



Parent Toolkit

Become the resource your child needs

Talking about substance use and online risks can feel uncomfortable. This toolkit provides clear information, early warning signs, and practical next steps.

Delaying first use protects the developing brain and lowers the risk of addiction.

Today's experimentation carries a higher risk. Early, calm intervention matters.

YOU ARE NOT ALONE.



Connect With Us

ACCADA offers prevention, intervention, and recovery services.

Call 419-289-7675

In an emergency, call 911.

Prevention Is About More Than Avoiding Harm



BUILDING FOUNDATIONS

Young people thrive when their bodies are nourished, their stress is regulated, and they experience belonging and purpose. Strong sleep, nutrition, movement, trusted relationships, and meaningful roles in family and community are powerful protective factors. Substance prevention works best when we build these foundations early and consistently.”*

Build Protection at Home

- Prioritize consistent sleep and family meals
- Encourage daily movement and outdoor time
- Create predictable routines
- Strengthen connection through shared activities
- Help your child develop interests, responsibilities, and goals.

This shifts the focus from risk-only to resilience-building.

Three Foundations of Lifelong Health

Prevention is strongest when all three are nurtured together.

Physical Health

Sleep, nutrition, and movement build brain stability.

Stress Regulation

Calm relationships and consistent routines help young people manage strong emotions.

Meaning & Belonging

Feeling valued, needed, and connected reduces the appeal of risky behaviors.

Fentanyl



WHAT IS IT?

Fentanyl is a powerful synthetic opioid used medically for severe pain. It is extremely potent and can be deadly in very small amounts.

WHY IT MATTERS

Fentanyl is often mixed into other drugs and counterfeit pills without the user knowing. Many overdoses occur during experimentation. A single use can be fatal.

WHY DELAYING USE MATTERS

Experimentation today carries a higher risk than in previous generations due to fentanyl contamination. One-time use can result in an overdose.

What to Watch For

- Constricted pupils
- Extreme drowsiness
- Slow breathing
- Sudden isolation
- Mood swings
- Increased secrecy
- Depression

How to Respond

- Be direct about contamination risks
- Focus on safety rather than punishment
- Make sure your child understands to call 911 in an emergency

Resources & Support

Immediate Support

In any suspected overdose, call 911 immediately. For prevention education or treatment guidance, call ACCADA at **419-289-7675**.

Learn More

Local Narcan Resource

Learn more about why Narcan matters, where to get free replacement in Ashland County, and how maintaining current Narcan could save a life. www.accada.org/narcan-saves

Recovery Services

Explore ACCADA outpatient and recovery support services:

<https://www.accada.org/outpatient>

Vaping



WHAT IS IT?

Vaping uses handheld devices to inhale heated liquid that may contain nicotine, THC, or other chemicals.

WHY IT MATTERS

Vaping is discreet and easy to hide. Many believe it is safer than smoking, but nicotine is highly addictive. Illegally obtained cartridges may contain unknown substances, including fentanyl.

WHY DELAYING USE MATTERS

Nicotine exposure during adolescence alters brain development and increases the likelihood of lifelong addiction and future substance use.

What to Watch For

- Sweet or unusual scents
- Increased thirst
- Irritability
- New small devices or chargers
- Frequent breaks or isolation

How to Respond

- Ask open-ended questions
- Share facts without lecturing
- Reinforce clear expectations
- Stay calm and consistent in follow-through

Resources & Support

Immediate Support

If vaping progresses or you suspect THC or unknown substances, call ACCADA at **419-289-7675**.

Learn More

How parents influence youth vaping and substance use:

www.accada.org/influence

Recovery Services

Learn about ACCADA's prevention programs for youth:

www.accada.org/prevention

Alcohol



WHAT IS IT?

Alcohol is a legal depressant found in beer, wine, and liquor.

WHY IT MATTERS

Teens may drink out of curiosity, peer pressure, or to cope with stress. Stress and emotional challenges are important signals that a young person may need additional support or connection. Early alcohol use significantly increases the likelihood of future dependence. Research shows that individuals who begin drinking before age 15 are far more likely to develop alcohol use disorder than those who wait until adulthood. Parental modeling influences adolescent behavior.

WHY DELAYING USE MATTERS

The longer a teen delays drinking, the lower their risk of long-term misuse and related health concerns.

What to Watch For

- Smell of alcohol
- Slurred speech
- Changes in sleep
- Grade changes
- Withdrawal from activities
- Hidden containers

How to Respond

- Stay calm if you discover alcohol
- Reinforce expectations clearly
- Focus on safety
- Apply consistent, reasonable consequences

Resources & Support

Immediate Support

For prevention guidance or substance misuse concerns, call ACCADA at **419-289-7675**.

