

KEEP YOUR KIDS

DRUG

ALCOHOL

THC

NICOTINE

JUUL®

LIQUOR

METH

VAPE

MARIJUANA

BOOZE

TOBACCO

POT

SUBSTANCE

FREE

ALCOHOL

Teen drinking negatively impacts physical and mental health.

Know the Risks

Isn't youth drinking just "being young and having fun?" That's what movies, music and even other parents may try to convince us, but make no mistake: underage drinking is dangerous. Those who start drinking as young teens are 4X MORE likely to develop alcohol dependence than someone who waits until adulthood. Youth who drink are more likely to be victims of violent crimes such as rape, assault and robbery. Driving under the influence is a leading cause of fatal car crashes, and youth drinking is linked to struggles with mental health, such as anxiety and depression.

Know the Facts

- **Binge drinking** happens at **higher rates than the national average** in our region. About **15% of 12th graders report regular binge drinking** (five or more alcoholic drinks within one hour, at least once a month).
- In our region, **17% of 8th graders, 19% of 10th graders and nearly 25% of 12th graders** admit they have driven drunk or ridden with a driver who was drunk within the past 30 days.
- **Almost 32% of 8th graders** in our region report that they have easy access to alcohol. **Over 18% of them** report their **parents provide alcohol** to them.
- **Over 60% of 12th graders** report it's **easy to get alcohol**, and 55% say they get alcohol at parties.
- **Early onset alcoholism** is exacerbated by **parental absence**, a growing problem in rural America.
- A **family history of alcoholism** increases the risk of addiction to youth. The earlier they start and the more they drink, the greater the risk.
- **Know the signs** that indicate kids may be using alcohol:
 - Mood changes (irritability and defensiveness or signs of depression)
 - Problems in school (grades or disciplinary problems)
 - Relationship issues (changes in friends, rebellion against or anger with family)

Focus on Prevention

This can be a tricky topic to discuss, but ignoring it is putting your kids at risk. Be clear about the facts and risks so your kids can make informed decisions. Be open and honest, asking for their input, and discuss how they can handle peer pressure to drink or ride with someone who's been drinking. Be clear about your expectations. Help your kids understand the impact drinking has on a developing brain so they can see the issue as protecting their own bodies and futures and not a matter of parental control. If you have a family history of alcohol abuse, be sure your kids know and understand the additional risk this creates for them. Some young people start or increase their drinking to mask anxiety or depression. Talk openly about this with your kids and discuss with your doctor if needed. Finally, NEVER provide alcohol or allow consumption by those under 21 in your home.

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This project is funded in whole (\$20,000), from the Strategic Prevention Framework Partnerships for Success grant (#SP080988) from the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration Center for Substance Abuse Treatment, subgranted through the Nebraska Department of Health and Services, Division of Behavioral Health.

All statistics taken from the 2018 Nebraska Risk and Protective Factor Student Survey (NRPSS), Nebraska Region 4 results report, implemented under the Nebraska Student Health and Risk Prevention (SHARP) Surveillance System; the 2018 Youth Risk Behavior Survey Results and the 2017 Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) Youth Risk Behavior Survey.