



**A Guide for Parents
of First-Year
College Students**

Your son or daughter is a first-year college student — what an exciting time! It is a mix of preparation and anticipation, excitement and apprehension. When students enter college, they are confronted with the opportunities and challenges of campus culture. You are at a turning point in your relationship with your son or daughter. He or she will be away from home

and your rules, perhaps for the first time. They may not admit it, but they feel insecure in a new social setting and want badly to fit in. Is your son or daughter prepared? You can be a big help in your student's successful transition to college life. This booklet provides you with up-to-date information that will help you talk with your son or daughter about drinking.



*Virginia Commonwealth University
Front cover, bottom left, Norfolk State University*

*Most college students make responsible decisions about the use of alcohol.
But balancing these new experiences can be difficult.*

Availability of Alcohol + Absence of Parents + Desire to fit in = Potentially risky drinking decisions

The Century Council

For many parents and young adults, bringing up the subject of alcohol is not easy. You may be unsure of when or how to begin and your student may try to dodge the conversation. However, it is important for you to be aware of the risks and consequences associated with alcohol so you can help your student be aware. Impaired judgement from drinking can lead to risky behavior causing academic, legal, and personal problems. It is important to understand the risks associated with drinking. For years, scare tactics have been used to try to curb risky behavior, but this strategy doesn't always work. It is much more effective for you to help your student understand that "not everyone is doing it." They should be aware that, across Virginia, students are developing positive behaviors concerning drinking.

Currently in Virginia

The Commonwealth of Virginia has taken a strong stance to curb underage drinking and heavy drinking by college students. In 1998, Virginia's Attorney General, Mark Earley, asked a task force on college drinking to encourage students to be responsible and exercise self-discipline. One very important recommendation was empowering parents to actively teach their children about the legal and responsible use of alcohol. This booklet will help you learn about alcohol laws, penalties, dangers, intervention techniques and positive changes in the campus environment.



Bridgewater College

Here are some statistics that may surprise you:

- A majority of first-year students think drinking to get drunk is wrong.*
- 70% of first-year students surveyed say drinking is not a central part of their social lives.*

Surprised? Your first-year student might be too! Surveys show that students believe their fellow students are drinking far more than they actually are. Because they think there is more drinking going on than there really is, students want to try to drink up to the level they think their fellow students do.

**1999 Virginia Campus Survey*



*understanding
the facts*



James Madison University

Students don't realize their fellow students don't really drink that much. The 1999 Campus Survey* shows the majority of students think less than half (39%) of Virginia college students are light drinkers—that is, they drink once a week, less than that or not at all.

The reality is actually that MOST Virginia college students (74%) drink once a week, less, or not at all and even more positive is that MOST (74%) includes 16.9% who do not drink at all!

Studies show that young people (ages 16-20) are more likely than any other age group to try to prevent their friends from drinking and driving.

Almost 90% of students feel their close friends would disapprove or strongly disapprove of them having four or five drinks every day.

It is important that your first-year student understand the facts and not rely on their perceptions alone. You can help your son or daughter understand that by being responsible they are in the majority, not the minority. Chances are they will make better decisions about drinking once they know the facts.

**(based on survey data collected at 21 Virginia higher education institutions from a representative sample of 3,283 students -Spring 1999).*

The Law in Virginia

All states and the District of Columbia now have laws stating age 21 as the minimum age to purchase or drink alcohol. Virginia's Zero Tolerance law makes driving under the influence of any amount of alcohol or drugs a serious criminal offense.

Young adults (ages 18-20) caught buying, possessing or drinking alcohol can lose their drivers license for up to a year, be fined up to \$2,500 and face up to 12 months in jail.

Using a fake ID to buy alcohol means losing the right to drive for a year and a minimum fine of \$500.

A driver, age 20 or younger, with a blood alcohol level between .02 and .07 could lose their license for up to 6 months. Impaired driving begins with the first drink.

Knowing the law is important, but it is not enough. It takes a commitment to personal responsibility to remain safe and alcohol-free. Talk with your students about these issues before they head off to campus and continue talking with them while they are on campus.

Career Consequences

Young adults are held responsible for their decisions today. They need good information to make wise choices.

You are investing in your son or daughter's future by providing the information and support to help them make the good decisions.

Parental Notification

Parental notification became law in 1998. Congress gave colleges and universities the green light to disclose alcohol or controlled substance violations to parents. These include state and federal laws as well as school policies and rules governing the use or possession of alcohol or controlled substances.

