

**“Parents are the single greatest influence upon their children. . . in determining whether or not their children will experience alcohol or other drug related problems.”**

(Department of Social and Health Services)

**Be a GREAT influence on your son/daughter by:**

- 1) **Being a parent to your teenager, not being their “friend.”** Good parents maintain that they make the rules and apply consequences when rules are broken to help their young adults realize responsibility. Parents who are striving to be their child’s “friend” are more likely to support illegal behaviors (e.g. buying their child alcohol and tobacco, allowing them to consume it in their home . . .) in hopes of being a “cool mom/dad”. Being a “friend” to your teenager results in a teenager who has little respect for authority and who is unable to take responsibility for their actions.
- 2) **Setting reasonable consequences.** Let your son/daughter know what the rules are and what the consequences will be when a rule is broken. FOLLOW THROUGH if a rule is broken. A consequence that isn’t followed through is just a threat. Teens quickly figure out that you don’t mean what you say. Also, be sure that you are setting a reasonable consequence. Don’t ground them for a month and then go away for the weekend. Take away one of their privileges: driving, talking on the phone, hanging out with friends . . . But make sure you are able to FOLLOW THROUGH on whatever you decide is the consequence.
- 3) **Knowing where your teenager is**, what they are doing and who they are with. Communicate with your son/daughter and other parents. The more you talk with them and the more you are aware of what your son/daughter is doing—the better!
- 4) **Not being afraid to tell your son/daughter, “No.”** If you don’t know who your teen will be with, you still have the authority to say no. Just because your child is now a teenager doesn’t mean they are capable of making thoughtful decisions. Remember, your teenager is living in YOUR house and YOU make the rules. They need to obey your rules while they are living in your care.

- 5) **Setting a reasonable curfew that is appropriate to the activity.** For example: Your son/daughter is going out to dinner with friends and then to a movie. The movie gets over at 9:30. The curfew should be set at 10:00 or 10:30 instead of 11 o'clock or midnight. It gives them less opportunity to get into trouble and holds them accountable for their actions and activities.
- 6) **Being awake when your son/daughter arrive home** and have them talk to you for a few minutes about what they did while they were out. Being awake allows you to hold them accountable for their curfew. Talking to your son/daughter allows you time to communicate with your teen while you observe their behavior and smell. Your teen will be less likely to drink and/or smoke cigarette/marijuana while they are out if you sit down and talk with them as soon as they get home.
- 7) **Getting them involved!** Boredom leads to experimentation with drugs and alcohol. Give them things to do after school and during summer/winter/spring vacations that promote their hobbies/interests and encourages positive risk taking.
- 8) **Being a positive role model with your relationship with alcohol.** Teenagers mirror the behaviors they see at home and in the media. If you drink, let your teenager see you drink moderate amounts that don't produce intoxication. Demonstrate ways of handling stress that don't use alcohol. Avoid saying things like, "I need a drink to relax" or "I deserve a drink after such a hard day."
- 9) **Holding your son/daughter accountable.** It's okay to check on your son/daughter and check on chaperones when your teenager is out. Trust is earned and **teens need to earn it**. The more trust they earn, the more responsibilities and privileges they earn. When that trust is violated, earned responsibilities and privileges need to be removed.
- 10) **Talking with your son/daughter about drugs.** It's just as important as talking to them about sex. Don't leave it to someone else to teach your child about drugs. Your teenager needs to understand your expectation of them concerning drugs, alcohol, and sex.

**Be a GREAT influence on your son/daughter!** Teenagers don't stay drug and alcohol free by luck. It takes hard work, time, effort, and communication.

Created by the Drug and Alcohol Task Force, (Some information gathered from the Department of Social and Health Services)