

The Community Coalition for Healthy Youth extends sincere congratulations to the 2020 graduates of Tompkins County high schools! For this week's #WeeklyWisdom, we are focusing on safety during this season of celebration.

The coming months of summer and loosening guidelines will present many opportunities for teens to consider engaging in high risk behavior, especially alcohol and other drug use. During this time, as much as ever, your teen needs your help to remain safe and healthy. CCHY wishes to share some tips to help you do so.

Have clear, open conversations with your teen about your expectations about irresponsible and dangerous behaviors like drinking and drug use, especially when connected with driving. Be clear, firm, and consistent so that your teen knows these actions are unacceptable. Helpful information on setting these expectations and talking to your teen can be found at www.healthyyouth.org. It is also important to set clear expectations for behavior when it comes to social distancing. If you are not comfortable with your teen gathering in large groups, be sure to include that in the conversation about safe and healthy choices.

Due to the impact of COVID-19 on colleges, your teen may be spending more time with siblings or friends who are 21 or older, potentially increasing access to alcohol. Let your teen know that you do not want them to miss out on a great summer because of bad choices. While quality time with these friends or siblings is important, underage drinking is a high-risk behavior with dangerous consequences.

As Tompkins County slowly begins reopening, teens may think it is safe to host or attend large, unsupervised gatherings to celebrate graduating and the beginning of summer. In addition to increasing the risk of underage drinking, people who are intoxicated are less likely to abide by social distancing guidelines, increasing the risk of virus spread. Help your teen find fun, supervised, alcohol-free alternatives. If you or your child are not yet comfortable arranging a small gathering, there are many other safe alternatives.

We encourage you to stay up to date with county and state guidelines for reopening activities. As community members, we are asking you to help us create a climate of celebration that is safe and memorable, ensuring future health and happiness for our students and their friends!

