

**GUILFORD COUNTY SCHOOLS  
MENTAL HEALTH COORDINATORS  
DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH SERVICES AND NURSING**

Focus: Mental Health and Substance Use



**2 Minute Video:  
Link between Alcohol and  
Suicide in Teens**

Link: <https://youtu.be/3laMuA0Hsco>

Dr. Katherine Elkington, Columbia University speaks candidly.

**Click BELOW:**

**Find Out How Much You Really Know  
About Marajuana: Take the Quiz from  
the Substance Abuse and Mental Health  
Services Administration (SAMSHA)**

Link: <https://www.samhsa.gov/marijuana-quiz>

Yvette Grier

HOW MUCH DO YOU KNOW

**“Anything that’s human is  
mentionable, and anything  
that is mentionable can be  
more manageable. When we  
can talk about our feelings,  
they become less  
overwhelming, less upsetting  
and less scary.”** Fred Rogers

The link between substances and suicide is a strong one. The American  
Addiction Center reports:

- 75% of suicides involve one or more substances
- 69% of suicides involve alcohol intoxication
- 33% of suicides involve benzodiazepines
- 30% of suicide deaths involve opiates (including heroin and prescription  
painkillers)
- 21% of suicides involve marijuana
- 6% of suicides involve cocaine
- 3% of suicides involve amphetamines

Source: Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. (2018). Surveillance for Violent Deaths—National Violent Death Reporting System, 18 States, 2014. *Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Report*, 67(2), 1-36. Substance Abuse and Mental Health Administration. (2016). *Substance Use and Suicide: A Nexus Requiring a Public Health Approach*



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As your child is growing older, you may notice some changes in their behavior and long for the connection you used to have. Try some tips outlined here as a way to connect. As always, feel free to contact Support Staff at your child's school. Relationships are critical in prevention and intervention with substance use and mental health concerns.

### **PARENT TIPS**

#### **HOW to talk:**

**Focus on listening, not lecturing.** Resist any urge to criticize or pass judgment once your child begins to talk. The important thing is that your child is communicating. You'll do the most good by simply letting them know that you're there for them unconditionally. COVID-19 and the many changes have brought on new emotions for some.

**Acknowledge their feelings.** Don't try to talk your child out of their feelings or concerns appear silly or irrational to you. Well-meaning attempts to explain why "things aren't that bad" will just come across as if you don't take their emotions seriously. Simply acknowledging the pain and sadness they are experiencing can go a long way in making them feel understood.

#### **WHAT to talk about:**

**Memories:** Look at old photo albums or movies

**A Day in the Life:** Ask them to describe a typical day and share yours. If possible, take them with you to work

#### **WHERE to talk:**

**Car:** The car can be a good place to talk where you don't have to make direct eye contact.

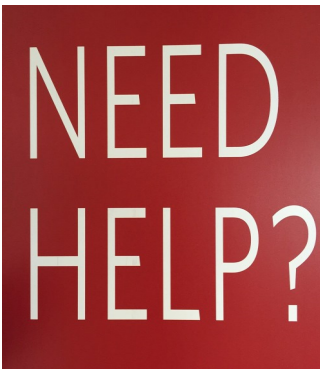
**Play a Sport:** Play basketball or go for a walk outside. A casual activity can often lead to good discussion.

**Hands On:** Build something together. Have your child pick something: garden box, model car, home repairs.

**Volunteer:** Make a meal for a neighbor together, help an animal shelter

**Family Meal Time:** Turn the tv off and sit together as often as possible.

**FAMILY Message Board:** Leave inspirational quotes, Funny jokes, schedules/activity calendar



## **What to Do if you Suspect Your Child is Drinking or Using Drugs?**

1- Don't blame yourself if you did not notice the warning signs. The important thing is that you are aware now and taking action. No one wants to believe their child is caught up in underage alcohol or drug use and need help. You may feel surprised and unsure what to do next, this is normal.

2- Reach out to people you know. It may be helpful to talk with friends or family. Other people that can be of support would be clergy, pediatrician, and School Support Staff.

3- Contact a professional if you are concerned about the health and safety of your child. Your family doctor, hospital and local behavioral health facility are resources that can answer your important questions and help you get the help your child needs.

Adapted from: <https://www.samhsa.gov/underage-drinking/parent-resources/how-tell-if-your-child-drinking-alcohol>



**Good relationships and early detection are key in working with youth. Have frequent conversations with your child about expectations. Establish trusted supports outside of the family for your child.**

## STATISTICS

Alcohol, marijuana, and tobacco are substances most commonly used by adolescents.

Based on the 2019 Youth Risk Assessment: In NC: 24.2% teens had at least one drink of alcohol, on at least 1 day during the 30 days before the survey

SUICIDE IS ONE OF THE LEADING CAUSES OF DEATH in the US. Suicide rates increased in nearly every state from 1999 through 2016. Mental health conditions are often seen as the cause of suicide, but suicide is rarely caused by any single factor. In fact, many people who die by suicide are not known to have a diagnosed mental health condition at the time of death.

In 2017, suicide was the 2nd leading cause of death among children, youth, and adolescents ages 10 to 24, behind automobile accidents.

Data from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention

### TEACHERS TEACHERS TEACHERS

Teachers are in a unique position to notice changes in their students. Remote learning has made the connection different however a child's teacher may still notice before others close to a child do when something is wrong. Signs to look for: ANY change in behavior, sleeping, agitated, poor attendance, grade changes, changes in friend groups or appearance and grooming. Many of these alone are not a cause sign of substance use or mental health concern but if you suspect a problem, seek out the support of your School Counselor, School Social Worker, Administrator or Mental Health Coordinator.

# LEARN MORE

[Take a look at the Guilford County Schools Drug Free Schools Page](#)

Click links below

**<https://www.gcsnc.com/Page/11392>**

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**<https://www.samhsa.gov/>**

**SAMSHA: Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration**

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