



CommunityNEWS

Promoting Health & Wellness through prevention in our Community.

Changing the Way We Look at Mental Health & Wellness

America is at a crossroads when it comes to how society addresses mental health. One in five people have a diagnosable mental health condition.

If everyone is more open and honest about mental health, we can prevent pain and suffering, and those in need will get the help they deserve. There are many resources addressing this issue head on, in our communities and globally.

One such initiative is *The Campaign to Change Direction*. *The Campaign's* goal is to change the culture of mental health so that all of those in need receive the care and support they deserve and encourage everyone to pay attention to emotional wellbeing which is equally as important as physical well-being.

A useful tool developed by The Campaign is the Five Signs of Emotional Suffering, a common language to identify when someone is suffering and how we can stay emotionally healthy.

Personality changes. You may notice sudden or gradual changes in the way that someone typically behaves — ways that don't seem to fit their values or are noticeably different.



Uncharacteristically angry, anxious, agitated, moody. You may notice a person has more frequent problems controlling his or her temper and seems irritable or unable to calm down. People in more extreme situations may be unable to sleep or may explode in anger at a minor problem.



Withdrawal or isolation from other people. Someone who used to be socially engaged may pull away from family and friends and stop taking part in activities they use to enjoy. In more severe cases the person may stop going to work or school. Not to be confused with someone who is more introverted, this sign is marked by a change in a person's typical sociability.



May neglect self-care and engage in risky behavior. You may notice a change in a person's level of self care or they may show poor judgment. Someone may let personal hygiene deteriorate, or they may start abusing alcohol or illicit substances or engaging in other self-destructive behavior that may alienate loved ones.



Overcome with hopelessness and overwhelmed. If you notice someone who used to be optimistic and now can't find anything to be hopeful about, they may be suffering from extreme or prolonged grief, or feelings of worthlessness or guilt. People in this situation may say that the world would be better off without them, suggesting suicidal thinking.



To learn more, please visit [changedirection.org](https://www.changedirection.org).

May is Mental Health Awareness Month

Each year millions of Americans face the reality of living with a mental illness. During May, NAMI joins the national movement to raise awareness about mental health. Each year they fight stigma, provide support, educate the public and advocate for policies that support people with mental illness and their families.

Learn more at <https://www.nami.org>

Dr. DiBiase's Letter to Class of '21



Dear Class of 2021,

I am so honored and proud to be your Principal! I am thankful for your positivity, insights and endless talents. Congratulations to each and every one of you for all you have accomplished during your high school years! It seems like just yesterday I welcomed you into Mt. Hope High School as incoming Freshmen. Although this is an unusual year, (to say the least) you have found innovative ways to rise above the challenges. I am so proud of each and every one of you for your perseverance and your true heart & husky spirit.

You have inspired me and brought joy and hope to all who know you. The Class of 2021 is truly RRHIIP'ed! You emanate our Core Values and



Beliefs; You are RESPECTFUL and RESPONSIBLE; Continue to be HONEST to yourself and others as you act with INTEGRITY, feed your INTELLECTUAL CURIOSITY and PERSEVERE through difficult challenges. Cherish the many memories that you experienced as Mt. Hope High School Huskies. I have no doubt that you will #BeTheChange our world needs and you will make a difference! Remember to laugh everyday, love deeply, and SPREAD KINDNESS. BE AMAZING, BE HAPPY, and BE YOU!

I love you all!

Deborah DiBiase, Ed.D.

Principal, Mt. Hope High School

Make Prom 2021 Memorable & Safe

Although prom and graduation may look very different this year as we continue to deal with the impact of the pandemic, there is still the potential for underage drinking or drug use. Parties that usually follow these events can be a temptation for youth to celebrate with alcohol or drugs.

Many parents put in a lot of work to make their teen's prom a memorable experience. Parents can make the event a truly positive experience by talking with their child to set some guidelines and discuss expectations. It can literally save lives.

Communicate Expectations

As students might be feeling more independent with college looming, it's important to help them successfully navigate prom-related temptations and potential peer pressures.

Support Plans for Safety

Encourage driving arrangements of a limo or older sibling to reduce the possibility of distracted driving. Create a plan with your child that can be used if a pick-up is needed.

Monitor Pre-Prom and Post-Prom Activities

If parents do plan to have a small gathering for their teen and friends before or after prom, it is important to take measures to ensure youth do not have access to alcohol. If your teen is invited to a family-hosted party, connect with the host parents about supervision and confirm alcohol will not be available.



Suggestions to help you keep your prom-goer safe

- Talk to your teens honestly about what could happen if they or friends use alcohol and drugs. Share your feelings. It's all about letting them see and feel how much you care.
- Remind teen to NOT to ride with someone who's been drinking or using drugs, even if it's the designated driver. Instead, call home for a ride, anytime, no questions asked.
- Consider scheduling "quick" check-in calls or texts during the evening. Make sure they're having fun — and feeling safe.
- ***Have teens continue to wear masks where requested and practice safe social distancing.***

Practical Tips for Parents When Talking to Your Kids About Alcohol

Your kids are listening to you even when it looks like they aren't! Talking with your kids can help them make healthy choices.



Why you need to talk

As a parent, you have a lot of input over your children's choices. Talking to them can help them make the right decisions about alcohol and other substances.

You may be excited, or stressed about your children being in middle or high school. They'll be curious about new things. They'll want to fit in. Their friends may pressure them to do things they may not feel good about doing.

You will have more power over your children's decisions if you bring up alcohol and other substances first. Your "coaching" can help them to feel good about staying away from risky choices. Your children could start asking questions at any time so it may be a good idea to be prepared. Here are some useful tips to help guide the conversation.

