



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

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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 module](#) available to all incoming students, orientation presentations, media campaigns, ongoing programming and events, and policy enforcement. Our message to these new students is centered on their value and 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?

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 informed and safer choices.

The time you spend now could be a potentially lifesaving gift—and will help strengthen the lines of communication within your family as you prepare for your student's years at UT and beyond.



**52% of 12th graders
reported using alcohol
in their lifetime.**

—Monitoring the Future 2019

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 2018 *Monitoring the Future* report, 30 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.

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 alcohol use, 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 2017 Annual Health and Wellness Survey, 41 percent of students said they had never used alcohol and 71% of UT students have chosen not to drink when they normally would have.

See page 14 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, pre-gaming, consuming from a common source, 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 has cold skin, is unresponsive, is vomiting,

or has slow breathing, they should call 911 immediately then lay the person on their side and stay with them.


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 865-974-HELP for assistance 24 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?

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 from a common source
 - 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.

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.

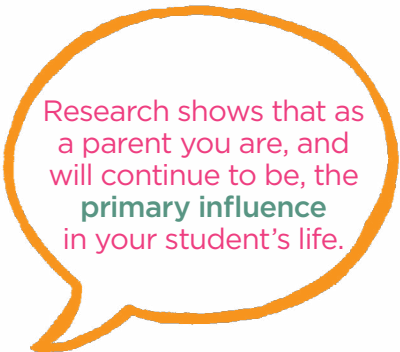
GET THE CONVERSATION STARTED

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?”



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

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.”
- Beware of using scare tactics such 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.

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.



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

IF YOU ARE

- In a crisis and are not sure what to do
- Concerned for a fellow VOL
- Observing a behavior that makes you feel uncomfortable
- Concerned that a fellow VOL may harm themselves or others

Call 865-974-HELP (4357)

We are here to help

dos.utk.edu

DEAN OF STUDENTS

RISK REDUCTION PROGRAMS

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.

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 Live the Experience at Welcome Week 2020, all students will 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 Title IX. It provides information on healthy decision making, 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.

Social norming messaging.

Many students arrive at UT with a skewed view of a typical student’s drinking behaviors. These views often factor into a student’s drinking behavior. The Center for Health Education and Wellness actively works to correct these misperceptions by providing corrective information regarding student drinking behavior. The approaches of changed from posters to ads to videos. We continue to be creative in how we provide this information to our students.

Online assessment tool. Alcohol eCheckup to Go is a self-assessment tool for students to examine their alcohol use. It provides immediate personalized feedback about drinking patterns, health and personal consequences, personal and family risk factors, campus and



**PUT US IN
YOUR PHONE**

Need a ride?
T.Link
ridethet.utk.com
865-974-4080

Worried about a friend?
865-974-HELP (4357)
dos.utk.edu

Worried about safety?
UTPD
utpolice.utk.edu
865-974-3111


THE UNIVERSITY OF
TENNESSEE
KNOXVILLE
CENTER FOR HEALTH
EDUCATION AND WELLNESS

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.

CAMPUS RESOURCES

Center for Health Education & Wellness

1800 Volunteer Boulevard, Ste. 201

865-974-5725

wellness.utk.edu

Empowers all Vols to thrive through personal and community well-being. Educates students about health and wellness areas that affect student success; 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

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

Office of New Student Orientation

412 Student Services Building

865-974-4546

orientation.utk.edu

Provides orientation programming, educational and leadership development opportunities, and Welcome Week events to support students' academic, social, cultural, and personal development.

Office of Family Programs

413 Student Services Building

865-974-4152

family.utk.edu

The Office of Family Programs helps all members of the Volunteer Family from the time that their student is admitted to the University until they graduate. We provide communications and engaging programs to help families stay connected with their student's college experience.

Center for Student Engagement

Student Union, Suite 174

865-974-5455

go.utk.edu

Contributes to the holistic education of all students by providing programs and leadership opportunities that advance student learning. 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. The Center for Student Engagement also supports over 400 registered student organizations ranging from academic, to performance, to advocacy, and more.

Office of Student Conduct & Community Standards

412 Student Services Building

865-974-3171

studentconduct.utk.edu

The Office of Student Conduct & Community Standards (SCCS) develops student integrity and accountability through an educational, consistent, and equitable conduct process. SCCS develops students by educating and holding them

accountable to the Student Code of Conduct. Staff members provide students with fair and responsible discipline, along with the opportunity to learn from personal challenges.

