An Aggie Parent & Family Guide to Talking With Your Student

Alcohol & College Life
Research shows that the first 6 weeks of freshman year is an especially vulnerable time for heavy drinking and alcohol related consequences because of student expectations and social pressures at the start of the academic year\(^1\). In an effort to support our students, Texas A&M University Alcohol and Drug Education Programs wants you as Aggie families to have the information and support necessary to assist your student during this time of transition.

As Aggie families, it is important for you to discuss this topic with your student. Studies show that parents are the primary source of health information for college students\(^2\). For many, bringing up the subject of alcohol use is not easy or comfortable. You may be unsure of when or how to begin, and your student may dodge the conversation. Before you have the conversation about alcohol with your student, it is important for you to be aware of the risks and consequences associated with alcohol use. Research indicates that impaired judgment from alcohol can lead to risky behavior causing academic, legal, and personal problems\(^1\). We hope you join us in our efforts to educate our students about the risks of alcohol use so that they can be prepared to make responsible decisions. Being available to talk and listen is just as important. In fact, studies show that the more time students spent communicating with their parents on
the weekend, the less their children reported alcohol use in college\(^2\).

Below is a list of discussion topics to help you start the conversation about alcohol with your student. By having this conversation before your student arrives on campus, you help prepare them to make educated and responsible decisions.

1. **Set clear and realistic expectations regarding academic performance.**
   Drinking to excess may contribute as much to a student’s decline in grades as the difficulty of their academic work\(^1\). If students know their families expect strong academic work, they are more likely to be devoted to their studies and have less time to be irresponsible with alcohol.

2. **Stress to students that alcohol is toxic and excessive consumption can fatally poison.**
   Students die every year from alcohol poisoning. Discourage dangerous drinking, such as drinking quickly or playing drinking games. Make sure your student understands how alcohol affects the body and knows the signs of alcohol poisoning (listed at the end of this document).

3. **Empower your student to intervene when classmates are in trouble with alcohol.**
   Nothing is more tragic than an unconscious student being left to die while others fail to recognize that the student is in jeopardy or fail to call for help due to the fear of getting in trouble. Students often call their families in these situations seeking advice.

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“The more time students spent communicating with their parents, the less their children reported alcohol use in college...”
After learning the **signs of alcohol poisoning**, it is important to make sure your student knows to call 911 if anyone is exhibiting any of these signs.

4. **Tell students to stand up for their right to a safe academic environment.**

   Students who do not drink can be affected by the behavior of those who do. Students may encounter various adverse effects of their peers drinking, including interrupted study time, assault, or unwanted sexual advances.

   If there is concerning behavioral issue surrounding alcohol consumption, we encourage students to address the issue either by directly engaging in conversation with the person(s) involved (if it is safe to do so) or by reporting the behavior. If the situation is not safe or they are not able to resolve the issue through dialogue, then some options for assistance include: the University Police Department, Student Conflict Resolution Services, Student Counseling Services, Helpline, and Alcohol and Drug Education Programs. On campus students can notify appropriate Residence Life Staff members (Resident Advisor, Graduate Hall Director, Community
Director and/or Area Coordinator). If your student is not sure who to contact in a NON-EMERGENCY situation, a report can be submitted to [http://tellsomebody.tamu.edu/](http://tellsomebody.tamu.edu/).

5. **Know the alcohol scene on campus and talk to students about it.**
   Students grossly exaggerate the use of alcohol by their peers. Students are highly influenced by peers and tend to drink to what they perceive as the norm. Confronting misperceptions about alcohol use is vital.

6. **Avoid tales of drinking exploits from your own college years.**
   Telling drinking stories and reminiscing about “the good old days” appears to give parental approval of alcohol consumption. True Aggie Traditions do not incorporate alcohol.
   
   Student rituals that support drinking do not reflect the Texas A&M University Core Values: Excellence, Integrity, Leadership, Loyalty, Respect, and Selfless Service ([http://traditions.tamu.edu/traditions](http://traditions.tamu.edu/traditions)).

7. **Encourage your student to become involved in student organizations and/or volunteer in community work.**
   In addition to structuring free time, involvement provides students with opportunities to develop leadership and job-related skills and to gain valuable experiences.
Helping others also gives students a broader outlook and healthier perspective on the opportunities they enjoy. The Department of Student Activities, located in Koldus 125, can help students find organizations suited to fit their needs. ([http://studentactivities.tamu.edu](http://studentactivities.tamu.edu)).

8. Be clear – Underage alcohol consumption, drinking to excess, and driving after drinking are against the law and university policy.
You should make it clear that you do not condone breaking the law or university policy. Studies show that parental communication of their disapproval of alcohol use does work to deter dangerous drinking\(^2\). Openly and clearly express disapproval of underage drinking and dangerous alcohol consumption. For more information on Texas A&M Student Rules: [http://student-rules.tamu.edu](http://student-rules.tamu.edu).

* This list was created with the help of College Parents of America (CPA) which is the only national membership association dedicated to helping parents prepare and put their children through college easily, economically and safely\(^3\).
Symptoms of Alcohol Poisoning

- Person is passed out and cannot be awakened
- Difficulty standing or walking without assistance
- Skin, gums, or nail beds are bluish in color
- Low body temperature
- Skin is cold and/or clammy
- Person appears awake but is not responding to verbal or physical stimuli
- Vomiting while passed out/asleep and not waking up
- Slow or irregular breathing
- Mental confusion or incoherence
- Seizures

Alcohol poisoning is a medical emergency! Call for help if a person exhibits ANY of these signs.

Using an on campus phone: 9-911
Using an off-campus phone: 911

For more information, please visit the Alcohol and Drug Education Programs website at http://studentlife.tamu.edu/adep/.

Like us on Facebook at https://www.facebook.com/ADEP4Aggies.

Follow us on Twitter at http://twitter.com/ADEP4Aggies or @ADEP4Aggies.
Other Helpful Resources and Information

Offices of the Dean of Student Life  
http://studentlife.tamu.edu

Texas A&M Student Rules  
http://student-rules.tamu.edu

Residence Life Department  
http://reslife.tamu.edu

Student Counseling Service  
http://scs.tamu.edu  
Helpline 979-845-2700

Student Activities  
http://studentactivitites.tamu.edu

Student Health Services  
http://shs.tamu.edu

University Police Department  
http://upd.tamu.edu

References
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2. Investigating Associations Between Perceived Parental Alcohol-  
   Related Messages and College Student Drinking. Journal of  
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