

Dear Parents and Students,

As a part of our ongoing effort to ensure your child's safety, we offer you this contract and tips sheet as a good lead into a discussion between parents and students about personal responsibility, personal rules, and safety plans.

Many teens who choose to experiment with drugs and/or alcohol realize there are risks involved, but often don't know what all of those risks are. Some of the risks include an increased chance of being injured, experiencing unwanted sexual activity, and having academic problems. There are also legal and disciplinary consequences for underage drinking and illegal drug use. An example of a health risk that affects many young people is alcohol poisoning. Most teens don't know that a person's blood alcohol concentration can increase for several hours after drinking.

We know that there are many adolescents who choose to not drink or use drugs. People abstain for many reasons including religious beliefs, personal experience, family history and legal consequences. Even if you are choosing to abstain it is good to understand the effects of drugs and alcohol and to have a safety plan in place. Regardless of what you choose for yourself, remember to respect and care for each other. If someone is seriously ill, call 911. Don't take a chance with someone's life. Please seek help from a parent/guardian, the school counselor, or another adult if you think you or someone close to you has a problem. There are many resources available to you.

Included with this letter is a student generated version of SADD's Contract for Life (Students Against Drunk Driving), which we have named *Parent/Guardian-Child Communication and Safety Agreement*. (SADD's version can be found at www.sadd.org). We felt that this would be a good thing to share with you as parents of sophomores and you, sophomores, and we hope it will provide you with an opportunity to have an honest discussion about safety and responsibility.

Parents, please understand that by the end of a student's time in high school, he or she will have likely encountered a social situation where drugs and/or alcohol are present. The purpose of this letter is to address these issues and encourage parents/guardians to delve into "kid culture" and discuss with their student ways to apply methods of party safety and harm reduction. While each family will have different views on drugs and alcohol use, we want to provide any and all assistance we can to facilitate discussions and plans of action in regard to these issues.

Hopefully, with the suggestions listed below you can engage your child in a discussion about thoughtful decision making and risk reduction, and encourage your child to make safer choices. Students, hopefully with the suggestions below you can open the line of communication with your parent/guardian so that you feel you can keep yourself safe throughout your time at UHS.

We hope this information will help families have a dialogue about these very important issues. If you have any thoughts, questions, concerns or comments, please contact Amy Jones at 447-3111 or amy.jones@sfuhs.org.

A happy and safe 2011 to all of you!

Amy Jones

Alex Lockett

Senior Peer Advisors

Director of Health and Wellness

Dean of Students

Student Representatives

Tips

Parent/Guardian

- Set your child up to be honest.
- Create a safe space for discussions. Pre-arrange a time to talk: Setting up a meeting time that works for both you and your child allows them to be prepared for the discussion. Try saying something

like, “I’d like to discuss something important with you, when do you have time to talk for about 30 minutes?” Pick a neutral meeting space: It’s important that the meeting space doesn’t make your child feel disempowered (your bedroom is your space) or trapped (a car leaves no escape). Try talking in the living room, at a coffee shop, or on a walk. Be an active listener. Be respectful. Try to listen without judgment. Try to remain calm.

- Have a “Promise You Won’t Get Mad” rule: This rule means that your child can tell you something that may be difficult to hear without fearing immediate consequences like yelling or punishment. For example, if your child calls and says, “Promise you won’t get mad, I drank too much tonight and now I can’t drive home. Can you pick me up?” you say “Yes” and nothing more. (You can reserve the right to discuss the situation at another time.)
- Be clear about your family values, rules and expectations. Try to be firm, fair and consistent. Explain to your child why you have the rules you have. For example, “Your curfew is 12:00 because I love and care about you and I can’t fall asleep until I know you are home safely. I know you’ll be in college in a few months and can come home when you want, but when you are at home you are my responsibility and I worry.” “I need you to call me when you change locations so that if something happens I know the last place to look for you.”
- Remember it’s ok to be the parent and not the friend. Keeping your child safe is more important than them liking you at that moment.
- Sign the Parent/Guardian-Child agreement included with this letter: Signing this letter shows your child you care and that they have a safe way out of bad situations. By signing the parent portion you are modeling for them responsible decision making.
- Remember that if your child comes to you rather than you going to them because they got caught they are trying to show you that they are responsible and mature. Try to treat them that way and praise and acknowledge them for being honest. This is behavior you want repeated so take sometime to consider your response and what effect it will have.

Students:

- Be honest about your plans. Let your parents/guardians know who, what and when. (Parents/Guardians---ASK!!!)
- Be responsible. Call your parents/guardians when you say you will, arrive home at the appropriate time and use good judgment—Don’t drive under the influence or get in the car with someone who is under the influence. Call 911 if there is an emergency.
- Sign the Parent/Guardian-Child Agreement and hold yourself to it. Give your parents/guardians a chance to prove to you that they will hold up their end of it. Trust them.
- Prioritize: Keep your commitments to school, family, friends, and extra-curricular activities.
- Listen to your parents/guardians—they know more than you think they do. It can be a relief to be honest with them. They may surprise you in how much they understand. Secrets never feel good.
- Respect yourself, your friends, and your family.

Parent/Guardian-Child Communication and Safety Agreement

This contract is designed to facilitate communication between young people and their parents/guardians about potentially destructive decisions related to alcohol, drugs, peer pressure, and behavior. The issues facing young people today are often too difficult for them to address alone. SADD believes that effective child-parent communication is critically important in helping young adults to make healthy decisions.

Child

I recognize that there are many potentially dangerous decisions I face every day and commit to you that I will do everything in my power to avoid making decisions that will jeopardize my health, my safety, my overall well-being, or your trust in me. I understand the dangers associated with the use of alcohol and drugs and the destructive behaviors often associated with impairment.

By signing below I agree to respect myself; I agree that I will never drive under the influence; I agree that I will never ride with an impaired driver; I agree that I will always wear a seatbelt.

Finally, I agree to call you if I am ever in a situation that threatens my safety and to communicate with you regularly about issues of importance to both of us.

Child

Parent/Guardian

I am committed to you and your health and safety. By signing below, I pledge to do everything in my power to understand and communicate with you about the many difficult and potentially destructive decisions you face.

Further, I agree to provide for you safe, sober transportation home if you are ever in a situation that threatens your safety and to defer discussions about that situation until a time when we can both have a discussion in a calm and caring manner.

I also pledge to you that I will not drive under the influence of alcohol or drugs; I will always seek safe, sober transportation; and I will always wear a seat belt.

Parent/Guardian

*This contract is a modified version of the SADD Contract for Life. (www.sadd.org)