

WAYS TO SUPPORT AND ENCOURAGE CELEBRATIONS WITHOUT ALCOHOL

OFFICE OF WELLNESS PROMOTION

Whether it be a holiday, a 21st birthday marking the change in your student's legal drinking status, or a personal triumph, parents and supporters have an important role in helping your student to navigate making informed decisions about how they choose to celebrate. Having a conversation with your student well in advance of their celebration can help them think through their decisions before they are in the celebratory moment.



Parents and supporters can encourage ways to celebrate holidays, birthdays, and accomplishments that do not involve the use of alcohol... Some activities may include:

- Game night
- Private group art class- painting, pottery making, etc.
- Movie night with favorite snacks
- Virtual games and activities
- Get pampered! Go get a massage, facial, hair, or nails done
- Enjoy a celebratory dessert!



Conversations with your student about the role that alcohol may have in celebratory events could start like this: Conversation Starters and Questions:

- How are you planning to celebrate?
- Whom do you plan to celebrate with?
- Have you discussed plans with your friends?
- Could you celebrate with friends over dinner?
- I could take you out for a celebration. Maybe bring a couple of your friends!
- Why don't we do something together for your birthday? It would be great to spend some time together.
- Share with me your plans for celebrating.
- What are your expectations?
- Not everyone drinks alcohol on their 21st birthday.
- Have any of your friends had too much to drink on their 21st birthday? How did that go for them?
- For more 21st birthday conversation starters, go to <http://www.collegeparentsmatter.org/assets/21stbirthday.pdf>

Things to Keep in Mind:

- Look for opportunities to raise the topic naturally.
- Discuss reasons not to use. Explain the risks of substance use.
- Realize that your student will likely be in a social situation where substance use is happening.
- Be prepared for questions about your own choices regarding substance use.
- During holidays and celebrations offer plenty of non-alcoholic foods, drinks, and activities.



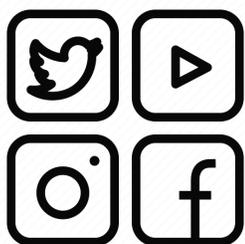
If your student shares they do plan to consume alcohol, here are some less risky ways to do so to reduce harm: Low-Risk Use Strategies:

- Alternate non-alcoholic drinks with alcoholic drinks
- Avoid drinking games that involve alcohol
- Eat before and/or during drinking alcohol
- Determine in advance not to exceed a set number of drinks
- Share your limits with a friend
- Have a friend let you know when you've had enough and/or exceeded your limit
- Pace your drinks to one or fewer standard drinks an hour
- Stay with the same people/friends the entire time drinking
- Choose only one kind of alcohol while drinking

Reference:

The Maryland Collaborative. (2015). The 21st Birthday Conversation. College Parents Matter.

<http://www.collegeparentsmatter.org/assets/21stbirthday.pdf>.



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