

# Raising Healthy Kids

Winter 2019/2020

Drivers under the influence of marijuana are **2x** as likely to cause a serious or deadly car crash.

**23%** of teens admit driving under the influence of marijuana, alcohol, or other drugs.

That's **3 million impaired** teen drivers on our roadways.

## How to Spot the Early Warning Signs Your Teen May Be Using Alcohol or Other Drugs

Once you have familiarized yourself with common warning signs of teen drug use, a few simple guidelines can go a long way toward spotting an issue earlier rather than later.

**Use Your Nose.** Have a real face to face conversation when your son or daughter comes home after socializing with friends. If there has been drinking or smoking, the smell will be on their breath, on clothing and in their hair.

**Look Them in the Eyes.** When your teen gets home after going out with friends, pay attention to his or her eyes. Eyes will be red and heavy-lidded with constricted pupils if they've used marijuana. Pupils will be dilated, and he or she may have difficulty focusing if they have been drinking. In addition, red, flushed color to the face and cheeks can be a sign of drinking.

**Monitor Driving and the Car.** Your teen's car and driving habits can offer clues as well. Is driving more reckless when he or she's coming home after being with friends? Are there new, unexplained dents? If you're suspicious, examine the inside of the car too. Does it smell like smoke or alcohol fumes? Are there bottles, pipes, bongs, or other drug paraphernalia around on the floor or hidden in the glove box? If you find evidence of drug use, be sure to prepare for the conversation ahead.

**Keep an Eye Out for Deceit or Secretiveness.** Are their weekend plans starting to sound suspicious? Are they being vague about where they're going? Can they describe the movie they just saw? They say parents will be at the party attending, but can't give you a phone number and come home acting intoxicated? They get in way past curfew with an endless string of excuses? When excuses fail, do they respond to your inquiries and concern by telling you that it's none of your business? If these ring true, something is wrong and it's time to take action.

Don't overlook your teen's cell phone or other digital devices. Do you recognize their frequent contacts? Do recent messages or social media posts hint at drug use or contradict what they've told you.

If you notice any of the signs above or find things that worry you, **prepare** for the conversation and lay the foundation for more positive outcomes.

**Talk. They Hear You.** An app to help parents practice talking to their teens about the dangers of alcohol and be prepared for one of the most important conversations with their kids.



**Keep the conversation going. Download the app today!**



### Recognizing Dangers – Hidden in Plain Sight

Hidden in Plain Sight is an awareness exhibit that allows parents an interactive opportunity to look into a Teenager's Mock Bedroom full of hidden items that may indicate drug and alcohol use. We offer these exhibits at local schools and community events.

**To find or schedule the next exhibit near you, please contact [psweet@tricountyri.org](mailto:psweet@tricountyri.org).**

## Dinner: 30 Minutes to a More Connected Family

Maybe you've heard that having dinner as a family is a good thing for your kids, but truly, it could change your child's life. Research shows that the more frequently kids eat dinner with their families, the better they do in school, and the less likely they are to get involved in high-risk behaviors.

### Why is this? Perhaps because of the following reasons:

- Families who eat together talk more often, helping them stay connected and build better relationships.
- Parents who eat with their kids are more likely to express love constructively in other ways, such as in the form of both attention and supervision.
- Dinner transforms individual family members into a "Team", giving parents more clout to rival the power of the peer group.
- Having dinner time to count on as a constant event provides feelings of belonging and being nurtured.

### How can you create a dinner routine so nurturing that everyone looks forward to it? Here are some ideas to get you started!

1. Plan ahead! Try putting out some healthy snacks such as carrots and hummus, cheese and crackers, as the "first course" while you take 10 minutes to unwind. You'll be more relaxed while you get dinner on the table, and every one will enjoy it more.
2. We can create daily, brief connections with family during dinner time. Consider adding a small tradition such as lighting candles, or stating something to be grateful for.
3. Turn off the electronics and protect this time with your family from interruptions.
4. Encourage your family to discuss difficulties and successes by using the "rose/thorn" or "hill/valley" in which family members share the best/worst part of their day.
5. Listen. Remember, even when conversations are difficult, you are fortunate that your children want to talk with you!

## Parents: Role Models for Teens During Holiday Celebrations

For most people, holidays are a time for celebration and quality time with family and friends. Alcohol is usually present during these occasions and consumed more than on an average day.

Parents are powerful role models for teenagers. What you do and say guides your child's behavior, attitudes and beliefs, now and in the long term.

You can be a role model by including your teen/child in family discussions, living a healthy lifestyle, being positive, taking responsibility for your actions and more.

During the holiday season there are lots of celebrations and certain events are boozier than the rest. Christmas, New Year's Eve, the Superbowl and St. Patrick's Day are considered the 'booziest' of the year. You and other significant adults are a major influence on your teen's use of alcohol.

You are unlikely to be able to stop your teen from trying alcohol, but you can be a role model for safe habits. Think about the different messages you might send by drinking occasionally and in moderation, compared with drinking daily and heavily.

- Talk to your teen about alcohol, the effects they have and the risks involved.
- Consider serving guests delicious nonalcoholic versions of favorite cocktails.
- Don't drink and drive. A general rule: One serving of alcohol per hour (see chart) or plan on a designated driver.

