



ALCOHOL & OTHER DRUGS: A GUIDE FOR PARENTS

Binge drinking among college students is a serious national problem. Each year, too many college and university students die or are seriously injured as the result of alcohol use. Researchers at the National Institute for Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism estimate that 1,825 college students between the ages of 18 and 24 die from alcohol-related unintentional injuries, including motor-vehicle crashes each year. About 1 in 4 college students report academic consequences from drinking, including missing class, falling behind in class, doing poorly on exams or papers, and receiving lower grades overall.

Castleton University is deeply concerned about excessive drinking as well as the use of controlled substances by our students. However, alcohol and drug abuse prevention is a job the University cannot perform alone. We need the involvement and the support of parents and other adult role models.

Please talk with your student about your expectations regarding drug and alcohol use. This can be part of a broader conversation about their expectations involving attending classes, drinking and driving, financial responsibility, and the balance between studying and socializing.

Even if you believe your son or daughter does not use drugs, does not drink, or does not drink to excess, it is important that you have this conversation. Although your student is not likely to bring up the topic, he or she will listen if you talk. You may not even get a response, but research shows that students pay attention when their parents talk about alcohol and drugs. It is surprising how often we hear “My parents think...” or “My parents say...” when students are talking with each other or with University staff about these issues.

Talk with your student about your own experiences with alcohol, both positive and negative. Keep in mind, however, if you idealize any over-indulgences from your own youth your student may assume you are granting approval for dangerous levels of consumption.

HOW CAN YOU START THE CONVERSATION?

Ask your student open-ended questions such as:

- How will you decide whether or not to drink at college?
- What reasons or excuses can you give your peers if you don't want to drink?
- What will you do if you find yourself at a party with only alcohol to drink?
- What will you do if your roommate only wants to drink and party?
- What will you do if your roommate or a neighbor passes out from drinking too much?
- How will you get home if the person you rode with is too drunk to drive?

Allow your student to explain his/her answers before you respond, and keep the conversation going. Check-in frequently, especially during the first couple of weeks of school and during breaks. Don't forget to ask: “What can I do to help?”

FACTS TO KEEP IN MIND

- In Vermont, the legal age for purchasing and consuming alcohol is 21.
- Underage alcohol consumption and driving under the influence of drugs or alcohol is against the law.
- Driving while intoxicated (DWI) is a misdemeanor and can result in a maximum fine of up to \$750 and up to 90 days in jail. Court costs, fines, and increased insurance costs can boost the price of a single DWI up to as much as \$18,000.
- It is not true that “everybody drinks in college.” Approximately one-third of Castleton University students do not drink in an average week.

CASTLETON UNIVERSITY POLICIES

- Students under the age of 21 may not consume alcohol anywhere on campus. Legal-age students may consume alcohol under restricted circumstances.
- Drugs other than those prescribed by a licensed physician for legitimate medical purposes may not be used, stored, manufactured, dispensed, or solicited on University property.
- Students can be evicted from the residence halls for repeated alcohol violations.
- A single incidence of use of a controlled substance, such as marijuana, will result in disciplinary action.

RESOURCES

“Marijuana: Facts Parents Need to Know”

<https://www.drugabuse.gov/publications/marijuana-facts-parents-need-to-know/talking-to-your-kids-communicating-risks>

“What to Say to Your Young Adult About Drugs”

<https://drugfree.org/article/prevention-tips-for-every-age/#tips5>