

Keep Your Kids Drug-Free This Summer

by Sarah Smith, Director

Ohio's Start Talking! Youth Drug Prevention Initiative

Summer break is upon us, and for tweens and teens this means no homework, plenty of free time and less supervision. While a majority of youth will find healthy ways to keep busy, some, unfortunately, will use their unsupervised freedom to experiment with drugs and alcohol. Now that your kids are no longer in school, how can you be sure that they will stay out of trouble this summer? How do you know that they won't get involved with drugs? It's time to Start Talking!

Ohio Gov. John R. Kasich and First Lady Karen W. Kasich launched the Start Talking! youth drug prevention initiative to give parents, guardians, educators and community leaders the tools to start the conversation with youth about the importance of living healthy, drug-free lives. Whether it's at the swimming pool, on the baseball diamond, around a campfire or at a family picnic, Start Talking! gives adults research-based tools and resources to help prevent substance abuse before it starts.

Start Talking! is rooted in national research that shows teens whose parents talk to them about the dangers of drugs are up to 50 percent less likely to use than children who do not have these critical conversations with a trusted adult.

The initiative features three main components:

1) [Know!](#) provides free, twice monthly emails that offer Parent Tips to families to help them talk about the risks and consequences of drug abuse.

2) [Parents 360Rx](#) features a free, downloadable toolkit to help communities come together to support local prevention efforts. The toolkit includes a video, discussion guide, handouts and other resources to decrease the risk of children taking illegal drugs or abusing prescription medicines.

3) [5 Minutes for Life](#) is a program led by the Ohio Highway Patrol, the Ohio National Guard and local law enforcement in partnership with high schools and the Ohio High School Athletic Association (OHSAA). Troopers, law enforcement officers and Guard members talk to student athletes to encourage them to become ambassadors who lead peer-to-peer conversations that promote healthy lifestyles.

Here are more ways you can encourage your kids to make smart, healthy decisions this summer:

1. Take advantage of life's teachable moments to reinforce the drug-free message.
2. Don't let them go to unsupervised parties
3. Maintain an open channel of communication
4. Keep unsupervised time to a minimum
5. Always know who they're with and what they're doing
6. Acknowledge and reward positive behaviors
7. Encourage them get involved in summer activities
8. Help them find a job
9. Set a good example

We all can play a role in preventing youth drug use. Don't underestimate the effect that the things that you say and do have on shaping your children's opinions and attitudes towards life. Be upbeat and driven, be compassionate and caring, be a role model, be a talker and a listener.

Visit www.StartTalking.ohio.gov to get started. Have a safe, healthy summer!

Start Talking at the Ohio State Fair

July 27 - August 7

Mark your calendars for the 2016 Ohio State Fair which will run from July 27th thru August 7th. Representatives from the Start Talking! initiative will be there to share information with parents and teens about the various efforts it includes. Stay tuned for more information or follow Start Talking! on [Facebook](#), [Twitter](#) or [Instagram](#) for more details as they become available.

Start Talking in the news

Lima News: Fight against heroin starts with youth

In the fight against heroin, preventing people from ever trying the drug is the logical first step. With a drug this potent, even a first-time user can develop a full-blown heroin addiction rather quickly. As more people experiment, the number of addicts increases, and drug treatment centers find themselves overwhelmed with the number of users trying to get clean. [More](#)

Cincinnati Enquirer: Ohio uses Prince's death to boost naloxone awareness

The death of superstar musician Prince from fentanyl has triggered a renewed urge to get an antidote to opioid overdose into the hands of Ohioans. The Ohio Department of Mental Health and Addiction Services [on Friday](#) released a statement encouraging people to get naloxone. [More](#)