

# What You Need to Know About Raising Safe and Drug-Free Children and Teens

**TIPS AND ADVICE FOR PARENTS  
AND OTHER CARING ADULTS**

*Sponsored by:*

SHELBY COUNTY DRUG FREE COALITION  
SHELBY COUNTY DISTRICT ATTORNEY'S OFFICE  
SHELBY COUNTY DRUG ENFORCEMENT TASK FORCE  
SHELBY COUNTY JUVENILE COURT  
SHELBY COUNTY SCHOOLS  
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FAMILY CONNECTION, INC.



[www.shelbycountdrugfreecoalition.org](http://www.shelbycountdrugfreecoalition.org)



Dear Parent,

Navigating through your child's early and teen years can be difficult. Research shows that children who learn from their parents about the dangers of underage drinking, illicit drugs, tobacco use, dangerous driving and other risky behaviors are less likely to become involved in these unsafe activities.

This booklet provides the information you need to help guide your child to a healthy life. It provides advice that is simple and easy to follow on setting expectations and rules, monitoring your teen and being a good role model. It also includes advice for safeguarding your child while on the internet and tips for parents of teen drivers.

Whether you are a mom or dad, single or married, grandparent or other caregiver, this handbook provides tips and advice that you can use. The Shelby County Drug Free Coalition thanks you for taking the time to focus on your child's future. It's an investment you will never regret!

Please visit our website for more information and helpful resources for parents and caregivers.

[www.shelbycountdrugfreecoalition.org](http://www.shelbycountdrugfreecoalition.org)

# A Message from Shelby County's Community Leaders

## Because You Matter...

*“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 are proud of them and that, although times may be tough now, better things are to come.”*

■ **JIM KRAMER** | *Shelby County Juvenile Court Judge*

*“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*

*“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*

*“Parents must know their children’s friends — and the parents of those friends — to determine that their values and expectations are consistent.”*

■ **ALEX DUDCHOCK** | *Shelby County Manager*

# Know the Facts...

**It is vital that parents be informed. By age 10, many children have already decided whether they are going to experiment with substances or not. It is never too early to start talking to your children.**

**Visit Shelby County Schools' Student Services website to see Pride Survey results for Shelby County and to stay informed of changing trends in this community.**

**[www.shelbyed.k12.al.us/parentresources/student\\_serv/index.htm](http://www.shelbyed.k12.al.us/parentresources/student_serv/index.htm)**

The Pride Survey was designated by Congress as an official measure of adolescent drug use in the nation. Pride offers anonymous surveys for students, teachers and parents.

## 2009 Shelby County Middle/High School Students Pride Survey Results

	Middle School Students	High School Students
Drink Any Alcohol Monthly	8.6%	28.5%
Use Any Tobacco Monthly	8.7%	26.0%
Use Marijuana Monthly	4.4%	16.3%

### *Students who use marijuana at home or at a friend's house*

Students	At Home	At Friend's House
Juniors	7.1%	17.1%
Seniors	8.4%	16.5%

### *Students who use alcohol at home or at a friend's house*

Students	At Home	At Friend's House
Juniors	17.8%	32.2%
Seniors	16.8%	36.1%

### *Do your parents talk to you about the problems of tobacco, alcohol and drug use?*

Students	Never	Seldom	Sometimes	Often	A Lot
6-12	15.0%	18.6%	29.2%	19.1%	18.2%

*Approximately 50% of 6th-12th grade students that are involved in school activities report that they never or seldom use drugs.*

*Approximately 78% of 6th-12th grade students that make good grades report that they never use drugs.*

# There are important facts you need to know about liability and consequences related to drug and alcohol use



## PARENTS:

- 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.
- Your teenager can have his/her 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) and suspended for being in possession of alcohol.  
(Alabama Code Section 32-5A-191)

## CONSEQUENCES FOR YOUR CHILD:

*Can I lose my driver’s license if caught with alcohol, even if I was not near a car?*

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

*What if I am in the car with someone else who has alcohol?*

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

*What if I am not drinking, just holding someone’s drink?*

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

*Am I safe from arrest if I am the designated driver?*

- NO, if other students in the car possess alcohol, you are just as guilty.