Federal law recognizes a parent's right to be notified if their son or daughter is involved in risky or illegal behavior such as underage drinking, public drunkenness, drugs or criminal activity. The law permits, but does not require, schools to notify parents any time a student under 21 violates drug or alcohol laws.

As the parent or guardian of a first-year student, YOU should share this information with your son or daughter to help their college years be a safe and productive experience.

Check with your son or daughter's college Dean of Students or Student Affairs office to find out whether their school practices parental notification.

The effects of college drinking may reach beyond the classroom. More and more companies are doing background checks on potential employees. Graduates may be denied employment opportunities as a result of alcohol-related criminal convictions. Even acquittals may remain on their permanent record.





*where to
draw the line*

Communication

Show you care when you talk to your son or daughter. You need to draw the line, but understand your son or daughter is growing up. Most of all, believe in your own power to help them avoid trouble :

- *be a good role model*
- *be factual and straightforward*
- *good information is always the best defense*
- *do not use scare tactics.*

It is important to talk with your son or daughter often. You do not need to cover every topic in one conversation. Lecturing will get you nowhere - providing information is the key.

- **Expect the Best** - Set expectations about class attendance, study time vs. free time, how you will keep in touch, and drinking. Make sure they understand that it is easy to have fun at college without drinking.

- **Valuable Information** - Your family's values have never been more important than now. You may feel your student knows your family values, but it is a good idea to restate your values and expectations. Your first-year student needs to know how to relate the values you have instilled to the choices your child will be faced with.

- **Priorities** - Set clear and realistic expectations regarding grades. Studies show that heavy drinking may contribute to a student's grades declining. If students are convinced their parents expect solid academic work,

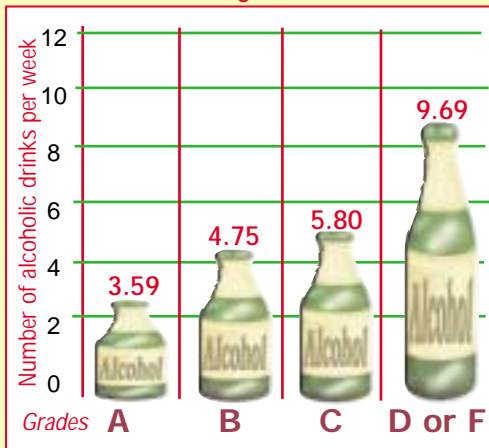


Virginia Military Institute; Peter Howard, photographer

they are more likely to pay attention to their studies which will give them less time to get involved with drinking.

- **More Means Less** - Alcohol is associated with missed classes and poor performance causing lower GPAs. The more drinks a student has each week, the lower the GPA, as shown below:

Grades and Drinking



Source: 1996 National Core Survey

- **Safe and Secure** - Help your son or daughter understand their right to be safe. Students who do not drink can be affected by others who do drink. This can cause problems like interrupted study time, assault or unwanted sexual advances. Students should discuss the problem with the offender when possible. If that fails, they should ask campus staff to help them such as the counseling center, residence assistant, academic advisor or student health.

- **Don't Tell Tales** - Your son or daughter may interpret stories of drinking during college as approving of dangerous alcohol consumption. If you drank alcohol at their age, avoid entertaining students with these stories.

- **Common Sense** - Make sure your student understands that alcohol can be toxic

and alcohol poisoning can kill. Ask your son or daughter to have the common sense and self-confidence to intervene when they see someone risking their life by drinking dangerously.

- **Volunteering** - Encourage your student to volunteer in the community. It helps structure free time, and provides students with a broader outlook and a healthier respect for their lives. Students may contact the Student Affairs Office on campus for information on volunteering opportunities.

- **Making It Clear** - Underage drinking and alcohol impaired driving are against the law. You should openly tell your son or daughter you disapprove of underage drinking, dangerous alcohol consumption and driving while under the influence of alcohol.

• **Non-Alcohol Centered Events** - Events centered on fun are more frequent at colleges than in the past years. Students can contact the Student Affairs Office on campus for information on programs and how to get involved in planning them.

• **DWYSYWD** - (Do What You Say You Will Do) Help your student think about how to handle certain situations before they face them on campus and teach them DWYSYWD. You can help them prepare successfully for the unexpected.

