

SAFE HOMES PARENTS NETWORK

"Parents, guardians, and community working together for drug-free, violence-free youth"

ELEMENTARY PARENT ISSUES

Parents of elementary school children should discuss concerns and share solutions about:

- ♥ Sleepovers
- ♥ Bedtime
- ♥ Responsibilities/household chores
- ♥ Rules for babysitters or babysitting
- ♥ Visiting malls alone or with friends
- ♥ Appropriate make-up and clothing
- ♥ Types of movies/videotapes
- ♥ Attending rock concerts
- ♥ Curfews on school nights/weekends
- ♥ Allowance/money management
- ♥ Phone rules
- ♥ Invitations to gatherings
- ♥ Supervision when parents are not home
- ♥ Transportation/carpool
- ♥ Group or single dating ages
- ♥ Types of music, radio/TV programs, MTV
- ♥ Homework/study habits
- ♥ Appropriate language and behaviors

The *SAFE Homes Parents Network* purposely includes all parents of children from pre-kindergarten through age 20. The legal drinking age is 21 in all fifty states.

The typical reaction from parents whose children are in elementary school is "Our children are still young." or "We will deal with that problem when our children are teenagers. We don't have to worry about it now." However, there are special advantages to starting early that parents of elementary students should consider now.

Starting prevention practices early is easier for both the parents and the child. *SAFE Homes* is simply a continuation of the prevention efforts parents have been using since their children were born.

1. ***Developing expectations for our children*** with logical, meaningful consequences is an effective way to discipline. It is an opportunity to TEACH ~ not punish ~ children at any age about many important issues, not just alcohol, tobacco, marijuana, other drugs, and violence.
2. ***Networking with other parents*** provides an opportunity to develop constructive guidelines and consistent limits on a wide variety of topics that parents face in today's world.
3. ***Developing meaningful consequences for our children*** while they are young allows them to become accustomed to these important parenting tools. Youth expect parents to communicate with each other throughout their school years. This is true even as the youth develop a larger and more diverse peer group in middle and senior high school. All parents need to communicate with the parents of their children's friends and develop a parents' peer group.
4. ***Maintaining active involvement throughout elementary, middle, and high school.*** Parents can take advantage of the fact that younger children want their parents to take active, visible roles in school and social activities. However, parents must not be lulled into a false sense of security. Early participation is not enough! Developmental changes that occur in pre-adolescence ***require active involvement long after elementary school.*** Parents MUST continue the effort throughout the teen years.

Parents of young children need accurate information about when children begin to use drugs. The average age of first use is 11.5 years old. Most children begin using drugs in grade school. Parents must also understand the impact of the media and societal norms on even very young children. Alcohol and tobacco advertisers can influence children to decide, well before initial use, that they want to be part of the current scene.

***Every child is at risk to use
alcohol, tobacco, marijuana, and other drugs.***