

MISSION STATEMENT

The Office of Alcohol & Other Drug Services (AODS) is a multidimensional resource for students - and for faculty, staff, and members of the larger Harvard University community who may have concerns about students - offering a wide range of programs and services aimed at reducing the negative consequences associated with heavy, episodic drinking and substance abuse through prevention, education, intervention, policy development and coordination with treatment providers. AODS collaborates with students and staff throughout the University to create a comprehensive substance abuse prevention program focused on the health and safety of Harvard students.

AODS STAFF

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PROGRAMS & SERVICES FOR STUDENTS

- **Individual Consultations**
Confidential consultations are offered by appointment.
- **Drug & Alcohol Peer Advisor (DAPA) Program**
DAPAs are a select group of students who are trained to respond to questions about alcohol and other drug issues at Harvard. In their role as health-opinion leaders, DAPAs help to inform programs, policies, and other prevention strategies overseen by AODS.
- **Harvard Proof**
Harvard Proof is an online alcohol education program that was developed, written and produced by leaders in the Drug & Alcohol Peer Advisor (DAPA) program and AODS staff.
- **Freshman Workshops**
Required during Orientation, these discussions—led by DAPAs—engage first-year students in concretely preparing for decisions about alcohol use. College resources at their disposal are also outlined.
- **Brief Alcohol Screening & Intervention for College Students (BASICS)**
Certified BASICS Providers are trained to explore a student's relationship with alcohol during this two-session individual assessment. Personalized feedback and comparisons to campus norms are provided.
- **Alcohol Communication & Education Skills (ACES)**
This interactive training—designed to initiate effective conversations about harm-reduction practices—is focused on the physiology of alcohol and skills related to recognition and facilitation of crisis response.
- **National Alcohol Screening Day® (NASD)**
NASD is an annual event that provides information about alcohol and health, as well as free, anonymous screening for alcohol use problems.



A Guide for Parents

“We view parents as partners in prevention and education.”

*~ Ryan Travia,
Director, AODS*

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Department of Health Promotion & Education



HARVARD UNIVERSITY
Health Services

RESOURCES FOR PARENTS

As your student prepares for life at Harvard College, we at Harvard University Health Services invite you to consider the choices that s/he may face regarding alcohol and other drugs. Although many students choose not to drink while at college, alcohol is frequently present at events or in social settings. This guide provides information about drinking at college, as well as resources for communicating about alcohol, college life, and healthy decision-making.



What's a parent to do?

It is illegal in the state of Massachusetts for individuals under 21 years of age to consume alcohol, and there may be consequences for breaking the law or violating campus policy. Still, many students will choose to drink before they reach the minimum legal drinking age—therefore, it is important to have open and honest conversations about such issues before your student departs. Following are a few considerations in broaching these topics:

- ◆ **Explore your own attitudes and behaviors related to alcohol and drinking.**

Not surprisingly, adolescents often adopt the patterns of those around them, particularly related to alcohol and drug use. Consider the frequency with which you drink; the amount, if any, that is typically consumed; and what these and related factors may mean for your student—and his or her expectations—once he or she is at college.

- ◆ **Communicate with your student early, openly and frequently.**

Although conversations about the use of alcohol and other drugs can be uncomfortable, they are invaluable. Ask questions often throughout the college years—not just during his or her first year.

- ◆ **Be clear about your expectations.**

Your views regarding the use of substances will bear significant weight for your student. Take time to be explicit about what behaviors you find acceptable and others that you may oppose. When outlining such expectations, work with your student to develop concrete and realistic strategies for making healthy decisions.

- ◆ **Familiarize yourself with campus resources.**

Members of the Harvard community are available to outline and reinforce alcohol-related education and prevention for you and your student. AODS offers several comprehensive programs that can be tailored to meet the needs of individuals or student groups (see reverse page).

- ◆ **Discuss violations of campus policy from a non-judgmental stance.**

If confronted with a violation of campus policy, state law, or health-related concern, approaching the issue in a non-judgmental way can improve communication. AODS staff are also available to offer guidance for discussing such topics.

The Science Behind Substance Use



High-risk alcohol use can have significant long- and short-term effects on students' cognitive growth. In fact, certain functions of the adolescent brain (such as risk assessment, decision-making and reasoning) do not fully mature until most individuals have reached their mid-20s.

Areas that are most susceptible to the adverse effects of alcohol are the **hippocampus**, which controls learning and memory; and the **prefrontal lobe**, which contributes to the formation of adult personality and behavior.

To avoid negative consequences of unhealthy drinking, it is imperative that students understand the difference between the use—and misuse—of alcohol. Practices that are correlated to both long- and short-term negative consequences are considered “high risk”. They are compared to “low-risk” behaviors in the following chart:

Low-Risk Drinking:	High-Risk Drinking:
Abstaining or pacing drinks to one or fewer per hour	Drinking games, taking shots, or pre-gaming
Alternating between alcoholic and non-alcoholic drinks	Drinking quickly or beyond one's tolerance
Staying hydrated	Leaving drinks unattended
Eating substantially right before or while drinking	Mixing alcohol with medications or other drugs

For more information about issues related to alcohol and safe decision-making at Harvard, please visit the following online resources:

Office of Alcohol & Other Drug Services aods.harvard.edu
Drug & Alcohol Peer Advisors (DAPA) harvarddapa.org