

Parents as Partners

College is an important time of transition for students and their parents. Many students are setting forth on their own for the first time, experiencing new freedom, responsibility and control over their own lives. But even though your student is now on their own, you continue to play an important and positive role in their life.

Many first-year students have yet to develop personal values or limits regarding alcohol use. We spend much time on this issue with your student during Orientation, in classes, and through residence hall programming.

The availability of alcohol and its excessive use are issues that college campuses struggle with every day. Paul Smith's College is deeply concerned about the consequences of high-risk drinking, not only for the drinker but also for friends, roommates and classmates. Research shows these consequences can include disrupted sleep or studies, unplanned and unprotected sexual contact, sexual or physical violence, vandalism or nights that end in an emergency room.

You can be an essential partner in our efforts to address this issue. Conversations about alcohol use can have a lasting effect. We encourage you to talk openly and honestly about alcohol with your student. Research shows that discussing values and boundaries in a calm, rational way will help students remember those tenets when they are under stress or frightened.

It is illegal to drink alcohol under the age of 21. It is also a felony to possess a false ID. We expect our students to be law-abiding citizens. Please help us by reinforcing our expectations about alcohol and other drug use.

Ideas to discuss with your son or daughter are listed below. The U.S. Department of Education's Higher Education Center for Alcohol and Other Drug Abuse and Violence Prevention can be a powerful resource as you work with us to reduce the consequences of high-risk drinking.

- Be aware your child really could be making unwise decisions about alcohol. We know from experience parents are often surprised to learn that their son or daughter has gotten into trouble because of excessive drinking. We also know that this does not mean you are an ineffective or uncaring parent. This period of transition to adulthood and independence presents difficult new choices to students, and they do not always make good decisions.

- Today's students do not drink for the same reasons that students drank 25 years ago. Today twice as many students drink with the intention of getting drunk, compared with 1980.
- Be a role model. It is important for students to see adults they respect enjoying themselves at alcohol-free events, and drinking sensibly when alcohol is present.
- Express your expectations and values clearly and directly. Rather than telling your student you hope he or she makes smart choices, be specific. If you do not want your student to consume alcohol as an underage adult, say so. Also, talk specifically about your values regarding illegal drugs.
- Explain that while you continue to care about your child's welfare, you are no longer in a position to protect against potentially harmful consequences of personal choices. Excessive drinking presents serious health risks, both from the chemical effects of alcohol and the accidental harm that can come to students when they are intoxicated. Underage drinking is against the law in New York State and can carry significant legal, academic and financial consequences. Help your child understand the magnitude of these risks.
- Talk about the importance of friendship and individuality. Remember that young adults truly want to be accepted by their peers and be perceived as "normal." Have a frank discussion about what it means to live with integrity according to one's values. Talk about the true meaning of friendship, and share an example of a time when you have confronted a close friend about their unhealthy problematic behavior.
- Set clear and realistic expectations regarding academic performance. When students do not succeed, alcohol is often a major factor. Students may be less likely to abuse alcohol if they are aware of their parents' expectations of academic performance. Others may turn to intense partying as a response to the stress caused by the pressure to excel. A balanced set of academic goals that is reasonable for your student may help them maintain a healthy campus life.
- Encourage your student to explore all the social options on campus. Plenty of campus activities do not include alcohol, including recreational sports, student government, any of our clubs. By exploring these options, students may meet others who share interests that don't involve drinking.
- Listen to your student. Know that there are many resources for your son or daughter at Paul Smith's College. Help for any concern is just a phone call away.

Health Related Links for Parents

Transitioning to College

[Parenting a Freshman](#)

[Guide to Families Transitioning to College](#)

Substances:

Beer, Booze, Books -

<http://www.beerboozebooks.com/parents.htm#talkingalcohol>

“Parents, You’re Not Done Yet” brochure

<http://www.centurycouncil.org/stop-underage-drinking/initiatives/parentsyourenotdoneyet>

Facts on Tap. Check out the “**What’s New?**” section of their site at

<http://www.factsontap.org>

<http://www.whitehousedrugpolicy.gov/NEWS/press06/031406.html>

Crisis Intervention and Stress Management:

<http://www.mentalhealth.samhsa.gov/cmhs/managinganxiety/tips.asp>