

CAMPUS COUNCIL PEER EXCHANGE HIGHLIGHTS

February 14, 2024

Topic: Parents and Families as Partners in Reducing Substance Use:
Latest Research and a Brainstorming Session

Malinda Hollis Kennedy shared the latest research on family engagement in higher education. A 2024 book, *Engaging Families in Higher Education: Lessons Learned and Best Practices*, highlights parents' changing role. Malinda's full slide set is available as a separate attachment. Highlights include:

Informed family support

- A majority of students trust their families and parents as a source of health information.
- The family can act as support to the student but need to have the right knowledge for the role.

Barriers to Partnering with Parents

- Mixed messaging (stay away/get involved) has led to a lot of confusion.
- Parents may feel like they don't have influence anymore, that it is too late because they didn't set boundaries earlier, or that they don't have the skills or know how to have the conversations.

Parent Limit-Setting: A Protective Factor

- A 2012 study showed that a zero percent tolerance message was most effective.
- Other new studies found that parents, through monitoring and setting expectations, can reduce the negative alcohol outcomes experienced by depressed students.

Ways to Reach Parents (offered by members during discussion)

- **Partner with other groups on campus**
 - Freshman seminar, Office of Student Conduct, Office of New Student Engagement
 - Leverage opportunities to interact with parents: Awareness Month, Honors College, Residence Life
- **Make yourself a resource.** When you have resolved an issue that allows for a conversation with parents, let them know that if they ever have an issue again, they should contact you directly. Ask them to share this with other parents. Parents formed their own Facebook group and let others know that if you have a problem, this is who to contact. Follow-up is essential.
- **Share resources with the family engagement office.** Have a regular bimonthly newsletter that promotes all well-being resources to cultivate a relationship with parents so that when it is time to talk about substance use, it is not first time. Partner with Family Weekend, offer meditation and yoga classes, and have a College Parents Matter flyer on the table.
- **Members discussed strategies for families that use alcohol or cannabis with their students.**
 - Distribute the College Parents Matter handbook to provide harm reduction guidance to parents.
 - Equip parent with information. Talk to student in front of parent about healthy boundaries (you can love your parent but not love the habit).