Communicate with your student in new ways — be a better listener, ask questions, and try not to react in a way that will shut down the conversation. If your student says things that challenge you, try not to react harshly and explain you want to prepare them for a good college experience. Invite a discussion and don't lecture. Talk to your son or daughter at a time and place for an easy give-and-take of ideas. Make



Bridgewater College

sure they understand you recognize them as young adults.

This is an exciting time for your son or daughter. And in the end, the choices about drinking are theirs to make. It will be their responsibility—*not* of the people at a party, the fraternity, roommates or friends. You have a large role in preparing your son or daughter to make responsible

choices. Often, students make choices without thinking how those choices will affect them later. By sharing the information in this brochure beforehand, you help them make responsible choices. While you may not be able to actively monitor your student away from home, you can be available to talk and listen. You're shaping your son or daughter's character, and you may be saving your child's life.

Resources for You and Your First-year Student

1. Virginia Department of Alcoholic Beverage Control
www.abc.state.va.us

2. Higher Education Center
www.edc.org/hec/
or the Parent Connection
www.edc.org/hec/parents/

3. Promising Practices: Campus Alcohol Strategies for Alcohol and other Drug Prevention
www.promprac.gmu.edu

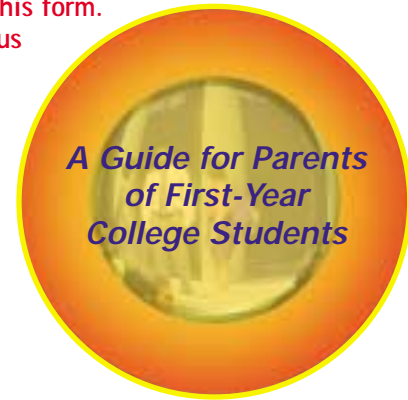
4. Facts on Tap
www.factsontap.org

5. Adult Children of Alcoholics
www.adultchildren.org

6. Prevention Research Institute
www.askpri.org

7. National Highway Traffic Safety Administration
www.nhtsa.gov

Please take a moment to fill out the quick response card below and fax to 804-213-4415 or tear out and mail to the address provided on the back of this form. You may also provide us feedback by email at: education@abc.state.va.us



How did you receive this brochure?

- From my son/daughter's college
- From a high school counselor
- From a special event (fair etc.)
- Other _____

Did you find this piece helpful?

- Yes, very helpful
- Somewhat helpful
- No, not helpful at all
- Other comments _____

After receiving this brochure, have you taken the time to talk with your son or daughter?

- Yes How? _____
- No Why? _____

Do you plan to use any of the Internet resources listed?

- Yes Which ones? _____
- No Why not? _____

Is there any information missing that would have been helpful to you?

Other Comments/Suggestions:

-----Please fold along the dotted line and return to:-----

Place
Stamp
Here

Virginia Department of
Alcoholic Beverage Control
Education Section
Post Office Box 27491
Richmond, Virginia
23261-7491

Resources (and brochures) used:

Alcohol, Drugs and Your College Student, Syracuse University, Division of Student Affairs, 306 Steele Hall, Syracuse, NY 13244 (315-443-4263)

Attorney General's Report by the Task Force on Drinking by College Students Commonwealth of Virginia - 1998 (www.oag.state.va.us)

Campus Connections Be Social & Sober, Be Successful, Michigan Department of Community Health

College Parents of America Outlines Eight Points for Parents Speaking With Students About Alcohol, The Higher Education Center for Alcohol and Other Drug Prevention (www.edc.org/hec)

Family Talk - How to talk to your kids about drinking, 1997, Anheuser-Busch, Inc., St. Louis, MO Item No. 003-886, revised (1-800-359-8255)

The Hartford Courant, 3/15/2000, "Binge Drinking on the Rise at Campuses" by Robert A. Frahm

Just The Facts Brochure - Virginia Alcoholic Beverage Control, 1999

Make a Difference Talk to Your Child about Alcohol, National Institute on Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services

Parenting Skills: 21 Tips and Ideas to Help You Make a Difference, The National Clearinghouse for Alcohol and Drug Information (a service of SAMHSA)

DWYSYWD: Do what you say you will do, page 3, "The Peer Educator", February 2000

Website: www.beerboozebooks.com/books.htm
Prevention Primer: College and University Students: www.health.or/pubs/primer/college.htm

The 1999 Core Alcohol and Drug Survey (Virginia Dept. of ABC) funded by the Governor's Office on Safe and Drug-Free Schools. Included 18 public and private colleges and universities and nearly 8,500 respondents.

