

Party Safe Education FAQ

Who is Encounter Youth?

Encounter Youth is not-for-profit, charitable organisation that is a positive influence on young people in the community. We support, advocate for and encourage young people with the social challenges they face and we mobilise volunteers all over the state to do the same.

What does the Party Safe Education™ program do?

Encounter Youth's Party Safe Education™ program aims to alert, inform and empower young people to bring about positive change towards safer, more meaningful celebration. Our key message is to "look after yourself, look after your mates, it's your choice". Encounter Youth is the largest provider of alcohol and other drug education in South Australian high schools, presenting to over 17,000 people each year.

What is Encounter Youth's opinion on the topic of young people drinking?

Encounter Youth do not promote or advocate for young people to drink alcohol. In Australia, alcohol causes over 5,000 deaths and over 150,000 hospitalisations every year – more than all illegal drugs combined. We recognise the harms that can occur from the choice to consume alcohol. We know that young people are at a greater risk of harm, as their brain is continuing to develop. Consuming alcohol can have a significant negative impact on this brain development and also increases a person's likelihood of engaging in risk-taking behaviour. However, we also recognise that while a growing number of young people are choosing not to drink (see [here](#) and [here](#)), there are some young people that still choose to drink. If a young person chooses to ignore the advice not to drink, we try to encourage them to make choices that will keep them as safe as possible. For example, eating beforehand, alternating alcoholic drinks with water, and drinking less, will all help decrease the risk of harm from their drinking.

How does a young person's friends and 'peer pressure' influence their choices around things like alcohol?

Peer pressure can be a significant issue. Young people value the opinions of their peers very highly and often feel like they need to conform to a particular behaviour in order to be accepted. Our encouragement to all young people is that they have a choice in absolutely everything that they do,

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and they should make a choice that is right for them. We know that 54.2% of 16- to 17-year-old students in South Australia describe themselves as “non-drinkers” and this number has increased consistently over the past 10-15 years. If a young person is feeling the pressure to drink, knowing that the majority of students describe themselves as non-drinkers can help them stand firm in their choice not to drink.

How much of a concern are illicit drugs for young people?

Illicit drugs often cause concern in the community. As mentioned above, it is important to note that alcohol continues to be the drug of most concern for young people and causes more harm than all illicit drugs combined. Keeping this in mind, illicit drugs can still be an issue for some young people. For Australians aged 14 years and older, research shows that since 2010, there has been a decrease in Australians’ use of ecstasy, GHB, heroin and injected drugs. In the same time, Australians’ use of nearly all other classes of illicit drugs has remained the same. The only type of drug use that has increased since 2010 is the misuse of pharmaceuticals.

Despite the increased media attention regarding methamphetamine use, the latest research does not suggest a significant increase in the number of people using this drug. The significant change is in relation to the form it is used. Among people who used methamphetamine from 2010 to 2013, the use of powder fell from 51% in 2010 to 29% in 2013 while the use of ice (also known as crystal meth) more than doubled, from 22% to 50% over the same period. What this suggests is that people that were already using powder, started using the more pure form, ice.