




*Talking to  
your **Student**  
about **Alcohol***

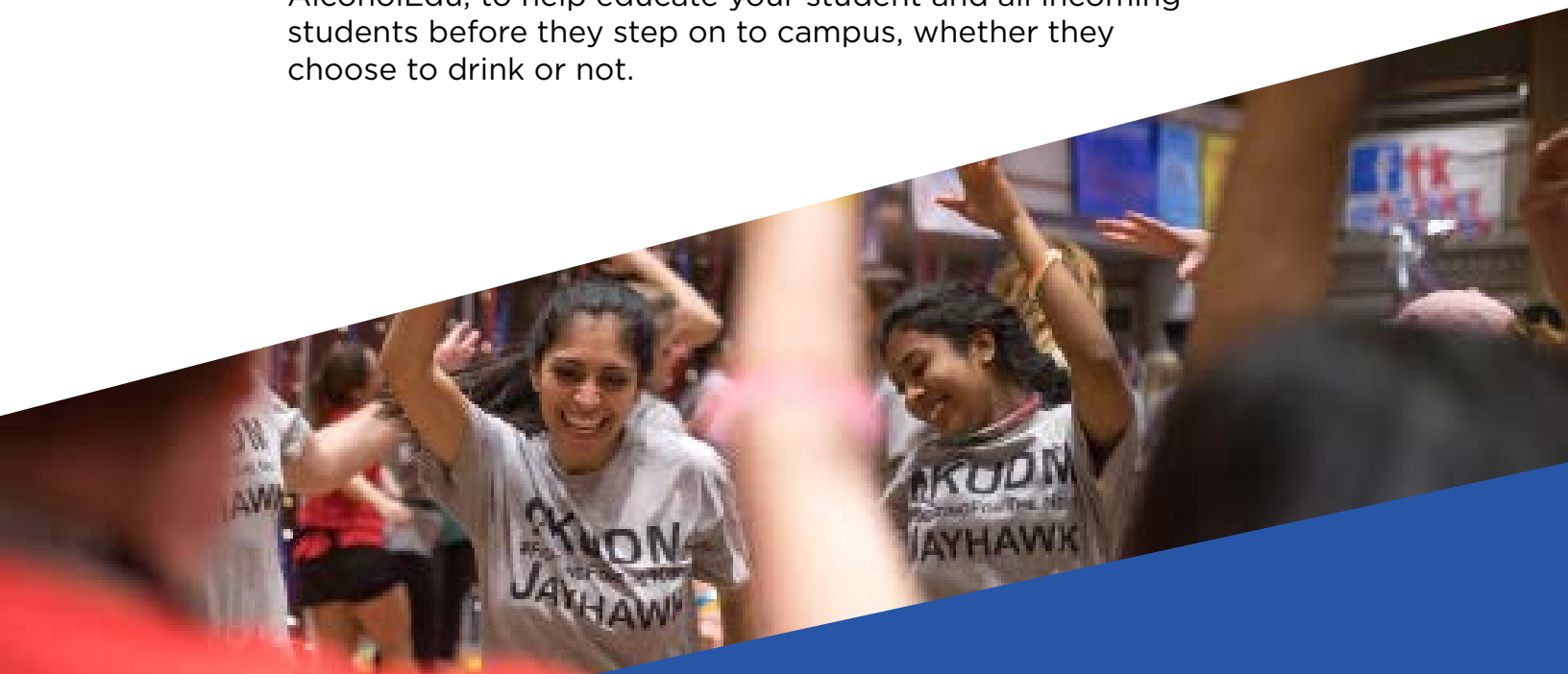


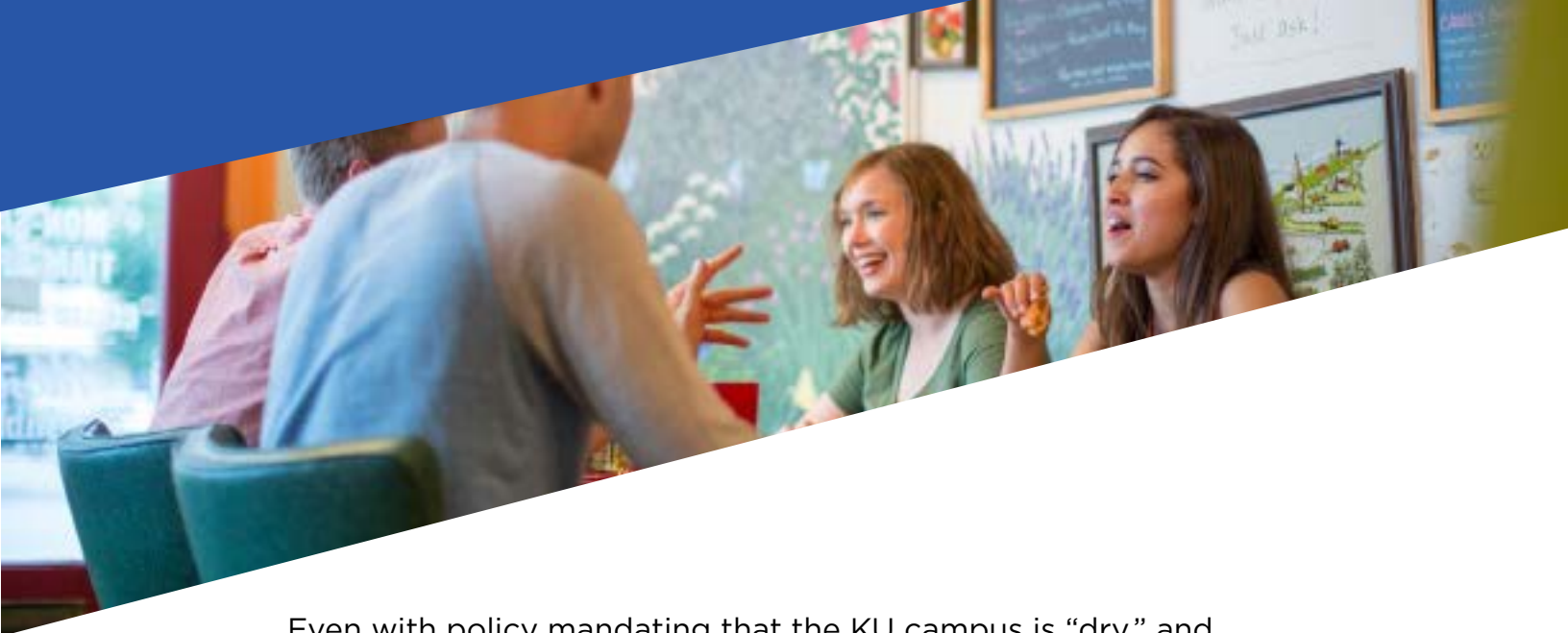


Once students have graduated from high school, going to college is a new and exciting time to explore their new found freedom. Those freedoms include making choices like where to go to school, what classes to enroll in, what activities to get involved in and more. Another important choice students make early on in their college years is if they will drink alcohol or not.

The reality is that most high school students have already tried alcohol. In fact, research shows that more than 90% of teens try alcohol outside the home before they graduate from high school (Pennsylvania State University, 2013). Research has also shown that parents who talk to their student about alcohol just prior to starting college leads to lower alcohol consumption during the first year and lowers the risk they will experience serious alcohol-related consequences (Pennsylvania State University, 2013).

Many students entering college from high school only know minimal information about alcohol usage and what it does to the body. This can cause serious concern when engaging in high risk drinking behaviors because students are unaware of the dangers. Here at KU, we have a mandated online education tool, AlcoholEdu, to help educate your student and all incoming students before they step on to campus, whether they choose to drink or not.





Even with policy mandating that the KU campus is “dry,” and the reality that alcohol use is not legal for those under the age of 21, we are not naïve to the fact that underage drinking occurs, and occurs often. According to the spring 2017 National College Health Assessment Executive Summary, 69% of college students reported drinking alcohol in the past 30 days (ACHA, 2017). When we look specifically at students at the University of Kansas, that statistic remains the same (ACHA, 2017).

