Strong Families, Safe Futures

A Parent Toolkit for Preventing Youth Substance Use



Simple, practical ways to help your child grow up substance-free

Provided by BKR Coalition



Welcome—
You Matter More
Than You Think

Parenting isn't about being perfect. It's about showing up, staying connected, and doing small things consistently.

Research shows that strong relationships, clear expectations, and open communication are some of the most powerful ways to prevent youth substance use.

This toolkit gives you simple tools you can actually use in everyday life.

> "The goal isn't control—it's connection."

Understanding the “Why”



Kids don’t usually use substances just to “be bad.” Often, they are:

- **Trying to fit in**
- **Curious or experimenting**
- **Coping with stress, anxiety, or boredom**
- **Influenced by what they see online or around them**

What might your child need more of right now?

What Really Prevents Substance Use



- [x] I spend one-on-one time with my child each week
- [x] My child knows my expectations about alcohol and drugs
- [x] We talk openly—even about hard topics
- [x] My child has activities, hobbies, or responsibilities
- [x] My child has at least one trusted adult

Small moments = big impact

Simple Ways to Stay Connected

You don't need big talks—just consistent small moments.

Try This:

- Ask one open-ended question each day
- Sit together during meals (even short ones)
- Do something your child enjoys

Conversation Starters:

- "What was the best part of your day?"
- "What's something kids your age are dealing with right now?"
- "What do you think about vaping or drinking?"



Stay Connected to Your Child's Social Circle



Knowing who your child spends time with is an important part of staying connected and keeping them safe.

Try This:

- Know your child's friends and encourage them to spend time at your home
- Ask about who they sit with, talk to, and spend time with at school
- Stay in touch with teachers, coaches, and other trusted adults



Home + school =
a fuller picture of your child's world

Talking So Kids Will Listen

Instead of → Try This

✗ "Don't ever drink." ✓ "I care about you and want to help you stay safe."

✗ "Because I said so." ✓ "Here's why this matters to me."

Tips:

- Stay calm
- Listen more than you talk
- Keep conversations ongoing (not one-time)



Helping Kids Say No

Give kids simple, realistic responses:

"No thanks, I'm good."

"I've got practice tomorrow."

"That's not really my thing."

Parent Tip:

Practice these out loud—
it builds confidence.

Mini Activity:

What would your child say in a tough situation?



Teaching Better Ways to Cope

Kids need tools—not just rules.



- Physical activity (sports, walking, chores)
- Music, art, or creative outlets
- Talking to someone they trust
- Quiet time to reset

Boredom + stress = risk

Connection + coping = protection

What Kids Are Seeing

Social media often makes substance use look normal or harmless.



- Talk about what they see online
- Set reasonable screen boundaries
- Follow or explore content together

“Have you seen anything online about vaping or drinking lately?”

When to Pay Closer Attention



Possible signs:

- Big changes in mood or behavior
- New secrecy or withdrawal
- Drop in grades
- Sudden change in friends

One sign doesn't mean something is wrong—but patterns matter.

Clear Rules Help Kids Feel Safe



In our family, we believe:

_____

_____

Our expectations about alcohol/drugs:

_____

_____

If rules are broken, we will:

_____

_____

Be clear, calm, and consistent.

Something to Try This Week



Pick one:

- [ ] Spend 10 minutes doing something your child chooses
- [ ] Ask a new question at supper
- [ ] Go for a walk or drive together
- [ ] Talk about a real-life situation (TV, social media, school)

Reflection:

What did you notice?

_____

_____

_____

_____

What To Do Next

You are not alone—support is available.

Steps:

1. Stay calm
2. Start a conversation
3. Listen without jumping to conclusions
4. Reach out for support if needed



Early conversations can make a big difference.

Support is Here When You Need It



Mental Health/Substance Abuse Support Services

Heartland Counseling Services (O'Neill) – 402-336-2800

Midwest Country Clinic (Bassett) – 402-684-2908

Oasis Counseling International (O'Neill) – 402-379-2030

Ally Counseling Services (O'Neill) – 402-336-1306

Counseling and Enrichment Center (O'Neill) – 402-992-1512

Joyce Enterprises (O'Neill) – 402-340-7419

A Better Spirit Counseling Agency (Ainsworth)– 402-992-1512

Lotus Counseling (Ainsworth) – 402-382-0155

Debby Linse, LIMHP (Stuart) – 402-608-9754

Jessica Sawyer, PMHNP (Bassett) – 402-684-3366

Medical Support Services

Ainsworth Family Clinic – 402-387-1900

Devine Health Care (Ainsworth) – 402-382-3555

Rock County Clinic (Bassett) – 402-684-2906

Greater Sandhills Family Healthcare (Bassett) – 402-684-2285

Rock County Hospital (Bassett) – 402-684-3366

Avera Medical Group – Gregory, SD – 605-835-9611

Need Immediate Help?

📞 Call or Text 988

Free, confidential support is available 24/7.

You're Doing More Than You Think



Strong families build strong communities.

Resource Provided By BKR Coalition
in partnership with
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