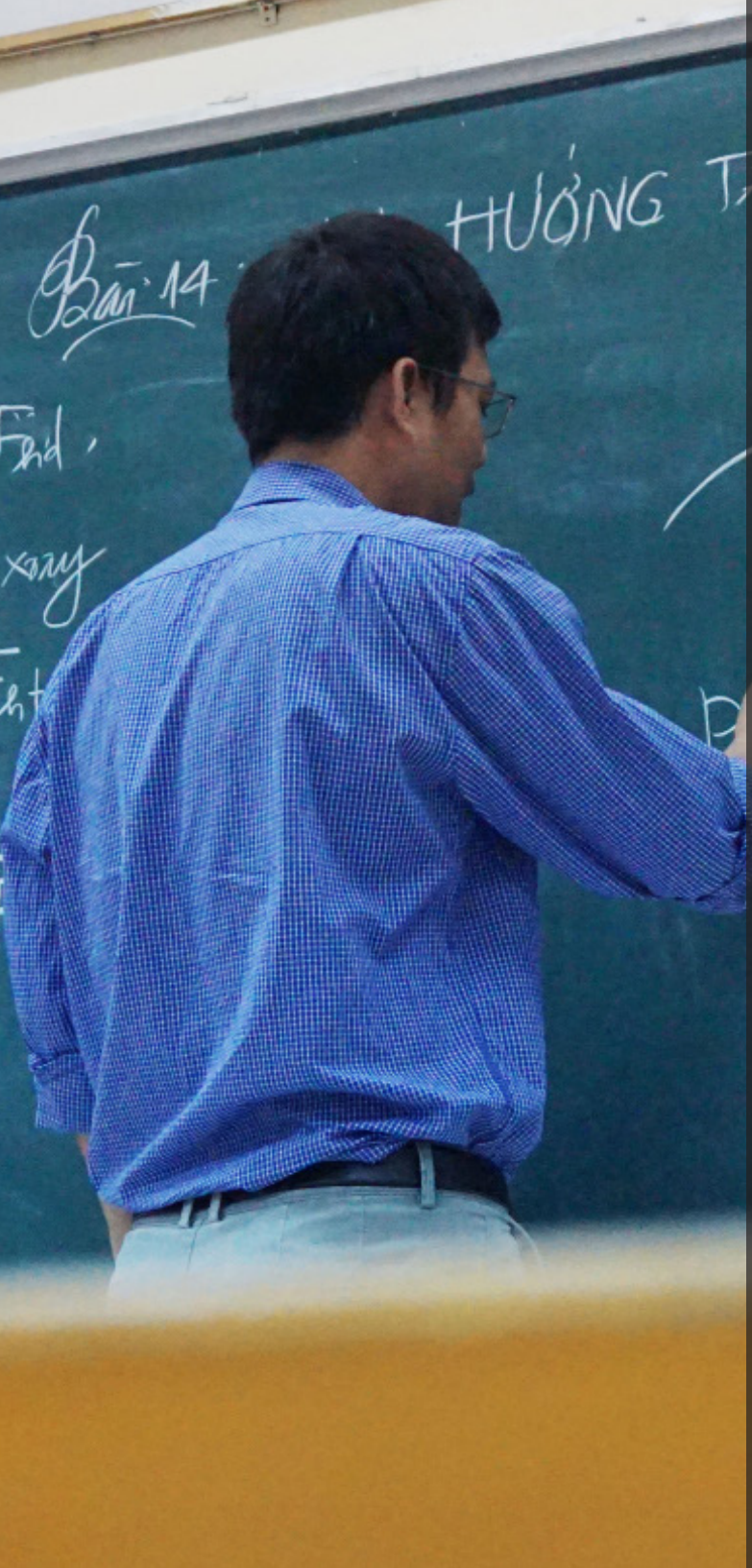
School Toolkit

Know More. Do More.

Preventing Substance Misuse in Teens



The first step is to become informed. We hope this resource is a helpful start.

Every community has a problem of kids misusing alcohol and other drugs. Yet, not every community has the resources they need to help address the issue or know quite where to start. Important to primary and secondary education is making sure our kids are healthy emotionally and physically so that they can learn, achieve and become healthy, happy adults. Beyond providing an education to children, our role as teachers and school administrators is to support children when they're in our hands.

