# April 2023 School Newsletter

## Talking to Youth About Alcohol

Did you know you can start talking to kids about harmful substances as early as 3-5?

April is Alcohol Awareness Month. It’s the perfect time to check in with your children about alcohol. Data shows youth in our three counties think their parents are less concerned with them drinking than the state average. This is worrisome since parents have the biggest influence in preventing alcohol use among their children.

Here are tips on how to talk to your kids about alcohol from the Mental Health & Recovery Services Board’s **Let’s Talk** program.

Children ages 3-5 seek their parents’ approval. That makes this a great time to teach kids about developing a healthy lifestyle. These healthy habits include what not to ingest. Talk to your kids about dangerous substances in their environment like cleaning products or alcohol.

As children get a little older, they become more influenced by their peers and the world around them. Let your child know how you feel about alcohol, tobacco, and other drugs. Keep it factual and focused on the present. Youth struggle with understanding the long-term dangers about substances because the future seems so far away. Focus on the present by explaining how alcohol can spoil the fun of friends or keep them from participating in after school activities.

The most important thing teens need to know is that they can talk to you no matter what. If you notice signs of alcohol use, show concern and interest. Start with, “I’m worried about you,” or “I’ve noticed your grades have dropped.” Intervene and be direct. Don’t forgot to show your love with “I love you” and a hug. Learn more about talking to your child and find video examples at letstalk.care.

If you have concerns about alcohol and substance use with your middle schooler or high schooler, consider referring them to the I Mind Program.

**I Mind** is a voluntary one-day program, with offerings in Lima, Kenton and St. Marys, that gives youth the tools to avoid substance use. The program also helps students return to school or after-school programs as quickly as possible after discipline measures. Topics include alcohol, vaping, smoking, marijuana, and other drugs. Each student will take a SASSI screening to assess substance use disorders. Parents will receive screening results at a later time. The school will not have access to the results.

Parents can refer their children to the program if they have concerns about substance use before any school policies are violated. Go to wecarepeople.org/imindprogram.

WE NEED YOUR HELP!

The Mental Health and Recovery Board of Allen, Auglaize and Hardin Counties needs your anonymous feedback as we create a strategic plan to carry the organization through the next three years. Take the survey at <https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/NMWKJD6>

