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As a freshmen in college you are hopefully excited for the school year to begin and yet may also feel some apprehension. Whether you are coming from somewhere close or somewhere far away there will be many new experiences in your future such as meeting people, adjusting to your new home, and juggling free time with responsibilities. You probably feel this new sense of independence, which can be a great feeling, but with that sense of freedom comes difficult choices. These difficult choices are yours for the making and some will be tougher than others.

One of the many things you will encounter in college is alcohol. In the beginning of the year there will be many opportunities for you to drink. There is a common misperception that in order for you to have the college "experience" and "fit in" you should drink despite being underage. The truth is over 1/3 of NMSU rarely or never drink (2015 CORE Survey). However, if you chose to drink there are some ways to reduce your risk of potentially serious consequences.

- **Always use a designated driver.** In the 2015 Student Lifestyle survey 68 percent of NMSU students have never driven under the influence and 62 percent served as a sober designated driver. NMSU also has the **Crimson Cab** available free for NMSU students at **(575) 524-TAXI (8294)**.
- **Set a drinking limit and don't play drinking games (or cheat at drinking games).** Avoid binge drinking (5 drinks for men and 4 drinks for women in a period of two hours or less). Binge drinking can lead to blacking out, passing out and alcohol poisoning. To make sure this doesn't happen to you, you can alternate drinks with non-alcoholic drinks to slow down the process of intoxication. Keep track of the number of drinks you have as the night goes on.
- **Utilize the buddy system.** Sexual assault is an issue that affects both men and women. Using the buddy system can help to safeguard each other. Never leave your buddy somewhere if you feel it is unsafe. Be accountable for each other! It is also important to never leave with a person whom you just met but instead exchange numbers and meet up while you both are sober.
- **Keep an eye on your drink.** Never leave your drink unattended to protect yourself from date rape drugs. Sixty percent of NMSU students watch a friends drink while they're gone. Avoid drinking from punch bowls or pitchers, since they are easy to drug and it is difficult to tell how much alcohol is in there.
- **Eat before and / or during partying.**
- **Never hesitate to call for help.** If someone is showing signs of alcohol poisoning (shallow breathing, clammy skin, vomiting, blacking out and/or passing out) call 911 immediately. The sooner help is called the more likely someone's life can be saved. Never try to give the person a cold shower, coffee, or allow them to sleep it off.

Alcohol may be legal (at least for those who are 21) and it comes in many different flavors, with lots of colors and pretty bottles, but it is still a dangerous drug that you can overdose on, or become addicted to over time, just like illegal drugs. Your undergraduate experience should be fun and exciting; don't let alcohol take that away from you! The WAVE programs is your primary prevention program on campus and we have lots of great information and resources. We are located in Corbett Center room 106, on Facebook (WAVE NMSU), and our NMSU web page can be found at <http://wave.nmsu.edu/>. If you are interested in taking a survey to find out how your alcohol use compares to other college students go to <http://wave.nmsu.edu/e-chug/>.