Good evening,

My name is Carolyn D’Agostino and I am the Student Assistance Counselor here at Horace Greeley. Student Assistance is a substance abuse prevention/early intervention program. I can and do see kids for a wide variety of reasons but when I am sharing information with parents, it will almost always be substance related. This is no exceptions. I have just a few points that connect the topics of substance use and driving.

**Example you set:** This is a perfect time to look at the example you set. Are there times that you drive when you really shouldn’t - you’re too tired or the roads are bad or you had an extra glass of wine with dinner. Kids are really paying attention to these things now. If you find that you aren’t always setting a good example it is ok to fess up. “ You know I know I answered that text while I was driving. That was dangerous. I’m not going do that anymore and I really don’t want you doing it.”

**How are they getting around:**  For some student’s sophomore year is marked by an increase in social connections and activities. With this increase, some parents end up feeling like a taxi service. But this is a very important time to pay attention to how your teen is getting around. It’s really not a good plan to say, “I’ll drop you off but you need to find your own ride home.” That might seem like a good plan but it can be very dangerous. Kids will talk about making poor decisions when they feel stuck or pressured –“ I had to get home by curfew” or “it was my only way home”. If you need them to find a ride home, help them be planful –“Who do you think could give you a ride home? Why don’t you call Joe’s mother and see if I bring you guys, she can drive you home”

**Drinking and Driving:** While it is true that with greater awareness, there has been a steady decline in drinking and driving fatalities, it unfortunately continues to be one of the top reasons for death of someone between the ages of 15 and 24. It is not enough to assume kids know better or to think reminding them not to drink and drive will keep them safe. Kids need help making a safety plan. How do you get out of a bad situation? Sometimes parent’s ask “how do I say don’t use alcohol or other drugs and say but call me if you need a ride home if you or your driver is drinking. “ My response is that safety overrides everything else. Make sure they **know** they can call you for a ride.

**Marijuana and Driving:** While the message is out that driving under the influence of alcohol is dangerous, there are definitely mixed messages and misinformation about the impact of marijuana on driving. Some kids actually believe they drive better high. You are absolutely impaired if you are driving high. Marijuana slows your reaction time, impairs peripheral vision, impairs your sense of space and time. You are much less likely to be aware of things going on around you – don’t check mirrors, can’t do divided attention, dilates pupils so impairs night vision and finally effects your critical self examination. Driving under the influence of marijuana is dangerous.

**Greet them when they come in:** As kids increase their social activities – coming back to school for play, or concerts or games, going out with friends to movies or other social gatherings, it is essential that you find ways to stay connected. Especially as they become less dependent on you for rides. Make a regular practice to greet your kids when they come in. If it is going to be a late night, set your alarm. Kids are much less likely to come home under the influence of alcohol or other drugs when they know you will be waiting for them. This also is often an opportunity to check on how the evening went.

**If you need help:**  Remember that we are here. If you are struggling with any of this, don’t struggle alone. We are here to help. I can be reached through the counseling department at Greeley.