



HEALTH EDUCATION  
AND WELLNESS

**START THE CONVERSATION:  
HOW TO DISCUSS  
ALCOHOL WITH YOUR STUDENT**

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**Start the Conversation.**

Developed for you by the

**Center for Health  
Education & Wellness**  
1800 Volunteer Blvd., Suite 201  
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865-974-5725

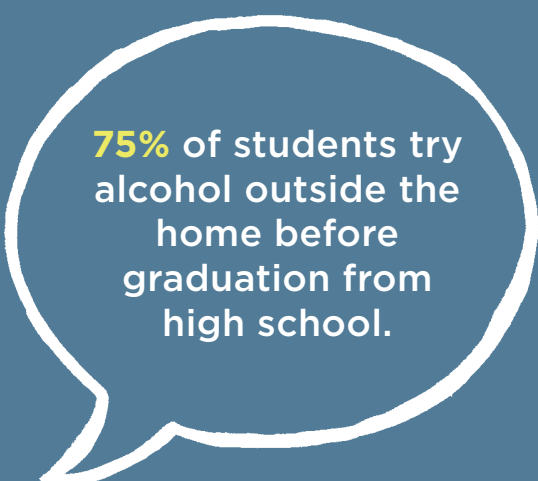
[wellness.utk.edu](http://wellness.utk.edu)

The University of Tennessee is working to engage students and influence the choices they make about alcohol through a number of initiatives, including an online study module required of all incoming students, orientation presentations, media campaigns, ongoing programming, and policy enforcement. Our message to these new students is centered on their value and their responsibilities as members of the Volunteer community.

Even after your student has moved into a residence hall, you remain the single most influential relationship in their life. We need your active partnership in influencing your student's decisions about alcohol. The information provided here is based on research from the National Institute on Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism, College Parents of America, Mothers Against Drunk Driving, and the Metro Drug Coalition.

This is an ideal time to talk with your student about family expectations and consequences related to the use of alcohol. We are all at our best when we have a clear understanding of our actions and their impact. By taking this initiative, you are partnering with your student, the university, and the Volunteer community to help ensure a successful and enriching experience at UT for your student.

# Why Now?

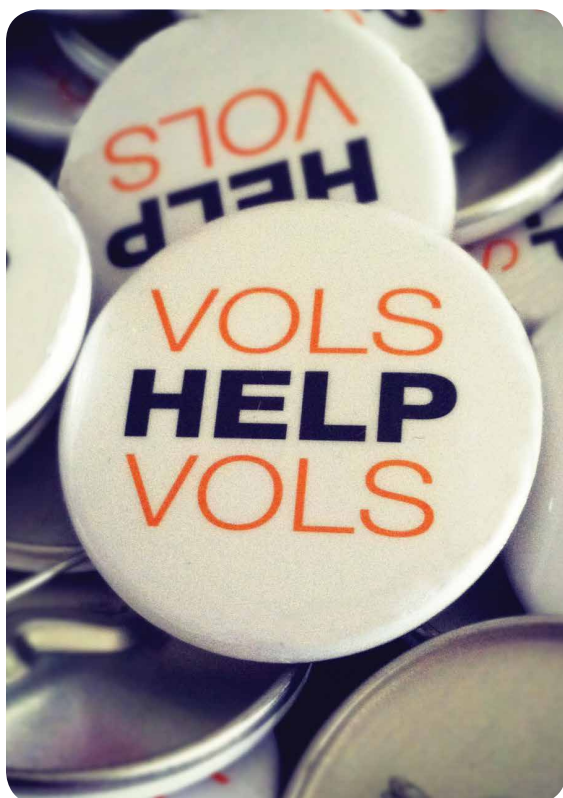


**75%** of students try alcohol outside the home before graduation from high school.

The purpose of this guide is to provide you with the tools you need to engage in an open dialogue with your student about alcohol.

To help you fully prepare for this important conversation with your student, it includes facts about alcohol and college drinking, UT policies, the importance of discussing your family history, and ways in which to discuss your expectations before your student leaves for college. We have also included a reference section with information on risk reduction programs, campus resources, and online sources that may be helpful.

We urge you to read through this booklet and then talk with your student about this important issue. By following the suggestions provided here, you can help equip your student to make smarter and safer choices. The time you spend now could be a potentially life-saving gift—and will help strengthen the lines of communication within your family as you prepare for your student's years at UT and beyond.



College is a time for your student to gain new experiences, build new friendships, and make new memories that will last a lifetime. As you prepare them for this transition, there are a lot of good reasons to include a conversation about alcohol.