*What is the legal consequence of taking another person’s prescription medication?*

- If you take or are in possession of a prescription medication not prescribed to you, you have committed a Class C felony that can carry a penalty of no more than 10 years but no less than 1 year of imprisonment.

Experts have identified practical parenting skills that can help prevent a wide range of risky behaviors among children and teens and lead to healthy well-adjusted youth.

## **PRINCIPLE #1: Tune In**

The common thread among children who do well academically and socially and stay drug-free is that they have close relationships with their parents.

**Here are some ways to foster a close relationship with your child:**

- Spend time together regularly doing things they enjoy.
- Talk openly and honestly.
- Acknowledge the positive qualities and behaviors of your child.

## **PRINCIPLE #2: Guide Your Child**

Expectations and rules provide support and structure for young people dealing with new situations and challenges. It is important to discuss your expectations and set clear rules.

**Here is some advice for setting consequences:**

- Consequences need to be practical for the parent. You must be able and willing to enforce them consistently if they are to be effective.
- Follow through. Many parents have trouble upholding consequences consistently, and their children are often aware of it.
- Set some rewards and special privileges for your child when following the rules.
- Allow your child to weigh in on some of the rules, but maintain the final say.
- Be specific when it comes to rules about substance use. Tell your child they are not permitted to use tobacco, alcohol or illicit drugs.
- Don't forget to address misuse of prescription and over-the-counter medications. Tell your child that taking these drugs without a prescription or a doctor's approval can be dangerous.
- Let your teens know you will be monitoring them so they know what to expect.
- Be the excuse for your child not using drugs. Be awake when they come home and ask questions.
- Teach your child to follow all laws, including driving laws.

## **PRINCIPLE #3: Be A Good Role Model**

You may not realize it, but your actions communicate a great deal to your child. Parents who set a good example through their relationships and social skills have children who do better in the areas of school, employment, relationships, communications, coping and other life skills.

**How to be a good example:**

- Don't smoke. If you smoke, quit for your own health as well as that of your family's.
- Don't allow your child to drink or smoke in your home.
- Don't provide alcohol to teenagers in your home. It's not safe, it sends your child the wrong message and you will be breaking the law.
- Don't involve your teen in your use, such as asking him or her to get you a beer or a cigarette.
- Never drink and drive and follow all driving laws.
- Enlist other family members or friends to serve as positive role models for your teen.

## PRINCIPLE #4: Respect Your Child

As children work on gaining independence, they want opportunities to assert their own identities and make their own decisions. They're craving respect for their ideas, opinions and beliefs.

### Here are ways to build respect in your relationship with your child:

- Stay involved, but give your child the privacy and space to be an individual.
- Encourage your child to develop and express his or her own opinions and ideas.
- Don't be dismissive of your child's beliefs if you don't agree with them. Instead, learn to engage your child in a healthy debate.
- Make time to listen and be responsive to your child's fears and concerns.
- When you have to criticize or discipline your child, focus on the behavior, not on your child.
- Don't call your child names or use hurtful language.
- Appreciate and acknowledge their unique interests, skills and strengths.

## Checklist for Parents

### TRY TO DO THIS DAILY:

- ✓ Know your child's main activities and plans for the day.
- ✓ Know where your child is when you are at work or not otherwise with them, including who they are with.
- ✓ At the end of the day, ask about your child's activities.
- ✓ Praise and thank your child for good behavior.
- ✓ Check that homework and other responsibilities have been completed.
- ✓ Try to have family meals together.

### TRY TO DO THIS WEEKLY:

- ✓ Set 20 minutes aside to find out how friendships are going, what's happening at school and what other events are important in your child's life.
- ✓ Ask your child mid-week if there are any special plans for the weekend that require your input.
- ✓ Every once in a while, check that your children are where they say they are going to be.
- ✓ Encourage your child to have a friend over or do fun activities together.

