

COLLEGE PARENTS MATTER: MOMENTS TO CHECK IN WITH YOUR STUDENT

The college years can be hard sometimes. With your help, your student will feel supported in making healthy decisions for themselves and have a happier and more successful experience! Here are some behavioral health conversation prompts and reminders to talk about with your student throughout the year.

Fall

- ✓ **Move-in time!** Regularly ask about their roommates and how their relationship with them is going.
- ✓ **Make sure your student knows campus resources** that can help. Do they know which services are offered at the health and counseling centers?
- ✓ **Use fall family weekend or another visit to check in** with your student about their well-being (sleep, mental health, nutrition, etc.).
- ✓ **Fall means football (or other sports)!** Give them some ideas for tailgating that don't include alcohol.
- ✓ **Halloween in college** can be really fun, but sometimes students feel pressure to drink alcohol to celebrate. Encourage them to start new traditions!

Winter

- ✓ **It's finals season!** Have a conversation over Thanksgiving break about how they can manage stress during their upcoming exams.
- ✓ "How are you, really?!" **Set aside some time during winter break** to talk about how their fall semester went. Include topics like grades, relationships, social life, etc.
- ✓ **Ask if they've felt any need for support services** and if they've taken advantage of campus resources. Discuss any barriers they feel to getting help.
- ✓ **Discuss "break boundaries"**. Even if your student drank while away, it's still appropriate to communicate your expectations at home. High-risk events can include the Wednesday night before Thanksgiving and New Year's Eve.

Spring

- ✓ **Spring Break is here!** What are their plans? Cruises, trips to the beach, etc. can involve high-risk drinking and funding them for your student might mean inadvertently paying for alcohol. Help them explore alternatives such as a "staycation" or a service trip.
- ✓ **The cold, early spring months can exacerbate mental health concerns.** Check in regularly and encourage your student to use campus resources. Offer to help them navigate the system.
- ✓ **High-risk drinking "holidays"** include St. Patrick's Day, Cinco de Mayo, and graduation, but they don't have to be high risk! Help them explore safer options.
- ✓ **Encourage self-care habits** like good sleep, nutritious snacks, and relaxation strategies during finals. Many schools have "de-stress" events available.

Summer

- ✓ **If your student will be new to college in the fall, now is the best time to talk with them about alcohol.** College Parents Matter has lots of resources available to help make these conversations effective.
- ✓ **If your student will be moving off campus,** this is a great time to talk with them about alcohol, and how they can make their home away from home a place where they can succeed as a student. College Parents Matter has specific guides for talking about off-campus housing.
- ✓ **If your student has any ongoing mental health care needs** (counseling and/or medications), talk with their school to understand how your student can continue to access that care while away from home.

Find out more about these topics, including conversation tips and guides!

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have the conversation