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Sex, Alcohol Use on Overnight College Visits

A recent survey conducted by the Center for Adolescent Research and Education (CARE) about sex and alcohol use on overnight college visits for high school student applicants found that roughly one in six surveyed teens (16 percent) who had been on an overnight college admissions visit reported drinking alcohol during the visit.

Teens also reported engaging in sex or other intimate sexual behavior (17 percent), using drugs other than alcohol (5 percent), or driving while impaired (2 percent) during their overnight college visit.

The study, conducted for CARE and Students Against Destructive Decisions by ORC International Inc., surveyed 1,070 US teens from age 16 to 19, 270 of whom indicated they had been on an overnight college admissions visit. It includes high school students currently making college visits and current college students reflecting on previous visits. Data were collected online between April 17 and 20.

Most concerning finding noted that for half of those kids, it was their first experience with sex or alcohol. This suggests that high schoolers visiting college may be a particularly vulnerable group. They may be initiated into the world of college life before they are quite ready for it.

With regards to sexual encounters, it is quite likely, given the circumstances, that these are one-time affairs. Such an experience may have negative consequences, particularly in the setting of emerging sexual identity.

The whole college application process challenges teenagers to focus, in what can and should be a healthy way, on their emerging sense of self and unique identity. For parents, offering background support and letting the child, with the help of college advisers, guide the process, is an excellent approach.

This survey, however, should open the public's eyes to an issue that warrants parental involvement. Every family has its own unique ways of communicating. The hope is that in calling

attention to the issue, it will help to prevent college-bound teenagers from getting themselves into uncomfortable or unhealthy situations.

To learn more about Underage and College Drinking, click here.

Source: The Center for Adolescent Research and Education (CARE) at Susquehanna University, http://www.susqu.edu/academics/40981.asp