



## What Parents Should Do if They Suspect Drug Use/Abuse

**Follow your gut instinct! No one knows your child like you do.**

### **Once you suspect there is a problem:**

- Are you in denial? Don't allow shame/embarrassment to delay getting help
- Do not assume it will get better; do not write it off as a phase
- Admitting you have a family problem is the first step to getting help. Research options for both support and professional help. You might be surprised to find out how many families are dealing with the same struggles.
- When your child acts out the behavior can be a symptom of something deeper, don't take it personally
- Set clear boundaries; boundaries show them you care
- Follow up on consequences - teens can be good at trying to wear you down so you will give in
- Carefully consider before taking away cell phones. If your teen has run off before, the cell phone is your only mode of communication with them. Instead consider limits on phones.
- Have phones in a central location at night, out of the kids' rooms
- Be aware of advice to medicate your teen, they are masters of manipulation and can easily investigate the medicines online and the symptoms they need to get the ones they want in order to sell or use
- Keep your own medications out of their reach; lock them up or put them in an undisclosed place

### **Monitor activity more closely**

- Connect with other parents, they may be experiencing the same struggles and welcome the support
- Check in with friends' parents to confirm your child is where they said they would be; once they reach their destination have them call you from the friend's HOME phone; call it back if you feel something is not right; if they move locations require another check in
- Adult presence is no guarantee your child will be safe, many parents offer alcohol, turn a blind eye, or simply don't pay attention. Have back-up safety plans, like having other friends' phone numbers so they can call you if your child is in real trouble. Siblings can be a great resource here as well.

### **Communicate**

- Communication is a priority; make an effort to open it up even if it has historically been poor. Have family dinners as often as possible and make it fun, not a time for confrontation. Address serious issues another time.
- Never start a discussion when your child is visibly upset, high, or drunk. Share your observations and give your teen equal uninterrupted time to do the same. Respect their opinion.
- Be a good listener. Don't strategize, just LISTEN FOR UNDERSTANDING.
- When your child is upset and wants to talk, ask if they want advice or just need to vent. Teens are pretty good at solving their own problems once they are able to open up and verbalize their thoughts to someone

### **Resources:**

Discovery Counseling Center, Muir Wood Teen and Family Counseling, Axis Community Health