### TRY TO DO THIS MONTHLY:

- ✓ Make sure you've had at least a couple of individual activities or outings with your child. Plan one special family event or activity.
- ✓ Check-in with your child to see what has taken up his or her time and interest this month, including who they are spending time with and what they are doing.
- ✓ Get a report from teachers on your child's school progress.
- ✓ Determine what your child has spent their money on during the month.
- ✓ Stay up-to-date on news and trends among children in the area. Talk with other parents and discuss concerns with your child. Check with local youth organizations to find out about problems in your community.
- ✓ Check in with your child about rules. If they've been doing well, then be flexible and reward them in meaningful ways. When your child is ready, allow them more freedoms. Discuss any new rules or limits for new activities.

# Protect Your Child Online

**The online world can come with many risks that children may not realize. They can be exposed to:**

**Inappropriate Conduct:** They may say things online that they may never say in person because they feel the online world is anonymous.

**Inappropriate Contact:** They can be exposed to bullies, predators, hackers or scammers.

**Inappropriate Content:** They can be exposed to pornography, violence or hate speech.

## THERE ARE STEPS YOU CAN TAKE TO SAFEGUARD YOUR CHILDREN

### YOUNG CHILDREN:

When very young children start using a computer, they should be supervised closely by a parent or caregiver. Parents may wish to choose the websites their kids visit early on and not let them leave those sites. You may want to restrict access to only the sites that you have visited and know to be appropriate. Visit the following websites for more tips:

[www.netsmartz.org](http://www.netsmartz.org)  
[www.onguardonline.gov](http://www.onguardonline.gov)

### TWEENS (AGES 8-12):

It is important to be with your child or nearby when they are online. For this age group, consider keeping the computer in an area where the child has access to you or another adult. Consider parental controls—including filtering or monitoring tools. However, your supervision is still needed as many middle school students can get around these. Consider setting limits on how often they can be online and how long those sessions should be.

### TEENS:

Teens have more internet access through cell phones, mobile devices or friends' computers, as well as more time to themselves. So it is not realistic to try to always be in the same room as your teens when they are online. They need to know that you or other family members can walk in and out of the room any time and can ask them what they are doing online.

Stress that the people on the internet may not be who they appear to be and that once something is posted online, it is close to impossible to take back. Remind them that there are real people behind screen names, and they need to be considerate of others' feelings and what they are saying.

It is important to set expectations for internet usage and behaviors and to plan consequences if rules are broken.

# Social Networking Tips for Parents

The best protection for your child online is you. Start talking to your child early about how to safeguard their information even when socializing with their friends.

## Discussion Points for Parents:

- Remind your children that online actions can have consequences off-line.
- Explain to your children that they should only post information that they are comfortable with others seeing, especially photos.
- Remind your children that once they post information online, they cannot take it back.
- Use privacy settings to restrict who can access and post on your child's profile.
- Review your child's friends list.
- Talk to your teens about avoiding sex talk online.
- Know what your children are doing and who they are talking to.
- Encourage your children to trust their gut if they have suspicions and talk to you.
- Tell your children not to impersonate someone else.
- Create a safe screen name. Do not include their name, birth date, home address or phone number in part or in whole.
- Help your children understand what information should stay private, especially their full name, birth date, home address or phone number.

## Sexting

**Sending or forwarding sexually explicit photos, videos or messages from a mobile phone is known as "sexting". If your child takes a sexually suggestive or nude photo and sends it to another person, this is a crime. It is also a crime for any child to be in possession of these types of pictures or forwarding them to someone else. Tell your kids not to do it. In addition to risking their reputation and their friendships, make sure they know they are breaking the law if they create, forward or even save this kind of message. Teens may be less likely to make a bad choice if they know the consequences.**



# Teen Safe Driving Initiative

## Parents/Peers Advocating for Safe Travel

### Did You Know?

Motor vehicle accidents are the leading cause of death for 16-20 year olds. Teens drive 3% of miles driven but account for 14% of driving fatalities. There are certain behaviors that cause many teen driving accidents.

