

Perspective & Strategies for More Effective Conversations about Alcohol & Other Drugs

- **Be a Partner** – You don't have to be an expert on alcohol and other drugs or have all the answers. Your interest and support complements the student's expertise on themselves and can lead to exploration of the issue.
- **Be Non-Judgmental** – Seek to understand, not judge, their perspective, experience or actions.
- **Be Curious** – Draw out the student's perspective, motivations and strengths, knowing they already have much of what they need to make a change.
- **Honor Autonomy** – Respect the student's capacity for self-direction and right to make their own choices.

Ask-Offer-Ask (AOA) is a framework for offering information, advice or a concern in a way that makes it more likely students will meaningfully engage with you and consider what you share vs tuning out or becoming defensive.

- **Ask:** Ask what they already know, and what concerns or interests them. Ask for permission to share information or advice.
- **Offer:** Prioritize information or advice you share according to the student's interests, concerns or experience. Keep it short and offer a menu of options when possible. Acknowledge they may disagree with you.
- **Ask:** Check back for student's response, understanding and interpretation instead or , or before, offering your own.

Conversation Starters

- Faculty/TA: “I’d like to share a concern if I may... I've noticed you are struggling to stay awake in class, your last 2 assignments were late and you've missed class recently. I’m concerned about you and your ability to do well in this course. I'd like to help. Can we talk about it?”
- Advisor: “To help me provide the best support for students, I routinely ask students about drinking and other drug use because we know it can interfere with academic performance. Would it be alright if we talked briefly about that today?”
- Coach/Coordinator: “There has been a lot in the news lately about [marijuana]. What are you noticing on campus? ... What are your thoughts about that?”

With students in general, with no specific concerns	With a student for whom you have concerns
<i>Examples</i>	<i>Examples</i>
<p>Ask</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I wonder what you think about _____? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ e.g. a current event involving alcohol or other drugs • What do you already know about marijuana use and academic performance? • Would you be interested in hearing about _____? 	<p>Ask</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • May I share a concern? • May I share some information/advice? • What do you know about _____? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ e.g., the impact that alcohol/marijuana use has on academic performance • What are your ideas for how to reach your goal/address this challenge? • What have you already tried?
<p>Offer</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I’m curious what you’ll make of this information about... • This may or may not apply to you, but some students... • I read an article that suggested... • We know from research that... 	<p>Offer</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I’ve noticed that you... • Some options you might consider are... • I don’t know what you’ll make of this... • Some students in a similar situation have found _____ to be helpful. • I recommend that you touch base with [referral information]. Of course, it’s your decision.
<p>Ask</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What do you make of that information? • What does that mean for you as a college student? 	<p>Ask</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What do you think about that? • What questions do you have about that? • What does that mean for you? • How does that fit with what you know about yourself? • How can I help?