Although discussing alcohol with your student may seem like a daunting task, the benefits will likely keep your student safer by being aware of the negative effects of overconsuming. Below are some questions that may help you facilitate the conversation with your student:

- Do you plan on drinking alcohol while you’re at school?
- What will determine how much you drink?
- Do you think drinking alcohol will play in a role in your college experience?
- What do you plan to do if you find yourself or someone you are friends with seriously sick from drinking too much alcohol?
- What would you do if you drink too much and cannot drive yourself back home?



**Below are some tips that have been shown to make a difference in how students respond:**

### **Listen**

Permit the person to speak without interruption. Listen to what they say. Sometimes, it is good to paraphrase. “Let me see if I understand you. It sounds like you feel that...” With paraphrasing, you don’t agree or disagree, you interpret.

### **Verbalize respect**

Whenever you can and it is appropriate to do so, convey respect to the other individual (e.g., “I admire what you have done and how you are coping”). People want to be respected and will be more willing to talk to those who respect them. Tell your student you are proud of them for being able to handle these tough situations.

### **Choose a good time**

Choose an optimal time to bring up and discuss problems. Don’t do it when the other person is rushed or has a commitment elsewhere. Wait until you both can have a relaxed, calm discussion. Perhaps you could take your student to lunch or out for some ice cream where you could both sit down to talk and listen to one another.

### **Communicate directly**

Don’t talk about important things while absorbed in another activity, such as reading the newspaper, watching television or doing the dishes.

### **Try to appeal to common goals**

Students need to be reminded that you are on their side. Whenever possible, common goals should be emphasized and should serve as the basis for your guidance and recommendations (e.g., you both want them to be healthy and safe).

### **Avoid communication “stoppers”**

There are single statements that will close anyone down (e.g., “Anyone who drives drunk is crazy;” “No one in this family would ever consider doing that”).

### **Conflict is natural**

Realize that conflict is natural. We are not identical to one another. We all have different beliefs and values, therefore disagreement is a natural thing. We should use conflict as an opportunity for growth and for learning about each other rather than treating it as a negative experience.

### **Agree to disengage**

Agree to temporarily stop if things don’t go well. Wait until both individuals can talk in a calm, direct fashion.

### **Use appropriate body language**


How you position yourself as you talk can send important messages about your attitudes or possibly convey something you are not trying to convey.

### **Avoid debate mode**

Sometimes conversations become structured so that people feel they must “defend” their position. The entire conversation turns into a mini debate. If you sense the conversation has turned into a debate, try suggesting that you both approach matters from a different angle. Also avoid statements that begin with “you” (“You did this...”). They often make the other person feel attacked (Pennsylvania State University, 2013).







For more information about the University of Kansas resources and policies on alcohol, please review the following:

- [\*\*Alcohol and KU\*\*](#)
- [\*\*Alcohol & Drug Policy, University of Kansas\*\*](#)
- [\*\*Amnesty Policy, University of Kansas\*\*](#)
- [\*\*Mandatory Alcohol Education\*\*](#)
- [\*\*Jayhawk Buddy System\*\*](#)

*References:*

American College Health Association. American College Health Association-National College Health Assessment II: Reference Group Executive Summary Spring 2017. Hanover, MD: American College Health Association; 2017.

College Drinking Prevention. (2010, July 1). What Parents Need to Know About College Drinking. National Institute of Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism. Retrieved January 7, 2016 from <http://www.collegedrink-prevention.gov/NIAAACollegeMaterials/parentBrochure.aspx>

Pennsylvania State University. (2013, March 19). Pre-college talk between parents and teens likely to lessen college drinking. ScienceDaily. Retrieved January 7, 2016 from [www.sciencedaily.com/releases/2013/03/130319124306.htm](http://www.sciencedaily.com/releases/2013/03/130319124306.htm)

Turrisi, R., Jaccard, J., Taki, R., Dunnam, H., & Grimes, J. (2001). Examination of the short-term efficacy of a parent intervention to reduce college student drinking tendencies. *Psychology of Addictive Behaviors: Special Issue on Understanding Binge Drinking*, 15(4), 366-372.