



# Voices of Child Health in Chicago REPORT

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## REPORT HIGHLIGHTS

Ninety percent of parents report having clear rules about alcohol and drug use for their adolescents.

The majority of parents believed they would likely know if their child had engaged in risky substance use behaviors, but youth in other surveys believed their parents were less likely to know about these behaviors.

Though most parents discuss substance use rules with their teens, many do not discuss these rules with the parents of their child's friends.

Parents were most likely to seek information about substance use from the internet and their child's doctor.

## Parent-Child Communication About Substance Use

Parents in Chicago have ranked youth alcohol and substance use as top concerns related to youth health for the past two years.<sup>1,2</sup> Results from the 2019 Youth Risk Behavior Surveillance System showed that 26% of Chicago public high school students said they currently drank alcohol and 23% said they currently used marijuana.<sup>3</sup>

For this *Voices of Child Health in Chicago* report, we focus on parents' communication with their children about substance use. We asked parents questions about youth substance use such as: "Do you have clear rules for your child about alcohol and drug use?"; "In the past year, have you talked with your child about NOT using the following [substances]?"; and, "Do you believe you would know if your child had been doing the following [behaviors]?" We also asked parents questions about their family and their family's health.

### Parents communicate with their kids about substance use

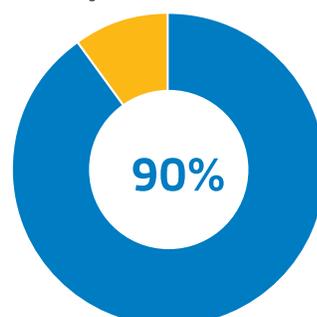
In our survey, nine in 10 Chicago parents report that they had "clear rules about alcohol and drug use" for their child (90%, Figure 1). This rate was slightly higher than the proportion of teens in the 2018 Illinois Youth Survey who said that their family had clear rules about alcohol and drug use — specifically, 81% of eighth graders, 76% of 10th graders, and 74% of 12th graders reported that their family had such rules.<sup>4</sup>

Additionally, in our survey 81% of Chicago parents said that in the past year they had talked with their child about not using alcohol, 80% had talked with their child about not riding in a vehicle with a driver who has been drinking and 75% had talked with their child about not using marijuana (Figure 1).

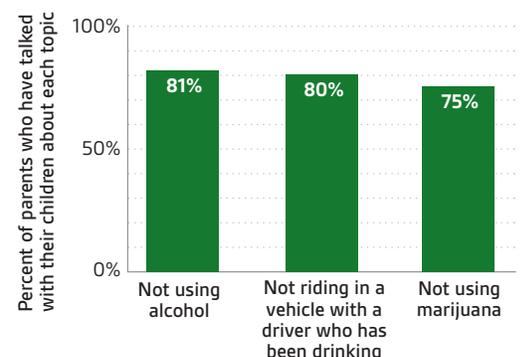
Parents can help to prevent substance use among their teen(s) by staying involved in their lives and having open, two-way communication about substances.<sup>5</sup> It also can be helpful for parents to clearly address and discuss family values and rules about substance use.<sup>6</sup> Other research has shown that having a positive relationship with adolescents, including consistent communication, is associated with lower rates of substance use.<sup>7,8</sup>

Figure 1. Communication among Chicago parents and their children around substance abuse

■ Parents who **do** have clear rules on drug and alcohol use  
■ Parents who **do not** have clear rules on drug and alcohol use



### The majority of parents talk with their children about...



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## Parents believe they would know if their child engaged in risky substance use behaviors

In general, parents believed that they would know if their child had used substances or engaged in risky behaviors. Specifically, more than half of parents believed they would know “always” or “most of the time” if their child: drank alcohol without permission (63%), drank alcohol and drove a vehicle (60%), went to a party where alcohol was served (57%) or rode in a car driven by a teen driver who had been drinking (52%) (Figure 2).