### Remember PAST: Passengers, Alcohol, Seatbelts, Technology/Texting

**P:** Teen drivers are inexperienced. Passengers are a distraction. Studies show that the risk of accidents increase when passengers are added to a teen's car.

**A:** Nationally, alcohol was cited as a factor in 13.1% of teen fatal crashes.

**S:** Studies have shown that teenagers have the lowest rate of seatbelt use when compared with other age groups. Nationally, not wearing seatbelts was cited as a factor in 37.7% of teen fatal crashes.

**T:** Cell phones, iPods, mp3 players, computers and other technologies are a distraction for already inexperienced drivers.

### What Can You Do?

Establish a parent-teen driving contract before allowing your child to drive alone. Limit the number of passengers, reinforce rules against alcohol use, establish seatbelt rules and ban the use of technology while driving. Establish consequences for breaking these rules.

Visit [www.allstateteendriver.com/contract](http://www.allstateteendriver.com/contract) to create your own contract.

### Parents Teach Your Teens Four Steps to Save a Life

<b>Passengers:</b>	<b>Limit passengers to reduce distractions</b>
<b>Alcohol:</b>	<b>Never drink and drive</b>
<b>Seatbelts:</b>	<b>Driver and passengers must always buckle-up</b>
<b>Technology:</b>	<b>Turn off cell phones and set up iPods before starting the car</b>

**Even as a passenger, teens should speak-up to keep them and their friends safe.**



# Help and Local Resources

**Our community offers two anonymous tip lines for residents to report suspicious or illegal activities.**

**Shelby County Sheriff's Office Secret Witness Line**  
205-669-9116 or 205-669-4181

**Shelby County Schools Tip Line**  
205-682-5919

## How To Spot Drug or Alcohol Use

Mood swings and unpredictable behavior are sometimes evidence of teenage "growing pains," but can also point to use of drugs or alcohol. Be aware of any unexplained changes and know the potential warning signs:

- She's withdrawn, depressed, tired or careless about her personal grooming.
- He's hostile, uncooperative and frequently breaks curfew.
- Her relationships with family members have deteriorated.
- He's hanging around with a new group of friends.
- Her grades have slipped and she's missing school.
- He's lost interest in hobbies, sports and other favorite activities.
- Her eating and sleeping patterns have changed; she's up at night and sleeps during the day.
- He has a hard time concentrating.
- Her eyes are red-rimmed and her nose is runny, but she doesn't have allergies or a cold.
- Household money has been disappearing.
- You have found any of the following in your home: pipes, rolling papers, small medicine bottles, eye drops, butane lighters, homemade pipes or bongs (pipes that use water as a filter) made from soda cans or plastic beverage containers.

## CONTACTS

### **School Counselors**

(Call your local school)

### **Family Connection, Inc.**

663-6301

### **Bradford Health Services**

621-4429

### **Chilton-Shelby Mental Health**

685-9535

### **Juvenile Court Services**

669-3831

### **The Freedom Source**

[www.thefreedomsources.com](http://www.thefreedomsources.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. Try to work with someone certified to do this type of work.

## **OTHER HEALTH PROBLEMS MAY EXIST**

Some of the warning signs listed above could also point to broader health problems, such as an emotional issue, physical or mental illness. Research suggests that as many as half of all children involved with drugs or alcohol are affected by mental health problems. Before you choose a course of action, discuss your observations with your child's doctor.

# **We Need Your Help!**

## **Shelby County Drug Free Coalition**



**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.

**Membership**...we have an open membership policy-anyone who shares our mission is welcome to join. Shelby County: United for a Safe and Drug Free Community



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

For more information, contact the coalition at 205.663.6301 ext. 201  
[www.shelbycountydrugfreecoalition.org](http://www.shelbycountydrugfreecoalition.org)

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