

Thrive update

 **Boulder Valley** School District
Excellence and Equity

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Inform healthy kids make smarter students

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inside Thriveupdate

2 Spotlight on... Boulder County Public Health: Immunizations are the best safest ways to protect families

3 Some Sobering Stats on Teen Drinking: Local and National

Q&A with Dr. j: Getting a drunk teen medical help

4 Parent to Parent: A parent's perspective on underage drinking and consequences

Spring Break Tips for Parents

5 Calendar and Events

Special Points of INTEREST

Send your questions to be answered by "Dr. j" (page 3)

>>Strategies for Spring Break

Spring Break vacations are well known as a time when many teens are confronted with temptations. "What happens here stays here" has become a phrase some teens feel they can use as an excuse for risky behaviors. Here are some strategies to help avoid those behaviors.

Make sure spring break plans are determined well in advance. Regardless of your teen's plans to be out of town or just hanging around the house, talk to them about what they plan on doing. Give them the responsibility of researching the options they are interested in whether it's attending a local ball game or a trip to Mexico. Have them explore costs, itineraries and supervision. Set a time to sit down with them and talk about the feasibility of their plans.

Clearly communicate your expectations about their conduct over spring break. Whether it is a family vacation, a trip someone else will chaperone, or they will be hanging around the house with their friends, let your teen know what behavior you expect from them. This includes telling them that their conduct needs to be the same over spring break as it is any other time of the year. In your point of view, there is no excuse for bad behavior just because it is Spring Break.

If your teen is going on a chaperoned vacation, make sure you know who the adults are and that they have your contact information. If you have any

concerns about your child's behavior, give them a heads up.

Be sure to set regular times that you and your teen will talk or text on a daily basis. Let them know this is for your peace of mind that they are safe and enjoying their day. Assure them that these will be short communications. Encourage your teen to call you if they find themselves in an uncomfortable situation or run up against a problem. Inform them that the goal here is open communication without them fearing criticism or punishment.

Consider Spring Break an opportunity for them to show you how they handle freedom and how responsible they are. This can be a chance for your teen to earn your respect and trust. Framing your expectations in this manner will be a positive motivator for your teen and will clearly communicate that "what happens on Spring Break counts."

by **Linda D. Cain**
Educational Consultant
BoulderPsychologicalServices.com



>>Spotlight on...Boulder County Public Health: Immunizations are the best safest ways to protect families and their children from disease

One of humanity's greatest achievements has been the development of vaccinations to spare children from illness and suffering from once commonplace diseases, such as whooping cough (pertussis) and polio. One unexpected outcome from the success of vaccinations, however, is that since most parents today have never had to experience the devastation from vaccine-preventable diseases, they may not believe that their families can still be at risk. This can create an environment in which parents become more concerned about the mild side effects of shots rather than the diseases themselves.

Because it's so easy to publish opinions or information on the Internet without the requirement of scientific review, many parents find themselves using incorrect information to make decisions about how best to protect their children from illness. Naturally, parents want the very best for their children and are concerned when they hear rumors that vaccines can cause autism or other problems, or that certain vaccine ingredients are toxic or harmful. However, this misinformation can be catastrophic. As more parents armed with incorrect information decide to delay or avoid getting their children fully vaccinated, they are putting their own children at risk, and our entire community is becoming more vulnerable to vaccine-preventable diseases.

In 2008, this dangerous trend of avoiding or delaying vaccines led to the highest levels of measles cases in the US since 1996. Most of the cases (66.3%) were among people who refused shots for personal or religious reasons, but many (9.5%) occurred among children who were too young to be vaccinated or who delayed getting vaccinated (7.4%). Last year, Minnesota experienced the highest number of reported cases of Hib meningitis since 1992. The disease struck five children under three years of age - three of the children were completely unvaccinated (for personal reasons), including a 7-month-old child who died. One child had not been completely immunized, and the other child became ill due to underlying health conditions.

At least 17 different scientific studies have concluded there is no link between autism and vaccines, and not one single study has proven that there is a link between the two. The most common side effects from immunizations are pain and redness or swelling at the site of injection. In some cases, vaccines can cause fever, or small children may become fussy and irritable. These side effects are mild and short-lived, and they usually completely subside within a couple of days.

Complete School Requirements on Time. Every fall before the new school year begins, many families find themselves in busy clinics rushing to complete required immunizations for school entry. It is best for everyone if all children receive their required shots before the first day of school. When you visit your health care provider, ask if your child's immunizations are up-to-date. If you don't have a health care provider, Boulder County Public Health has two immunization clinics that offer low-cost services. More information about immunizations is available at: www.BoulderCountyShots.org or by calling 303-413-7500.

by Carol Helwig, MPH

Boulder County Public Health Immunization Clinics

Longmont: Mondays, 1:00-6:45 p.m.; call 303-678-6166

Boulder: Wednesdays, 1:00-6:45 p.m.; call 303-413-7500

**Appointments are strongly encouraged,
although limited walk-in appointments are available.**

>>Some Sobering Stats: Local & National

2007 BVSD Youth Risk Behavior Survey (YRBS) (as stated in the Thrive Parent Handbook, page 71)

Nearly 70 percent of high school students said they have tried alcohol.