The proportion of parents who believed they would know if their teenage child had engaged in these behaviors was substantially higher than the proportion of Chicago teens who believed their parents would know if they had engaged in these behaviors on the 2018 Illinois Youth Survey. For instance, less than half of Chicago 10th graders believed their parents would know “always” or “most of the time” if they had: drank alcohol without permission (26%), drank and drove (41%), went to a party where alcohol was served (27%) or rode in a car driven by a teen driver who had been drinking (33%) (Figure 2).<sup>4</sup>

We also asked parents, “When your child is not at home, do you or another parent/guardian know where they are and who they are with?” Seventy-eight percent of parents said they would always know this information. In contrast, in the Illinois Youth Survey, 54% of eighth graders, 41% of 10th graders, and 41% of 12th graders said their parents would always know where they were and who they were with.<sup>4</sup>

## Parents and their children’s friends

Sixty percent of parents said they know the parents of their children’s friends; however, only 28% of parents said they regularly talked to the parents of their children’s friends about rules for alcohol and drug use at their house and the friend’s house, 30% said they sometimes talk about this and 42% said they did not talk about this with their children’s friend’s parents.

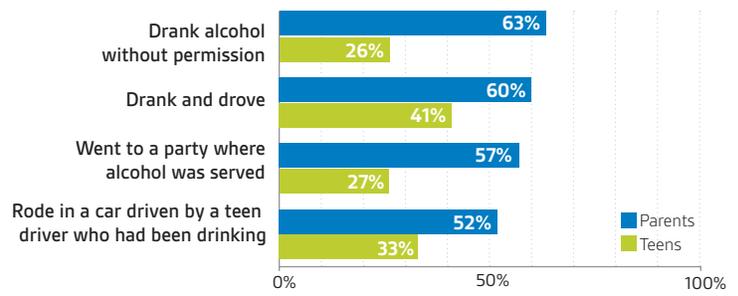
## Where do parents get information about youth substance use?

When Chicago parents had questions about youth alcohol or drug use, they most frequently reported seeking information on the internet (61%), followed by from their child’s doctor (44%) and other parents (21%). Pediatricians and other clinicians can be a partner in substance use prevention through education, answering parents’ and adolescents’ questions and encouraging conversations. Parents can also find tips for how best to talk with their children about substance use at:

- Partnership to End Addiction ([drugfree.org](http://drugfree.org))
- Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration ([samhsa.gov](http://samhsa.gov))
- National Institute on Drug Abuse ([drugabuse.gov](http://drugabuse.gov))
- Lurie Children’s Substance Use Prevention Program ([SUPP](http://SUPP))
- Talk to Your Teen About Drugs ([AAP](http://AAP))

**Figure 2.** Proportion of Chicago parents who reported they would know “always” or “most of the time” if their child engaged in risky substance use behaviors and the proportion of Chicago teens who reported their parents would know if they engaged in these behaviors

Would parents know if their child had been doing the following:



Percent of Chicago parents and teens reporting “always” and “most of the time”

Note. The data from Chicago teens are from the 2018 Illinois Youth Survey.

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## HOW THE SURVEY WAS CONDUCTED

This report is based on data from the Voices of Child Health in Chicago Parent Panel Survey. The survey is administered to a sample of Chicago parents by Lurie Children’s and NORC at the University of Chicago via internet and telephone. The survey is administered to the same panel of parents three times each year. The data in this report was collected from May through July 2020. The sample consisted of 1,642 Chicago parents, step-parents or guardians who had at least one child under 18 years of age in the household (referred to as “parents” in this report). Some analyses in this report are based on a subset of 921 parents who had at least one child 11 years old or older. Parents were from all 77 community areas in Chicago. The cumulative survey response rate was 2.24%. All analyses were conducted with statistical weighting so that the results are representative of the parent population in the City of Chicago during the time period of data collection. For more information about the VOCHIC Parent Panel Survey, visit [luriechildrens.org/ParentPanel](http://luriechildrens.org/ParentPanel) and our page on Open Science Framework at <https://osf.io/cjz82/>.

## SUGGESTED CITATION

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