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Parents don't always know what's happening with their kids

The Enquirer

There is a wide gap between what parents think they know about their kids and what kids are really doing.

This was the overriding theme of "Turn on the Lights," a community forum on teen substance abuse held tonight at Battle Creek's new Holiday Inn, 8775 Beckley Rd. The event was sponsored by the Substance Abuse Council and The Coordinating Council.

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More than 100 people, most of them parents, gathered in one of the hotel's meeting rooms to hear local experts talk about what they called "today's toxic culture," a term enveloping drug and alcohol use and the destructive behavior associated with it.

"Overall, we're all here to protect our kids from the bad things that can happen to them," said Kathleen Zimmerman-Oster, an associate professor in the psychology department at the University of Detroit Mercy. "There is a lot of disconnect between what parents know about kids' behavior and what their kids tell us."

Much of that disconnect comes from technology that kids understand and parents don't. Teens can access limitless amounts of dangerous information, such as which over-the-counter drugs can get them high, through the Internet. Parents need to learn the technology their kids are using, Zimmerman-Oster said.

"Otherwise, it's like sending your kids to a foreign country and not knowing anything about it," she said.

See the full story Friday in the Enquirer and at battlecreekenquirer.com.

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