



media release



BoysTown

25 June 2010

Talk about the hard stuff

This Drug Action Week (20-26 June) Parentline is urging parents and carers to talk to their teens about drugs and alcohol.

Parentline General Manager Wendy Protheroe said adolescence is a time of risk-taking and testing boundaries, and using drugs or alcohol can often be part of this process.

"A recent study showed that 13% of people aged 16-24 years reported symptoms of a drug or alcohol use disorder within the previous 12 months," she said.¹

"Another study revealed that 5.5% of children and young people aged 12-19 years used tobacco on a daily basis and just under 16% of children and young people in this age group used alcohol on a weekly basis.²

"If your kids aren't talking to you about drugs and alcohol they are getting their information somewhere, make sure they're getting reliable, accurate facts from someone who cares – you."

According to Ms Protheroe a recent overseas study has revealed just how important a role parents have in helping manage alcohol and drug use by their children.

"Kids who talk to their parents about drugs are up to 50 per cent less likely to use drugs," Ms Protheroe said.³

"Parentline is there to help parents and carers who may wish to assist young people with drug and alcohol issues and can provide tips on how to approach topics like this with your kids."

Parentline's tips for talking to children and young people about drugs and alcohol include:

- **Ask Questions** - Try starting a conversation by asking what your child thinks about drugs. Whatever the answer, be sure to remain nonjudgmental and understanding.
- **Discuss Current Events** - If a well-known athlete is caught using performance-enhancing drugs, talk about why they may have been tempted to use them as well as the potential adverse consequences for the athlete's health and career.
- **Stay Involved** - Be aware of what's going on in your child's life, so that you can see early warning signs, such as behaviour changes for no apparent reason. If you notice a change, ask if they are experiencing any problems or why they seem to be acting differently.
- **Set Boundaries** - Make sure your teen knows that you do not approve of using drugs or alcohol, and explain the physical, emotional and legal consequences of breaking the rules. Talk about your expectations before an issue arises.
- **Be a Role Model** - Provide a good example to children and young people; model the kinds of healthy behaviours you would like them to adopt. This includes drinking alcohol in moderation or quitting smoking.

Parents and carers can call Parentline on 1300 30 1300 from 8am-10pm in Queensland and 7:30am-9:30pm in the Northern Territory, 7 days a week.

Parentline is a service of BoysTown and receives funding support from the Queensland and Northern Territory Governments.

¹Australian Bureau of Statistics (2008). 2007 National Survey of Mental Health & Wellbeing. ²Australian Institute of Health & Welfare. (2008). 2007 National Drug Strategy Household Survey. Canberra. ³Vivo, Meghan (2009). *Why straight talking is best when talking to your kids about past drug use*. Retrieved 22 June 2010 from <http://www.adolescent-substance-abuse.com/substance-abuse/why-straight-talk-is-best-when-talking-to-your-kids-about-past-drug-use.htm>