

Norwayne SALT

Parent Alert
August 2019

Talk. They'll Listen

Your kids are listening to you. Really. Even if you're talking about underage substance use.

When it comes to alcohol use, 80% of youth say their parents have the most significant influence on whether they drink. But let's break it down: only 57% of Wayne County parents have talked with their youth about alcohol. Simply put: more conversations could be a great way to prevent/reduce youth substance use – especially drinking. (Alcohol is also the substance youth most frequently use, according to results of a 2018 survey of Wayne County youth.)

A new countywide campaign – “Talk. They'll Listen.” – has been launched to encourage more parents to talk more often about substance use. You can find it at: **theywilllisten.com** The resource and information hub encourages parents and caregivers to talk with their kids – doing so keeps them healthy, safer and less likely to engage in drinking and other risky behaviors. You can also check out Wayne County Coalitions on Facebook, Instagram and Twitter.

So, how to do it? Here's some tips and pointers:

- Have regular conversations.
- Keep them short. Little, consistent talks avoid having one big, intimidating talk.
- Tailor conversations to various age groups – for older youth don't treat them like children.
- Build open, trusting relationships so your kids want to come to you.
- Talk. Don't lecture.
- Listen without interrupting.
- Acknowledge their feelings.
- Don't overwhelm with too many facts.
- Send a strong, clear message about why you disapprove of underage use.
- Praise them for positive actions.
- Use the news for teachable moments.
- Have regular family dinners.

- Busy? Have short, frequent conversations while doing everyday things: driving, watching TV, doing chores.
- Conversations are a two-way street. Let your child ask questions. Children whose parents listen to their feelings and concerns are more likely to be able to refuse alcohol and other drugs.
- Keep up to date on the facts, newest trends.
- Talk with your child about what to do if faced with peer pressure.
- What you do is as important as what you say.
- End the conversation on a positive note.
- Check out theywilllisten.com and [samhsa.gov/underage-drinking](https://www.samhsa.gov/underage-drinking)