

Dear Sussex County Parents of High School Seniors:

Senior year of high school - a time of nostalgia, excitement, possibilities and temptation. It may be hard to believe, but soon your son or daughter might be packing up to head off to college. The campus may look similar, but college today is probably a lot different from the way it was when you were growing up. While rates of alcohol and drug use vary by campus but the drug of choice does not. The drug most commonly used by high school and college students is alcohol.



A sobering statistic to think about- 159,000 of today's first-year college students will drop out of school next year for alcohol- or other drug-related reasons. Other things to consider:

- 1,700 college students die each year from alcohol-related causes.
- 97,000 students are victims of alcohol-related sexual assault or date rape annually.
- 599,000 students are injured annually as a result of alcohol use.
- 600,000 students are assaulted each year by another student who has been drinking.
- 25 % of college students report that their drinking caused them to fall behind in classes and receive lower grades overall.
- 34 % of college students say they've missed at least one class because of their alcohol or drug use.
- Nearly 34 % of college students admitted to failing a test or project because of the aftereffects of drinking or drug use.



Your teen will be graduating soon, but that doesn't mean it's time to just let go. Although teens sometimes seem to have one foot out the door, parents still matter. You can continue help your teen make decisions not to drink, smoke or use other drugs even when they're away from home. This will be a new stage in your relationship- one that demands new ways to connect, interact and communicate.

When it comes to alcohol and other drugs, the "just say no" approach is too simplistic. During the next few months before your son or daughter leaves for college, use time together in the car or over dinner to talk about alcohol and the many risks associated with its use. There will be many opportunities to talk about what college will be like. Talk about a range of situations that could influence a teen's decision to drink or use other drugs, including parties, make friends, coping with stress and dating. Make sure they (and you) know the penalties at the school for underage drinking, public drunkenness, using a fake ID and other alcohol-related offenses. Talk about staying in touch and share ideas how you can stay connected (email, phone, visits) when they are away at college.

The Center for Prevention and Counseling has provided a free resource for you to utilize, "What Parents Need to Know About College Drinking", to assist you with this new phase of your child's life. Remember you are not alone. Talk to other parents and caring adults in your community and share your concerns and the information you learn from this booklet.

Sincerely,

Members of the Sussex County Underage Drinking Task Force
A program of the Center for Prevention and Counseling

