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How To Talk to Your Kids about Alcohol & Drugs

Contributed by Diana Williams

You may have seen the new slogan recently being advertised: "PARENTS. The Anti-Drug." This is very true. Research has shown that parents who are closely involved with their children's lives on a daily basis, and who start communicating with them at a relatively young age (9-12) about tough topics, including drugs, alcohol and tobacco, often steer them away from substance abuse and related problems. In 2001, the National Youth Anti-Drug Media Campaign found that teens who learn anti-drug messages at home are 42% less likely to use drugs.

In order to prevent your child from using drugs, experts recommend creating an environment that combines talking with action. Here are some tips from the National Institute on Drug Abuse:

- Be a good listener
- Give clear no-use messages about drugs and alcohol
- Help your child deal with peer pressure to use drugs
- Get to know your child's friends and parents
- Monitor your child's whereabouts
- Supervise teen activities
- Maintain an open and honest dialogue with your child

You might feel uncomfortable talking to your kids about drugs, especially at first. This is normal, and you're probably still doing a good job even if you feel uncomfortable. Some parents find it helpful to talk to their kids when taking a walk together, or going out to eat. If your child seems resistant to talking about drugs, it may help to talk about drugs in the third person (i.e. movies, people you know) and/or discussing possible situations.

Keeping your child involved in healthy activities after school hours is also important. It has been proven that most kids get into trouble with drugs between 3-6 pm, so if you can't be home during these times, encourage your kids to become involved in sports, clubs, jobs, after-school programs, community or religious youth groups.

As hard as it is to accept, drugs and alcohol are widely prevalent in today's society. Unfortunately, many adolescents have easy access to these substances, and when used, their developing bodies react more negatively than adults. The major causes of substance abuse seem to be related to stress, isolation, boredom, emotional pain, and lack of positive role models. We believe that providing young people with clear, accurate information about drugs and alcohol, along with helping them to develop healthy social skills, can help them to deal with their problems in positive ways.

Not only does SAISD (Substance and Alcohol Intervention Services for the Deaf) provide intervention and counseling services for deaf and hard of hearing individuals and their families who may have a concern about drugs, alcohol or tobacco, we also provide information and prevention education to deaf and hard of hearing children, adolescents and their families. If you would like more information on how to talk to your kids about drugs, or if you would like to request a presentation on any of the above mentioned topics, feel free to call, write or visit us at: SAISD, Rochester Institute of Technology, 115 Lomb Memorial Drive, Rochester, NY 14623. (585) 475-4978 v/tty. You may also visit our website at: www.rit.edu/sa/coun/saisd. All our services are free and confidential. We look forward to hearing from you!