

WHY?

Drug abuse is costly to our society as a whole but is especially harmful to our youth. Youth's immature physical and psychological development makes them more susceptible than adults to the harmful effects of drug abuse. Behavior patterns that result from teen and preteen drug use often produce tragic consequences. Self-degradation, loss of control, disruptive conduct, and antisocial attitudes can cause untold harm to juveniles and their families. In the 7 years that the National Center on Addiction and Substance Abuse at Columbia University has published the National Survey of American Attitudes on Substance Abuse, results have indicated that teens and their parents view drugs as their biggest concern.

KIDS ARE DOING DRUGS

Results from the 2001 National Household Survey on Drug Abuse indicate that 10.8% of youth ages 12 to 17 are current drug users, having used an illicit drug at least once in the month before being interviewed. The rate is higher than the 9.7% observed in 2000. The 2001 survey also shows that 20.8% of youth reported using illicit drugs at least once in the past year, and 28.4% reported having used drugs at least once during their lifetime. Among youth who were heavy drinkers in 2001, 65.3% also used illicit drugs. Among nondrinkers, only 5.1% were using illicit drugs. Similarly, among youth that smoked cigarettes, the rate of past month illicit drug use was 48%, compared with 5.3% for nonsmokers.

Results also show that the earlier in life people initiate drug use, the more likely they are to develop a drug problem. For example, among adults who first used marijuana at the age of 14 or younger, 11.8% were classified as drug dependent or abusers compared with only 2.1% of adults who first used marijuana at age 18 or older.

YOU CAN'T BE WITH THEM EVERYWHERE

Although most data indicate that youth generally use drugs on weekends and after school during the week, survey results also show that drugs are being made available and used on school property. Among students surveyed reported that they were offered, sold, or given and illegal drug on school property during the 12 months preceding the survey. More than 5% of students in grades 9 through 12 reported using marijuana on school property at least once in the 30 days survey

IN THE EMERGENCY ROOM

The Drug Abuse Warning Network collects data on emergency department (ED) drug episodes in cities across the United States. A drug episode is an ED visit induced by or related to the use of illegal drugs or the non-medical use of a legal drug. In 2001; 61,695 of the total ED drug episodes involved patients 12 to 17. There were also 1,013 episodes among 6 to 11 year olds. Preliminary data for January to June 2002 indicate that there were 29,846 ED episodes involving patients ages 12 to 17 and 813 ED episodes involving 6 to 11 year olds.

SEX

Youth alcohol or drug use may lead to earlier sexual initiation, unprotected sexual intercourse, and multiple partners. Results from a survey conducted by the Kaiser Family Foundation indicate that more than a third of sexually active young people report that alcohol or drugs have influenced their decisions about sex. Seven out of 10 young people ages 15 to 24 report that condoms often do not get used when people are drinking or using drugs, resulting in an elevated risk for sexually transmitted diseases or unwanted pregnancies. Twenty-nine percent of sexually active young people ages 15 to 24 comment that they have "done more" sexually when drinking or using drugs than they had planned.



"Here's your sign"

Drug use is an expensive habit. Users often spend large amounts of money on drugs, as their tolerance increases, more drugs are needed. The user's financial situation can also be affected by loss of a job, legal costs, fines, paying for accidents or damages, and CRIME

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SUICIDE

Youth substance abuse is also associated with an increased risk of suicide. Results from the 2000 National Household Survey on Drug Abuse indicate that youth who reported alcohol or illicit drug use during the past year were more likely to be at risk for suicide than those who did not use the substances. For example youth reporting past year use of any illicit drug other than marijuana, 29% were almost three times more likely than youth who did not report past year use to be at risk for suicide.

CRIME

Juvenile drug arrests represent 8.9% of all arrests of individuals under 18 and approximately 13 % of drug arrests among all age groups.

In essence, The Wake County Fraternal Order of Police Lodge #41 in conjunction with the sponsors listed in this publication realize that the use of drugs and alcohol among youth is a serious problem in this country that can be solved. The first step to solving any problem is the recognizing what the problem is and attacking it with information and education. With your help and your continued understanding of the facts surrounding the complications of youth and drug use, we can more effectively attempt to eliminate the epidemic of youth and tragedy that goes hand in hand with Drug Abuse.

Please use this guide as a resource tool. Share it with family and friends. You will find telephone numbers and web sites of organizations throughout this book dedicated to almost every aspect of teenage years and drug use.

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