

STRAIGHT TALK

**DIRECT AND HONEST CONVERSATIONS
TO HAVE WITH YOUR CHILD**



Shelby County Drug Free Coalition
A Program of Family Connection
www.shelbycountdrugfreecoalition.org

This handbook is made possible with the support of:

Shelby County Drug Free Coalition
Shelby County District Attorney's Office
Shelby County Drug Enforcement Task Force
Shelby County Juvenile Court
Shelby County Schools
Shelby County Sheriff
Bradford Health Services
Family Connection, Inc.

STRAIGHT TALK...

We are providing this handbook as a tool to help you develop an increased awareness of the situations that put your child at risk. It should help you handle the difficult situations your child may encounter as they progress through their adolescence. Please take the time to review this handbook and keep it available for future references.

The Shelby County Drug Free Coalition

Table of Contents

| | |
|----------------------------------|-----------|
| Substance Abuse..... | Pages 3-5 |
| Warning Signs and Resources..... | Pages 6-7 |
| Online Safety..... | Pages 8-9 |
| Bullying Prevention..... | Page 10 |
| Teen Safe Driving..... | Page 11 |
| Sexting..... | Page 11 |

“Peer pressure on children and teens in Shelby County is unbelievable! Parents MUST be an example, encouragement and excuse for their children. Parents must teach their children to be drug/alcohol free by being a good example and not using or permitting usage in their home. Parents must be their child’s “excuse” not to use. Allow them to tell their friends that they cannot use drugs/alcohol because their parent will test them by being awake and talking with them when they get home or using an over-the-counter drug testing kit. Praise your children and let them know that you’re proud of them and that, although times may be tough now, better things are to come.”

Jim Kramer, Shelby County Juvenile Court Judge

“Parent must exhibit responsible behaviors to their children along with consistently enforcing standards of conduct. Being a parent is the most important position a person holds. It’s more important to be a parent rather than a best friend”

Alex Dudchock, Shelby County Manager

Parents are a Powerful Influence...

As a parent, you have a powerful influence on your children. You can do more to shape their views than any other influence in their lives. By communicating with them about the harmful effects of using drugs, you can help deter them from substance abuse. Actions are as important as words. It is important to set a positive example; get involved in your children's lives by knowing their friends, where they are going and what they are doing; set clear rules and enforce them with set consequences. Talk early about substance abuse and talk often!

Tip #1: TUNE IN

Research shows that children who do well academically and socially and stay drug-free have close relationships with their parents. Spend time together regularly doing things they enjoy. Acknowledge positive qualities and behaviors.

Tip #2: GUIDE YOUR CHILD

Discuss your expectations and set clear rules which provide support and structure for young people.

Tip #3: SET A GOOD EXAMPLE

Parents who set a good example through their relationships and social skills have children who do better in the areas of school, employment, relationships, communication and other life skills.

Tip #4: RESPECT YOUR CHILD

As children work on gaining independence, they want opportunities to assert their own identities and make their own decisions. Make time to listen and respond to your children's fears and concerns.

“Don't be a friend. Be a parent.” *Chris Curry, Shelby County Sheriff*

“Education, awareness and parental involvement are the keys to keeping your child drug-free during their teenage years.”

Randy Fuller, Superintendent, Shelby County Schools

Know the Facts...

It is never too early to start talking to your children about drug use and help them understand the facts. The sooner you start talking to your child about drugs and alcohol, the better prepared they will be to make the right decisions.



2011 Shelby County Middle/High School Student Pride Survey Survey conducted annually by Shelby County Schools

| Percentage who reported... | Middle School Students | High School Students |
|------------------------------|------------------------|----------------------|
| Drinking any alcohol monthly | 8.3% | 28.9% |
| Using cigarettes monthly | 6.6% | 21.5% |
| Using marijuana monthly | 5.6% | 21.3% |

Do your parents talk to you about the problems of tobacco, alcohol and drug use? (2010 Pride Survey)

| Students | Never | Seldom | Sometimes | Often | A Lot |
|----------|-------|--------|-----------|-------|-------|
| 6-12 | 15.5% | 17.9% | 27.8% | 19.3% | 19.5% |

Approximately 45% of 6th-12th grade students that are involved in school activities report that they never or seldom use drugs. (2010)

Approximately 98% of 6th-12th grade students that make good grades report that they never use drugs. (2010)

Note: The Pride Survey is an official measure of adolescent use in the nation. Visit Shelby County Schools website for full results: www.shelbyed.k12.al.us/student_serv/pridesurvey.htm

“Parents must talk openly with their children about the tremendous danger drug use poses to their health, their happiness, and even their lives.”
Robby Owens, Shelby County District Attorney

www.shelbycountydrugfreecoalition.org

Parent's Liability...

