

Talk Early, Talk Often: Parents Can Make a Difference in Teen Alcohol Use

April is Alcohol Awareness Month and the Mental Health and Recovery Board serving Belmont, Harrison and Monroe Counties wants parents to know that progress is being made in the struggle to address underage drinking in our community. Each April since 1987, the National Council on Alcoholism and Drug Dependence, Inc. (NCADD) has sponsored Alcohol Awareness Month to increase public awareness and understanding, reduce stigma and encourage local communities to focus on alcoholism and alcohol-related issues. With this year's theme, "Talk Early, Talk Often: Parents Can Make a Difference in Teen Alcohol Use," research shows that kids who learn about the dangers of underage drinking from their parents are up to 50% less likely to experiment than kids who don't. As a parent you can be a primary source of positive and reliable information and it is important to take advantage of "teachable moments." It's not so much about "the big talk," but about being there for them when the issues come up -- on TV, at the movies, on the radio, about celebrities or sports figures, or about their friends.

The need to provide meaningful education on the dangers of underage drinking and drug use here in our community has never been greater. The importance of parents knowing they can play a significant role cannot be stressed enough. As kids get older and alcohol and drugs enter the picture, parents are faced with a unique set of challenges. Don't miss your opportunity to teach your kids. It is important to know that parents play a significant role in preventing and reducing the incidence of underage alcohol and drug use. Fostering healthy and responsible attitudes, talking openly and honestly, encouraging supportive relationships, and showing children that their opinions and decisions matter, are all ways to help prevent the use of alcohol and drugs. It can make a tremendous difference in our community as we reach out to those who are most vulnerable and help our next generation avoid the many problems that underage alcohol and drug use can bring.

To learn more about underage drinking in Belmont, Harrison and Monroe counties, call Crossroads Counseling Services at (740) 695-9447. So, *Talk Early and Talk Often* with your kids about alcohol use - it's worth it. Many kids drink alone because they are bored or depressed. This puts them at greater risk for developing alcohol-related problems later in life. Crossroads Counseling Services is an organization that specializes in the treatment of substance abuse and related disorders. It works closely with other agencies and programs throughout the region as needed. The Central Office number is (740) 695-9447.