

Fall Is The Perfect Time For Parents To Discuss Underage Drinking With Their Children

(NAPSA)—While fall means students are again hitting the books during the week, it also means Friday-night parties, dances, extracurricular activities, and other events where teens may be tempted to drink alcohol. That also means it's a good time for parents to talk with their



Dr. Lonnie Carton

children about drinking, according to family therapist Lonnie Carton, Ph.D., former director of Family Support Services for Boston Partners in Education, and vice president of teen and family resources for WARM2KIDS, a Web-based family and school support system.

By helping their children get the facts and make the right decisions, parents not only help fight underage drinking, but they underscore the importance of personal responsibility in the many choices their children will make. Dr. Carton offers these tips to help parents address the issue of underage drinking. In talking with your teens:

- Let them know that rules are made to protect them, not to punish them.

- Remind them to be in control of themselves and to base whatever decision they make on what they know is right.

- Tell them that if they face a situation they know isn't safe, to call you immediately, no matter the time or circumstance—and assure them that when they do, they'll be praised for making the smart decision.

In fact, parents should begin talking with their children about drinking long before their teenage years, according to Carton. "Many times, teens will have heard—or think they'll have heard—everything they need to know about drinking," she emphasizes. "But by talking with our children about drinking before their teen years, we can best prepare them to make the right decisions when faced

with peer pressure to drink as teenagers."

Carton recommends parents follow these simple guidelines:

- Be a good role model. If you drink, do so responsibly.

- Be factual when discussing drinking with your children. A "scare" can become a "dare."

- Clearly state your positions and rules about drinking.

- Practice the fundamentals of good parenting, such as building self-esteem and encouraging two-way communication.

- Know your children's friends and their friends' parents.

- Seek professional help if you suspect your child has a drinking problem.

"Parents are critical," Carton concludes. "In fact, a recent Roper Organization survey found that of all the influences we know, parents clearly have the greatest impact when it comes to young people's decisions about drinking."

Carton is an advisor for the "Family Talk About Drinking Program" which is celebrating its 15th anniversary of helping parents prepare for conversations with their children about the subjects of peer pressure, self-esteem, underage drinking and teen drinking and driving. The free guidebook and video offer advice to parents on how to encourage open, honest communication with their children on this issue. The *Family Talk* parent guidebook is available in English, Spanish, Chinese, Korean, and Vietnamese, and the video is available in English and Spanish. This program has been distributed by the American School Counselor Association, Optimist International, Association of Junior Leagues International Inc., and the U.S. Junior Chamber of Commerce, among other organizations. The *Family Talk* guidebook, which is provided as a community service of Anheuser-Busch, is available for viewing and downloading at www.familytalkonline.com or by calling 1-800-359-TALK (8255).