

WHAT CAN I DO



Believe it or not, parents play a larger role in influencing adolescents than you may think:

- Teens reported to SAMHSA that they rely on the adults in their lives more than anyone else to help them make tough decisions and provide good advice. Letting your kids know your stance on drugs and alcohol can delay their use and reduce the risks that they face, giving them a better future to look forward to.
- Other studies show that teen behavior is strongly associated with parents' behavior, so model good behavior. Getting drunk in front of your kids leads them to do the same.
- And finally, teen behavior is related to parent expectations: when you expect the worst, teens will deliver on that expectation. Not every kid in high school drinks. In fact, we know that over 50% of Ridge High School Sophomores have NOT had a drink in the past 30 days. If you expect your teen to do it, they will.

Parents have an enormous impact on the decisions their children make. Here are a few things you can do to reduce early alcohol use:

- **Talk early and often:** Maintaining open lines of communication lets kids know that they have someone to talk to when faced with tough decisions.
- **Get involved** – Talking with kids about their activities opens opportunities to share your interests and values.
- **Be a good role model** – In addition to your words, your actions are powerful indicators to your children of what is appropriate and acceptable. Don't take part in illegal, unhealthy, dangerous practices related to drugs, alcohol, and tobacco.
- **Teach kids to choose friends wisely** – Help them to understand what qualities to look for in a friend.
- **Monitor their activities** – This includes knowing where your children are and getting acquainted with their friends and friends' parents. Limit amount of time they spend without an adult present. Unsupervised kids have more opportunities to experiment with risky behaviors.
- **Set clear rules** – Having clear and consistent rules to follow protects children's physical and mental well-being, lowering their risk for developing substance abuse problems. Rules and consequences should be specific, consistent, and reasonable, and good behavior should be recognized.