

Resources

National Clearinghouse
for Alcohol and Drug
Information (NCADI)
Phone: 1-800-788-2800
Web: www.health.org

National Institute on
Drug Abuse (NIDA)
Web: www.nida.nih.gov

National Institute on
Alcohol Abuse and
Alcoholism (NIAAA)
Web: www.niaaa.nih.gov

Substance Abuse and
Mental Health Services
Administration
(SAMHSA)
Web: www.family.samhsa.gov

Especially for Teens

www.freevibe.com is an online service of the National Youth Anti-Drug Media Campaign that offers information, fact sheets, games and posters for teens with a special section on early intervention.

www.checkyourself.org is an online service of the Partnership for a Drug-Free America (www.drugfreeamerica.org) that offers resources, information, quizzes and videos for teens to question themselves about their drug use.

www.thecoolspot.org is an online service of the National Institute on Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism. It is a place for teens about “being yourself, thinking for yourself, and getting the facts about underage drinking.”

Especially for Parents

www.TheAntiDrug.com is an online service of the National Youth Anti-Drug Media Campaign that offers resources, information and facts for parents.

www.laantidroga.com is the Spanish online service of the National Youth Anti-Drug Media Campaign and offers resources, information and facts for parents.

www.family.samhsa.gov is an online service of the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration developed to support the efforts of parents and other caring adults to promote mental health and prevent the use of alcohol, tobacco and illegal drugs among 7- to 18-year-olds.

If you know anyone who is in need of alcohol or drug treatment, the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) has a treatment locator that can be found at <http://findtreatment.samhsa.gov/facilitylocator.doc.htm> or you may call the SAMHSA Referral Helpline at 1-800-662-HELP.

Community Resources

Drug-Free Community Coalitions provide prevention information and intervention services in many communities throughout the United States. Go to www.helpyourcommunity.org. Community Anti-Drug Coalitions of America (CADCA) is the national membership organization representing community anti-drug coalitions nationwide. CADCA helps coalitions become stronger and more effective, and works with federal, state and local government to support the coalition movement. Go to www.cadca.org. The Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA) offers a Web site to help identify drugs of abuse: www.dea.gov/concern/concern/htm.



When It's Not Your Kid,
How Do You Deal With
Drug Use and Drinking?

Suspicion?

You are the coach for a teenage hockey or soccer team and you are told by one of the team members that a teammate is drinking pretty hard or using marijuana or both. Other than a few unexplained absences and a recently lousy attitude, there are no obvious signs to you. How do you handle both the team member and the teammates?

While the stories may vary from after-school activity to a community-sponsored event, the elements remain the same: You find out about drug or alcohol use by a teen who is not your child. You have little or no direct authority over these kids — you're just trying to help out. You know little or nothing about drug or alcohol abuse or you may not be familiar with your institution's policy on drug use. You're not their parent. You aren't a member of their family. You probably aren't even their teacher. You just wanted to give back to your community and you are unprepared for all of this. But you know you shouldn't ignore it.

One thing is certain: The power of a non-parent role model should not be underestimated. You can be a powerful positive influence for kids, and in some cases, you could be the only person to whom the teen can turn.



The scenario is a common one: You are a volunteer mentor and one of your students confides that she is “experimenting” with marijuana. What do you do?

Why Should You Care?

Most adults agree that any drug use by teens is risky and can lead to serious trouble. Every day, approximately 4,700 American youth under the age

of 18 try marijuana for the first time — ages when their brains and bodies are still developing. Drugs and alcohol use can interfere with teens' independence and their efforts to establish their own identity.

Substance abuse (including alcohol, which is illegal in all 50 states for people under the age of 21) can change the direction of a young person's life — physically, emotionally and behaviorally. What was once excused as a “rite of passage” for some teens is now shown to have harmful and, sometimes, lasting effects. Treatment for marijuana is the number one reason kids get admitted to treatment programs — more than for all other illicit drugs combined.



