

April is Alcohol Awareness Month, a national observance that raises awareness about the dangers of alcohol use disorders and underage drinking. This year's theme is "Connecting the Dots: Opportunities for Recovery." Efforts are being directed towards youth, who can be easily influenced by the lure of alcohol and drugs. Underage drinking can lead to higher assault rates, health problems, academic-related problems, unsafe sexual behavior, driving under the influence, or even death.

Research has shown that youth who have conversations with their parents about the dangers of alcohol and other drug use are 50% less likely to use these substances than those who don't have such conversations. Parents also have more influence on a child's values and decisions *before* he or she begins to use alcohol.

But what to say? Here are some conversation starters for talking with your teen:

1. CONNECT: "Let's eat dinner together tonight." "Did something happen at school today?"
2. EDUCATE: "Alcohol is especially dangerous for young people, and here's why..."
3. BE A ROLE MODEL: "No thanks. I'll drink water with my dinner because I'm driving."
4. ENCOURAGE: "I see you put a lot of effort into this." "Thanks for putting away the groceries!"
5. MONITOR: "What are your plans for Saturday night? Who will you be with?"
6. ENFORCE: "By missing curfew, you lost car privileges."

### **The Lifeline Law**

Call 911. Get Help. Save a Life. Indiana's Lifeline Law provides that a person is immune from arrest or prosecution for certain alcohol offenses if the arrest or prosecution is due to the person: (1) reporting a medical emergency; (2) being the victim of a sex offense; or (3) witnessing and reporting what the person believes to be a crime.

Within the State of Indiana, "The Lifeline Law provides immunity for the crimes of public intoxication, minor in possession, minor in consumption, and similar laws, to persons who identify themselves to law enforcement while seeking medical assistance for a person suffering from an alcohol-related health emergency. In order to receive immunity, the reporting individual must demonstrate that they are acting in good faith by fulfilling the following expectations:

- Providing their full name and any other relevant information at the request of law enforcement officers.
- Remaining on the scene until law enforcement and emergency medical assistance dismiss.
- Cooperating with all authorities.

The Indiana Lifeline Law will not interfere with law enforcement procedures or limit the ability to prosecute for other criminal offenses such as providing alcohol to minors, operating vehicles while intoxicated, or the possession of a controlled substance."

The Lifeline Law makes it clear to young adults throughout Indiana that the priority is to get professional medical care to those who need it, no matter the circumstances.

At a time in their lives when youth are being molded, the use of substances can change their lives forever. As a parent, every effort to help your children "connect the dots" can make a world of difference.