- You can be **sued** for money damages if you are aware of a minor (under age 21) drinking in your “residence” without taking appropriate steps to stop it when injury results.
- You can be **prosecuted criminally** if you are aware of a minor drinking at your “residence” and you do not take the required action to stop it, even if no injury results.

Consequences for your Child...

What happens if my child chooses to drink alcohol and drive?

- They can have their driver’s license revoked and be prosecuted criminally for drinking and driving with only a .02% blood alcohol content (this is just one serving of alcohol).

Can my child lose their driver’s license if they are caught with alcohol, even if they are not near a vehicle?

- YES, they are subject to the loss of their driver’s license for consuming or possessing alcohol regardless of where or when.

What if my child is in a vehicle with someone else who has alcohol?

- It is illegal anywhere in Alabama for anyone under 21 to possess alcohol, therefore, everyone in the vehicle is subject to detention and a petition being filed in Juvenile Court.

What if my child is not drinking, just holding someone’s drink?

- It is illegal for anyone under 21 to even hold someone else’s drink. If they are in possession of the alcohol, they are subject to arrest and loss of driving privileges.

Is my child safe from arrest if they are the designated driver?

- NO, if other minors (under age 21) in the vehicle possess alcohol, your child is just as guilty.

Be Alert for Warning Signs...

Mood swings and unpredictable behavior are sometimes evidence of teenage “growing pains” but can also point to use of drugs or alcohol. The best way to make the distinction is to be ready to respond when multiple factors appear—especially those that seem extreme and continue for more than a few days or weeks. These factors can directly impact your child’s behavior and personality. Be aware of any unexplained changes and know the potential warning signs that can include:

- **Behavioral Changes:** Change in eating and sleeping habits; depressed; always tired; hostile; uncooperative; frequently breaks curfew; loss of interest in favorite sports and hobbies; or struggles with concentration.

- **Physical Changes:** Careless about personal grooming; extreme weight loss or weight gain; chronic cough or other indications of unexplained, ongoing minor illness; slurred speech; shaky hands; clothes, hair or breath have smoky smell; or dilated eyes.

- **Academic Changes:** Sudden and unexplained drop in grades; lateness or absence from school; disrespect/defiance towards teachers; or inability to stay focused on homework.

- **Evidence of Use:** Rolling papers; small medicine bottles; eye drops; butane lighters; soft drink cans with false bottoms; or pipes.



www.shelbycountydrugfreecoalition.org

Know who to Call for Help...

Local Contacts:

- School Counselors - Contact your child's school counselor
- Bradford Health Services - 205.621.4429
- Chilton-Shelby Mental Health - 205.685.9535
- Family Connection - 205.663.6301
- Juvenile Court Services - 205.669.3831
- The Freedom Source - www.thefreedomsorce.com

If you decide to consult a clinician, ask if that person has specific experience and/or credentials working with adolescents and substance abuse. Not everyone is an expert in this field.

Support Groups: Provide a safe, confidential forum for exploring and discussing your situation, introductions to others who have faced similar circumstances and support through a local chapter.

- Alcoholics Anonymous: birminghamaa.org
- Al-Anon and Alateen: www.bham-al-anon.com
- Narcotics Anonymous: www.alnwfl.org

Other Support: National Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration Hotline provides direct referral for assistance - 1.800.662.4357.

Emergency: In an emergency situation when someone appears to be suffering from impairment, other side effects of alcohol or illicit drug use or where a risk to life or limb is present...**CALL 911.**

Reporting Concerns:

Shelby County Sheriff's Office Secret Witness Line
205.669.9116 or 205.669.4181

Shelby County Schools Tip Line
205.682.5919

Online Sexual Exploitation...

There are individuals who attempt to sexually exploit children through the use of the internet. These individuals may attempt to gradually seduce their targets through the use of attention, affection, kindness and even gifts. Other individuals immediately engage in sexually explicit conversations to collect and trade child pornographic images. As soon as your child is using a computer, a cell phone or any mobile device, it is time to talk to them about online behavior, safety and security.

Warning Signs of At-Risk Children:

- Your child spends a large amount of time online, especially at night.
- You find pornography on your child's computer.
- Your child receives phone calls from people you do not know or is making calls to numbers you do not recognize.
- Your child turns the computer monitor off or quickly changes the screen when you come into the room.
- Your child is using an online account belonging to someone else.

