

## TIPS FOR TALKING WITH STUDENTS ABOUT ALCOHOL AND OTHER DRUG (AOD) USE

- Ask questions that will help the student reflect on their AOD use, motivation, pros and cons of use, how it may be impeding their academic/social life. Examples include:
  - How much/often are you drinking?
  - How many hours do you spend drinking or recovering from drinking?
  - Why do you think you drink?
  - Where does alcohol fit in your lifestyle?
  - What expectations do you have about how alcohol will make you feel?
  - What is the monthly cost to maintain your current drinking pattern? Is there something else you would like to use that money for?
  - Have your grades been impacted?
  
- Be prepared for resistance/ambivalence. Many college students experiment with alcohol use and do not suffer severe consequences. Consider some of the following “harm reduction” points when talking with students.
  - What do you want/expect from drinking alcohol? Are there situations you absolutely want to avoid?
  - Monitor drinking behavior – count drinks consumed and in what time span.
  - Set drinking limits – what’s your upper limit of drinks at a party or per week?
  - Alternate/space drinks -- beer, water, beer, water, etc...
  - Choose not to drink at a party even if you normally do.
  - Eat before and during the party (subway sandwiches, burrito wraps) – want to slow down absorption by eating substantial carbohydrates (vs. potato chips)
  
- Avoid action-based language, such as “just stop drinking” or labeling the student’s behavior, such as “abusive” or “unhealthy”. Instead, encourage them to talk about why they drink, how they feel, how their friends perceive their behavior. Some conversation starters may be:
  - You look like you were having a really good time at the party Saturday night. I noticed you were pretty belligerent and having trouble walking. Can we talk about how this affects you and other hall members (i.e., roommate, hallmate)?
  - You know we are one big family in the hall and people care about one another. A few of your peers have come to me and are concerned about your drinking. Have you thought about going to see someone at CAPS or Wardenberg? They are a confidential resource and lots of students go there for help. Seeking help is a sign of strength.
  
- Consider referring a student to Wardenburg or CAPS in the following circumstances:
  - Your attempts to talk with the student are unsuccessful
  - You feel the problem is outside the scope of your knowledge and/or available time
  - You notice an increase in the student’s AOD use; negative consequences begin to occur; you see the same behavior at many parties; you continue to hear concern expressed by friends/RAs/other people.