



News Alert Northeast Community Challenge Coalition

Celebrate **FAMILY DAY**

**– a day to eat dinner with your children–
EVERYDAY!!!**

The more often children & teenagers eat dinner with their families, the less likely they are to smoke, drink or use illegal drugs. That's the reason The National Center on Addiction and Substance Abuse (CASA) at Columbia University conceived *Family Day – A Day to Eat Dinner with Your Children*. Now in its eighth year, *Family Day* is gaining significant momentum across the nation, with corporate America, not-for-profit organizations and all levels of government supporting and participating in the initiative, including the Northeast Community Challenge Coalition, which is encouraging all families to celebrate ***Family Day– Everyday!***

“The frequency of family dinners decreases significantly as children grow older – and that’s just when the benefits of family dinners and parental engagement are needed the most. Teen risk of substance abuse increases sevenfold between the ages of 12 and 17,” noted Joseph A. Califano, Jr., CASA’s chairman and president and former U.S. Secretary of Health, Education and Welfare. “It is vital that frequent family dinners become a permanent fixture for teenagers, especially as they get older.”

Frequent family dinners have many other benefits. Research shows that teens who eat dinner with their families often are likelier to do well in school and less likely than other teens to have sex at young ages, get into fights or be suspended from school. Frequent family dining is also correlated with developing healthy eating habits. This pattern holds true regardless of a teen’s sex, family structure, and family socioeconomic level.

Additionally, teens who eat dinner with their families often are less stressed and are bored less frequently. CASA’s back-to-school survey showed that teens who are frequently bored and have a high level of stress are at three times the risk of smoking, drinking, getting drunk and using illegal drugs.

If your schedule makes it impossible to eat dinner together, try having breakfast together or engaging in another family activity. Talk with your child about their friends and interests. Peer influence can play a pivotal role in your child's decision to drink, smoke and use drugs. Encourage your child to make his/her own decisions.

Parental engagement is one of the single most potent protective factors in preventing substance use and abuse among children and teens. Talk with your child early and frequently about the health, legal and social effects of alcohol and other drugs.