

# APPROACHING SOMEONE ABOUT A SUSPECTED DRINKING PROBLEM

The purpose of this handout is not to transform you into a counselor, but to assist you in being helpful in a time of need.

## **Avoid Crisis Management**

1. Educate yourself about alcoholism and local resources before you need to use them.
2. Know your feelings and attitudes toward people with an addiction. What are your motives? Are you wanting to preach, punish or criticize?
3. Observe and document. Prepare in advance a list of specific problems that have occurred because of this person's drinking. Include specific times, places, and behaviors.
4. Choose a location and time where you can talk in private without embarrassment or interruptions. Remember, you can't talk to an intoxicated person.
5. Explore whether you are the only or best person to approach this individual.

## **Raising the Issue - A Carefrontation**

You have documented behaviors, chosen an opportunity, and are ready to share your concern for the person and relate your observations. A simple model for talking to a student about a sensitive topic consists of the following elements: "I care," "I see," "I feel," LISTEN, "I want," "I will." For example:

"Jerry, I care about you. I've gotten to know you a lot this semester and our friendship means a lot to me. Last night, I saw you yell at your best friend, get sick from drinking, and insist on driving back to campus. I felt worried because this is different than how you usually act."

*LISTEN* (It is important to give the student a chance to speak or ask questions and for you to show that you are concerned and willing to listen.)

"I want you to talk with someone about how you've been acting when you drink alcohol. I really care about you, and I will help you find someone who can help you.'

## **To summarize the model...**

*I care*....describe relationship feelings

*I see*....specific, observable behaviors

*I feel* .... how these behaviors affect you

*LISTEN*....If he/she gets angry or provokes you, remind yourself to remain calm and focused on your task. Remain factual and nonjudgmental.

*I want*....it may be necessary to set some limits or firm resolution

*I will*....indicate your support, what you are willing to do to help

Try to get the person to agree to some form of positive action. Encourage a referral to a professional when needed. Be optimistic, yet realistic (CAREfrontations do not always work). Always be open to further involvement — never close the door.