

Fall Semester: A Time for Parents to Revisit Discussions about College Drinking

As college students arrive on campus this fall, it is a time of new experiences, new friendships, and making memories that will last a lifetime. Unfortunately for many, it is also a time of excessive drinking and dealing with its aftermath—vandalism, violence, sexual aggression and even death.

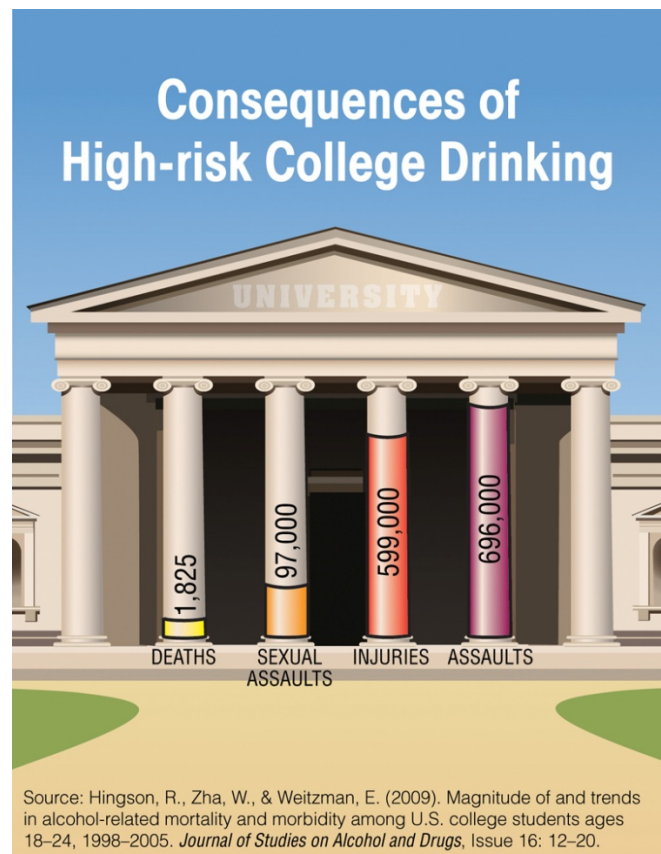
According to research summarized in a College Task Force report to the National Institute on Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism (NIAAA), the consequences of excessive drinking by college students are more significant, more destructive, and more costly than many parents realize. And these consequences affect students whether or not they drink.

Statistics from this report, which were updated recently, indicate that drinking by college students aged 18 to 24 contributes to an estimated 1,825 student deaths, 599,000 injuries, 696,000 assaults by another student who has been drinking, and 97,000 cases of sexual assault or date rape each year.

EARLY WEEKS ARE CRITICAL

As the fall semester begins, parents can use this important time to help prepare their college-age sons and daughters by talking with them about the consequences of excessive drinking.

Some first-year students who live on campus may be at particular risk for alcohol misuse. During their high school years, those who go on to college tend to drink less than their non-college-bound



classmates. However, during subsequent years, the heavy drinking rates of college students surpass those of their non-college peers. This rapid increase in heavy drinking over a relatively short period of time can contribute to serious difficulties with the transition to college.

Anecdotal evidence suggests that the first 6 weeks of the first semester are critical to a first-year student's academic success. Because many students initiate heavy drinking during these early days of college, the potential exists for excessive alcohol consumption to interfere with successful adaptation to campus life. The transition to college is often difficult and about one-third of first-year students fail to enroll for their second year.

PARENTS CAN HELP

During these crucial early weeks, parents can do a variety of things to stay involved. They can inquire about campus alcohol policies, call their sons and daughters frequently, and ask about roommates and living arrangements.

They should also discuss the penalties for underage drinking as well as how alcohol use can lead to date rape, violence, and academic failure.

RESOURCES ARE AVAILABLE

For parents who want to talk to their college-age sons and daughters about the consequences of college drinking, a variety of helpful resources are available from NIAAA.

A special guide for parents offers research-based information, including the need to stay involved during freshman year and how to get assistance if faced with an alcohol-related crisis.

The Task Force's award-winning website, www.collegedrinkingprevention.gov, features this guide along with links to alcohol policies at colleges across the country, an interactive diagram of the human body and how alcohol affects it, an interactive alcohol cost calculator, and the full text of all Task Force materials.

For More Information Visit: www.collegedrinkingprevention.gov

NIH Publication No.12-5640
June 2012

