Binge-Drinking/Abstinence/Drinking Responsibly

BINGE-DRINKING is a widespread phenomenon occurring across college campuses. It is usually defined in terms of quantity of drinks—typically 4-5 drinks at one sitting in a short period of time. But it can also include just reaching a high Blood Alcohol Level or drinking a lot. Unfortunately, students may perceive that Binge-Drinking is the "normal and usual" way of consuming alcohol on campuses; they may respond to peer pressure, feel compelled to give it a try, and participate in drinking contests.

BINGE-DRINKING is extremely dangerous because you're ingesting alcohol faster than your body can metabolize it. The maximum amount of alcohol your body can process is up to 1 ounce per hour—about the equivalent of 1 drink. Since you're consuming multiple drinks in a short period of time, your body gets overloaded with alcohol. This can easily lead to alcohol poisoning, coma, or death. Just think of the recent alcohol-related deaths at Louisiana State University and MIT. Both of those students got caught up in drinking contests and rituals and paid for it with their lives.

So how do you keep from getting caught up in this pattern of drinking. Well, first consider ABSTINENCE from alcohol—It's a viable option. Just because others drink does not mean that you have to do the same thing. If you perceive that the campus culture is one of needing to get drunk in order to have fun, do something to help change the culture. There are plenty of people out there who are not drinking alcohol and having a good time.

If you are 21 years or older and making the choice to drink alcohol, drink RESPONSIBLY. Here are some tips:

- Limit the amount you drink. It's always okay to refuse a drink.
- Pace yourself: Don't gulp drinks; Stay away from shots of liquor; Do not participate in drinking games.
- Dilute your drinks.
- Alternate alcoholic drinks with nonalcoholic ones.
- Do not drink on an empty stomach (food helps slow down alcohol absorption—but you must eat before; eating after ingesting alcohol will not help).
- Avoid "spiked" punch and other drinks containing unknown amounts of alcohol.
- Know how to calculate your Blood Alcohol Level. Pick up a brochure from the Counseling Center with calculation tables.
• Do not mix alcohol with other drugs. It increases the effects of both medications.

• Do not Drink and Drive. In California, if you are under 21 years old and driving, you can be arrested with any amount of alcohol in your system. It's called the Zero Tolerance Law. If you're over 21 years old, you are legally drunk at a Blood Alcohol Level of .08; however, your driving may very well be impaired at a lower level.