

“America’s drug problem is not going to be solved in courtrooms or legislative hearing rooms by judges and politicians. It will be solved in living rooms and dining rooms and across kitchen tables – by parents and families.”

Joseph A. Califano, Jr.,
founder and chairman of

The National Center on Addiction and Substance Abuse (CASA) at Columbia University

Why Family Dinners Are Important

- ★ Research by The National Center on Addiction and Substance Abuse (CASA*) at Columbia University shows that a child who gets through age 21 without smoking, abusing alcohol or using illegal drugs is virtually certain to never do so.
- ★ Family mealtime is a good place to start the communication process, reviewing events of the day or just finding out what is happening in your child’s life.
- ★ The conversations that go hand-in-hand with dinner will help you learn more about your children’s lives and better understand the challenges they face.
- ★ No one has more power to prevent kids from abusing substances than parents.
- ★ Most teens who have dinner with their parents fewer than five nights a week wish they could eat dinner with their parents more often.

Make a Date for Dinner

- ★ Make family dinners a priority, as they are about more than just sharing a meal!
- ★ If busy schedules are making it hard for your family to pencil in regular family meals, take a “time out” to consider all the benefits of gathering around the dinner table.
- ★ A family meal doesn’t need to be fancy. It can be a picnic, take place at a restaurant, on Mom or Dad’s lunch break, or at your child’s school.
- ★ Dinner isn’t the only time when parents can engage with their children. Other opportunities can be driving to and from school or other activities, or talking to your child at the end of the day, close to bedtime. The opportunity of openness and communication is important for families to make routine.

Tips for Organizing Family Dinners

- ★ Set a goal that works with your schedule. Try starting twice a week and build from there.
- ★ Keep it simple. Family meals don’t have to be elaborate. Try to incorporate salads and vegetables into meals.
- ★ Be prepared. Keep ingredients for healthful meals on hand, including plenty of fruits and vegetables.
- ★ Keep healthy “appetizers” on hand. Stock the kitchen with fresh fruits, nuts and low-fat cheese--stuff the kids can snack on after school, instead of chips.
- ★ Get the whole family involved. Let the kids help prepare and set the table.
- ★ Use a crock pot. Put everything together before leaving for work in the morning. You’ll come home to the delicious smell of a cooked meal.
- ★ Picking up take-out or ordering a pizza is okay, but attempt to make “fast food” an exception rather than a regular routine. It still counts as quality time together even if you didn’t make the meal.



FOR MORE INFO, CONTACT:



The Family Day campaign in Kansas is supported by Kansas Department of Social and Rehabilitation Services-Addiction and Prevention Services, Blue Cross and Blue Shield of Kansas Foundation & coordinated by Kansas Family Partnership, Inc.



An Independent Licensee of the Blue Cross and Blue Shield Association.

For more Family Day information, go to: <http://www.kansasfamily.com/GetInvolved-FamilyDay.cfm>