

## Talking with your student about alcohol

College is a time when both parents and adolescents are looking forward to a future filled with new opportunities. These opportunities will occur as your student takes on the responsibilities of academic achievement, extra-curricular activities and personal growth while attending Illinois State University.

It is important that you realize college students, especially first-year students, are at a significantly higher risk for alcohol-related problems than almost any other population. Certainly, making poor decisions regarding alcohol and drug use can negatively impact your student's success at Illinois State University.

We recognize that many parents may not feel equipped to talk with their students about alcohol issues occurring on college campuses. The Student Health Services Health Promotion Office and Student Counseling Services offer the following suggestions for beginning this discussion with your student. If you would like additional information, please feel free to contact the Health Promotion Office at (309) 438-5948. Additional resources are listed at the end of these tips.

### **1. Set clear and realistic expectations regarding academic performance and the use of alcohol.**

Keep in close contact with your student during the first six weeks of classes. This is when first-year students are often introduced to the drug and alcohol scene. Partying has a significant impact on a student's academic work. If your student knows you expect sound academic work, he or she is likely to devote time to daily studies, and less time getting in trouble with alcohol.

### **2. Encourage them to stand up for their right to a safe academic environment.**

Students who do not drink can still be affected by those students who do. Encourage your student to take a stand if he or she feels that their educational experience is being negatively affected in any way, such as interrupted study time, sexual assault, or unwanted sexual advances. Students can deal with these issues directly by confronting the person or the problem themselves, or by contacting a member of the residence hall staff.

### **3. Encourage them to intervene when classmates or roommates are in trouble with alcohol.**

Stress the importance of helping a person who is unconscious or may have just had too much to drink. Many students fail to seek help due to lack of experience. Help them to understand that contacting trained residence hall staff or calling 911 immediately could save someone's life.

#### **4. Stress that drinking alcohol to impairment or intoxication is risky.**

Emphasize that getting drunk is not something to be admired or laughed at, and that students may suffer unwanted consequences (sexual assault, blackouts, DUI, accidents and injuries) from episodes of high-risk drinking. Discourage participation in drinking games or in any other activity that encourages consuming large amounts of alcohol.

#### **5. Know the scene at Illinois State University and talk to your student about it.**

Students tend to exaggerate the use of alcohol and other drugs by their peers. Encourage your student to get to know the myths and misperceptions about the use of alcohol or drugs at ISU. Help them realize it is "ok" to resist the peer pressure to get involved with drugs or alcohol. **Fact:** About 67% of Illinois State University students reported drinking zero to six drinks per week (2008 Core Drug and Alcohol Survey). Illinois State University 2008 Core results may be found at [http://www.shs.ilstu.edu/hpo/curriculum/core\\_data.shtml](http://www.shs.ilstu.edu/hpo/curriculum/core_data.shtml). Alcohol policy sanction information is available at [http://www.deanofstudents.ilstu.edu/crr/student\\_conduct/sanctions.html](http://www.deanofstudents.ilstu.edu/crr/student_conduct/sanctions.html)

#### **6. Signs of alcohol or drug problems:**

The following may indicate your student is having difficulties with alcohol or drugs:

- Skipping classes or a drop in academic performance. Try to stay up-to-date with your student's academic progress.
- Your student frequently asks for more money to cover their expenses or takes a second or even third job. Ask to see his/her budget and have him/her clearly explain expenses.
- Your student becomes moody, defensive, or quiet when you try to talk to him/her about school.

**If you notice any of these signs, or suspect that your student is having problems at college, please encourage them to seek help at the following on-campus locations:**

Student Counseling Services (309) 438-3655  
Student Health Services Clinic (309) 438-2778 or (309) 438-7676  
Student Health Services Health Promotion Office (309) 438-5948  
University Housing Services (309) 438-8611

Your student may also talk to his or her academic advisor for assistance.

**You may contact the departments listed above for information, or go to the following website to become more informed about alcohol and drug issues on college campuses:**

The Higher Education Center for Alcohol and Other Drug Prevention  
[www.edc.org/hec](http://www.edc.org/hec)

An Equal Opportunity/  
Affirmative Action University  
Encouraging Diversity



Illinois State University  
Health Promotion Office  
Campus Box 2540  
Normal IL 61790-2540  
(309) 438-5948  
[www.shs.ilstu.edu](http://www.shs.ilstu.edu)

