

TALKING WITH YOUR STUDENT ABOUT ALCOHOL & CANNABIS



University
of Rochester
Student Life

HEALTH PROMOTION



PARENTS & FAMILIES

Talking about alcohol and other drugs with your student may feel uncomfortable at first, but it's important that these conversations are being had. Many college bound students are coming to school with established drinking habits and have already tried cannabis. Parents and families play a vital role in helping college students make intentional and safer decisions by providing information, setting expectations, asking questions, and listening to what they have to say. Below are helpful steps to follow that will assist you when talking to your college student about alcohol and cannabis.

STEP 1: GATHER INFORMATION

As you start to think about having these conversations with your student it is important to know: alcohol & cannabis facts, your expectations of your student, and University of Rochester alcohol and other drugs (AOD) policies.

Alcohol & Cannabis Facts

- Most people can process about one standard drink an hour, but many factors—including weight, rate of consumption, and chromosomal sex— contribute to an individual's blood alcohol concentration (or BAC). Time is the only thing that will sober up an intoxicated person.

- Alcohol negatively effects motivation and can impact academic success.
- It's important to note that not everyone drinks in college. According to our 2024 ACHA (American College Health Association) NCHA (National College Health Assessment) data, over 25% of our students reported never drinking alcohol.
- Cannabis is made up of hundreds of cannabinoids, the two main ones to note are CBD and THC. THC is the psychoactive part of the plant whose potency has increased greatly over the last 10 years.
- Contrary to popular belief cannabis is addictive. Cannabis Use Disorder (CUD) is defined in the DSM-5 by many characteristics including; cravings, negative impact on social and professional life, increased tolerance, and continued use despite harms.
- Cannabis can have a negative impact on academics and mental health. Worsening existing mental health disorders and/or changing mental health status.

Expectations

- Let your student know your stance on underage drinking & cannabis use. You are allowed to disapprove of substance use, but students who fear punishment or expect a lecture are less likely to listen.
- Set clear and realistic expectations around your students substance use and the consequences that may come from use.
- Explain the reasons behind your expectations and encourage your student to talk about any concerns. It's important to be open-minded while having these conversations.

University of Rochester AOD Policies

- Although cannabis is legal for adult consumption (21+) in New York State, to be in accordance with the Drug Free Schools and Communities Act, a federal act, cannabis and paraphernalia are not allowed on campus.
- All first year residences are alcohol free regardless of age (this include memorabilia and paraphernalia). Only upper-class residence may have alcohol if the person is over the age of 21.

- Medical Amnesty is provided to student who actively seek out medical attention for themselves or others who are experiencing harms related to alcohol or drugs, including cannabis.

For more information on all our policies please use the link to below to read our Student Code of Conduct.

University of Rochester Student Code of Conduct

STEP 2: PLAN YOUR CONVERSATION

You know why it's important to have these conversations with your student and you've learned some basic facts. Now it is time to plan the what, where, when and why.

What do you want to address and what do you want your student to take away from this conversation?

There is no one way to talk to your student about alcohol and cannabis. However, there is evidence to suggest that some conversations are more effective than others.

Here are some suggestions on what to address:

1. Remind your student that you are on their side and emphasize any common goals; for example, you both want to keep your student safe, happy, and healthy while at college.
2. Make sure your student understands the possible health and academic risks that come from drinking and using cannabis. Students should also know what to do in an alcohol or other drug emergency.
3. Make sure your student knows and understands the University of Rochester's alcohol and other drug (AOD) policies, and that students who call for help in an AOD emergency are protected from judicial consequences (see Medical Amnesty).
4. Explore the reasons why some students choose to drink or use cannabis. Focus on the underlying motivations; for example, a desire to connect differently with their peers.
5. Explore the reasons why some students choose NOT to drink or use cannabis, and make a plan for how to say no.

6. Discuss with your student how you can best support them as they navigate alcohol and cannabis at college.

Where & When do you want the conversation to take place?

