



The Coalition  
Connection

## Transition from high school to college

Your teen is ready to launch and leave for the college experience. Make sure you and your teen are armed for the newfound freedom and the enticing world of alcohol and other drugs. Here are a few facts and tips to help safeguard your graduate:

1. Various studies have found that 80% of students attending four year colleges consume alcohol - 44% drink alcohol at the binge level or greater.
2. Annually, 400,000 students between the ages 18-24 engage in unprotected sex while drunk and say they wouldn't have done it had they been sober.
3. About 25% of college students report academic consequences of their drinking including missing class, falling behind, doing poorly on exams or papers and receiving lower grades overall.
4. More than 150,000 students develop an alcohol related health problem and between 1.2 and 1.5 percent of students indicate that they have tried to commit suicide within the past year due to drinking or drug use.

### What you can do - before and after they leave for college:

1. **TALK** – about the danger and facts about having newfound freedom and the lure of alcohol and other drug use. Discuss the consequences and risks to brain, body, reputation and future.
  - a. **Set clear and realistic expectations regarding your student's academic performance.** Alcohol and other drug misuse contributes to a decline in GPA. If students know their parents expect a certain standard of academic work, they are likely to be more devoted to their studies.
  - b. **Stress that alcohol is toxic and excessive consumption can be fatal.** The fact is that a number of college students die every year. From alcohol poisoning, as well as accidents while under the influence. Discourage high-risk activities such as drinking games, day drinking and taking shots.
2. **KNOW THE LAW - Be aware of state and local laws as well as school policies regarding alcohol and other drugs.** Rules about minors in possession of alcohol, marijuana and other drugs, open container laws and Good Samaritan laws protecting those who intervene or seek help for others are critical to know.
3. **Know the realities of alcohol on campus.** Discuss making better choices as they navigate the college scene reminding them that not everybody drinks! Contrary to what is often portrayed in movies, the majority of college students choose to drink moderately or not at all. Yet students often believe that other students use alcohol more often and in higher quantities than they realize; this can lead to increases in their own alcohol consumption. Confronting misconceptions about alcohol use is important.

4. **Stay connected.** Support your student by checking in with your child, especially in the first few weeks of school, whether it be via phone, FaceTime, Skype, text, instant messaging or snail mail. Expect that your student will not respond to all of your contacts, but know that they appreciate hearing from you. Parent and Family Weekends are an excellent time to reconnect. Give your student the opportunity to share feelings and ideas with you.
5. **Reinforce harm reduction factors if your student does choose to drink:**
  - a. Alternate non-alcoholic drinks
  - b. Don't play drinking games
  - c. Set a limit
  - d. Pace yourself
  - e. Have a buddy – look out for one another.
  - f. Have a designated driver.
6. **Teach your student the signs of alcohol poisoning and encourage them to look out for their peers.** Call 911 if:
  - a. The person is unconscious or semi-conscious and cannot be awakened when touched, spoken to, or shaken.
  - b. They pinch the child and there is no reaction.
  - c. There is cold, clammy, pale or bluish skin.
  - d. Their breathing is slowed.
  - e. The person is vomiting while sleeping or passed out.
  - f. The person drank a large quantity of alcohol and collapsed.
7. **Be knowledgeable about state and local laws and school policies on sexual assault.** This is a hot topic on college campuses everywhere and it is important to know the definition of “consent” for sexual activity, e.g., at UC’s the standard is a higher “affirmative consent” standard. Stress that alcohol is often a factor in instances or claims of sexual assault on campus.
8. **Avoid tales of drinking exploits from your own college years.** Telling your student stories of your own excessive drinking normalizes the behavior (regardless of whether the situation had a positive or negative outcome.) These stories may also appear to give parental approval to excessive drinking.
9. **Model responsible alcohol use in your home if you choose to drink.** Whether or not you choose to drink, talk with your student about what it means to use alcohol responsibly.
10. **Remind your student that they deserve to live in a safe environment.** Encourage them to advocate for themselves if someone else’s drinking negatively affects them. Students who do not drink can be affected by the behavior of those who do, ranging from interrupted study time or sleep to vandalism, assault or unwanted sexual advances. Students can confront these issues directly or indirectly by reaching out to campus resources.
11. **Make sure your child knows where to get help on campus,** whether its through a university health service (e.g., UHS) or counseling and psychological services (e.g., CAPS) or specialty clinics. These resources are covered through student tuition and by law are confidential to students 18 years and older.