As a parent, you are and will continue to be the primary influence in your student's life.

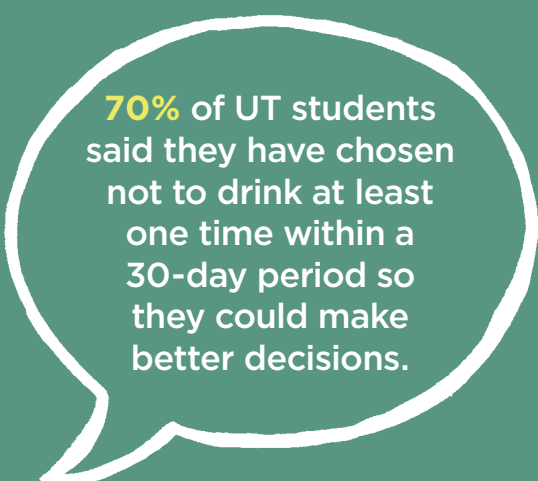
The odds are high that your student has already faced a decision about drinking. According to the 2016 *Monitoring the Future* report, 33 percent of high school seniors have consumed alcohol in the past 30 days.

When students arrive at UT, the pressure to misuse alcohol may be intensified as parents are less present, students begin interacting with new peers, and the need to fit in grows more important.

Binge drinking becomes a stronger concern in the college and young adult years. According to the National Institute on Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism, the consequences of binge drinking are more significant, more destructive, and more costly than many parents may realize.

The consequences of drinking can include poor academic performance, sexual abuse, assault, injury, and death. Even students who do not drink can experience consequences from other students' drinking.

# Create a Plan.



**70%** of UT students  
said they have chosen  
not to drink at least  
one time within a  
30-day period so  
they could make  
better decisions.

As you plan the conversation with your student about drinking, it is important to incorporate three elements: a summary of relevant facts about alcohol, your family's history of drinking, and the expectations you have for your student while they are away at college.

### ALCOHOL FACTS

The use or possession of alcohol by anyone under the age of 21 is illegal, and consuming, manufacturing, possessing, distributing, dispensing, selling, or being under the influence of alcoholic beverages is a violation of federal, state, and local law. Alcohol-impaired driving is also against the law.

Alcohol is a central nervous system depressant. When consumed in excess, it leads to intoxication; loss of control; impaired coordination, reflexes, and judgment; and, in extreme cases, death. According to the National Institute of Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism 1,825 college students between the ages of 18 and 24 die each year from unintentional alcohol-related injuries.

Most people can process about one standard drink an hour, but many factors—including weight, rate of consumption, and chromosomal sex—contribute to an individual's blood alcohol concentration (or BAC). Time is the only thing that will sober up an intoxicated person.

Not everyone drinks in college. In the university's 2016 Annual Health and Wellness Survey, 26 percent of students said they had never used alcohol and 70 percent of students said they had chosen not to drink at least one time within a 30-day period.

See page 15 of this booklet for resources that provide more detailed information on alcohol use, effects, and risks.



### FAMILY HISTORY

Discuss your family history of alcohol use and misuse with your student. Family history is likely more important than you may think!

In numerous studies, family history has been proven to be a risk factor for developing an alcohol problem. First-degree relatives (parents, children, and siblings) of those treated for alcohol use disorder (AUD) are at two to four times greater risk of being diagnosed with AUD compared to those with no treated relatives.

As you prepare to talk with your student, take some time to process your family's history with alcohol and its effects.

Avoid telling your student drinking stories from your own college years. Entertaining your student with these stories can normalize what, even then, was risk-taking behavior. These conversations can also mislead your student and make it appear that you have given them permission to participate in dangerous alcohol consumption.

## EXPECTATIONS

The final critical element of the conversation about alcohol is explaining the expectations you have of your student beginning their college experience.

Know your stance on underage drinking and make sure your student knows it, too.

Set clear and realistic expectations regarding academic performance. Studies have found that drinking may contribute to a decline in grades. If students know their parents expect sound academic work, they are likely to be more devoted to studying and spend less time partying and drinking alcohol.

Explain the reasons behind your expectations and encourage your student to talk about any concerns.

Set consequences in advance for failing to meet expectations. Doing so will allow you to impose any necessary consequences consistently instead of basing them in the heat of the moment.

Your student always has a choice about whether or not to drink.

Discourage your student from participating in drinking games, pregaming, or other dangerous drinking strategies.