NOTES

Know what's happening in your community.

- **Highlight the positive.** Approach your alcohol and drug prevention program with a positive mindset — one that's focused on keeping kids safe and healthy by making sure they and their parents understand the risks and often life-altering consequences of alcohol and drug misuse in kids ages 12 to 25.

Tool: SMART Handout

- **Partner with others.** Keeping kids safe from alcohol and drugs can't be left only to parents and schools. Build a program that involves the entire community by pulling in faith leaders, civic and business leaders, and law enforcement. If a program already exists, get involved.
- **Partner with your local police and schools to understand the data in your community and gain some perspective.**
  Denial that a child or community has a drug or alcohol problem can be as potent as the substance itself. To engage parents, as well as community, faith and business leaders, find and make available data for your community (see list below).

Check out:

- Local police records, including arrests for under-age use, under-age DUI, drug paraphernalia, disturbing the peace, public intoxication, petty thefts, etc. (Ask police if they keep statistics for age groups 18 and under or 24 and under.)
- EMS records
- Diversion programs, i.e., how many kids in your community are in this program, how many are related to substance issues, etc.
- Suspensions and code violations related to substance abuse
- Self-reported information
- School staff surveys
- County statistics
- OHYES! Survey
- Educational Records Bureau

NOTES

Build your team

- **Identify someone to serve as Drug Prevention Specialist or Coordinator.** If your school district does not have someone officially serving in the role of drug prevention specialist or coordinator, recruit someone who understands and is passionate about the issue of drug misuse and abuse to take on the role. This typically is a school nurse, guidance counselor or coach, but it could also be a teacher or administrator who has experience with this issue and is willing and able to play an active role.
- **Build a Drug Prevention Team in your school.** Many people are vested in the education of students, especially when a health issue like drugs or alcohol affects their ability to learn. Led by the individual serving as Drug Prevention Specialist or Coordinator, an effective drug prevention team breaks down into four sub-teams:

Student and family	Academic	Athletic	Medical
	teacher, guidance counselor, school administrator and/ or psychologist	coach, athletic director, physical education teacher	nurse, doctor, athletic trainer

Tool: Drug Prevention Team Roles and Responsibilities

- **Have a game plan**. Now that you've identified a team, you must create a clearly defined process and line of communication so that every team member effectively and successfully fulfills their roles and expectations and plays an active role.

Tool: Drug Prevention Game Plan

NOTES

Educate staff and students

- **Educate your staff.** Create a culture that encourages and enables teachers, guidance counselors, school nurses and administrators to play an active role in keeping kids safe from substance misuse.
  - Dedicate time during in-service days for drug and alcohol prevention education, including how to identify students who are at risk and the rules to follow for those who are suspected or discovered using substances on school premises.
- **Build alcohol and drug education into your health curriculum**. Ohio now requires that all schools implement a health curriculum that includes instruction on the dangers of prescription opioid misuse and abuse. Called the Health & Opioid Abuse Prevention Education (HOPE) Curriculum Project, the goal of HOPE is to:
  - Design a K-12 opioid abuse prevention curriculum to develop the knowledge, skills, behaviors and attitudes to prevent opioid and prescription drug misuse
  - Provide professional development for teachers (health educators, elementary classroom teachers) administrators (principals and curriculum directors) and other school health partners throughout Ohio
  - Implement and evaluate the impact of the HOPE curriculum and opioid abuse crisis on students, teachers, schools and communities
  - Evaluate the extent to which HOPE increases the students' knowledge and expected behaviors (i.e., learning targets)

  To learn more and start creating your school's Health & Opioid Abuse Prevention Education (HOPE) Curriculum Project, visit education.ohio.gov/Topics/Learning-in-Ohio/Health-Education/Opioid-Abuse-Prevention
- **Enlist your athletic department to educate and support athletes who have been prescribed painkillers and their parents.** Keep students safe while they're recovering by monitoring their pain and medicine use and emphasizing non-addictive therapies like Tylenol® and ice.

