk of a child's alcohol use.

Significant social transitions like graduating to middle or high school.

A history of social and emotional problems

Depression and/or other mental health challenges

A family history of alcoholism

Interactions with peers who use alcohol.



02. Be a positive adult role model.



03. Engage with the community to protect children from underage drinking.

Make sure schools and the community support and reward young people's decisions not to drink

Support schools and the community intervening with children engaged in underage drinking early

Ensure rules about underage drinking are in place at home, at school, and in your community

Establish agreements of acceptable behavior and make sure they are understood and applied consistently

Establish the norm that parties and social events do not allow underage drinking.

How can I prevent underage drinking with my child?



04. Support Your Children and Give them Space to Grow

Be involved with your children and make it easy for them to share information about their lives.

Encourage your children's growing independence, but set appropriate limits.

Know where your children are, what they are doing, who they are with, and who they are friends with.

Make an effort to get to know the parents of your children's friends. Share your rules about not allowing alcohol use.

Set clear rules, including rules about alcohol use. Enforce the rules you set.

Help your children avoid dangerous situations such as riding in a car driven by someone who has been drinking.

Don't let children go to parties with alcohol or allow alcohol at parties in your home. Help them find ways to have fun without alcohol.

Help your children get professional help if you are worried about their involvement with alcohol.

Create a pledge between yourself and your children that promises they will not drink alcohol.

How to have a conversation about underage drinking

Conversations about alcohol should start early and continue often. Why do these talks with your children matter? Because data shows that when conversations around alcohol go up, underage drinking rates go down.

These talks should not be a one time conversation and they don't have to be formal—the more natural the better.



A key ingredient of every conversation should be “responsibility.” In fact, not every conversation needs to be about alcohol; a great place to begin is to communicate with kids about making healthy, responsible decisions. You can use current events or things you and your kids are seeing to start the conversation.

Kids also need to hear consistently that underage drinking is illegal. And that underage drinking and drunk driving are both illegal and dangerous.

Parents are the #1 influence on their kids’ decision to drink—or not to drink—alcohol. So keep talking; keep asking questions; keep modeling responsible behaviors; and keep listening.

Tips for having the conversation about underage drinking

For kids who find it tough to open up face-to-face, text messages or emails are a way to engage in conversation.

Be authentic.

Make them the expert by asking about something they are passionate about - a hobby, a school subject, a sport, or something else they enjoy!

Be intentional about connecting when relaxing at home.

Try asking thoughtful questions with open ended answers to spark conversations.

“What was the best part of being a little kid?”

“What do you think will be most different about living in the future?”

What would your best day be like?”

Sometimes conversations can flow better when you're having fun with an activity like taking a walk, playing video games, going bowling, or having a picnic.

Keep it positive, but realistic.

Teach them to say yes to a healthy lifestyle and no to underage drinking.

Talking to Kids About Alcohol: 5 Conversation Goals

Prevention science tells us that focusing on these five goals are most effective when preventing underage drinking in children.

1. Send a clear message that you disapprove of underage drinking.

2. Show you care about your child's health, wellness, and success.

3. Show you're a good source of information about alcohol.

4. Let them know you're paying attention and you discourage risky behaviors.

5. Build your child's skills and strategies for avoiding drinking and drug use.

For more tips and information about these five conversation goals, scan the QR code below:



Facts for Caregivers

Here are some facts you can share with your children when you have conversations early and often to prevent underage drinking.

- **Most kids don't drink.**
 - 91% of Douglas County 6th, 8th, 12th, and 12th graders report they have not drank alcohol in the past 30 days (Kansas Communities That Care Student Survey, 2022)
- **Age matters.**
 - Our brains are not fully developed until our mid- to late twenties. Drinking during the teen years can negatively affect brain development and can cause short- and long-term damage.
- **Alcohol use can make mental health challenges worse.**
 - Sometimes people use alcohol to cope with mental health challenges; however, alcohol can actually make the problem worse and could even result in dependence or addiction.
- **It's okay to say no.**
 - Remind your child they can call you if they need to get out of any uncomfortable situation. Work together to set up a code word or a text signal, practice ways to say "NO", and remind them never to get in a car with anyone who is impaired.

10 Ways to Say No to Alcohol

Help your child pick the phrase that feels most natural to them and work together to practice it.

- No, I'll pass.
- No thanks, I'm not into that.
- Nope, I'm going to go (insert activity here) instead.
- No, that's not my thing.
- No thanks.
- Nah, that's nothing but trouble.
- And get grounded for life? No thanks.
- I've got to study.
- Not today, I'll wait.
- No. Just no.

Family Agreement

Here's an example of a family agreement you can create with your child to establish clear expectations around underage drinking.

Adult Agreement

As your parent/caregiver, I agree to do my part in helping to keep you alcohol and drug free. I promise to talk with you about the dangers and harmful effects of drug and underage drinking. I will do my part to create an alcohol-free environment that is safe and fun for you and your friends. I agree to pick you up at any time or place if you find yourself in any uncomfortable situation where drugs or alcohol are involved. By signing this agreement, I agree to help keep you alcohol- and drug-free.

Youth Agreement

As your child, I understand that alcohol and other drugs can harm my body and my mind and make me say and do things I might regret. I agree to avoid situations where my friends and peers are drinking underage or using drugs. I promise to call or text you to help remove me from those situations if they arise. I agree to NOT engage in underage drinking or drug use. By signing this agreement, I agree to not drink alcohol or use other drugs.

Parent/Caregiver Signature:

Child Signature:

Or write your own as a family here!

Resources

Ask Listen Learn

<https://asklistenlearn.org/>

Responsibility.Org

<https://www.responsibility.org/>

SAMHSA Talk. They Hear You Campaign

<https://www.samhsa.gov/talk-they-hear-you/parent-resources>

Own Your Limits: Responsible Drinking for Adults

<https://ownyourlimits.org>



Scan the QR code to
learn more about

**SAFE
HOMES**
Healthy Families



YOUTH EMPOWERMENT
& PREVENTION



Engaged Adults, Thriving Youth.

ENGAGE
Douglas County

Contact

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References: Ask Listen Learn, Responsibility.Org, Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA)