






Family Matters:  
Talking to Your Student About  
**ALCOHOL, CANNABIS  
& VAPING**



**NDSCS ATOD PREVENTION TEAM**

**[NDSCS.edu/Alcoholinfo](https://www.ndscs.edu/Alcoholinfo)**

# PARENT'S INFLUENCE

- Talk with your student about NDSCS Policy and city/state laws. When students violate the NDSCS Alcohol, Tobacco, and Other Drugs Policy, consequences vary from a \$250 fine to suspension. Education also accompanies monetary sanctions.
- Model appropriate behavior with your own use.
  - Research indicates late adolescents who have seen one or both parents drunk are more than twice as likely to get drunk in a typical month.<sup>13</sup>
- Minimize Risk. Although any amount of alcohol or other drugs carries at least a moderate risk, some ways to minimize risk and model appropriate use of alcohol include:
  - Never driving after drinking or any drug use;
  - Educate yourself and your student about standard drink sizes for beer, liquor, and wine;
  - Spacing drinks to no more than one standard drink per hour;
  - Never mixing alcohol with prescriptions, OTC medications, cannabis, or other drugs;
  - Not exceeding a blood alcohol concentration (BAC) of .05.
- Continuously check in with your student regarding their use – this will need to be an ongoing conversation topic.
- Indicate your willingness to answer your students' questions or offer to help them find assistance/resources if needed.
- Encourage involvement as students who volunteer or get involved in their community are less likely to misuse alcohol and other drugs. Offer to help your student find healthy alternatives and stay informed of College events, such as:
  - **Follow NDSCS Student Life**
    -  /NDSCS Student Life
    -  @NDSCS\_StLife
    -  @NDSCS.StudentLife
    -  NDSCSstudentlif
    -  NDSCS.StudentLife
  - **Student Activities**  
NDSCS.edu/Events
  - **Wildcat Athletics**  
NDSCSwildcats.com
  - **Community Resources**  
NDSCS.edu/Volunteer

## HOW DO I KNOW IF IT IS MISUSE?

Various behaviors could indicate that your student may have developed a serious drinking or drug problem. Indications that help is needed may include:

- Declining school performance/drop in grades
- Abrupt changes in friends
- Abnormal health issues or sleeping habits
- Deteriorating relationships with family/close friends
- Less openness and honesty
- Incidents resulting from a high BAC or other drug related experience

<sup>13</sup> The National Center on Addiction and Substance Abuse (CASA) at Columbia University. (2009). *National Survey of American Attitudes on Substance Abuse XIV: Teens and Parents*. New York: The National Center on Addiction and Substance Abuse (CASA) at Columbia University. Available at [www.centeronaddiction.org/addiction-research/reports/national-survey-american-attitudes-substance-abuse-teens-parents-2009](http://www.centeronaddiction.org/addiction-research/reports/national-survey-american-attitudes-substance-abuse-teens-parents-2009).

# ALCOHOL USE

As your student begins this new chapter in their lives, we know that decisions about alcohol and other drugs are something that every student will face. NDSCS cares about student drinking and we appreciate your involvement and support on this important issue.

About 38.5% of NDSCS students haven't used alcohol in the past 30 days and for those that do make the choice to use alcohol, the average number of drinks per week is only 2.2.<sup>1</sup> If you were surprised by this data, you are not alone. Perceptions of use vary by age group and college students consistently over-estimate how much – and how often – their peers are using alcohol. Peer influence, culture, TV shows/movies about college students, family pressures/influence, and social media can all impact student's perceptions of use.

**68.7%**

of NDSCS students reported that their parents have talked with them about their expectations regarding alcohol use.<sup>1</sup>

## ALCOHOL: THE RISKS YOU SHOULD KNOW

### Underage drinking may impact student success.

- Research continues to illustrate that alcohol negatively impacts student success in college – specifically with lower graduation rates, missed classes, and career implications.
- About **1 in 4 college students** report academic consequences from drinking, including missing and/or falling behind in class, doing poorly on exams or papers and receiving lower grades overall.

### Underage drinking poses a range of risks and negative consequences.

- **Interferes with brain development.** Research shows that young people's brains keep developing well into their twenties. Alcohol can alter this development, negatively impacting brain structure and function. This may cause cognitive or learning problems and/or make the brain more prone to alcohol dependence. This is especially a risk when people start drinking heavily at a young age.
- **Impairs judgment.** Drinking can lead to poor decisions about engaging in risky behavior, including drinking and driving, sexual activity (such as unprotected sex) and aggressive or violent behavior.<sup>2</sup>
- **Increases the risk of physical and sexual assault.** Underage youth who drink are more likely to carry out or be the victim of a physical or sexual assault after drinking than others their age who do not drink.<sup>2</sup>
- **Alcohol dependence.** Youth who begin using addictive substances like alcohol before the age of 15 are nearly seven times more likely to develop a substance problem, compared with those who delay first use until age 21 or older.

<sup>1</sup> ND University System. (2021). 2020 North Dakota Student Wellness and Perception Survey NDSCS Institutional Report. Bismarck, N.D.: ND Higher Education Consortium for Substance Abuse Prevention.

<sup>2</sup> National Institute on Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism (NIAAA). Underage Drinking. January 2016. Available at <https://pubs.niaaa.nih.gov/publications/UnderageDrinking/UnderageFact.htm>

<sup>3</sup> Wechsler, H.; Dowdall, G.W.; Maenner, G.; et al. Changes in binge drinking and related problems among American college students between 1993 and 1997: Results of the Harvard School of Public Health College Alcohol Study. *Journal of American College Health* 47(2):57-68, 1998. PMID: 9782661 [www.tandfonline.com/doi/pdf/10.1080/07448489809595621](http://www.tandfonline.com/doi/pdf/10.1080/07448489809595621)

<sup>4</sup> Center on Addiction. Teen Substance Use. 2018. Available at [www.centeronaddiction.org/addiction-prevention/teenage-addiction](http://www.centeronaddiction.org/addiction-prevention/teenage-addiction)

# CANNABIS USE

Cannabis, also referred to as marijuana, is a mind-altering drug made from the dried hemp plant *Cannabis*. It can be consumed in a variety of ways – such as edibles, oils, vaping, and smoking.

About 10.4% of NDSCS students reported smoking cannabis in the last 30 days and 16% of NDSCS students have used cannabis in the past year.<sup>1</sup> It is important to have discussions with your student to ensure they understand what cannabis is and the risks associated with use.

## CANNABIS: THE RISKS YOU SHOULD KNOW

- Any drug – including cannabis – in any form is not safe for a child's brain development. The brain is not fully developed until a person's mid-20s. Use before this age increases chances of dependency on a drug. Other risks include, but are not limited to:
  - Issues with **attention, concentration, problem-solving, learning, and memory**, which could cause poor academic or future job performance;
  - **Lack of balance and coordination**, which could increase risk of injuries when playing sports or driving; and/or
  - **Poor judgment and decision making**,<sup>5</sup> such as having unprotected sex or impaired driving.

## DID YOU KNOW?

- Cannabis Concentrates, also referred to as marijuana extracts, contain extraordinarily high THC levels ranging from 40-80 percent or higher THC amounts.
  - Using an electronic vaporizer to ingest cannabis concentrates is commonly referred to as “dabbing.” Using a dab pen is preferred for some because it is odorless and easy to hide.
  - Cannabis potency levels have been increasing since the 1970s. Concentrates can be up to four times stronger in THC content than high grade cannabis, which normally measures around 20 percent THC levels.<sup>6</sup>

## IS CANNABIS USE ADDICTIVE?

Cannabis use can impact your student despite it being thought of as a “natural” substance. Increasing potency levels is a concern and may lead to a substance use disorder. Research indicates that trying cannabis from a young age increases the likelihood of problems with cannabis later in life.<sup>7</sup>

Estimates from research suggest that about 9 percent of users become addicted to cannabis. This number increases among those who start young (to about 17 percent, or 1 in 6) and among daily users (25-50 percent).<sup>8</sup>

<sup>5</sup> Crane, N.A., Schuster, R.M., Mermelstein, R.J., Gonzalez, R. (2015). Neuropsychological sex differences associated with age of initiated use among young adult Cannabis users. *J. Clin. Exp. Neuropsychol.*

<sup>6</sup> Just Think Twice. *The Facts About Marijuana Concentrates*. (n.d.). Retrieved from [www.justthinktwice.gov/facts-about-marijuana-concentrates](http://www.justthinktwice.gov/facts-about-marijuana-concentrates).

<sup>7</sup> National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine. (2017). *The Health Effects of Cannabis and Cannabinoids: The Current State of Evidence and Recommendations for Research*. Washington, DC: The National Academies Press.

<sup>8</sup> Hall, W., Degenhardt, L. (2009). Adverse health effects of non-medical cannabis use. *Lancet*; 374:1383-91.

# VAPING

Electronic smoking devices, also known as e-cigarettes or “vapes”, are battery operated devices that heat a liquid to a boiling point into an aerosol used by the inhaler. The liquid usually contains nicotine, flavorings, and other additives. When used, the brain releases adrenaline that creates a “buzz” of pleasure and energy. E-cigarettes are now the most commonly used nicotine product among youth.

At NDSCS, about 29.1% of NDSCS students have vaped in the last 30 days and 29.7% have vaped in the last year. Of those that reported use, 44.6% first used at the age of 16-17 years old and 25% reported first use at 18-20 years old.<sup>1</sup>

## VAPING: THE RISKS YOU SHOULD KNOW

- **The aerosol emitted when using an electronic smoking device can also contain other harmful substances**, including heavy metals such as lead, volatile organic compounds, and cancer-causing agents. The aerosol also contains ultra fine particles that can be inhaled deep into the lungs as well as concerning flavorings, such as diacetyl, which is a chemical linked to serious lung disease.<sup>9</sup>
- **E-cigarettes harm brain development.** E-cigarettes typically deliver nicotine, a harmful drug to the youth brain and body. Teens are particularly vulnerable to the effects of nicotine since the brain is still developing until young adulthood.<sup>10</sup>
  - Research indicates that the nicotine in e-cigarettes and other tobacco products can also prime young brains for addiction to other drugs.<sup>11</sup>
  - Additionally, nicotine may affect:
    - ◆ teens’ behavior, concentration, memory, and ability to learn;
    - ◆ increases risk of low-impulse control; and
    - ◆ there is a strong relationship between youth smoking and depression, anxiety, and stress.<sup>9</sup>
- **E-cigarettes are not safer than smoking cigarettes or forms of smokeless tobacco.** Regular cigarettes are unsafe, killing half of all people who smoke long-term.<sup>9</sup> However, youth use of tobacco products in any form is unsafe. More research is needed to fully understand their overall impact on health.
- **E-cigarettes are a health and safety hazard.** Defective e-cigarette batteries have been known to cause fires and explosions, some of which have resulted in serious injuries. Most of the explosions happened when the e-cigarette batteries were being charged.<sup>11</sup>

<sup>9</sup> Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). (2018). *Electronic cigarettes. Smoking & Tobacco Use*. Retrieved from [www.cdc.gov/tobacco/basic\\_information/ecigarettes/index.htm](http://www.cdc.gov/tobacco/basic_information/ecigarettes/index.htm)

<sup>10</sup> U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS). (2016). *E-Cigarette Use Among Youth and Young Adults: A Report of the Surgeon General*. Atlanta, GA: U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, National Center for Chronic Disease Prevention and Health Promotion, Office on Smoking and Health. Retrieved from [https://e-cigarettes.surgeongeneral.gov/documents/2016\\_SGR\\_Full\\_Report\\_508.pdf](https://e-cigarettes.surgeongeneral.gov/documents/2016_SGR_Full_Report_508.pdf)

<sup>11</sup> HHS. (2016). *Fact sheet. E-Cigarette Use Among Youth and Young Adults: A Report of the Surgeon General*. Retrieved from [https://e-cigarettes.surgeongeneral.gov/documents/2016\\_SGR\\_Fact\\_Sheet\\_508.pdf](https://e-cigarettes.surgeongeneral.gov/documents/2016_SGR_Fact_Sheet_508.pdf)

# TAKING ACTION

It's never too early – or too late – to talk with your student about your expectations regarding alcohol, cannabis, vaping, and other drug use and the risks associated. Research suggests that one of the most influential factors for children is a strong, open relationship with a parent.<sup>12</sup>

## IN FACT...

**82.3%**

of NDSCS students say that their **parent's expectations or rules** about limiting or controlling **alcohol use** is effective<sup>1</sup>

**78.5%**

of NDSCS students say that their **parent's expectations or rules** about limiting or controlling **vaping/ electronic cigarette use** is effective<sup>1</sup>

**82.1%**

of NDSCS students say that their **parent's expectations or rules** about limiting or controlling **cannabis use** is effective<sup>1</sup>

<sup>12</sup> National Scientific Council on the Developing Child. (2004). Young children develop in an environment of relationships. Working Paper No. 1.

If you have a concern about your student, please feel free to contact the NDSCS Alcohol, Tobacco, or Other Drugs Prevention Office or Counseling Services at 701-671-2286. NDSCS Counseling Services can provide free and confidential counseling or can help with making a referral.

**Please go to [NDSCS.edu/Counseling](https://www.ndscs.edu/Counseling) for more information.**

## ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

### NDSCS Prevention

For more information about alcohol and other drug use prevention, visit our website at [NDSCS.edu/Alcoholinfo](https://www.ndscs.edu/Alcoholinfo).

### PARENTS LEAD

For more information about talking to your college-age student about alcohol, visit [ParentsLead.org](https://ParentsLead.org)

**PARENTS LEAD**

### FirstLink 2-1-1 Helpline

[MyFirstLink.org/Services/2-1-1-Helpline](https://MyFirstLink.org/Services/2-1-1-Helpline)

### North Dakota Prevention

[Prevention.ND.gov](https://Prevention.ND.gov)