Winter break often provides students with a much needed break for their brains and their bodies. It is chance to unwind and recharge before they “show up” for the last few weeks of the first semester. It is also an opportunity to enjoy time with friends and family. And at the same time substance use, including alcohol and cannabis often increase around the holidays.

The Journal of Alcohol and Drugs found that 76% of youth ages 8 to 17 said parents were the leading influence in their decision about whether to drink alcohol or not.  Make the most of the time surrounding the holidays to reinforce family values surrounding alcohol and other substance use. Using this time as teachable moments doubles as substance use prevention. It is also a great time to check in with your teen about their beliefs as well. Here are a few additional tips for parents:

**Talk with Other Parents & Share Contact Information**: If you hear about a party that your teen plans to go to, check in with the hosting parents. Make sure that you have their contact information and they have yours. This is also a good time to ask about supervision, bag searches and how alcohol, cannabis, or other substance use will be handled.

**Monitor & Secure:** Monitoring your teen around the holidays is especially important. Keep track of any alcohol or other substances from your holiday festivities, storing substances out of reach of teens, ideally locked away.

**Be Up & Ready:** Just because they don’t have to get up early for school doesn’t mean there don’t still need a curfew. Make sure to set a curfew time, as well as a time to check in with your teen when they return home. This is an important part of accountability, often if teens know they will have a parent to check in with they arrive home, they will chose not to drink or use other chemicals.

**Have a Plan**: Should your teen find themselves in a situation that they are not comfortable in, have a code word or an emoji that can be sent via text to signal you to pick them up. Once you pick them up, keep things light, if they want to talk about it, great. If they do not, first make sure they are safe, then make a plan to talk in the morning.

Please reach out to Candi Davenport MS LADC with any questions or concerns at cdavenport@relatemn.org.