

Alcohol Awareness Month focuses on preventing teen drinking

“Help for Today. Hope for Tomorrow” is the theme of this year’s National Alcohol Awareness Month.

The April campaign encourages individuals and families to get help for alcohol-related problems and to take steps to prevent alcohol use among youth.

“Alcohol remains the drug of choice for young people and is something we are concerned about in our communities,” said Shirley White, manager of the El Dorado County Alcohol and Drug Programs, said in a press release.

According to the most recent California Healthy Kids Survey, alcohol is the most frequently used substance among youth in grades 9-12 in El Dorado County.

“Our mission is to work with youth, schools, parents and community groups to help give youth the skills and opportunities to prevent alcohol use and to choose healthy behaviors,” said White.

ADP supports numerous substance abuse prevention projects throughout the County including a local community substance abuse prevention coalition, Club Live/Friday Night Live, Police Activities League programs and Teen Court. ADP offers substance abuse educational materials, assessments and referrals to local resources.

Data from the National Council on Alcoholism and Drug Dependency show that the sooner a child starts drinking, the more likely he or she is to develop a dependency and to graduate to other drugs. Children who begin drinking before

the age of 15 are five times more likely to develop alcoholism than those who start at the age of 21.

According to White, parents have a profound influence over their children's decisions about alcohol use. "Parental attitudes and messages around alcohol use make a lasting difference in their children's lives," said White. "While it may be common to think of drinking as a 'rite of passage' for youth, it is important for parents to emphasize that underage drinking is not only illegal and but often results in dangerous and life altering consequences. Alcohol use places teens at very high risk for developing chemical dependency, being involved in motor vehicle crashes, and other serious issues such as depression and increased risk of suicide."

These tips can help prevent teen drinking:

- Know where your children are and who they are with. Teens are less likely to get into trouble if parents are aware of what they are doing.
- Don't allow teens to drink in your home. Coordinate with parents to make sure parties and other social events your teen attends are alcohol- and drug- free.
- Lock up liquor cabinets at home. Some kids may drink after school when adults are at work.
- Try to get your child involved in school or recreational activities, and work with other parents and community leaders to provide safe alternatives for fun in the community.
- Provide consistent rules and boundaries, and enforce them.
- Talk with your child early about the importance of making good choices, not just for you but for themselves. Help them understand that the choices they make today can affect them for the rest of their lives.

More information, call (530) 621.6146.

