

Fall Semester -- A Time For Parents To Discuss The Risks Of College Drinking

BETHESDA, Md., Sept. 3, 2013 As college students arrive on campus this fall, it's a time of new experiences, new friendships, and making memories that will last a lifetime. Unfortunately for many, it is also a time of excessive drinking and dealing with its aftermath—vandalism, violence, sexual aggression, and even death.

(Photo: <http://photos.prnewswire.com/prnh/20130903/PH72218-INFO>)

According to research summarized in a College Task Force report to the National Institute on Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism (NIAAA), the consequences of excessive drinking by college students are more significant, more destructive, and more costly than many parents realize. And these consequences affect students whether or not they drink.

Statistics from this report indicate that drinking by college students aged 18 to 24 contributes to an estimated 1,825 student deaths, 599,000 injuries, 696,000 assaults by another student who has been drinking, and 97,000 cases of sexual assault or date rape each year.

Early Weeks Are Critical

As the fall semester begins, parents can use this time to help prepare their college-age sons and daughters by talking with them about the consequences of excessive drinking.

Some first-year students who live on campus may be at particular risk. During high school, students who plan to go to college tend to drink less than their non-college-bound classmates. However, during subsequent years, the heavy drinking rates of college students surpass those of their non-college peers.

This rapid increase in heavy drinking over a relatively short period of time can contribute to serious difficulties with the transition to college. Anecdotal evidence suggests that the first 6 weeks of the first semester are critical to academic success. Because many students initiate heavy drinking during this time, the potential exists for excessive alcohol consumption to interfere with successful adaptation to campus life. The transition to college is often difficult and about one-third of first-year students fail to enroll for their second year.

Parents Can Help

During these crucial early weeks, parents can do a variety of things to stay involved. They can inquire about campus alcohol policies, call their sons and daughters frequently, and ask about roommates and living arrangements.

They should also discuss the penalties for underage drinking, and how alcohol use can lead to date rape, violence, and academic failure.

Resources Are Available

For parents who want to discuss the consequences of college drinking, a variety of helpful resources are available from NIAAA at the Task Force's award-winning website, www.collegedrinkingprevention.gov.

These resources include a parents' guide that offers research-based information plus helpful advice on choosing the right college, staying involved during the freshman year, and getting assistance if faced with an alcohol-related crisis.

There are also links to alcohol policies at colleges across the country, an interactive diagram of how alcohol affects the human body, and an interactive alcohol cost calculator.

Copies of all Task Force materials, including the parents' guide, may be ordered from www.collegedrinkingprevention.gov or through the NIAAA Publications Distribution Center, P.O. Box 10686, Rockville, MD 20849-0686.

SOURCE National Institute on Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism, National Institutes of Health

For further information: NIAAA Press Office, John Bowersox, 301-443-3860, NIAAAPressOffice@mail.nih.gov

Additional assets available online:  [Photos \(1\)](#)

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