

How to talk to your kids about alcohol

By Laura Jackson, LCSW, LICDC, Counselor and SUDS Supervisor

The most commonly reported age for trying alcohol is **13 years old**. We know teens are more likely to engage in risky behaviors due to their increasing need for independence. While asserting independence is a sign of good development, it may make teens want to defy their parents' wishes and be difficult to be around.

If you make your teen feel respected as an individual, you will increase the chances that your child will be open and honest with you.

Risk Factors

- Times of transition, such as the onset of puberty or a parents' divorce, can lead kids to alcohol or drug use.
- Kids who have problems with self-control, low self-esteem, depression or anxiety are more likely to abuse alcohol and/or drugs.
- Kids without a sense of connectedness to their friends and family, or who feel different in some way (appearance, economic circumstances, etc.)
- Family History of alcoholism or addiction.

Not wanting to harm the **relationships between themselves and the adults who care about them** is the most common reason that young people give for **not using** alcohol and other drugs.

What You CAN Do

- Be a good role model. Consider how your use of alcohol or medications may influence your kids.
- Talk to your kids about the risks involved with drinking. Encourage them to wait until after high school. Research shows that kids who wait until the age of 18 greatly decrease their chances of having a problem with alcohol, drugs, or nicotine.
- Teach your kids that even when life is upsetting or stressful, drinking as an escape can make a bad situation much worse.

- Try to be conscious of how you can help build your child's self-esteem. Kids are more likely to feel good about themselves if you emphasize their strengths and positively reinforce healthy behaviors.
- Teach kids to manage stress in healthy ways, such as by seeking help from a trusted adult or engaging in a favorite activity.

Recognizing the Signs

Despite your efforts, your child may still use—and abuse—alcohol and/or drugs. How can you tell? Here are some common warning signs:

- Sudden change in mood or attitude
- Change in attendance or performance at school
- Loss of interest in school, sports, or other activities
- Discipline problems at school
- Withdrawal from family and friends
- Secrecy
- Association with a new group of friends and reluctance to introduce them to you
- Alcohol disappearing from your home
- Depression and developmental difficulties

It's important not to jump to conclusions based on only one or two signs. Adolescence is a time of change—physically, socially, emotionally, and intellectually. This can lead to erratic behavior and mood swings as kids try to cope with all of these changes. If your child is using alcohol, there will usually be a cluster of these signs, like changes in friends, behavior, dress, attitude, mood, and grades. If you see a number of changes, look for all explanations by talking to your kids, but don't overlook substance use as a possibility. Get a second opinion from a professional, if necessary.

Group Education and Support

To register for any program contact Client Care at 859.581.8974 Monday–Friday 9am–5pm.

Family Wellness Classes

A lively, interactive curriculum that teaches parents the skills they need to raise their children successfully and builds on existing strengths. Each session teaches skills that can be used right away. This program is offered through Stronger Together, a partnership of the Northern Kentucky Community Action Commission and the Women's Crisis Center. No charge.

Parenting classes are ongoing starting every four weeks. Contact Client Care for the next available class.

NeighborWorks

Realizing the American Dream

Homebuyer Education Class

One Day Class from 9am to 5pm Can Help!

Saturday, December 3

Saturday, January 7

Learn how to buy a home! Certified housing counselors will walk you through the process, answer questions, and give you the information you need to realize the dream of homeownership. Registration required, but class is free! Class meets from 9am to 5pm. Lunch is provided.

Human Trafficking—Victim Advocacy

Free Training Sessions are available for ANYONE who is interested in learning more about local human trafficking, equipping professionals, community members, and students to identify and respond to human trafficking in their neighborhoods.

Concerned about potential victims? Want to schedule a training? Contact Lisa Ramstetter at Catholic Charities, 859.581.8974 or Lramstetter@archlou.org.

FREE SUPPORT GROUPS

Parents of Addicted Loved Ones (PAL)

PAL meets every Wednesday from 6:30-8:00pm at Catholic Charities, 3629 Church Street, Latonia, KY 41015. It provides education and support, at no charge, for parents. Contact Laura Jackson at 859.581.8974 or visit www.covingtoncharities.org.

Families of Incarcerated

Is someone you love separated from you and your family because he or she is incarcerated? You are welcome to attend our support group to listen and share stories, and to express needs. Resource people will be available to consult as the need arises. The group meets on the third Tuesday of the month at 7:00 p.m. at Catholic Charities. The group is free; no registration needed. For more information about our jail ministry program contact Maria Meyer at mmeyer@covingtoncharities.org or 859.581.8974.

Individual, Marriage and Family Counseling

Counseling addresses emotional and relationship issues which impair personal and social functioning, and includes work with individuals, couples and families. Catholic Charities accepts many different insurance companies. Call Client Care.

Parenting Talks and Workshops

A parenting educator is available to speak to your school or community group on a variety of topics. Call Anna Phillips at 859.581.8974.

Foreclosure/Mortgage Delinquency Counseling

Catholic Charities offers foreclosure counseling and mortgage delinquency counseling at no charge. Call for an appointment.



**Catholic
Charities**
Diocese of Covington

3629 Church Street, Covington, KY 41015
Phone 859.581.8974 | Fax 859.581.9595
www.covingtoncharities.org

