



Improving Health in Adams, Clay, Nuckolls and Webster Counties

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Keep your teens safe and healthy during prom and graduation season

Two area organizations, Area Substance and Alcohol Abuse Prevention (ASAAP) and the South Heartland District Health Department, are providing tips to help parents keep their teens safe and healthy during prom and graduation season.

“Alcohol is the most commonly used and abused drug among youth in the United States,” said South Heartland health director, Dr. Michele Bever. “This is also true for the South Heartland Health District of Adams, Clay, Nuckolls and Webster counties.”

According to Bever, student health survey results for the four county health district are concerning. “Survey data indicate that more than 38% of high school seniors reported consuming alcohol in the prior 30 days,” she said, “and that nearly 1 of 5 high school seniors have ridden in a vehicle driven by someone who had been drinking alcohol.”

Bever also said that nearly 20% of seniors are binge drinking, which means that they are consuming multiple drinks in a row within a couple of hours (4 or more drinks for females, 5 or more drinks for males).

Bever said that our communities should be concerned about underage drinking because of the impact it has on student health and safety. She encouraged parents to talk to their teens about not using alcohol or drugs.

“Research shows that if parents talk to their teens about avoiding alcohol there is an increase in school success, an increase in healthy brain development and a decrease in the likelihood that teens will use alcohol, tobacco and other drugs,” she said.

Stef Creech-Will, executive director of ASAAP, said that there are many ways that parents can be involved to keep their teens safe and healthy during prom and graduation season. “Parents should discuss the school’s prom rules with their teen, and explain the consequences for violating them,” she said. “They should find out who their teen is going to the prom with - - do you know the teen’s date and do you know their group of friends?”

Creech-Will said that parents should talk to other parents about post-event activities and make sure that alcohol won’t be present. “Make sure you know the location of the post-prom or post-graduation parties and who is sponsoring them,” she said.

“Parents should also know who will be driving their child to and from parties,” she said. “Or, they can make themselves available to provide a timely and safe ride home, if needed, and let their teen know that they should call a parent if they need a ride or get into a situation they know isn’t safe, no matter what time it is or where they are.”

Bever and Creech-Will challenge parents to keep their teens safe and healthy during prom and graduation season.

According to Bever, approximately one third of the alcohol-related traffic fatalities involving U.S. teens each year occur around prom and graduation season.

“The months of April, May and June regularly hold the record for the most teen driver/passenger fatalities,” said Creech-Will. “So even though prom and graduations are special occasions, remind teens to buckle up,” she said.

Parents can learn more by contacting South Heartland District Health Department at 877-238-7595 or ASAAP at 402-463-0524.

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