That number increased by 85 percent of seniors reporting they had consumed at least one drink of alcohol.

More than 72 percent of students feel it is wrong for someone their age to drink and 90 percent of students say their parents feel it is wrong for them to drink.

Taken from Dr. Michael Bradley's Boulder Talk 2/27/09

Recent studies indicate that 10 percent of all high school students in America are alcohol dependent. That number rises to 23 percent of all college students being alcohol dependent.

If a youth starts drinking before he's 15 years old, he's five times

more likely to be addicted to alcohol than the youth who starts drinking at age 21.

Other statistics:

Teens that drink are 50 times more likely to use cocaine than teens who never consume alcohol. (ADASK)

63 percent of the youth who drink alcohol say that they initially got the alcohol from their own or their friend's homes. (ADASK)

58 percent of teenage drinkers report they drink when they are upset or depressed. (Project for Drug Free Schools)

Eight young people a day die in alcohol-related crashes. (Mothers Against Drunk Driving)

45 percent of teenagers drink alcohol, and of those who drink, 64 percent admit to binge drinking. (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention)

Q&A with Dr. J

Q: I had a disturbing conversation with a friend about a parent's experience with alcohol poisoning. The child had already been in trouble with the police over alcohol use and had passed out drunk again, when the parent was called to pick up the teen. The parent did not take the teen to the hospital because the parent was afraid that the police would be involved again. I've known several teens in the past whose lives were most likely saved by prompt medical attention. Is there any assurance that we can give parents that medical care asked for by a parent or guardian is not subject to reporting, so that they will do what is right for the child? -Parent of Two Teens

A: In June 2005 the Colorado General Assembly passed a series of laws (House Bill 05-1183) that include protections for the minor and up to two additional persons from prosecution if they call 911 to report that the minor is in need of medical attention due to alcohol consumption, give their names, stay on the scene, and cooperate with medical and law enforcement personnel when they arrive. You can read the exact language of the law by clicking on: www.state.co.us/gov_dir/leg_dir/ollssl2005a/sl_282.htm. These laws

were enacted due to "incidents of death related to underage binge drinking."

The danger of not taking someone who is suffering from alcohol poisoning to the hospital is that they can die. Alcohol is a depressant and, when too much alcohol is ingested, there is a risk of slowing down the respiratory system and the person simply stops breathing. Tragically a parent would simply assume that they're "sleeping it off." It is important to be safe not sorry and seek medical attention.

When Gordon Bailey died from alcohol poisoning several years ago at a C.U. fraternity, his parents were interviewed. Surprisingly they indicated that they themselves did not really understand the fatal nature of alcohol poisoning and were haunted that they never sat their son down and educated him about this. The good news is that you can. After educating yourself on the subject, be sure to educate your children. And don't wait until they're in high school. These conversations should begin no later than the beginning of middle school, if not earlier. It is important to revisit this and other potential self-harm behaviors (other substance abuse including cigarettes, sexual behavior, bike helmets, seat belts, and other risk behaviors)

frequently as your child develops and matures.

Ironically the two most dangerous drugs on the planet are the two that are legal: cigarettes and alcohol. This sends a very confusing message to our children. Particularly because parents and our general culture model the use of these two drugs far too often. If you are aware that your child is regularly abusing alcohol, it is critical to intervene.

Depending on the seriousness and chronicity of the alcohol abuse, some of the interventions that may be necessary include: alcohol classes, driving restrictions, substance abuse treatment, and attending Alcoholics Anonymous.

Do you have a question?

Submit your questions directly by:

Phone: 720-217-3270

Fax: 720-381-6089

Email: Jan.Hittelman@gmail.com

Post: 1527 Pine Street, Boulder 80302

by Dr. Jan Hittelman
Licensed Psychologist
BoulderPsychologicalServices.com

>> Parent to Parent - A parent's perspective on underage drinking and consequences

While protecting those reporting underage drinking in order to receive medical care is important, parents need to help their children learn from their mistakes, too. Not too long ago, I was faced with these difficult decisions with my own son and his friend. I experienced both the reporting of a senior's binge drinking experience to the law, while he was being helped thankfully at a local emergency room, and my own son's involvement that same evening.

Both received the help and consequences they needed. After my son's friend who had consumed more than 15 beers in a short period of time was successfully treated in the ER, his parents agreed to have their son written an underage drinking ticket. Since our son had not consumed enough to go to the ER and had not been caught by the law, we decided on a difference consequence. Knowing that our son had broken the BVSD athletic code we signed in the beginning of the school year, we guided our reluctant son (who said, "Nobody

else's parents make their kids self report") to tell his lacrosse coach and athletic director what he had done. His consequences were to lose 10 percent of playing time that spring.

