KNOW THE SIGNS
ALCOHOL POISONING

THE SCIENCE
Many different factors affect an individual's level of intoxication, so it's often difficult to gauge exactly how much is too much for any one person. There are many common myths about sobering up: drinking black coffee, taking a cold shower, sleeping it off. The only thing that reverses the effects of alcohol is TIME.

A person's blood alcohol concentration (BAC) can continue to rise even while he or she is passed out. Even after a person stops drinking, alcohol in the stomach and intestine continues to enter the bloodstream and circulate throughout the body. It is dangerous to assume the person will be fine by sleeping it off.

THE SIGNS
Unsure if someone needs assistance? Use the acronym MUST HELP
Mental Confusion, Unresponsive, Snoring/Gasping for Air*, Throwing Up

Hypothermia/Cold Clammy Skin, Erratic Breathing*, Loss of Consciousness, Paleness or Blueness of Skin

*Monitoring breathing for slow breathing (fewer than eight breaths per minute) or irregular breathing (10 seconds or more between breaths).

YOUR CHOICES
Your choices are critical when trying to provide assistance to someone who might be experiencing symptoms of alcohol poisoning. Don’t worry that your friend may become angry or embarrassed. Remember, you cared enough to help. Always be safe, not sorry.
• Know the danger signals.
• Don’t wait for all of the symptoms to be present.
• Be aware that a person who has passed out may die.
• Call 911 for help if there’s any suspicion of an alcohol overdose. Don’t try to guess the person’s level of drunkenness.

AMNESTY POLICY
The University of Tennessee, Knoxville has an amnesty policy for those that receive and see assistance in the event of an alcohol overdose. The "Good Samaritan" must remain with the person receiving assistance and provide information requested from emergency responders. There is not a limit on the amount of times an individual can call 9-1-1 or seek assistance. The amnesty policy does not apply to student organizations. However, seeking assistance properly will act as a mitigating circumstance during a conduct process. Questions about the amnesty policy should be directed to the Office of Student Conduct.

THE REALITY
What can happen if alcohol poisoning goes untreated?
• Victim chokes on his or her own vomit
• Breathing slows, becomes irregular, or stops
• Heart beats irregularly or stops
• Hypothermia (low body temperature)
• Hypoglycemia (too little blood sugar) leads to seizures
• Untreated severe dehydration from vomiting can cause seizures, permanent brain damage, or death

Even if the victim lives, an alcohol overdose can lead to irreversible brain damage. Rapid binge drinking (which often happens on a bet or a dare) is especially dangerous because the victim can ingest a fatal dose before becoming unconscious.

This document is a resource to help interpret policy. Always observe federal, state, local law in addition to national organization policies.