



DrugFree@WorkPlace

This edition of the *Employee Education Newsletter* contains information on keeping kids drug free.

Parents make up a large percentage of the American workforce. According to the Pew Research Center, two-parent households where both parents work full-time today make up 46% of the population, compared to 31% in 1970.

In 2017, 34.2 million families included children under the age of 18, about two-fifths of all families. (Children are sons, daughters, stepchildren, or adopted children living in the household who are under 18 years old. Not included are nieces, nephews, grandchildren, other related and unrelated children, and children not living in the household.) At least one parent was employed in 89.7% of families with children in 2017. Among married-couple families with children, 96.8% had at least one employed parent, and 61.1% had both parents employed.

Most parents work outside the home, and substance abusing children can cause considerable disruptions to their parents' work routine. Family problems impact the productivity of employees, and subsequently hurt a company's profitability. It is important for companies to provide information to their employees to help them keep their children drug free.

Communication: the Best Prevention

The most effective drug prevention tool available to parents is communication.

As children enter adolescence, parents must focus on knowing what the child is doing when away from home. Children should be required to check in regularly by cellphone or other means, and parents have to know who their child is with at all times. Getting to know the parents of your children's friends and using those contacts to help keep track of your teens' activities will help to verify that your children are where they say they will be.

Spending time with your kids and talking individually with each child helps to keep the lines of communication open. But be sure to listen more than you talk. Try to set aside together time where you can ask open-ended questions and try to understand your child's point of view.

When discussing substance abuse, kids need to hear from their parents that teen drug and alcohol use is not condoned in the family. They need to learn from parents about the consequences of substance use and abuse, and they need to be held accountable for their actions. Each parent has to find his or her own right way to deliver this message, and sometimes simply saying, "I don't want you to use drugs or alcohol or be in a situation where they are being used," is enough.

It is also important to help kids know what constitutes a risky situation so that they can avoid potential problems. Parents should help their teen understand that being places without "safe adults" in the vicinity, getting into a vehicle with someone who is impaired, going to a party, or being alone with a non-relative adult could lead to problem situations. Some parents provide their kids with a code word or phrase that can be used if the child finds him- or herself in a difficult situation and is in need of immediate transportation (like at a party or other gathering where drugs or alcohol are being used).

When communicating with your child about drug and alcohol use, certain boundaries must be clearly set. Knowing the limits of behavior ahead of time gives kids the "guardrails" they need to be successful in life. But rules are useless if they are not enforced and if there are no real consequences for breaking them.

A written parent/child contract that spells out the consequences of violating family rules can be helpful in clarifying to teens what is expected of them, and what will happen if they break the agreement. The contract should list the specific penalty

for different behavior infractions. Some examples of consequences might include:

- Restricted cellphone, television game system, and internet use.
- Restricted access to friends.
- Loss of driving privileges.
- Additional chores.
- Performance of community service.
- Writing an essay on the dangers of drug or alcohol use.

Getting Help

Prevention is of course the best cure, but if you find that your child is already engaged in substance abuse, it is time to seek professional help. There are experts available who can help facilitate communication and determine the best next step for your teen. Check with your health insurance provider or the company Employee Assistance Program (EAP) for information on how to access this assistance.

Other sources of help include school counselors, family doctors or pediatricians, faith leaders, community health centers, adolescent prevention and treatment professionals, local anti-drug coalitions, law enforcement agencies, and community resource officers.

But the best time to find help for a drug abusing child is before the need arises. Be proactive in identifying key resources in your community before the crisis occurs. Community prevention coalitions often have many. Most communities have referral services for a variety of

health and human services, including the county health department, 2-1-1 referral system via telephone or internet (not in every community), hospital referral, free clinic, etc. Your physician or clergy can be great sources of information but are also good resources for referral.

It is important to know that there are many websites available, but not all websites provide factual information. Websites provided through U.S. government agencies are well-researched and always provide the most current information. Here are a few trusted resources:

- Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA): <http://www.samhsa.gov/>.
- National Institute on Drug Abuse (NIDA): <http://www.nida.nih.gov/>.
- NIDA for Teens—The Science Behind Drug Abuse: <http://www.teens.drugabuse.gov/>.
- National Institute on Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism (NIAAA): <http://www.niaaa.nih.gov/>.
- Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA): <http://www.usdoj.gov/dea/index.htm>.
- Partnership for Drug Free Kids: <http://www.drugfree.org>.
- Teens—Above the Influence: <http://www.abovetheinfluence.com/>.
- Just Think Twice—You’ve Heard the Fiction. Now Learn the Facts: <http://www.justthinktwice.com>.

To help us combat substance abuse, go to www.LiveDrugFree.org and click on “Donate!”