

PREVENTING YOUTH SUBSTANCE USE

10 TIPS FOR PARENTS/CAREGIVERS

Saying "Just Don't Do Drugs" Isn't Enough

START THE CONVERSATION



Even if your child seems uninterested or doesn't want to talk—they are listening to you!

EMBRACE PROBLEM-SOLVING



Ask your child what situations they may find themselves in, then help think of ways to handle them. Try to understand their point of view.

LISTEN TO YOUR CHILD



Talk to your child without judging—they want to feel heard and understood. Asking open-ended questions is helpful.

HAVE FAMILY RITUALS



Family dinners, game nights, and other activities are great ways to build trust with your child and make starting these conversations easier.

SET A GOOD EXAMPLE



Your children are always watching you. Remember that your actions speak louder than words and children learn behaviors at home.

KNOW YOUR CHILD'S FRIENDS



Make sure to talk to the parents or caregivers of your children's friends, so you know who they're spending their time with.

SET LIMITS WITH YOUR CHILDREN



Have set rules and consequences for when rules are broken. Start talking to your child about substance use no later than third grade.

CHECK ON YOUR CHILDREN



Know where your children are and check in on them frequently.

WATCH FOR WARNING SIGNS



Changes in mood, appetite, behavior, or sleep patterns could all be warnings signs that something isn't right.

SEEK HELP WHEN NECESSARY



You don't have to do this alone! Talk to your neighbors, family, or other parents, and use your community as your support system!

CONVERSATION STARTERS

1. "WHAT ARE YOUR FRIENDS SAYING ABOUT ALCOHOL, VAPING, OR CANNABIS? WHAT DO YOU THINK? CAN WE LOOK UP SOME INFORMATION TOGETHER?"
2. "HAVE YOU BEEN IN A SITUATION WHERE YOU HAD THE OPPORTUNITY TO USE DRUGS? HOW DID THIS MAKE YOU FEEL AND WHY?"
3. "DO YOU WANT TO PRACTICE DIFFERENT WAYS TO SAY NO OR GET OUT OF THAT KIND OF SITUATION? I CAN GIVE YOU IDEAS ON WHAT TO SAY - LIKE, I DON'T WANT TO GET IN TROUBLE, I'M NOT INTO THAT, MY PARENT(S) WOULD BE REALLY MAD, I'VE GOT OTHER THINGS TO DO, ETC."
4. "HAVE YOU SEEN SOMEONE EMBARRASS THEMSELVES OR MAKE A POOR DECISION WHILE UNDER THE INFLUENCE OF ALCOHOL OR DRUGS?"

EVEN IF YOU HAVE USED IN THE PAST, THIS IS ABOUT THEIR FUTURE. BE HONEST AND OPEN, INCLUDING WHY YOU DON'T WANT THEM TO DRINK OR USE DRUGS. YOUNG PEOPLE WHO HEAR FROM THE ADULTS THEY LOVE ARE 50% LESS LIKELY TO USE SUBSTANCES.

Keeping Your Children Safe

What Caring Adults Need to Know About Fentanyl



What is Fentanyl?

Fentanyl is a very powerful synthetic opioid and is the most common drug involved in drug overdose deaths in the United States (National Institute on Drug Abuse).

FENTANYL FACTS

1 50 - 100 Times Stronger Than Heroin

Just a tiny bit of fentanyl, usually found as a white powder or a pill, can be deadly. In fact, an amount so small that it can fit on the tip of a pencil is enough to cause an overdose.

2 Involved In Majority of Overdose Deaths

Fentanyl was involved in 85% of Connecticut overdose deaths in 2020. There are now more overdoses in Connecticut involving fentanyl than heroin.

3 Added Into Other Substances

Illegal fentanyl is being mixed with other substances, including cocaine and cannabis. This is especially dangerous because people are often unaware that fentanyl has been added, or the mixture of substances creates severe reactions.

4 Extremely Addictive

Opioids have a strong risk of addiction, as they create changes in the brain. Young brains, which are still growing and developing are especially at risk for being impacted by fentanyl.

PREVENTING UNDERAGE USE OF FENTANYL

KEYS TO SAFETY



- KEY 1** Have conversations with the young people in your life about the risk of using substances. Ask them what they know about fentanyl or other substances to ensure they understand the dangers.
- KEY 2** Have honest conversations in your family about any history of addiction. Establish rules and clear consequences while also sharing why you don't want your child to use drugs.
- KEY 3** Connecticut allows for the prescribing of naloxone to prevent or treat an overdose. Talk to your doctor or dentist if naloxone is something that can benefit you or your family.
- KEY 4** The "See Something, Say Something" Anonymous Call-in Line for Students is available 24/7 to allow anyone to submit secure, anonymous safety concerns to help someone who may hurt themselves or others. Just call 844-572-9669 or 844-5-SAYNOW

Keeping Your Children Safe

Prioritize Prevention Under New Legalization Laws



Where do you start? What do you say?

Some substances in your house are meant for adult use. How do you keep your children safe and the danger out of little hands? With the new law legalizing adult use of cannabis, now is the time to talk!



We're here to help!



CONVERSATION TIPS



A

Be Positive

Start the conversation in a positive manner with curiosity and respect. If you approach the situation with shame or anger your efforts may not work.