What Parents Can Do:

- Communicate and talk to your child about sexual victimization and potential online danger.
- Spend time with your children online. Have them teach you about their favorite online destinations.
- Keep the computer in a common room in the house. It is much more difficult for a computer sex offender to communicate with a child when the computer screen is visible to a parent or another member of the household.
- Utilize parental controls provided by your service provider and/or blocking software.
- Maintain access to your child's online account and check his/her email.

Source: FBI - Parent Guide to Internet Safety

Safeguarding Children on Social Networks...

To help keep your children safe, pay attention to social networking sites such as Facebook. Talk to your child about how to safeguard their information even when socializing with their friends online.



Keep your child safe while using social networks:

- Teach your child to never give personal information over the internet such as name, address, telephone number, password, parents' names, the name of any club or team they are involved in at school or their school's name.
- Remind your children that once they post information online, they cannot take it back. The information they post becomes public and permanent.
- Pay attention to online photos. Know the type of photo your child is posting online.
- Use privacy settings to restrict who can access and post on your child's profile.
- Instruct your child never to plan a face-to-face meeting.
- Know your child's online friends.
- Create a safe screen name (no personal information). Set limits and monitor the amount of time your child spends online. Establish online rules and make an agreement with your child about internet use at home and outside of the home. Encourage your children to talk to you about their concerns.

Source: Netcetera (www.onguardonline.gov)

Bullying is Serious...

Bullying among children is aggressive behavior that is intentional and involves an imbalance of power and strength. Bullies use their power to control or harm. Types of bullying include name-calling, teasing, spreading rumors, leaving people out on purpose, breaking up friendships, hitting, punching, shoving and using the internet, cell phones or other digital technologies to harm others.

Teach your child how to handle bullying:

- **Stay Calm.** Bullies love a reaction so do not give them one.
- **Do not fight back.** You may get hurt or make the situation worse. Bullies want attention and fighting back only gives them what they want.
- **Avoid vulnerable situations.** Walk to school earlier or later and walk with others. Do not be alone in the hallways or restrooms.
- **Do not be afraid to tell adults.**
- **Never give out or share personal information online.**
- **Do not erase or delete messages from cyber bullies.** You do not have to read it, but keep it. It is your evidence. The police and your Internet Service Provider and/or your telephone company can use these messages to help you.



What parents can do:

- Work with your child's school to help address bullying effectively. Ask for the school policy for handling incidents of bullying or harassment.
- Ask to be notified if your child becomes involved in an incident.
- Report any incidents that occur and keep good records.

Teen Safe Driving...

Motor vehicle accidents are the leading cause of death for 16-20 year olds. Teens drive only 3% of all miles driven but account for 14% of driving fatalities.

PARENTS TEACH YOUR CHILD THE ACRONYM: P.A.S.T.

Passengers: Limit passengers to reduce distractions

Alcohol: Never drink and drive

Seatbelts: Always use them

Texting: Do not text and drive

Sexting....

“Sexting” refers to youth (under the age of 18) sending sexually explicit messages or sexually explicit photos of themselves or others by using cell phones, computers, web cams, digital camera and/or certain video game systems. In Alabama, sexting can result in possible charges of creating, possessing and distributing child pornography.

Make sure to review your house rules for online conduct with your children before giving them access to new web-enabled technologies. Along with discussing your expectations for their behavior, discuss the consequences for failing to meet those expectations, such as limited access to the web and texting functions. If children ignore the rules, consider removing cell phones all together; however, this should be your last resort. Technology is not going anywhere, and it is important that children learn how to use it appropriately.

Talk to them early and often about how digital information and images may travel very far, very quickly. Make it absolutely clear to youth that the moment they send a digital image of themselves, they completely lose control of what happens to it next.

GET INVOLVED

Shelby County Drug Free Coalition

The Shelby County Drug Free Coalition is a county-wide network of individuals and organizations who are committed to the reduction of underage use of alcohol and drugs. Members represent education, law enforcement, mental health and substance abuse professionals, nonprofit agencies, businesses, faith-based groups and concerned parents and citizens. We have an open membership policy and anyone that shares our mission is welcome to join.

MISSION...to enhance the safety of our community by preventing drug abuse among youth and by promoting initiatives that improve the well-being of our citizens.



You Can Make a Difference
Be Educated-Be Aware-Be Involved!



For more information, contact the coalition at
205.663.6301

www.shelbycountydrugfreecoalition.org