Ask your student to have the courage to say something if they see someone participating in dangerous drinking. If your student sees a person who is passed out, not breathing, unconscious, or throwing up uncontrollably, they should call 911 immediately.

Let your student know they have the right to a safe academic environment. Even students who do not drink can be affected by the behavior of those who do choose to drink. These effects can range from interrupted study time to loss of sleep, assault, or unwanted sexual advances. If your student feels comfortable doing so, they should talk to the person or persons whose behavior is at issue; if not, they should notify

the residence hall director or other residence hall staff. If your student lives off campus, they can call **974-HELP** for assistance twenty-four hours a day.

## Ask yourself the following questions before you talk with your student:

- Do you want your student to abstain from drinking?
- If your student has an unintended consequence from alcohol, how will you respond?
- If you think your student may have a substance use issue, how will you respond?
- If your student says they are going to drink, how will you respond?
- If your student is somewhere and feels concerned for themselves or for others, whom should they contact?



## PUT US IN YOUR PHONE

**Need a ride?**

T:Link  
[ridethet.utk.com](http://ridethet.utk.com)  
865-974-4080

**Worried about a friend?**

974-HELP  
[wellness.utk.edu](http://wellness.utk.edu)

**Worried about safety?**

UTPD  
[utpolice.utk.edu](http://utpolice.utk.edu)  
865-974-3114



THE UNIVERSITY OF  
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KNOXVILLE

CENTER FOR HEALTH  
EDUCATION & WELLNESS



NOT ALL DRINKING IS THE SAME IN TERMS OF RISK

# HIGH-RISK DRINKING

Chugging, drinking games, shots, or drinking anything out of a punch bowl, hose, or funnel

Drinking to get drunk

Driving after drinking or riding with someone who has been drinking

Drinking too fast

Going to parties where people drink too much

Not knowing what is in your cup or leaving your cup unattended



## LOW-RISK DRINKING

Abstaining from drinking

Eating a meal before drinking

Drinking no more than one drink an hour for women or two drinks an hour for men

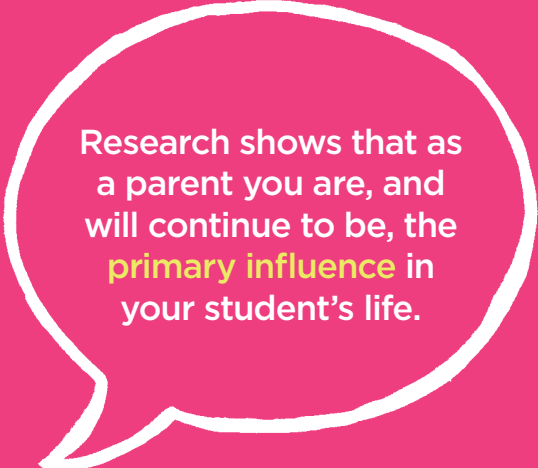
Always knowing what is in your cup

Alternating alcoholic drinks with water throughout the night

Planning a safe way home before you go out



# Start the Talk.



Research shows that as  
a parent you are, and  
will continue to be, the  
**primary influence** in  
your student's life.

It's up to you, as a parent, to start the conversation about alcohol. As with anything important, taking some time to set the stage and plan the details will help it go more smoothly.

Think about when and where you and your student can best talk. This is not a conversation to have over the phone, in a crowded public place, early in the morning, or as your student is heading out the door.

You may want to talk at home, or consider going out to dinner or to a coffee shop. Wherever you choose, make sure it is a place where you can be comfortable in one-on-one conversation.

### GET THE CONVERSATION STARTED

With important conversations, sometimes the hardest part can be knowing how to open the subject. Here are a couple of ideas to help you get started:

**“You will be leaving for college in August, and all of us in the family share your excitement as you begin this new chapter. Perhaps you can help me with something that is on my mind. I have heard about how freshman students can fall into a heavy drinking scene, and that worries me. Maybe if we talk about what you think about drinking, I might feel a little better. Would you mind giving me a few minutes to chat about this?”**



**“You’ve probably heard a lot about alcohol in school, and I would like to talk with you about it as well. I feel like I would not be a good parent if I did not talk to you about something so important before you leave for college. Do you mind talking with me for a few minutes about this?”**

### KEEP THESE POINTERS IN MIND

- Ask your student about their views on alcohol and college life.
- Listen to your student. Listening is the most important part of good communication. While you listen attentively, try not to be critical.
- Give constructive feedback, share the facts, and debunk myths.
- Refrain from blanket statements like “Students who get drunk are stupid.”
- Be aware of using such scare tactics as “If you drink, you will flunk out of college” to influence your student; this approach may backfire.
- Help plan ways for your student to handle peer pressure. Brainstorm ways in which your student can respond to offers of alcohol. Responses can be as simple as “No thanks, do you have any soda?” or “No thanks, I have a huge test tomorrow.”
- Be prepared to discuss your own drinking. Be honest in your answers. Your student may ask if you drank alcohol when you were underage. (If you chose not to drink, explain why. If you chose to drink, share an example of a negative consequence of your drinking. If you are an active drinker, be prepared to talk about why social drinking is OK for you but not for your student.)