Learn More

Drug and alcohol prevention tips for parents:
<https://www.accada.org/blog/2021/11/02/drug-and-alcohol-prevention-tips-for-parents-of-teens>

Recovery & Family Support

ACCADA Outpatient & Recovery Services
Counseling, peer support, and recovery planning.
<https://www.accada.org/our-services/outpatient-services>

Self Help Meetings & AA for Families
Information about Alcoholics Anonymous, Al Anon, and other recovery meetings for individuals and families.
<https://www.accada.org/resources/self-help-meetings>

Cannabis



WHAT IS IT?

Cannabis, also called marijuana, contains THC, which is mind-altering. Recreational cannabis is legal for adults in Ohio. Legal does not mean safe for developing brains.

WHY IT MATTERS

Legal for adults does not mean safe for adolescents. Normalization in the home can increase the likelihood of early use. Edibles and discreet products can contain high levels of THC and are easy to conceal.

WHY DELAYING USE MATTERS

Most adults with substance use disorders began using before age 18. Early cannabis use increases the risk of dependency, academic challenges, and mental health concerns, which are often signals that additional support or connection is needed.

What to Watch For

- Red or bloodshot eyes
- Slowed reaction time
- Mood swings
- Paraphernalia
- Increased appetite
- Irritability or sleep difficulty

How to Respond

- Explain that adult legal use is not the same as adolescent safety
- Focus on brain development and long-term goals
- Maintain calm, firm boundaries

Resources & Support

Immediate Support

For questions about adolescent cannabis use, call ACCADA at **419-289-7675**.

Learn More

How parents influence youth cannabis use and why delaying use matters:

www.accada.org/cannabis

Prevention Services

Learn more about ACCADA's youth prevention programs:

www.accada.org/prevention

Kratom



WHAT IS IT?

Kratom is a plant-based substance sold in capsules, powders, and drinks. It is often marketed as natural or herbal.

WHY IT MATTERS

Legal does not mean regulated or safe. Kratom acts on opioid receptors in the brain and can produce stimulant or opioid like effects depending on the dose. Because it is unregulated, strength and purity vary widely.

WHY DELAYING USE MATTERS

Early use increases the risk of dependency, particularly because it affects the same brain systems involved in opioid addiction.

What to Watch For

- Nausea
- Weight loss
- Constipation
- Drowsiness
- Confusion
- Mood changes

How to Respond

- Ask what they know about kratom
- Share that natural does not mean harmless
- Reinforce your expectations clearly

Resources & Support

Immediate Support

If you have concerns or need guidance, ACCADA offers evidence-based prevention and recovery services. Call **419-289-7675**.

Learn More

Kratom – When Natural Doesn't Mean Safe
www.accada.org/kratom

Recovery Services

Explore ACCADA's outpatient counseling and recovery support services:
www.accada.org/outpatient

Sexting



WHAT IS IT?

Sexting involves sending or receiving sexually explicit images or messages through digital devices.

WHY IT MATTERS

Images and messages can be shared without consent, leading to emotional harm, bullying, or exploitation. Youth who engage in sexting are more likely to experiment with substances and experience symptoms of depression or anxiety.

WHY DELAYING RISKY DIGITAL BEHAVIOR MATTERS

Early use increases the risk of dependency, particularly because it affects the same brain systems involved in opioid addiction.

What to Watch For

- Increased secrecy with devices
- Spike in screen time
- Anger or defensiveness
- Grade changes
- Heightened focus on appearance

How to Respond

- Stay Calm
- Keep the conversation non-judgmental
- Discuss peer pressure openly
- Explain real life and legal consequences

Resources & Support

Immediate Support

If you need guidance navigating digital safety or related mental health concerns, call ACCADA at **419-289-7675**.

Counseling & Outpatient Services

ACCADA provides individual counseling, family counseling, and group services to support youth experiencing anxiety, depression, peer pressure, or risky behaviors.

www.accada.org/outpatient

Prevention Services

Learn more about ACCADA's prevention education programs that build communication skills and healthy decision-making:

www.accada.org/prevention

You are not alone



Delaying first use and early risky behaviors protects the developing brain and reduces long-term harm.

Intervene early. Stay calm. Set clear expectations. Seek support when needed.

If you would like help, ACCADA offers a variety of mental health, prevention, and recovery services. We have a wide-reaching network to meet people where they are and get them what they need to live healthy, successful lives.

**Please contact us at 419-289-7675.
In an emergency, call 911.**



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