THE STUDENT WHO IS SUSPECTED OF ABUSING SUBSTANCES

A variety of substances are available that provide escape from pressing demands. The most abused substance is alcohol. Alcohol and other drug-related accidents remain the single-greatest cause of preventable death among college students. Alcohol is the preferred drug on college campuses and is the most widely used psychoactive drug. Alcohol abusers in college populations may also abuse other drugs, both prescription and illicit. Patterns of use are affected by fads and peer pressure.

The effects of alcohol on the user are well known. Student alcohol abuse is most often identified by faculty, staff, or peers when irresponsible, unpredictable behavior affects the learning, work, or living/ social environment (e.g., drunk and disorderly in class, office or lounge spaces), or when a combination of the health and social impairments associated with alcohol abuse sabotages student performance. Because of the denial that exists in most substance abusers, it is important to express your concern about the student not in terms of suspicions about alcohol and other drugs, but in terms of specific changes in behavior or performance.

**WHAT TO DO:**

* Share your honest concern and encourage the student to seek help.
* Address the substance abuse issue if the student is open and willing
* Offer support and concern for the student’s overall well-being
* Be alert for signs of alcohol and drug abuse: preoccupation with drugs, periods of memory loss, deteriorating performance in class.
* Get necessary help from Campus Police in instances of intoxication.
* Encourage the student to seek an evaluation and/ or referrals

**WHAT NOT TO DO:**

* Don’t ignore the problem
* Don’t chastise or lecture
* Don’t convey judgment or criticism about the student’s substance abuse
* Don’t make allowances for the student’s inappropriate or irresponsible behavior
* Don’t ignore signs of intoxication in the classroom, workplace, etc.

\*\**When in doubt, if any personal information the student tells you raises red flags, consult with* the Student Advocacy and Accountability team. <https://webapps.mccneb.edu/bcat/>