## KEEP THE CONVERSATION GOING

After the initial conversation, continue to talk with your student about alcohol. It is common for conversations about alcohol to happen at more than one sitting, and for the depth of the conversation to evolve over time. Keeping the communication lines open can let your student know that you are there to discuss drinking and that you will continue to support them in making informed choices.

Once your student leaves for school, you can still be available to talk, listen, and provide support.

Here are some ways to stay connected:

**Call.** Give your student a call frequently during their first few weeks away. Research shows that parents who communicate regularly with their freshman student, especially on weekends, affect student drinking in a positive way. Pay special attention to experiences and activities during the first six weeks of school. It is during this critical period that students are learning how to manage their time appropriately.

**Text.** Send a text to wish your student good luck on a test or ask how things are going. It's an easy, nonintrusive way to show that you are thinking about your student, and it gives them an easy way to respond.

**Email.** Students can often be more connected to their email than their voice mail. Drop your student a quick email to check in and see how they are doing.

**Visit.** If you do not live too far away from campus, plan a lunch or shopping date with your student. Avoid drop-in visits and staying too long to avoid the risk of wearing out your welcome. Attend Family Weekend and other campus events that are open to parents. While you are there, ask to meet your student's friends.

## IF YOU THINK YOUR STUDENT HAS A PROBLEM

Be aware of the signs of an alcohol use disorder by your student. These may include lower grades, unavailability or reluctance to talk with you, trouble with law enforcement, or mood changes.

If you believe your student may be having trouble with alcohol, it is important to find the most appropriate help. For more information and 24-hour-a-day assistance, call 865-974-HELP.



**VOLS HELP VOLS**

College can be a fun and exciting experience, but it can also be challenging, overwhelming, and stressful.

If you are concerned about a fellow Vol, observe a behavior that makes you uncomfortable, or you feel like a fellow Vol may harm themselves or others...

**Call**

**865-974-HELP (4357)**

WE ARE ALL VOLUNTEERS.  
WE LOOK OUT FOR EACH OTHER.

 HEALTH EDUCATION  
AND WELLNESS

UT is actively working to keep students safe, healthy, and informed about the effects, risks, and consequences of alcohol use. Encourage your student to take full advantage of these programs and resources.

## RISK REDUCTION PROGRAMS

**Alcohol education program.** This program is offered to engage our students in a discussion about alcohol use, encourage a harm reduction model, provide safety information, and provide resources. Contact the Center for Health Education and Wellness at 865-974-5725.

**Alcohol-free events.** All Center for Student Engagement events are alcohol-free. A very popular activity, Vol Night Long, is hosted by the Center for Student Engagement four times a semester. Students participate in games and activities while enjoying free refreshments and meeting new people. Encourage your student to attend the first Vol Night Long, held as part of Welcome Week.

**Be Smart, Be Safe, Be a Vol.** During summer orientation all students attend the one-hour session “Be Smart, Be Safe, Be a Vol,” conducted by the Center for Health Education and Wellness and the Office of Student Conduct and Community Standards. It provides information on UT alcohol policies, risk reduction strategies, and data about drinking on campus.

**Consistent enforcement of university alcohol policies in residence halls.** Housing staff members receive extensive training about the policies, procedures, and consequences of alcohol consumption by UT students. All students found in violation of the policies will receive consistent enforcement. See the disciplinary process information on page 16 of this booklet for more information.

## First-Year Studies (FYS) 100:

**The Volunteer Connection.** FYS 100 is a required online course that students complete in the summer before their freshman year. The module provides facts about alcohol and a discussion of potential legal consequences as well as the ways in which alcohol can affect a student’s health, safety, and academics.

The best conversations are informed conversations. Have your student complete the FYS module via FYS 100 at [fys.utk.edu/fys100](https://fys.utk.edu/fys100).

