

Off to College

You started the discussions about drinking when your children were at an early age. They've made smart choices so far. Now it's time to share some additional information before they head off to college. Follow these suggestions:

- Continue the dialog. Keep the communication lines open with your student by discussing drinking and how he or she can continue to make smart choices at college.
- Create shared expectations. Set goals —and consequences if goals are not met — for your student's performance, both academically and socially, at college.
- Know and respect the law. Understand the penalties for underage and/or abusive drinking and share them with your student.
- Focus on true norms. Let your student know that, in fact, the majority of college students don't abuse alcohol. Moderate or infrequent drinking is the "true norm."
- Share the facts. Thanks to your previous discussions as your children were growing up, your students will understand the effects of alcohol, but you can also share responsible drinking tips they can use when they're of legal age and ways they can help their friends who may be abusing alcohol.
- Take advantage of campus resources. Colleges and universities offer a variety of services, from academic support to alcohol treatment assistance. Encourage students to take advantage of the appropriate resources... especially if they or their friends may be abusing alcohol.

This article was derived from the Family Talk guide for parents, developed by an advisory panel of authorities in the fields of education, family therapy, and alcohol treatment, and through conversations with parents and teens. The full guide may be read online or downloaded by clicking on Document Library on www.familytalkonline.com.

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