Know the facts about underage drinking

Your child may know more about alcohol, drugs and tobacco than you do! Don't worry. You don't need to know everything. Here are a few facts to get you started.

- Most teenagers don't use alcohol, tobacco, or drugs.
- Teens who start drinking before age 15 are 5 times more likely to develop alcohol dependence or abuse later in life than those who begin drinking after age 21. [Read More](#)
- When kids use alcohol, it can cause changes in the brain. [Read More](#)
- The average age teen boys first try alcohol is age 11, for teen girls it's 13. [Read More](#)
- Adolescents tend to drink alcohol based on opportunity and heavy drinking often is the norm. [Read More](#)

Ways to start the conversation with kids

- Ask your kids about friends and what's new and fun.
- Get your kids to talk about feelings, like how they feel about school, their friends, or being a pre-teen or teen.
- Make sure they know you're listening. Show them that what they say and think matters.
- Respect their answers even if you don't agree with them. This can be a chance to talk about values.
- Use what comes up on the internet to start talking.
- Ask your kid who is their favorite social media influencer.

Coach your kids on peer pressure

Your coaching can help prepare your kids. You can help them build confidence by talking to them about how to say no to alcohol or other substances. You can suggest your kids say:

"No thanks. Let's go to my house and hang out instead."

"Not now, I gotta go" or "No! I'll get grounded."

Help them to come up with their own ways to say no to alcohol. They take the lead, and you coach and support them. Encourage them to spend time with friends who don't use alcohol or other substances.

Build your support system

There are many in your community who can support you as you talk with your child about alcohol and drugs.

- Family doctors, nurses, and faith leaders may have experience in talking to teens about alcohol, tobacco, and other substances.
- Student assistance counselors and coaches can help.
- Community health centers and prevention coalitions can provide helpful information and resources in your area.

Watch for warning signs

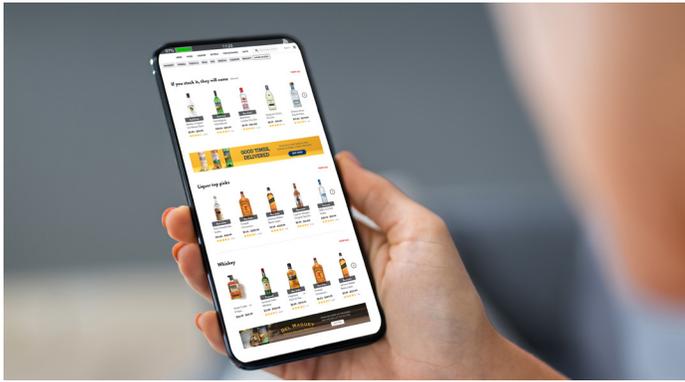
If you've seen some changes in your kids, it might be time to talk with them about using alcohol or other substances.

Have you noticed a change in mood or is your child sleeping more than they usually do? Do they show less interest in school, friends, or activities? Some of these behaviors are normal for pre-teens. But if you think your child may be using alcohol or other drugs, have a calm and supportive talk with him or her and get help. Getting help early is key to protecting your child's health.

Looking at the Impact of Alcohol Home Delivery

Alcohol delivery may be a welcome convenience for some, but in many ways, it could lead to problems for people who have trouble controlling their alcohol consumption. It could also be a convenient way for underage drinkers to obtain alcohol.

Alcohol is one of the most widely abused substances, and while it is not always addictive, it can be accompanied by negative consequences. In most cases, alcohol is one of the first substances youth experiment with, due its accessibility and pressure from peers.



Another concern with alcohol delivery is that online ordering may allow people to avoid the stigma associated with drinking more. They don't have to go to the local liquor store where they may be recognized. They don't have to go to a bar. Apps and the internet make it simple to anonymously buy alcohol or to sign up for subscription services that will regularly deliver. Men and women can bypass the social stigmas that might otherwise limit how much and how often they drink.

Cause for Concern?

- On-demand alcohol delivery app Drizly saw a 300% spike in sales in March of last year when bars and restaurants shut down and social distancing keep people at home.
- The average online alcohol order is also up by 20%.
- According to scheduling platform Doodle, there was a 296% increase in group meetings booked specifically for virtual happy hours and drinking events in March 2020.

Source: <https://www.cnn.com/2020/03/27/drinking-coronavirus-social-distancing-and-alcohol-delivery-app-boom.html>



More relaxed attitudes toward marijuana, the effects of social media and the legalization for adult recreational use in many states may be key reasons that teens' perception of harm for marijuana use has steadily declined over the past decade.

With the number of retail recreational marijuana outlets increasing and today's marijuana being more potent than ever, containing as much as two to three times more tetrahydrocannabinol (THC), the ingredient that makes people high, we need to protect youth health.

Talk to your kids about marijuana. Make sure they know the real health risks and potential consequences of youth marijuana use.

Community RESOURCES

East Bay Community Action Program (EBCAP)

100 Bullocks Point Ave., Riverside, RI (401) 437-1000

East Bay Center 2 Old County Rd., Barrington, RI

(401) 246-1195

East Bay Recovery Center 31 Railroad Ave., Warren, RI

(401) 302-6231 or 401-289-2055

BH Link Hotline — (401) 414-LINK (414-5465)

24/7 – help with a behavioral healthcare crisis.

St. Mary of the Bay Food Pantry

645 Main St., Warren RI (401) 245-700



Warren
Prevention Coalition

514 Main Street, Warren, RI 02885 • 401.245.7387

#Connectionisthebestprevention

For information, contact Ann Marie Roy at ARoy@townofwarren-ri.gov or Maria Ursini at Mursini@townofwarren-ri.gov.

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warrenprevention.com