**Social norming messaging.** Many students arrive at UT with a skewed view of a typical student’s drinking behaviors. An annual health and wellness survey gathers information about actual and perceived substance use among UT students. Data from this survey is then communicated to the student body to reduce students’ misperceptions about substance use.

**Online assessment tool.** Alcohol eCHECKUP TO GO is a self-assessment tool for students to examine their own alcohol use. It provides immediate personalized feedback about drinking patterns, health and personal consequences, personal and family risk factors, campus and community support, and emergency services. Answers are confidential and identifiable personal information from the survey is not stored. It is available at [wellness.utk.edu](https://wellness.utk.edu).

## CAMPUS RESOURCES

### Center for Health Education & Wellness

1800 Volunteer Boulevard, Suite 201

865-974-5725

[wellness.utk.edu](http://wellness.utk.edu)

Manages 974-HELP, the distressed student protocol, case management, and the Threat Assessment Task Force; educates students about health and wellness areas that impact student success; and develops campaigns and programming to address personal safety, sexual assault, alcohol and other drugs, and health and wellness initiatives.

### Student Counseling Center

1800 Volunteer Boulevard

865-974-2196

[counselingcenter.utk.edu](http://counselingcenter.utk.edu)

UT's primary facility for personal counseling, psychotherapy, and psychological outreach and consultation services.

### New Student & Family Programs

412 Student Services Building

865-974-4546

[newvols.utk.edu](http://newvols.utk.edu)

[parents.utk.edu](http://parents.utk.edu)

Provides orientation programming, educational and leadership development opportunities, and Welcome Week events to support students' academic, social, cultural, and personal development. The office also provides a support system for families through the Parents Association and programs such as Family Weekend.

### Center for Student Engagement

305 University Center

865-974-5455

[activities.utk.edu](http://activities.utk.edu)

Contributes to the holistic education of all students by providing programs and leadership opportunities that advance student learning.

### Office of Student Conduct & Community Standards

409 Student Services Building

865-974-3171

[studentconduct.utk.edu](http://studentconduct.utk.edu)

Concerned with the individual rights and responsibilities of students. Staff members serve as advisors to the student judicial system and, when necessary, initiate appropriate disciplinary proceedings.

### University of Tennessee

#### Police Department

1101 Cumberland Avenue

865-974-3114

[utpolice.utk.edu](http://utpolice.utk.edu)

Provides entertaining and educational programs on safety and law enforcement topics through its Community Relations Unit.

### Rocky Top Recovery Group

1800 Volunteer Boulevard, Suite 201

865-974-5725

[utk.collegiatelink.net/organization/TBD](http://utk.collegiatelink.net/organization/TBD)

Rocky Top Recovery Group is a student organization at the University of Tennessee dedicated to supporting Volunteers in recovery from substance use disorder. Through fellowship, campus programming, and community service, we provide a healthy environment for students in recovery or interested in recovery. We promote personal development, academic success, and civic duty to the University of Tennessee community and beyond.

## ONLINE RESOURCES

### **Centers for Disease Control & Prevention**

Information on alcohol and public health.

[cdc.gov/alcohol](https://www.cdc.gov/alcohol)

### **College Drinking—Changing the Culture**

Created by the National Institute on Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism; comprehensive research-based information related to alcohol abuse and binge drinking among college students.

[collegedrinkingprevention.gov](https://www.collegedrinkingprevention.gov)

### **Substance Abuse & Mental Health Services Administration**

Information covering a broad range of topics related to substance abuse.

[samhsa.gov](https://www.samhsa.gov)

### **National Highway Traffic Safety Administration**

Information on impaired driving.

[nhtsa.gov](https://www.nhtsa.gov)

### **Rethinking Drinking**

Self-assessment, information, and resources on from the National Institutes for Health's National Institute on Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism.

[rethinkingdrinking.niaaa.nih.gov](https://www.rethinkingdrinking.niaaa.nih.gov)

### **National Council on Alcohol & Drug Dependence**

Statistics, interviews with experts, and recommendations about drinking from leading health authorities.

[ncadd.org](https://www.ncadd.org)

### **National Institute on Alcohol Abuse & Alcoholism**

As a part of the National Institutes of Health, supports and conducts research on the causes, consequences, treatment, and prevention of alcoholism and alcohol-related problems.

[niaaa.nih.gov](https://www.niaaa.nih.gov)

## OFFICE OF STUDENT CONDUCT AND COMMUNITY STANDARDS

According to the university's disciplinary rules and regulations, the Office of Student Conduct and Community Standards (SCCS) may hold students responsible for incidents involving the use or possession of alcohol. University rules apply to students' conduct on and off campus property.