UT Police Department

1101 Cumberland Avenue
865-974-4674
utpolice.utk.edu

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

ONLINE RESOURCES

Centers for Disease Control & Prevention

Alcohol and public health information.
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

Substance Abuse & Mental Health Services Administration

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

National Highway Traffic Safety Administration

Information on impaired driving.
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

East Tennessee Intergroup of Alcoholics Anonymous

The primary purpose of E.T.I.A.A. is to assist the A.A. groups of East Tennessee in carrying the Alcoholics Anonymous message to those who suffer from alcoholism and to facilitate 12 Step work. It is a good source to locate local meetings.
etiaa.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

OFFICE OF STUDENT CONDUCT AND COMMUNITY STANDARDS

According to the University's Code of Conduct, the Office of Student Conduct & Community Standards (SCCS) may hold students responsible for incidents involving the use or possession of alcohol and/or drugs.

Several Standards of Conduct relate.

Standard 18: ALCOHOL RELATED CONDUCT—UNIVERSITY PROPERTY OR UNIVERSITY ACTIVITIES.

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 unless expressly permitted by University policy.

Standard 19: ALCOHOL RELATED CONDUCT PROHIBITED BY LAW.

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

Standard 20: PROVIDING ALCOHOL TO UNDERAGE PERSON. Providing an alcoholic beverage to a person younger than twenty-one (21) years of age, unless permitted by law.

Standard 21: DRUGS AND DRUG PARAPHERNALIA. Using, manufacturing, possessing, distributing, selling, dispensing, or being under the influence of drugs, if prohibited by federal, state, or local law; using, manufacturing, possessing, distributing, or selling drug paraphernalia, if prohibited by federal, state, or local law; using or possessing a prescription drug if the prescription was not issued to the student; or distributing or selling a prescription drug to a person to whom the prescription was not originally issued.

The University uses the following definition of possession: Direct control of a substance or property, actual knowledge of a substance or property and/or being in such close proximity to the substance or property that it is a reasonable presumption that one had knowledge of the substance or property.

Sanctions for Code of Conduct violations include, but are not limited to:

- Educational Activities/Classes
- Warning
- Disciplinary Probation
- Deferred Suspension
- Suspension
- Expulsion

In accordance with state law, SCCS will send a letter to parents or guardians regarding an alcohol or drug violation if the student is under twenty-one (21) years of age. Staff members cannot speak to parents or guardians about the specifics of a student's incident without the student submitting a signed Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) waiver.

The entire Code of Conduct and more information about the Code of Conduct may be found at studentconduct.utk.edu.

STUDENT CONDUCT PROCESS

SCCS receives report from police, residence halls, students, staff, faculty, community members, etc.

SCCS sends written notice of educational conference to student.

Educational conference with student:

- Discuss allegations and student's rights.
- Student has opportunity to respond and provide information or witnesses.
- Notice of allegations and sanctions if no additional investigation needed and SCCS believes there is enough information to indicate that it is more likely than not that the student violated the Code of Conduct.*

*SCCS may choose to take no action at any time throughout the process.

Student selects resolution option:

- Resolution Agreement
- Student Life Hearing Officer
- Student Conduct Board
- Alternative Resolution
- Uniform Administrative Procedures Act Hearing*

*only an option if recommended sanction of deferred suspension or greater



Start the Conversation.

Notes



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All qualified applicants will receive equal consideration for employment and admission without regard to race, color, national origin, religion, sex, pregnancy, marital status, sexual orientation, gender identity, age, physical or mental disability, genetic information, veteran status, and parental status, or any other characteristic protected by federal or state law. In accordance with the requirements of Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972, Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, and the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990, the University of Tennessee affirmatively states that it does not discriminate on the basis of race, sex, or disability in its education programs and activities, and this policy extends to employment by the university. Inquiries and charges of violation of Title VI (race, color, and national origin), Title IX (sex), Section 504 (disability), the ADA (disability), the Age Discrimination in Employment Act (age), sexual orientation, or veteran status should be directed to the Office of Equity and Diversity, 1840 Melrose Avenue, Knoxville, TN 37996-3560, telephone 865-974-2498. Requests for accommodation of a disability should be directed to the ADA Coordinator at the Office of Equity and Diversity.