Tool: Athletes and Prescription Medications Toolkit

NOTES

Communicate with parents

- **Talk with parents** when you notice a change in behavior and suspect drugs or alcohol may be the culprit. A teacher or administrator may notice a student's grades suddenly dropping or that he or she is sleeping in class or arriving late or hanging out with a different group of kids. These can all be signs of drug or alcohol misuse. DON'T ASSUME they have a problem, but call parents to share with them the behaviors you're seeing.
- We know this isn't an easy conversation. There are ways teachers can talk with parents about what they've seen and encourage or solicit input from parents. Here is a script you can use that school districts have found successful when talking with parents.
- **Keep the conversation going — five to six minutes is all you need.** Look for times during the school year and even during the summer where parents or parents and their kids come together, and use these events to briefly talk with them about the risks of drinking and drug misuse.
- **Turn key milestones in a child's school journey into an opportunity.** Elementary school to middle school, middle school to high school, high school to college — are when the risks are most high. Use these milestones as an opportunity to reinforce the message that drugs and alcohol aren't worth the risk.
- **Seek out information.** We've compiled a list of websites of institutes and organizations that are authorities on the issue of substance misuse and abuse. We encourage you to visit these websites to learn more about teens and substance misuse and abuse and develop additional tools to raise awareness among your students, parents and the community.

Tool: Substance Abuse Resources

NOTES

Establish policies

Establish policies and protocols for when you suspect or know someone is misusing alcohol or other drugs. Ohio school districts have similar yet varied protocols for when a teen or child is suspected of or known to be misusing alcohol or other drugs. If the teen or child is drinking or misusing drugs on school property, it becomes an administrative issue. Your priority is to make sure the child is safe and to establish a support system.

- **Educate — don't just penalize.** Typically, children are suspended for 10 days; consider offering them reduced suspension (3 to 5 days) if they and their parents agree to participate in an education program or series about the risks of drugs and alcohol.
- **The most effective drug education programs** are based on evidence-based strategies and practices that involve students with their parents or guardians. You can design your own, working with drug and alcohol misuse experts and resources. Seek out resources in your community to create an evidence-based educational program, such as:

  - Substance Abuse and Lifestyle Education workshops available through the Educational Service Center of Central Ohio. Visit escco.org for more information.
  - The National Institute on Drug Abuse provides information for teens, teachers and parents. Visit https://teens.drugabuse.gov/ for a wealth of resources.
- **Don't wait until there's a problem to educate.** You can host workshops for parents and their children throughout the year.
- **Realize that all kids are at risk.** While all kids are at risk for alcohol or other drug misuse, their reasons vary — from athletes and academic over-achievers to academic underachievers and kids who have emotional programs and/or are isolated.
- **Set additional expectations for athletes and club members:** Reinforce to students who are athletes or participate in club sports that participation is a privilege and an honor; with this privilege comes higher expectations. Some schools drug test student athletes up to three times a season. If drugs or alcohol are found in their system, they will lose their eligibility for a portion of the season or forfeit their eligibility to be captain. These disciplinary actions can be waived if the student and parents participate in drug prevention workshops.
- **Revisit your school district's policy and protocols for when a child is in crisis.**

RESOURCES
(Counselors, Psychiatrists, Testing Labs, Advocates)

This information was made possible by the Dublin ACT Coalition in partnership with Nationwide Children's Hospital.

Offer reinforcement when a higher level of care is needed.

- **When you have a student who requires a higher level of care.**
  Encourage parents to seek out a licensed outside counseling center and/or a psychiatrist to provide a full assessment and recommend a treatment plan for their child — preferably one that involves the entire family.

Franklin County Psychiatric Crisis Line

for kids ages 17 and under (614) 722.1800

for kids 18 and older (614) 276.CARE (2273) or (888) 276.CARE

HandsOn Central Ohio 2-1-1

Connecting residents in Franklin county with comprehensive and up-to-date information about social, health and government services

(614) 221-6766 www.211centralohio.org

SAMHSA Behavioral Health Treatment Sources

1-800-662-HELP www.samhsa.gov/find-help

Mild concern: NIDA recommends starting with the child's primary care doctor.

Moderate concern: Connect with the child's primary care doctor, a local behavioral health agency or Employee Assistance Program (EAP)

Drug crisis: If the child is under the influence, call 911.

SEEK PROFESSIONAL HELP IMMEDIATELY IF a child shows violent behavior, or threatens or attempts suicide.