



## What do media have to do with children's use of Alcohol, Tobacco and Drugs?

Adolescence is a time when many children explore and define their identity through experimentation, often using celebrities and characters from sports, TV shows, movies, music and video games as role models. During this stage, the messages they receive from media can play a large role in shaping their behaviors and beliefs around substance use.

### How can media affect substance use?



- \* For some teens, frequent exposure to inappropriate and inaccurate portrayals of substance use in media may lead to early initiation of alcohol, tobacco and drug use. Underage drinking is a major cause of death among teens through car crash injury and suicide. It can also increase depression, antisocial behaviors, and unprotected sex.
- ❖ Substance use in media can often be glamorized, legitimized and normalized. These messages often lack any negative consequences and/or provide inaccurate information about consequences. These types of messages, which are often marketed directly to teens, make substance use look both rebellious and appealing.
- ◆ Some teens will start to experiment with substance use, believing that this behavior is common and even cool for their age. This kind of experimentation can be driven and fueled by attractive media messages as well as their peer's social media activity displaying similar substance use behaviors.

### What can I do?

- \* Supervising and limiting media content at this stage can be difficult; however, you can help guide their choices and exposure by talking to them about their media use and keeping TVs and computers in common areas of the house (not in bedrooms) and charging internet connected devices such as smartphones in your bedroom overnight.
- ❖ Encourage teens to critique the media they consume. Ask them to analyze the content and decide if what they see and hear is accurate and contains enough information for them to make informed decisions about their own beliefs and behaviors surrounding substance use.
- ◆ Make yourself available to help your teens navigate the messages they are receiving about substance use. Listen to their concerns and offer advice and informative support. Talk about the substance use depictions they see in media, and what their peers are sharing on social media and whether the consequences have been taken into consideration.

Where can I find more information?  
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