

# GRANDPARENTS HOLD KEY TO KEEPING TEENS DRUG FREE



Today's grandparents do much more than bake cookies. Forty-four percent of grandparents see a grandchild every week and 45 percent of grandparents talk weekly or more with their grandchildren. According to a national survey conducted in conjunction with the 2000 Census, there are 2 million grandparent-headed homes with children under 18 and another 3.2 million grandparents live with their grandchildren. In other words, grandparents are doing more "parenting" than ever.

While parents are generally recognized as the most important and long-lasting influence on children, grandparents have a close and special bond and often serve as an inspiration to their grandkids. The unique relationship between grandparent and grandchild provides an ideal opening for a discussion of the dangers of drugs.

Research shows that grandparents are looking for guidance on how to talk to their grandkids about difficult topics. In fact, according to a recent AARP survey, 54 percent of grandparents would find information about discussing drugs somewhat or very useful.

The Office of National Drug Control Policy's National Youth Anti-Drug Media Campaign offers the following strategies for grandparents to keep their grandkids drug-free:

- 1. START:** It is never too early to prevent your grandchildren from trying drugs. Building protective factors, such as letting your grandchild know you care, plays an important role in deterring them from drugs. State your position clearly and often. One of the major reasons teens decide not to use drugs is the fear that their parents or other family members will lose respect for them.
- 2. CONNECT:** Take the opportunity to build lines of communication and do things regularly with your grandkids. Spend time together — eat dinner with them, read together, play a game, go shopping, go to the movies, a baseball game or go sightseeing.
- 3. LISTEN:** Take an active interest in what is going on in your grandchild's life. Foster family openness by listening to their cares and concerns.
- 4. CARE:** Make sure your grandchildren know you care that they are drug-free.
- 5. SUPPORT:** Explain to your grandchildren that you are always there for them – no matter what happens. Make sure that they know to come to you for help or information.

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