As college students arrive on campus this fall, it’s a time of new experiences, new friendships, and making memories that will last a lifetime. Unfortunately for some, it is also a time of excessive drinking and dealing with its aftermath—vandalism, violence, sexual aggression, and even death.

According to research summarized in a College Task Force report to the National Institute on Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism (NIAAA), the consequences of excessive drinking by college students are more significant, more destructive, and more costly than many parents realize. These consequences affect students whether or not they drink.

The Good News
In spite of the stereotypes, research repeatedly shows that most college students make responsible choices when it comes to alcohol. Surveys done at MTSU in the 2014-2015 academic year* show that **53% of our students consume alcohol less frequently than once a week or not at all.** Parental involvement can help our incoming students feel comfortable to make responsible choices, as well.

Early Weeks are Critical
As the fall semester begins, parents can use this important time to help prepare their college-age sons and daughters by talking with them about the consequences of excessive drinking.

During their high school years, those on a college-prep track tend to drink less than their non-college bound classmates. However, during subsequent years, heavy drinking rates of college students surpass those of their non-college peers. This rapid increase in heavy drinking over a relatively short period of time can contribute to serious difficulties with the transition to college.

Anecdotal evidence suggests that the first six weeks of the first semester are critical to a first-year student’s academic success. Because some students initiate heavy drinking during these early days of college, the potential exists for excessive alcohol consumption to interfere with successful adaptation to campus life.

Parents Can Help
During these crucial early weeks, parents can do a variety of things to stay involved:

- Pay special attention to your son’s or daughter’s experiences and activities during the first six weeks on campus.
- Call your son or daughter frequently during the first six weeks of college.
- Inquire about their roommates, the roommates’ behavior, and how disagreements are settled.
- Make sure that your son or daughter understands the penalties for underage drinking, public drunkenness, using a fake ID, driving under the influence, assault, and other alcohol-related offenses.
- Make certain that they understand how alcohol use can lead to sexual assault, violence, and academic failure.
- Be aware of the signs of possible alcohol abuse by your son or daughter (e.g., lower grades, never available or reluctant to talk with you, unwilling to talk about activities with friends, trouble with campus authorities, serious mood changes).
- Visit your son or daughter. Ask to meet their friends. Attend Family Weekend and other campus events open to parents.
- Continue to stay actively involved in the life of your son or daughter. Even though they may be away at college, they continue to be an extension of your family and its values.

For more information, visit the NIAAA’s award-winning website: [www.collegedrinkingprevention.gov](http://www.collegedrinkingprevention.gov)

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*Statistics are from the CORE Drug and Alcohol Survey, administered anonymously in the 2014-2015 academic year to 920 MTSU students. Information adapted from National Institute of Health’s publications No. 07-5640, Aug. 2007, and No. 02-5015, April 2002.*