

## Talking to Youth about Alcohol

Spring is a great time of year to get back outside after a long winter and enjoy celebrations like graduation parties, Prom and Memorial Day Weekend. Spring is also a time when underage drinking tends to increase. Despite the numerous reports in the media on vaping and prescription drug abuse, alcohol is still the most commonly abused drug by youth. According to the 2017 Youth Risk Behavior Survey, 54% of high school students drank alcohol in their life time; 39% of youth consumed alcohol in their home.

According to Mothers Against Drunk Driving (MADD), individuals that begin drinking at a young age are more likely to be alcohol dependent later in life. Furthermore, “over 40 percent of individuals who start drinking before the age of 13 will develop alcohol abuse or alcohol dependence at some point in their lives. Ninety-five percent of the 14 million people who are alcohol dependent began drinking before the legal age of 21.” With prom and graduation season upon us, now is the time to educate youth about the dangers of underage drinking.

Youth experiment with alcohol and other drugs for several reasons. Teens may feel insecure or feel a desire to be accepted by their peers. They may also experiment with alcohol as a way to cope with stress, trauma or transitions in life. Teens with mental health and behavior problems are at an increased risk to use or abuse alcohol. Alcohol abuse within the family is also a risk factor for underage drinking.

### Ways to Prevent Underage Drinking:

- Develop a trusting and open relationship with youth
- Set clear expectations
- Encourage healthy relationships
- Know your child’s friends and activities
- Do not drink with your child or allow them to drink in your home

It can be difficult to break the ice, take advantage of teachable moments in your daily life. Many movies and TV shows contain messages about alcohol that can be used as conversation starters. Be open about the dangers of underage drinking and the effects alcohol has on the developing brain. Be prepared to share facts and debunk myths about underage drinking. Also, use the opportunity to brainstorm alternate activities and strategies to handle peer pressure.

Taking the time to talk to youth about alcohol can be difficult, but it is worth it in order to protect their safety and well-being. There are several great resources available on the SCIP website to assist you in educating youth. In addition, Talkaboutalcohol.org provides many useful tips on how to talk to youth about alcohol.

### Resources:

<https://www.madd.org/the-problem/myths-and-facts/>

<http://www.talkaboutalcohol.org/parenting-styles>

<https://www.mayoclinic.org/healthy-lifestyle/tween-and-teen-health/in-depth/teen-drinking/art-20047947>

<https://drugfree.org/article/how-to-talk-with-your-teen/>

<https://www.collegedrinkingprevention.gov/niaacollegematerials/factsheets/highschoolgradfactsheet.aspx>

## Strategies to Keep Kids Mentally Healthy During Summer Break

For most kids and parents, summer vacation means taking a break from the daily grind of schedules, homework and running around. It is a time to rejuvenate and relax. However, for kids who might be living with mental health conditions like anxiety, depression and ADHD, the loss of school supports and daily routine can bring extra worry and struggles. According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), one in five children in the U.S. shows signs of a mental health disorder and a half of all lifetime cases start by age 14.

During the school year, kids are surrounded by adults who are monitoring their daily behaviors and moods. When changes in behavior occur, there are often many who take notice. Parents and schools can work together to provide multiple perspectives to monitor the health and wellbeing of students and offer supports. When the school year comes to an end, parents and caregivers are often the primary adults checking in with kids. Below are some ways parents can check in on their children's mental health during summer break:

- **Find activities to do together:** taking a walk, playing a game, going to the park or even just relaxing and watching a movie can provide great opportunities to talk and have your child open up to you.
- **Maintain routine and structure:** while summer is a time for relaxing and taking a break from academic expectations, it is helpful to maintain some structure through the days/weeks and engage in a variety of activities.
- **Monitor overall patterns of behavior:** For example, it is normal for children to want to sleep in during summer break. However, if your child sleeps for much of the day, avoids engaging with others and also appears to be down or irritable much of the time, this could be a cause for concern. If something seems out of the ordinary or concerning, take notice and check in with your child.
- **Watch for avoidance of or anxiety in certain types of activities or situations:** avoiding activities or disengaging from things they used to do could be a sign of anxiety, depression or other mental health struggles.
- **Watch for any signs of distress:** tearfulness, irritability, restlessness, hopelessness or excessive worry could be a sign of distress in your child. It is normal to have "off" days, but if these signs are ongoing most days of the week, it might be time to seek out professional guidance through a physician or counselor.

For additional resources on youth mental health and wellbeing visit [www.scipnebraska.com](http://www.scipnebraska.com).

References: Childmind Institute; Mental Health America; <https://www.parenttoolkit.com>



**Hop, SCIP, Jump and RUN!**  
**Brought to you by Nebraska Mental Health  
Centers**

**May 10, 2019**  
**Antelope Park**

This year's event will include food, music and booths offering a variety of activities for families. Children and adults of all ages can register to participate in a 1-mile Fun Run, with prizes for the top three finishers. All attendees will be eligible for other prize drawings by visiting a minimum number of booths.

The 1-Mile Fun Run registration fee is \$15. To participate in the 1-Mile Fun Run, register through the SCIP website, [www.SCIPnebraska.com](http://www.SCIPnebraska.com). Admission is free for those not participating in the Fun Run.

For more information on the event or SCIP, go to [scipnebraska.com](http://scipnebraska.com) or call 402-327-6843. Proceeds from the event will help SCIP provide needed resources to schools and families throughout the state of Nebraska.

**May is Mental Health Awareness Month!**

Approximately 1 in 5 youth aged 13–18 (21.4%) experiences a severe mental disorder at some point during their life (National Alliance on Mental Illness). To learn more about Mental Health Awareness Month go to

<https://www.nami.org/mentalhealthmonth>

**"SCIP Intervention and Prevention Training"**  
**July 9-12, 2019**  
**Lincoln, NE**

This training will provide you with the tools needed to recognize warning signs of at-risk behaviors and the ability to develop an appropriate plan to assist the student and his or her family through the process of getting the help they need.

This workshop is for new SCIP teams, new members joining existing SCIP teams, as a refresher for long-time team members, or for any other interested community member.

Topics Include: Digital Citizenship, Family Engagement, Self-Care, Childhood Trauma, Internalizing Behaviors, Substances of Abuse and Addiction, Youth Mental Health and more!

**Registration Deadline: June 28, 2019**

To register go to: [https://scipnebraska.com/trainings\\_and\\_events/conferences-and-workshops.html/event/2019/07/12/scip-intervention-and-prevention-training-/245658](https://scipnebraska.com/trainings_and_events/conferences-and-workshops.html/event/2019/07/12/scip-intervention-and-prevention-training-/245658)