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Talking regularly with youth about the dangers of alcohol, tobacco and other drugs reduces their risk of using in the first place.

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Prevention Action Alliance
6171 Huntley Road, Suite G
Columbus, Ohio 43229
PH: (614) 540-9985
FX: (614) 540-9990

Start Talking!



Building a Drug-Free Future

KNOW! To Practice Good Sportsmanship



The benefits of participating in sports are vast. Sports help build character, boost self-confidence, strengthen perseverance, promote discipline, enhance physical and emotional health, develop teamwork skills, and promote healthy competition. Sports also provide children with additional supervision and additional mentors to help guide them as they grow, which is monumental. In fact, a study by Big Brothers Big Sisters shows that youth are 52% less likely to skip school and 46% less likely to use drugs when they have a caring adult mentor in their lives. Sports also give young people a focus, and another reason to say “no” to substance use and other risky behaviors.

As parents, we should recognize the importance of athletics, and show appreciation for our team coaches and sports officials, who are most likely out there not only because they enjoy the sport, but because they care about *our* young people.

Yet, according to the Ohio High School Athletic Association (OHSAA), sports leaders are not feeling the love. When over 2,000 high school athletic directors were asked in a national survey what they liked least about their job, 62% said it was “dealing with aggressive parents and adult fans.” Sports officials agreed, with nearly 80% having quit their job after the first two years - due primarily to unruly parents.

Because of this, there is a growing shortage of high school officials. No officials would mean no more games, which would be tragic for so many youth. For this reason, the OHSAA issued a stern warning to parents and fans in a recent press release. Though it is geared toward high school athletics, it can be a lesson applied to parents of various age groups.

If you are a parent attending a high school athletic event this year, you can help by following these six guidelines:



Talk early and often about alcohol, tobacco and other drugs. Even when it gets tough.

Empowering Parents To Raise Their Children To Be Substance-Free



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Act Your Age. You are, after all, an adult. Act in a way that makes your family and school proud.

Don't Live Your Life Vicariously Through Your Children. High school sports are for them, not you. Your family's reputation is not determined by how well your children perform on the field of play.

Let Your Children Talk to the Coach Instead of You Doing It for Them. High school athletes learn how to become more confident, independent and capable—but only when their parents don't jump in and solve their problems for them.

Stay in Your Own Lane. No coaching or officiating from the sidelines. Your role is to be a responsible, supportive parent—not a coach or official.

Remember, Participating in a High School Sport Is Not About Getting a College Scholarship. According to the NCAA, only about 2% of all high school athletes are awarded a sports scholarship, and the total value of the scholarship is only about \$18,000.

Make Sure Your Children Know You Love Watching Them Play. Do not critique your child's performance on the car ride home. Participating in high school sports is about character development, learning and having fun—not winning and losing.

In closing, the OHSAA reminds parents and other fans that purchasing a ticket to an athletic event does not give them the right to be rude, disrespectful or verbally abusive. Instead, all fans are encouraged to cheer loud and proud, while being responsible and respectful, and to keep in mind that the future of sports - and the well-being of many of our children - depend on it.

Sources: [Karissa Niehoff and Jerry Snodgrass, Ohio High School Athletic Association \(OHSAA\) - Parents and Adult Fans: The Biggest Challenge Facing High School Sports Today. Sept 10, 2019.](#) [Harri Daniel, BenefitOf.net: Benefits Of Youth Sports. Feb 2, 2011.](#) [Health Fitness Revolution: Top 10 Health Benefits of Youth Sports. Jun 3, 2015.](#) [Maegan Olmstead, Women's Sports Foundation: How Sports Help Decrease the Risk of Teen Substance Abuse. Jan 8, 2016.](#)