B

Find a Comfortable Setting

Announcing a sit-down meeting ("We need to have a talk after dinner") will usually be met with resistance, while a more spontaneous, casual approach will lower their anxiety and maybe even your own.

C

Don't Lecture

Ask them what they already know about cannabis or other substances, and make sure they understand you disapprove of substance use. Lecturing will most likely lead them to shut down, tuning you out, or anger. When talking, sit with them and be mindful of body language. Try to communicate with relaxed open gestures.

D

Try Active Listening

Try asking open-ended questions. Be positive, let your child know you hear them. Sum up and ask questions. Offer empathy and compassion, remember when you were young and didn't have everything figured out.

PREVENTING UNDERAGE USE OF CANNABIS

PARENTS / CAREGIVERS - PAY ATTENTION!

While cannabis is now legal for adults over the age of 21, it is not legal to provide or sell cannabis to someone under the age of 21.

Youth may not hang out at stores that sell cannabis or lie about their age or use a fake ID to buy cannabis. There are legal consequences for these types of activities.

Delivery services will be required to use ID and age verification. Driving while under the influence of cannabis may lead to a suspended license or more serious consequences.

KEYS to storing medications and potentially harmful substances



1

All prescriptions and adult use only substances should be placed up high in a cabinet or a safe place that can be locked.

2

Keep medications stored out of the reach of children

3

Store prescriptions and adult use substances in their original containers

4

Bring unwanted, unused, or expired medications to a drug takeback location



Did you know that?

Tetrahydrocannabinol (THC), the chemical responsible for most of cannabis's psychological effects, affects cells throughout the brain, including cells in circuits related to learning and memory, coordination, and addiction.



CANNABIS AFFECTS YOUR LUNGS

Cannabis smoke is extremely bad for your lungs, containing large amounts of cancer-causing substances and tar. This impacts your lungs' ability to work properly

CANNABIS AFFECTS COORDINATION

Cannabis can seriously impact the ability to control your body, such as your sense of timing. This impacts the capacity to drive safely or have high sports performance.



CANNABIS USE IS NEGATIVELY LINKED WITH OTHER ASPECTS OF HEALTH

Chronic cannabis use has been linked with depression, anxiety, and an increased risk of schizophrenia in some cases.

CANNABIS IS NOT ALWAYS WHAT IT SEEMS

Cannabis can be laced with other substances without your knowledge.



CANNABIS CAN BE ADDICTIVE

Not everyone who uses cannabis becomes addicted, but some users develop signs of dependence.

“ It is everyone’s responsibility to ensure substances – legal or illegal – are kept away from the little hands of our children ”

Preventing Youth Opioid Abuse

Online Resources

- Learn where to safely dispose of unused/expired medication:
 - bit.ly/DrugCollectionBoxes
- Learn how/where patients and their loved ones can obtain naloxone from a pharmacy:
 - bit.ly/NarcanCT
- Access a Voluntary Opioid Opt-Out Form to have on file with your medical provider:
 - bit.ly/OpioidOptOut
- Access substance abuse treatment at a walk-in assessment center:
 - Call 1-800-563-4086 or visit bit.ly/Walk-In-Assessment-CT
- Access free app to prevent, treat, and report opioid overdoses:
 - <https://egov.ct.gov/norasaves/#/HomePage>
- Find services, including counseling or substance use disorder treatment programs:
 - <https://www.211.org/get-help/substance-use>
- Get information on opioids and other substances:
 - drugfreect.org
- Access the latest research on opioids, or find resources in your area:
 - <https://www.ctclearinghouse.org/topics/opiates-opioids/>
- Connect and get support if you or someone you know is struggling:
 - <https://liveloud.org/>

HELPING YOUNG PEOPLE

PROCESS CURRENT EVENTS

Between traumatic events, disturbing images, and rampant misinformation, helping youth process what they see and hear on the news has never been more difficult. These tips will help guide you in a conversation with a young person who wants to discuss current events like the COVID-19 pandemic or the violence at the U.S. Capitol.



KNOW YOURSELF

Before talking to your mentee about current events, first, explore how you feel and plan how you might approach the topic with your mentee.



BE AGE-APPROPRIATE

Discuss these issues with children and youth using words, ideas, and relationships that they understand.



START THE CONVERSATION

As a mentor, it is appropriate and necessary for you to help mentees process troubling current events. Find out what they already know.



LISTEN, DON'T LECTURE

The best way to start the conversation with your mentee is to listen. You should use active listening skills.



ANSWER HONESTLY

While you do not need to be an expert on everything, you do need to respond to your mentee's questions about current events.



DON'T BE AFRAID TO GUIDE

As a mentor, your role is to help your mentee process events and clarify how they will respond to these events.



CONFRONT RACISM

Negative messages and stereotypes about people of color and other marginalized identities are prevalent throughout our society.



ACKNOWLEDGE IMPLICIT BIAS

You can use tools like the Implicit Association Test, which measures bias around race, gender, sexual orientation, mental health, etc.



ENCOURAGE COPING STRATEGIES

Mentees also need to be directed towards concrete positive coping strategies for working through their thoughts and emotions.



EXPLORE ADVOCACY

Current events often reflect oppression. Mentees may have to accept there will be no satisfactory closure without social action.