

Frequently Asked Questions

What age should I start talking to my children about alcohol and drug use?

It is never too early to begin talking to your child about drug use. Use language they can understand when delivering the message (e.g., using alcohol is against the law until you are 21). Make sure that your child knows the expectation in your house is no alcohol use until they are at least 21. Saying things like "Well, I don't like it but I know you will probably drink, just promise me that you won't ever drink and drive, okay?" sends the wrong message. You just gave them permission to drink. And because alcohol is a chemical that affects decision-making, impulse control, judgment, etc. they might drive after drinking because they are under the influence.

How do I start a conversation with my child about this topic?

Use everyday opportunities to talk to your children about the legal, responsible, and appropriate use of alcohol. Naturally, it needs to fit the age of your child.

Use visual cues such as a TV program or movie where people are having a drink. Discuss whether the situation looks realistic. Is everyone dressed really nice, living in extraordinarily nice homes (nothing out of place), have great jobs, no problems, etc. Is this what real life is like? Listen to what your child has to say.

What are the signs of substance abuse?

You should consider substance abuse when you notice changes in your child's behavior. Changes that might be a sign of substance abuse include increased moodiness or sudden changes in mood, getting into fights, secretiveness, and associating with friends who are getting into trouble. Additional signs can also include doing worse in school, cutting classes, dropping out of activities or getting into more arguments. Be alert to more direct signs such as missing pills, unexplained over-the-counter medications in the house, cigarettes or rolling paper in the laundry, or smells of alcohol and smoke.

Do all high school students use alcohol?

No, they do not. In fact, the majority of students do not. Unfortunately, some people perceive that most students use alcohol and perpetuate the myth by claiming it to be true. In Minnesota we have what is called the Minnesota Student Survey that a majority of school districts participate in every 3 years. On the 2013 Minnesota Student Survey, 53% of Sherburne County's 8th, 9th, and 11th graders reported that they thought students used alcohol monthly or more often when only 16% reported past month use.

What should I do first if I think my child has a substance abuse problem?

You can contact a trusted professional, for example, a school counselor, a pediatrician or a family doctor. If you have access, you can seek advice from a specialist such as a child psychiatrist, psychologist, or substance abuse counselor.

What is a chemical dependency assessment?

A chemical dependency assessment will include an interview with a counselor in which the individual's chemical use will be reviewed along with the impact of that use on the individual's daily life and relationships. The assessment may also include an individual diagnostic test, review of relevant medical, legal, mental health, and previous treatment records, a physical screening and assessment for detoxification and interviews with other people in that individual's life. Assessments should address each individual's unique needs.

Who do I call for an assessment?

If you have health insurance or coverage through a managed care organization, call the member services number on the back of your member card or call the social service agency of the county in which you live. If you live on a tribal reservation, call the tribal office. Anyone can request an assessment for him/herself or for another person. The county or tribal agency must provide the assessment.

Sherburne County Health & Human Services

Phone: 763-765-4000

Website: www.co.sherburne.mn.us/hhs

If you are currently enrolled in a managed care plan under MinnesotaCare or PMAP (prepaid medical assistance or pre-paid general assistance medical care), you should call the number on the back of your enrollment card to see where to go for your assessment.

Where can I refer someone for treatment or to get help?

The first step in getting help is to receive a chemical dependency assessment by a professional. The type of insurance coverage you have usually determines where you go for an assessment. If you do not have insurance coverage, you may be able to receive help through your county.

Sources:

[American Academy of Child & Adolescent Psychiatry](#)

[Minnesota Department of Human Services](#)