Neither one of these consequences was required by Colorado law. My son's friend could have gotten out of getting that underage drinking ticket and my son could have simply not told his coach about violating the athletic code of conduct. We as parents made the decision to impose these consequences on our sons for their underage drinking. Both consequences were meaningful in these young men's lives. Both students learned from their choices of underage drinking and continued on to have a very successful senior year without any more incidences, a successful lacrosse season, graduate, and continue on to colleges back east.

I know that not everyone will agree with me, but as someone who has been through this, I strongly believe that hiding behind the law that includes protections

for the minor and up to two additional persons from prosecution if they call 911 without consequences is not an option. When it happened to two families, one family's choice was to use the structure of the law AND our family's choice was to impose strong consequences using the athletic code. Both families sent the strong message that underage drinking will not be tolerated and both of these young men learned from their mistakes. Getting the teen the medical help they need is paramount and can never be ignored, but following through with the help of the law or the family's consequences may make the difference in stopping the behavior that got them into a "sticky wicket" in the first place. It's hard parenting to this, but I think it is really important not to look the other way in using this law that is meant to get teens the help they need in an emergency.

by Marsha Moritz,
former BVSD parent

>> Spring Break Tips for Parents

1. **SET RULES - Especially no alcohol or drugs.** Be clear and specific about your expectations and establish consequences for breaking the rules. Spring Break should not be a break from responsibility. Talk candidly about the risks of drug use and drinking, including alcohol poisoning, violence, STI's (sexually transmitted infections) and sexual assault. Include a conversation about date rape drugs like Rohpnl and GHB. While usually coupled with alcoholic beverages, they can also be slipped into nonalcoholic drinks.
2. **PREPARE your teen.** Give teens tips on how to protect themselves, such as using a buddy system (3 or more is best) to watch out for each other, and make them aware of the laws that apply in various areas of travel. Walk through different scenarios and discuss how to handle pressures including offers of drugs or alcohol and other situations.
3. **KEEP MONITORING** and ask questions. Know your teen's itinerary and where he/she is staying. If they are staying home, know how they are spending their unsupervised time. Ask questions. Require a daily check-in via cell phone and make

sure your teen is reachable. Make sure to have cell phone numbers for your teen's friends and check in with them as necessary too. Network with and connect with other parents to confirm plans and coordinate ground rules.

REMEMBER: Research shows that parents are a powerful deterrent to drug or alcohol use, even when teens are far from home.

Looking for Alternative Spring Break Options? There are organizations that offer alternative Spring Break vacations in lieu of traditional "party" travel. These trips tend to be sponsored by churches, schools or other organizations and are focused on service learning or educational travel. Check out these websites for more information: Student & Youth Travel Association of North America, Break Away: The Alternative Break Connection, and Habitat for Humanity.

www.theantidrug.com/springbreak/default.asp

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Look for us on the web!

www.bvsd.org

>> Calendar of Classes & Events

MARCH 2009

3/11: A Parent Engagement Network (PEN) Community Conversation - **Building Bridges - Effective Ways to Communicate and Connect with Your Kids featuring Michael Vladeck.**

Wednesday, March 11. 9-11 a.m. Lafayette Library, 775 W. Baseline, Lafayette.

3/15: Caring for our Elder Parents - Karen Wilding, LCSW

Sunday, March 15. 1-2:30 p.m. Trinigy Lutheran Church, 2200 Broadway, Boulder (NE Corner Broadway & Pine).

For more info: BoulderPsychologicalServices.com.

3/22: "Love and Logic Early Childhood Parenting Made Fun"

(for parents of children birth to 6 years) Sundays, March 22, 29, April 5.

1-5 p.m. Louisville Recreation Center. Teacher: Sheryl Schwabe 303 520 6803

APRIL 2009

4/4: "Love and Logic Early Childhood Parenting Made Fun!"

(for parents of children birth to 6 yrs.) Saturdays, April 4 – May 2, 10:00 a.m.-12:30 p.m., Parenting Place, Boulder. Teacher: Sheryl Schwabe, 303-520-6803

4/5: Caring for the Caregiver: Stress Reduction & Relaxation Techniques – Jeffrey Kuhn, LCSW. Sunday 1-2:30 p.m. Trinity Lutheran Church, 2200 Broadway, Boulder (NE Corner Broadway & Pine). For more information: BoulderPsychologicalServices.com

4/6: Becoming A Love and Logic Parent - Mondays, April 6, 13 & 20, May 4, 11 & 18 (six sessions; no class on April 27) 6-8:30 p.m. Superior Elementary School, 1800 S Indiana Street, Superior, CO, 80027. For details contact the instructor Cyndi Goldfarb at 303-494-8373 or cyn@indra.com

4/8: A Parent Engagement Network (PEN) Community Conversation - **The Adolescent Brain: New brain research & what parents need to know** - Dr. Cynthia Divino, Psychologist, Clinical Supervisor, CU. cdivino@mac.com. 9-11:00 a.m. BoulderValley School District-6500 E. Arapahoe, Boulder.

To submit items for the calendar contact:

Leisha Conners Bauer at lconnersbauer@bouldercounty.org.