

Beginning this month, during the school year, NNHS will distribute a new, monthly "Healthy Huskies Letter." The goal of the newsletter is to enhance our the school's partnership with families, particularly by sharing our knowledge of various topics related to your child's social, emotional, and physical health, and what the our school and our families can do to promote student healthiness. Each issue will address a different health topic and will contain resources for further exploration of that topic. Staff at NNHS as well as the School, Family, Community Partnership (SFCP), will be advisors for these newsletters; we encourage parents and students to suggest topics and resources. Send suggestions to kpobst@naperville203.org.

Healthy Huskies Letter

Vol. 1, No. 1, November 1, 2012

According to the latest *Power of Choice* survey (2012), only 29% of high school students reported that their parents talked to them about their family's rules against underage drinking. In our school of about 3100 students, approximately 900 students heard from their parents, but over 2200 students did not. The primary work of NNHS is academic preparation; most of our staff members are classroom teachers. However, we also have staff with expertise in healthy teen decision making. We often work with students and families who struggle with the consequences of not making healthy decisions. We want to share with you the expertise acquired through experience and training.

Lately, there has been a lot of attention paid to young adult substance abuse in DuPage County, particularly to the scourge of heroin. Our data shows that most NNHS students are making healthy decisions, rejecting drug and alcohol use. We do not have any indication that substance use by teens at NNHS is any greater than it has been throughout the last decade or greater than other DuPage high schools. However, we are concerned if any student uses illegal substances; the risk to their health, future, and life is real. The staff of NNHS is committed to partnering with families to help our young adults make healthy decisions.

Experts in substance abuse prevention are clear about a crucial factor in teen decision-making: parents are the "anti-drug." Before the world embraced texting, Facebook, and other social media, face-to-face conversations were more common between parents and their sons and daughters. Research tells us that parent opinions positively influence their teens, especially conversations about the most challenging decisions they will face. We encourage you to have these important conversations with your teens.

Specifically what can a parent do?

TALK

- Educate yourself. Become knowledgeable about current patterns of drug use and addiction.
- Be clear. Talk to your son or daughter about the consequences your teen will face if they break your family's rules against underage drinking and drug use.
- Disapprove. Tell your teen and his or her friends that you do not approve of teens using alcohol, tobacco, and other drugs.
- Family. Talk about how drug use not only affects your child, but family and friends as well.
- Set a good example. Model behaviors you want your children to emulate; your actions can drown-out your words.
- Legal consequences. Discuss negative consequences your child would face if he or she breaks the laws regarding use of illegal substances.

- Persist. Remind and repeat, again and again!

ACT

- Love. Your vigilance is genuinely a good way to love your child.
- Limits. Curfews, expectations, and rules are not oppressive, they are caring and smart. Set limits.
- Instincts. If you sense that your son or daughter may be using, you are probably correct. Trust your instincts.
- Check. It is not wrong to snoop. Check your child's room for alcohol, drugs and paraphernalia.
- Check-in. Make sure your child checks-in with you when they come home from events; look at their eyes and smell their breath.
- Monitor. Keep track of the prescriptions and alcohol in your house.
- Confront. Respectfully confront your child if you think they are using; do it in a way that keeps them talking to you.
- Breathe. Take a deep breath when you hear things you don't want to hear. Listen. Keep communication open.

REACH OUT

- Consult. Contact school staff, especially Nurses, Social Workers and Guidance Counselors (see contact information below).
- Seek. There are many resources in the community and online that can provide advice, intervention and education (see list below).
- Reach Out. Not talking about "it" is a bad idea. If your child is using, this is no time to isolate yourself. Get over being embarrassed. Seek advice and help. Turn to your extended family. Talk to your friends. Your friends will understand, and if they don't, your child's health and future matter more than those friendships. The parents of young adults who have passed away from drug abuse consistently say that they made the mistake of withdrawing and isolating themselves because of the stigma attached to having a child involved in drugs and alcohol.

RESOURCES

[NNHS Social Workers, Nurses and Guidance Counselors](#)

Local Resources:

360 Youth Services, 630-717-9408

Naperville Police Social Workers, 630-420-6666

Rosecrance Health Network, 630-849-4295

Linden Oaks (Edward Hospital) 630-305-5500

Breaking Free, 630-4897-1003

Stepping Stones Treatment and Recovery Center, 815-744-4555

Timberline Knolls, 630-257-9600

Websites:

www.thepowerofchoice.info

www.theantidrug.com

www.drugabuse.gov

www.drugfree.org

www.robertcrown.org/HeroinEducation/index.html

www.monitoringthefuture.org
www.dea.gov

Please, invest the time to talk now before the poor choices are made. If you make the time to talk to your child now, when he or she is a young teen, the consequences of his or her substance use can be modest. If you wait to have the conversations, or you avoid them entirely, the consequences of his or her use can be much worse. Your conversations could even be the difference between life and death.

Please, consider Naperville North High School to be your partner.