

## **Parents, what are your prom plans?**

### ***Talk with your kids about your expectations, rules for the big night***

So, your son or daughter is headed to the prom. They've got their outfit, ordered flowers and decided on that trendy restaurant where they'll take their date. They're even planning to attend a party at a friend's house after the dance.

They're definitely primed for the big night.

Are you? Whether you know it or not, you're the biggest influence on your teen when it comes to their making healthy choices. The prom season – replete with a “big-event” feel, pre- and after-parties and raging hormones - is a great time to reinforce where you stand when it comes to such things as your teen steering clear of alcohol and other drugs.

Your best approach is to clearly and repeatedly communicate your family's rules, help your kids think critically about prom night and connect with other parents.

Here are a few tips:

- *Talk with your kids about their plans and share your rules and expectations.* That means agreeing on a curfew, communicating your family's no-tolerance policy on substance use, and not riding in a car with someone who has been drinking or using other drugs. The reality is, alcohol is the biggest drug problem for youth. Exactly how much of it is going on these days? Take a classroom of 30 high school juniors. State statistics show nearly 15 of those students have had alcohol, and some seven or eight have binged on alcohol, in the past month. That means they've consumed five or more drinks in a row in a couple of hours. Given all the hoopla surrounding proms, opportunities to imbibe tend to increase. But make no mistake: You've got the power to help your kids avoid alcohol and other drug use. The key is talking with them – often – and being clear about your rules.

- *Talk specifically about any before- or after-parties they plan to go to.* These events can pose big risks. Mix a large group of kids with alcohol or other drugs and the potential is there for a dangerous situation. Make it clear you expect them to avoid such parties. If a party is at a private home, talk with the host parents to ensure responsible adult supervision is planned and how you can support them. If your child's school is planning an after-party, find out the details.

- *Be realistic and hammer out a contingency plan.* Sometimes kids find themselves in risky situations they didn't expect to be in. Let your kids know they can call you or a trusted family friend if they find themselves in an unsafe situation and need a ride home. But be clear they may still face consequences from you, depending on the situation.

- *Talk with your kids about effective ways to refuse offers of alcohol and other drugs.* Again, your teen may end up in a situation that takes them by surprise. Together, practice responses they feel comfortable saying that can effectively remove them from risky situations without embarrassment.

- *Ask lots of questions about the evening's logistics.* Make sure, for example, that you have a good handle on their transportation plan and who they'll be hanging out with before and after the prom. Kids can sometimes fly by the seat of their pants. Your questions will help your teen think things through.

- *Before the prom, connect with the parents of the kids your teen plans to be with.* Share phone numbers and communicate your expectations.

- *Before your son escorts his date out the door, or your daughter steps into the limo, tell them you love and care about them.* And remind them you have confidence in their character and ability to make good decisions.

*This article was written by Oregon Partnership, a statewide nonprofit that promotes healthy kids and communities through drug and alcohol awareness, prevention education programs, and 24-hour crisis lines for treatment referrals and suicide prevention and intervention. To learn more about Oregon Partnership, and for parenting resources, please call 503-244-5211, or visit [www.orphnership.org](http://www.orphnership.org) and [www.faceitparents.com](http://www.faceitparents.com).*