

Parent/Caregiver guidance

Be clear that substance use is not allowed

- You do not have my (our) permission to use alcohol, nicotine, marijuana, or other drugs.
- Set house rules that substances are **not** allowed in the house.
- Be clear that your concerns are about health, wellness, and optimal growth and development.
- Treat all substance use as a single decision, because we know that kids who use alcohol are much more likely to also use marijuana, nicotine, opioids, and other drugs.
- **Avoid ambiguous statements, such as “Be smart” or “Don’t get into trouble” because this is often interpreted as permission to use “cautiously” (which does not exist in adolescence!).**

Everyone follows house rules

- “No drugs in the house” applies to everyone who lives in the house, regardless of age.
- Parents set the rules. As long as you are providing anything to your adult child (car insurance, phone service, clothing, etc.), you have something to leverage towards better behavioral choices. If that doesn’t succeed, you can always move towards a cohabitation arrangement where you start to ask for financial contributions towards room and board (not market rates, but an amount that would be realistic for your child to pay).

If friends use

- If your child has friends who use substances, be clear that your child may spend time with that person, but only if they can do so without using themselves.
- If you are drug testing your child, you can let them know ahead of time that they will have to give a test sample following time with their friends.

Going out

- Avoid teenage drinking parties, because there is no way to keep teens safe in this setting, even if keys are taken away.
- If your child asks permission to go to an event (such as a concert or sporting event), be clear that they may go **if** they can assure you they will not use alcohol, nicotine, marijuana, or other drugs.
- If you are drug testing your child, you can let them know ahead of time that they will have to give a test sample following their time at the event.

Privacy

- Allow your teen privacy unless you notice signs of a problem.
- Avoid reading a child’s personal journal or diary unless invited.
- Consider regular room and backpack checks; invite your child to watch (to confirm that you will not be violating personal space).
- If you believe your teen may have a serious drug problem, consider monitoring text messages and social media, particularly for younger teens.

Discovering your child’s substance use

- Tell your child that you discovered drugs and be specific; “I found a vape in your pants pocket when I was doing the laundry.”
- Be clear that your child does not have your permission to use substances.
- Ask your child to quit.
- Suspend a privilege for a short period of time; explain exactly what the consequence is and when the privilege will be restored.
- Monitor your child closely to ensure that the behavior stops.
- If you find signs of ongoing use, contact your pediatrician’s office for guidance.

For consultations or virtual counselling about SUD issues, call your MCPAP team and ask for the ASAP-MCPAP (SUD) program.



Adolescent Substance Use
and Addiction Program



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