

Downward Trend in Teen Marijuana Use Slows; Prescription Drug Misuse Remains High

On Thursday, December 11th the National Institute on Drug Abuse's 2008 Monitoring the Future (MTF) Survey was released indicating mixed results. While there are signs that the ongoing decline in teen marijuana use in recent years has stalled; the downward trend in cigarette and alcohol use continues, according to the 2008 Survey. The 2008 MTF survey indicates a continuing high rate of prescription drug abuse among teens, with little change seen in the past six years. Nearly 10 percent of seniors reported past year nonmedical use of Vicodin, and 4.7 percent report abusing Oxycontin, both powerful opioid painkillers. In fact, seven of the top 10 drugs abused by twelfth graders in the year prior to the survey were prescribed or purchased over-the-counter. There are some bright spots in the survey—among them, that cigarette smoking is at the lowest rate in the history of the MTF survey. Nevertheless, given the devastating related health costs, tobacco and alcohol use by teens still remain at high levels. More than one in ten high school seniors say they smoke daily; 5.4 percent smoke more than a half pack a day. While drinking continues a slow downward trend, close to 25 percent of seniors report having five or more drinks in a row sometime in the two weeks prior to the survey.

In response to the survey, NIDA Director Nora D. Volkow, M.D. stated "while the long term general decline is encouraging, especially for cigarettes and alcohol, some of the other findings this year amplify our concerns for potential problems in the future—especially the non-medical use of prescription drugs." Additional information on the Monitoring the Future Survey, as well as comments from Dr. Volkow can be found here

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