

Tips for Parents

Be a Good Role Model

Studies show that parents significantly influence their children's choices and lives. With this in mind, parents need to continue to effectively communicate with their children. Learning to talk and listen to your children can help prevent them from making poor choices, sometimes with devastating consequences. Communicate, not only verbally, but also by the way you live. If you have used or abused drugs or alcohol in the past, be honest, but brief. Set a good example in your own home and socially. "Walk the walk and talk the talk."

Set consistent no use rules about drinking and other drug use. By giving a clear and concise message about drug and alcohol use, children will witness good decision making skills. Parents need to provide opportunities for their children to learn critical thinking and decision-making skills to combat the peer pressure to use drugs. Teens today are more likely to experience increased pressure to use illegal drugs than they did several years ago. It is also important to discourage the use of the new herbal drugs that can be improperly used, with a sometimes-fatal result.

Focus On the Problem Before It Starts

People who go through adolescence to age 21 without smoking, using drugs or alcohol have a very good chance of never abusing substances. Generally, the major weakness in drug prevention programs is that they do not begin before teens start using drugs. Unfortunately, today's exposure to drug use starts as early as grade school. Parents, as well as schools, need to recognize this and provide earlier prevention programs. Children need to learn the skills to resist peer pressure to use alcohol and drugs before being exposed to that pressure. Early prevention and education can decrease the possibility of drug use among children and younger teens. For instance, studies have suggested that the earlier teens use marijuana, the greater chance that the same teen will use other drugs. Consequently, prevention may make the difference in whether marijuana becomes a gateway drug for that adolescent or child.

Not Everyone is doing It

Teens often believe the blatant misconception that "everyone's drinking" based on their peer relationships and the messages received by the media. Parents need to convey a message that not everyone drinks alcohol and as parents we need to set clear guidelines regarding alcohol use. As long as adolescents believe that everyone drinks and continue to associate with friends who drink alcohol, the likelihood of their involvement with underage drinking increases. According to the 2016 Florida Youth Substance Abuse Survey the following statistics were revealed about alcohol, tobacco and marijuana use among youth in Hendry County:

- 77.3% of middle school youth have NOT used alcohol in the past 30 days.
- 75.2% of high school youth have NOT used alcohol in the past 30 days.
- 97.7% of middle school youth have NOT used tobacco in the past 30 days.
- 93.2% of high school youth have NOT used tobacco in the past 30 days.
- 93.7% of middle school youth have NOT used marijuana in the past 30 days.
- 84.9% of high school youth have NOT used marijuana in the past 30 days.

Remember: being a parent isn't easy – but then, neither is being a kid in this day and age.

For more information about the free prevention programs available in Hendry County schools and in the community please contact:

Jalen Rushing, Prevention Specialist

Hanley Foundation
700 South Dixie Highway, Suite 103
(863) 677-4818
jalen@hanleyfoundation.org

Kevin Mace, Regional Prevention Coordinator

Hanley Foundation
700 South Dixie Highway, Suite 103
(941) 875-8273
kevin@hanleyfoundation.org