The Science Is Clear

While we know that not all youthful drug or alcohol use leads to addiction, no one knows how long it takes to develop an abuse problem or even

who will develop a problem. What is known is that addiction is a process that begins with use and continues with abuse before becoming a full-blown addiction. Drug and alcohol use can lead to many negative consequences, including bad grades, broken friendships, family problems, physical violence and trouble with the law. Because of new scientific research, we know that addiction is not a matter of will; it is a disease of the brain. While there is no cure, there is prevention. And the sooner you take action to stop occasional use, the more likely your chances of stopping the progression to abuse and addiction.

Research shows that kids start using drugs and alcohol because they feel the need to take risks or they believe it will help them fit in or feel better. Sometimes they use drugs because they are seeking relief from stress or feelings of depression. And it's important to remember that there is, sometimes, a genetic risk for addiction — just like heart disease, diabetes, cancer and other diseases.

What Can You Do?

The first thing you can do is learn as much as you can. The National Youth Anti-Drug Media Campaign offers two important Web sites. The

first is primarily for parents and adults who spend a lot of time with teens (www.TheAntiDrug.com), and the second is for teens (www.freevibe.com).

The National Clearinghouse for Alcohol and Drug Information (NCADI) will send free pamphlets and fact sheets that will help you learn about alcohol and drug use by teens. Their phone number is 1-800-788-2800, and their Web site is www.health.org.

Many kids have parents with alcohol or drug problems of their own. In situations like this, bringing the kid's drug or alcohol use to a parent's attention isn't likely to get the teen the help he or she needs. For more information about how to help children of substance abusers, call NCADI at 1-800-788-2800 or log on to: www.health.org.

If your organizing group has written rules regarding substance use, seek guidance there. If it does not, this may be a good time to request that your organizing group develop such guidelines. They don't have to be sophisticated or complicated — just a statement of what will and won't be tolerated and what will

happen if the rules are broken. When developing the rules, it should be noted that involvement in recreational activities actually helps kids stay away from drugs. Automatically kicking kids off teams or out of groups may not be the best response for teens as it may escalate their drug use.

After you've gathered information about substance use for yourself and feel comfortable, talk with the teen. You need to listen non-judgmentally to what the teen is telling you. Just because a kid is using drugs doesn't mean he or she is addicted. The goal is to get involved early — before the use becomes abuse and, perhaps, leads to addiction. If you are a coach or a Scout leader, you might take the opportunity to talk to the group as a whole. Again, it doesn't have to be fancy. Tell them that you've read some materials on alcohol and drug use by teens, and tell them what your expectations are for them, along with what happens when they violate the rules. Tell them that, while you're no expert, you have access to experts in the community and that if they need help, you'll be there.

Who Can You Talk to for Help?

Look to your community for resources for help. There are many prevention and treatment specialists who can guide and inform you:

School counselors and student assistance professionals

Employee assistance professionals

Family doctors or pediatricians

Nurses

Faith leaders

Community health centers

Adolescent prevention or treatment professionals

Local community anti-drug coalitions

What Do You Do About the Family?

While only one person may be using drugs, all family members are affected by it. Families don't want to

believe that one of their members could be involved in something illegal. Denial plays a big role in substance abuse and addiction. No parent wants to face the fact that his or her child is using illicit drugs.

Do You Tell the Parents or Caregivers? And, If So, How?

It is important that you express your concern for the teen both "on and off the field." Sit with the parents or caregivers

and explain the facts, as you know them. Offer them information on teen drug use — the same information that you used to educate yourself. Suggest resources in the community where they can turn for help. Explain the consequences for using drugs or alcohol to the parents, caregivers and the teen. Be there to answer questions or provide resources. Remember that some kids get introduced to drugs by family members. It's important that you recognize that relatives — even parents — may be enabling or even dealing or providing drugs and alcohol. This won't be an easy conversation — for you or the teen or the family. But, you may just help the teen to rethink his or her choices and stop drug use before the consequences become severe.

Remember to follow up. Your responsibility doesn't end with one conversation — staying involved could be the most important thing you do for the teen.

RESEARCH NOTES

- Researchers have found that people who drink to excess and use marijuana are more likely to suffer injuries.
- Children who are drinking alcohol by the seventh grade are more likely to suffer employment problems, abuse other drugs and commit criminal and violent acts once they reach young adulthood.
- Research shows that marijuana use is three times more likely to lead to dependence among adolescents than among adults.