Find a place that is comfortable for you and your student, out to dinner, a café, in the car or in your home. Avoid somewhere too public where you and your student can't speak freely.

Find a time that you and your student can dedicate to spending that time with each other. Make sure neither of you are in a rush, so the conversation can have as much or as little time dedicated to it as needed.

Why is it important to have this conversation with your student?

You know why it's important to have this conversation, let your student know why as well. Ask your student why talking about this is important to them to help you understand their perspective. Remind them you're on their team and want them to be healthy and safe while here at URochester.

STEP 3: HAVE THE CONVERSATION & KEEP IT GOING

Beginning can be the hardest part. Here are some suggestions on how to get started. Get comfortable with the topic, if you're uncomfortable your student will likely be uncomfortable as well.

"You're going to be heading to college soon and I want to have an open and honest conversation about alcohol and cannabis."

"College is a time of new experiences, and that may include more exposure to alcohol and cannabis. I am here to listen, not lecture. I want to understand your thoughts and feelings around the subject."

It may not be possible to cover all the areas you want to talk about with your student in one conversation. It's important that these conversations about alcohol and other drugs are a regular activity. Some times that are associated with more high-risk drinking are; birthdays, academic breaks, holidays (especially Halloween and St. Patrick's Day), and warmer weather.

Communicate with your student frequently to keep the lines of communication open. What you say or do not say about alcohol can have a big impact.

NARCAN & CAMPUS

An opioid epidemic is being experienced across the United States. While recorded instances of opioid overdoses are not at a high at the University of Rochester, data shows that students are using illicit substances. Our students' safety is our first priority and part of safety is harm reduction. Harm reduction is using education, policies and practices to help reduce the harms that may happen from substance use. Having life saving medication available across campus is one of the harm reduction strategies we use.

There are seven Narcan Box locations across Eastman and River Campuses, as well as, over 200 AED boxes with Narcan in them across all seven campuses.

Here are all the locations of the Narcan boxes:

- UHS Vestibule
- Goergen Athletic Center: First floor next to the elevator.
- Wilson Commons: Second floor Vestibule next to the Campus Information Center
- River Campus Library Tunnels: Next to the vending machines
- Eastman SLC: First next to AED box near main entrance
- Eastman, Lowry Hall: First floor near the entrance

A map of all the AED machines on campus is [here](#).

STUDENT SUPPORT

This is an important time for your student to grow and be independent. And because of the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) there are limited times when the University is permitted to contact a student's parent(s), guardian(s), emergency contact(s), or others about their education records and disciplinary files. At the same time, the University believes that there may be situations when a student could benefit from extra support and resources, including the support of their parent(s), guardian(s), emergency contact(s).

Therefore if a student is documented multiple times for an alcohol and other drugs related incident within a short period of time, and our team believes that they would benefit from additional supports, and resources, the University may contact you, as the student's parent(s), guardian(s), emergency contact(s) so that we all can best support the student.

IF YOUR STUDENT NEEDS SUPPORT ON CAMPUS

The University of Rochester community offers a variety of different supports for students around alcohol and other drugs.

If you are concerned about your student you can:

- Have a conversation using tips from this guide
- Reach out to Health Promotion
- Connect with University Counseling Center
- Submit a CARE Referral

MORE PARENT & FAMILY RESOURCES:

- HOW TO TALK ABOUT CANNABIS - COLLEGE PARENTS MATTER
- A PARENT HANDBOOK FOR TALKING WITH COLLEGE STUDENTS ABOUT ALCOHOL - PENNSYLVANIA STATE UNIVERSITY
- PARENTS AND KINSHIP CAREGIVERS- OFFICE OF ADDICTION SERVICES AND SUPPORTS
- TALKING WITH YOUR COLLEGE BOUND YOUNG ADULT- SAMSHA
- TIPS FOR GOOD COMMUNICATION - COLLEGE PARENTS MATTER