



MISERICORDIA UNIVERSITY

Dear Parent of Incoming Student,

If you are like most parents of teenagers, you wonder how much your son or daughter still listens to your opinion and you are curious about the influence you will continue to have as they grow into adults. You also probably wonder how they will navigate the many decisions which lie ahead of them during their first year in college. These are important questions and we want to talk about some of the answers as they relate to alcohol abuse.

The alcohol abuse awareness and prevention program in place at Misericordia University utilizes various techniques to help support our incoming first year students as they begin to make more independent decisions about alcohol use. We use an online, interactive course (Alcohol-Wise) that includes a self-assessment tool (the highly-regarded E-CHUG,) in addition to follow-up emails and other campaigns to promote healthy decision-making by the newest members on our campus. While these have proven to be effective prevention methods, they can be even better with your help.

There is considerable evidence that parents play a critical role in the success of their teens in college, particularly related to their choices about alcohol use. Recent studies discovered a *significant decrease* in students' tendencies toward drunkenness and drinking-related consequences within a group of freshman who experienced a *parent-based intervention* the summer prior to the start of the college career. Research shows the following about parent involvement as it relates to student alcohol use:

- Parents are best able to tailor the content and timing of communication based on their knowledge of the child's strengths, weaknesses and maturity level. This means that parental influence is able to respect the diversity of the adolescent in a way that few other interventions can.¹
- The more parents communicate about the risks of alcohol abuse, the less positive their children are about drinking.²
- Important communication components include: reinforcement of non-drinking alternatives, clarification about risks and negative consequences of drinking, strategies to support assertiveness and resistance to influences that encourage heavy drinking, and ensuring that communication lines remain open throughout the first year of college.³
- Timing is important. The weeks and months just prior to the start of school are the best times to have these conversations.¹

So while it is true that your son or daughter is becoming more independent with each passing day, it is never too late to have important conversations about their future and the decisions that will face them. We encourage you to help make our alcohol abuse prevention efforts as effective as possible by reinforcing your child's ability to make healthy choices. They are listening. Don't miss an opportunity to contribute to their success.

Sincerely,

Darcy Brodmerkel, M.ED., CAADC
Director of Student Activities/
Addictions Counselor

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1. Turrisi R, Taki R, Dunnam H, Jaccard J, Grimes J. Examination of the short-term efficacy of a parent intervention to reduce college student drinking tendencies. *Psychology of Addictive Behaviors*. 2001;15(4):366-372.
 2. Turrisi R, Wiersma KA, Hughes KK. Binge-drinking-related consequences in college students: Role of drinking beliefs and mother-teen communications. *Psychology of Addictive Behaviors*. 2000;14(4):342-355.
 3. Lange JE, Clapp JD, Turrisi R, Reavy R, Jaccard J, Johnson MB, Voas RB, Larimer M. College binge drinking: What it is? Who does it? *Alcoholism: Clinical and Experimental Research*. May 2002;26(5):723-730.