Red Ribbon Week is the oldest substance use prevention awareness effort in the nation – starting in 1985. Today, Red Ribbon Week serves as a catalyst to mobilize individuals, families, and communities to engage in substance use prevention. This year’s Red Ribbon Week will be observed October 23-31.

As a parent, you play a powerful role in supporting the behavioral health of your child. By providing a safe and supportive environment that promotes health and well-being, your child can be led down a path where they can grow, learn, and thrive.

Below are tips on how to reduce your child’s risk for substance use during this year’s Red Ribbon Week and throughout the year.

**Have ongoing conversations with your child.**

Discuss the dangers of using drugs and other substances and that you disapprove of any drug usage.

**Be a good example.**

You are the #1 influence in your child’s life. Role-model healthy behaviors and attitudes.

**Be a part of your child’s life.**

Regularly discuss your child’s interests and take time to learn about him/her.

**Get to know your child’s friends and their friends’ parents.**

Help them problem-solve and offer encouragement.

**Spend time together.**

Be fully engaged with and responsive to your child; see the world from their perspective.

**Encourage your child to get involved in school or extra-curricular activities.**

Keeping your child engaged in healthy and positive activities decreases the likelihood of them participating in risky behaviors.

**Know where your child is and what they are doing.**

Monitor your child’s activity, especially during high-risk times such as after school.

**Set clear rules and enforce them fairly**.

Encourage your child’s growing independence but set appropriate limits and follow through with consequences when rules are broken.

**Practice refusal skills.**

Help them practice how to say no even if they might not be currently experiencing peer pressure.

**Make your home safe.**

Do not have drugs or other substances available in your home and limit guests who abuse drugs and/or alcohol. Keep track of medicines (over-the-counter and prescription) and cleaning products.

If you suspect your child is engaging in substance use it’s important to start the conversation right away even though it may not be easy. Here are some tips on how to have a successful conversation: [Communicating with Your Child When You Suspect Substance Use | Parents Lead North Dakota](https://www.parentslead.org/special-topics/alcohol/communicating-with-child)

For age specific resources and tips on promoting the behavioral health of your child you can visit [Age Specific Resources | Parents Lead North Dakota](https://www.parentslead.org/age-specific-resources).

Parents Lead is a North Dakota program administered by the Department of Health and Human Services’. Behavioral Health division and it provides parents and caregivers a variety of tools and resources to support them in creating a safe environment for their children that promotes behavioral health.

Visit [www.parentslead.org](http://www.parentslead.org) or follow Parents Lead on [Facebook](https://www.facebook.com/parentslead/), [Instagram](https://www.instagram.com/parents_lead/) and [Pinterest](https://www.pinterest.com/parentslead/).