The Parent Connection on the HEC Web site. www.edc.org/hec/parents/

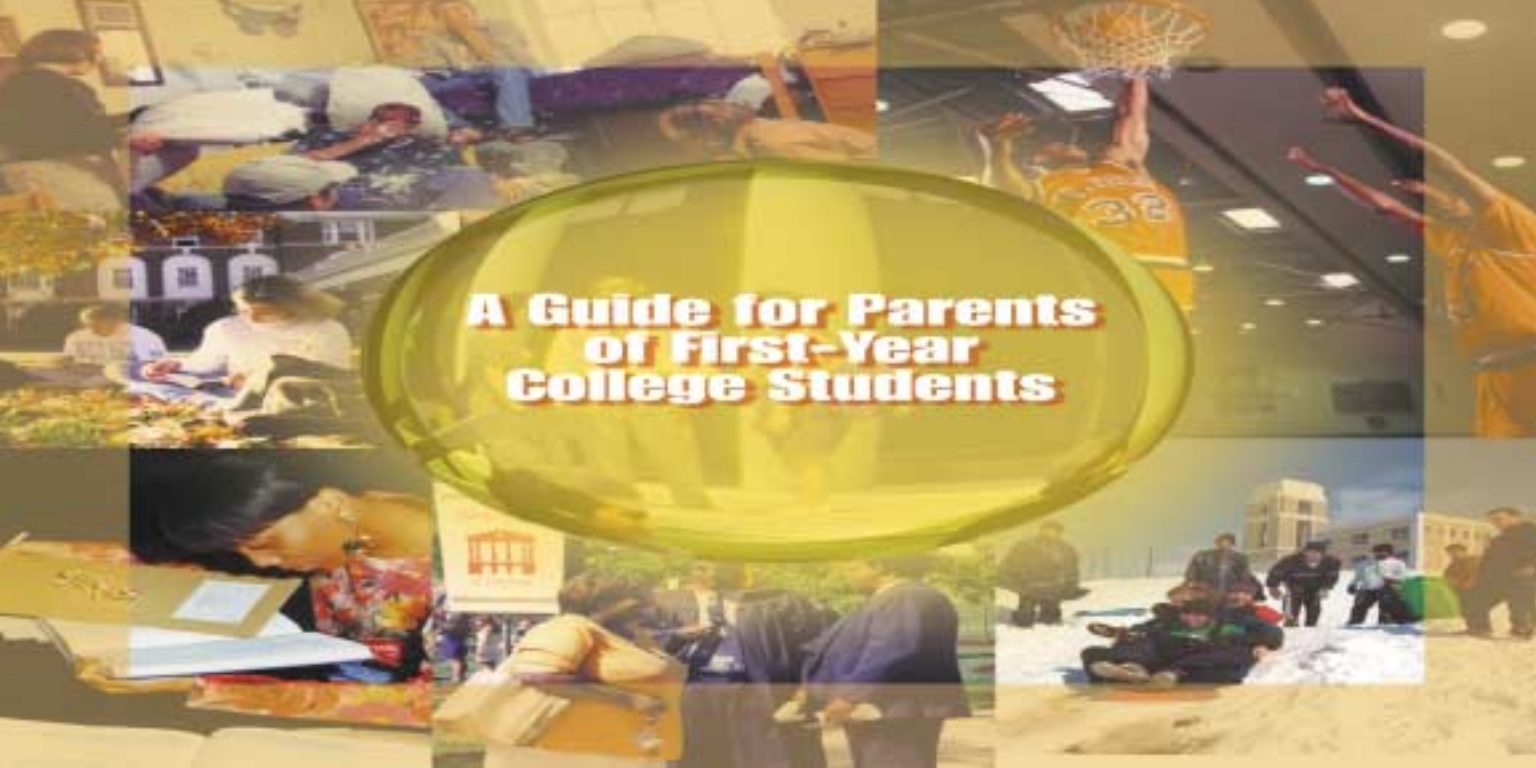
The 1999 Campus Survey of Alcohol and Other Drug Norms (Virginia Dept. of ABC) funded by the Governor's Office on Safe and Drug-Free Schools. Included 8 public and private colleges and universities and 3,200 respondents.



This resource was developed by the Education Section of the Virginia Department of Alcoholic Beverage Control.
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Virginia Military Institute; Peter Howard, photographer





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