Several Standard of Conduct violations relate specifically to alcohol:

(19) Consuming, manufacturing, possessing, distributing, dispensing, selling, or being under the influence of alcoholic beverages on university-controlled property or in connection with a university-affiliated activity.

(20) Consuming, manufacturing, possessing, distributing, dispensing, selling, or being under the influence of alcoholic beverages, if prohibited by federal, state, or local law.

(21) Providing an alcoholic beverage to a person younger than twenty-one (21) years of age, unless permitted by law.

(29) Committing an act that is prohibited by local, state, or federal law.

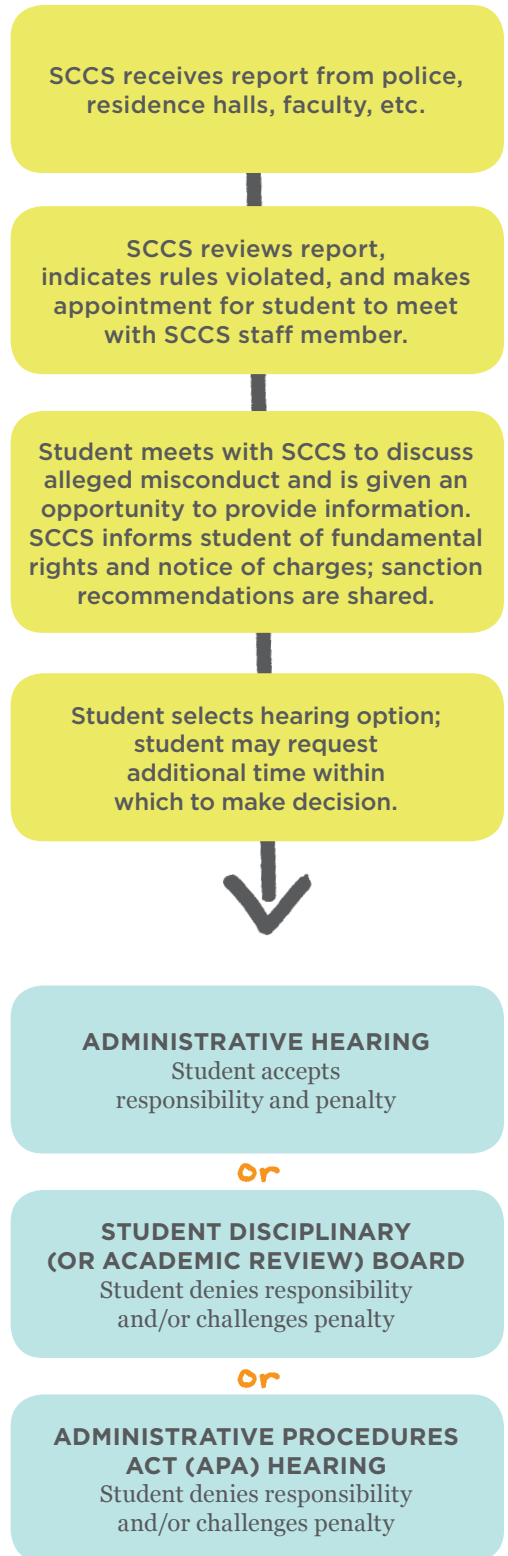
When the Office of Student Conduct and Community Standards receives a report—most often from Residence Life staff, University of Tennessee Police, or Knoxville Police—a staff member meets with the students listed on the report. During that meeting, the student receives notice of fundamental rights, hearing options, notice of charges and alleged misconduct, and a sanction recommendation.

Sanctions for alcohol violations can range from a warning, educational sanctions, a reprimand, probation, suspension, or permanent dismissal.

In accordance with state law, the Office of Student Conduct and Community Standards will send a letter to parents or guardians regarding the alcohol violation if the student is under twenty-one years of age at the time of the meeting. Even though the office must send a notification letter, staff members cannot speak to parents regarding a student unless the student submits a signed Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) waiver.

A detailed description of the disciplinary process and additional information are available at [studentconduct.utk.edu](http://studentconduct.utk.edu).

*This guide was compiled by the UT Center for Health Education and Wellness with information from the following sources: the Office of Family Engagement, the Office of Orientation and Transition, the Parents Association, Mothers Against Drunk Driving, the National Institute of Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism, College Parents of America, and the Metropolitan Drug Commission.*





# Notes



**Start the Conversation.**

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