

# High school drinking mediates the relationship between parental monitoring and college drinking: A longitudinal analysis

## MAJOR FINDINGS:

The purpose of this study was to discover how parental monitoring during adolescence might affect alcohol use patterns during college. Data on drinking patterns during the last year of high school and the first year of college were collected in a sample of first-year college students. Students were also asked about the ways in which their parents might have monitored them during their last year of high school, such as keeping tabs on their whereabouts, who they were with, and when they were expected home. Results indicated that students whose parents monitored them more closely in high school had lower levels of drinking in high school, echoing prior evidence that parental influence greatly impacts alcohol use patterns during high school. Once in college, both parental monitoring and high school drinking strongly predicted college drinking, but high school drinking was the independent predictor of college drinking. This means that although parental monitoring did not directly influence how much students drank in college, indirectly it was a very important factor via its influence on high school drinking.

**Practice and Policy Suggestions:** These results show that parental monitoring and supervision during the high school years is an important factor in underage drinking. Some parenting tools that have proven effective are providing consistent discipline, setting rules, monitoring adolescents' activities, providing positive reinforcement, and good communication. These measures have reduced and delayed adolescent drinking and risk-taking behaviors. The present findings counter the popular belief that college students who are heavy drinkers are the same students who were forbidden to drink in high school.

### *Of major interest to:*

- College Administrators
- Parents
- Educators
- Health Professionals
- Students
- Law and Policy Makers



*(Practice and Policy Suggestions continued):* Parental notification policies should be adopted so that if a student receives a citation for underage drinking, parents can become involved and encourage the student to seek any necessary assessments and treatment. College administrators should invest in programs that involve parents and use their help to educate students about the risks of heavy drinking.

The complete publication referenced in this research brief can be found here: Arria, A.M., Kuhn, V., Caldeira, K.M., O'Grady, K.E., Vincent, K.B., Wish, E.D. (2008). High school drinking mediates the relationship between parental monitoring and college drinking: A longitudinal analysis. *Substance Abuse Treatment, Prevention, and Policy*. 3(6). <http://www.substanceabusepolicy.com/content/3/1/6>



### About the College Life Study (CLS)

The CLS is a longitudinal study of 1,253 college students at a large, public, mid-Atlantic university. This study is one of the first large-scale scientific investigations that aims to discover the impact of health-related behaviors during the college experience. Any first time, first-year student between 17 and 19 years old at the university in the fall of 2004 was eligible to participate in a screening survey. The researchers then selected students to participate in the longitudinal study, which consisted of two-hour personal interviews administered annually, beginning with their first year of college. A full description of the methods used is available.<sup>1</sup> Inherent to all self-reporting research methods is the possibility for response bias. Because the sample is from one large university, the ability to generalize the findings elsewhere is uncertain. However, response rates have been excellent and attrition bias has been minimal.

For more information about the study, please visit [www.cls.umd.edu](http://www.cls.umd.edu) or contact Amelia M. Arria at the University of Maryland, College Park, at [aarria@umd.edu](mailto:aarria@umd.edu).

<sup>1</sup> Arria, A.M., Caldeira, K.M., O'Grady, K.E., Vincent, K.B., Fitzelle, D.B., Johnson, E.P., Wish, E.D. (2008). Drug exposure opportunities and use patterns among college students: Results of a longitudinal prospective cohort study. *Substance Abuse*. 29(4), 19-38.

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