



SCIP Special Edition Newsletter

RECENT TRENDS IN TEEN SUBSTANCE USE

Protecting our youth from at-risk behaviors, such as substance use, takes a community of support. One of the best ways we can help our kids make healthy choices is to stay informed and be aware of issues that may adversely affect the lives of our youth. Alcohol, marijuana (including marijuana extracts) and prescription drugs continue to be three of the most prevalently used substances of abuse among our youth. Understanding why our youth may turn to drugs or alcohol is an important step in prevention and intervention. While some kids choose to experiment with drugs and alcohol out of peer pressure or curiosity, others may turn to using substances as a means of self-management or self-medication to deal with underlying issues. For example, youth may find a temporary relief from the symptoms of depression, anxiety or stress, through the use of drugs or alcohol. Young adults with undetected, undiagnosed or untreated emotional or mental health disorders have a higher likelihood of experimenting with substances. If you have concerns that a youth may be experimenting with substances, it is important to ask "what does the drug do for you?" as a means to better assess the problem.

UNDERAGE DRINKING

Nationally, as reported by the CDC, alcohol is the most commonly used substance of abuse among America's youth. According to the 2015 Nebraska Youth Risk Behavior Survey, 22.7% of adolescents have consumed one or more drinks on at least one occasion in the past 30 days, and 14.3 % of adolescents have engaged in binge drinking (5 or more drinks of alcohol in a row) in the past 30 days.

Recent trends in teenage consumption of alcohol include: binge drinking, mixing alcohol with other substances (i.e. prescription pills), flavored liquors, and candy soaked in liquor (i.e. gummy bears in vodka). Throughout our schools we have seen an increase in students consuming liquor that is not diluted with another liquid (most commonly vodka or flavored vodka). The most common ways for students to acquire alcohol are from their own home, from a friend, a friend's house, or by theft.

Excessive drinking is responsible for more than 4,300 deaths among underage youth each year. This alone should drive communities to instill practices and policies that reduce youth access to alcohol. While losing a youth to an alcohol related death is the most costly consequence to underage drinking, youth who drink alcohol are more likely to experience:

- School problems, such as higher absences and lower grades
- Social problems, such as lack of participation in youth activities
- Unwanted, unplanned and unprotected sexual activity
- Higher risk for suicide and homicide
- Alcohol-related car crashes and other unintentional injuries.

Despite the use of alcohol amongst youth and the risks associated with such use, there is hope. Everyone can play a role in preventing underage drinking but parents are pivotal players in reducing alcohol consumption amongst youth. 83% of teens say their parents are the leading influence in their decision to not use. It is critical for parents to have discussions with their children on alcohol use and the risks of underage drinking. By talking with children early and often, parents can play a role in their child's choice to not drink.

SYMPTOMS OF ACUTE ALCOHOL INTOXICATION

- **Unable to stand or walk or can only do so with great difficulty**
- **Poorly aware of his/her surroundings, difficulty speaking or identifying him/herself to others**
- **Obnoxious or unruly**
- **Repeated episodes of vomiting**
- **Slowed or irregular breathing (8 or less breaths per minute or lapses of more than 10)**
- **Fever or chills**
- **Cold, clammy or pale/bluish skin**
- **Passed out, unconscious or semi unconsciousness**

If you encounter a person with one or more of these symptoms call 911! Stay with the person until emergency personnel are present. It is best to err on the side of caution and get help.

MARIJUANA EXTRACTS (DABBING)

Another national trend that has made its way into our schools is marijuana extracts, most commonly referred to as dabbing. The amount of THC (the chemical in marijuana that results in feeling high) in marijuana has been increasing steadily over the past few decades, and with increased potency comes increased health risks and harmful reactions.

On average, regular marijuana has a THC content of 12-13%; the typical dab has a THC content of more than 50% and some extracts are as high as 80%.

Marijuana Extracts can come in various forms:

- Hash Oil or Honey Oil– a gooey liquid
- Wax or Budder– a soft solid with a texture like lip balm
- Shatter– a hard, amber colored solid

E-Cigarettes/Vaporizers are being used to smoke marijuana wax and Hash/Honey Oil. Smoking these extracts can deliver extremely large amounts of THC and have sent some users to the Emergency Room. Since dabbing is a relatively new trend, there have not been many studies done on it. We do know the higher potency leads to stronger effects, such as poor judgment, poor coordination, increased heart rate, hallucinations, intense anxiety or panic attacks, sleepiness, and difficulty keeping track of time.

DID YOU KNOW?

Marijuana is the most commonly used illicit drug by teens. When marijuana use begins in the teen years, it can have a significant impact on brain development. THC alters the ability of the hippocampus (a brain area related to learning and memory), to communicate effectively with other brain regions. This can lead to:

- Reduced ability to concentrate
- Impaired or reduced short & long –term memory
- Impaired or reduced comprehension
- Impairments in learning, memory, perception, and judgement.

Teens who smoke marijuana at least once a month are 3 times more likely to have suicidal thoughts than non-users.

Compared to those who don't use marijuana, those who use heavily more often report:

- Lower life satisfaction
- Poorer mental health
- Poorer physical health
- More relationship problems

National Institute on Drug Abuse (NIDA)

PRESCRIPTION DRUG MISUSE AND ABUSE

There is a misperception among some of our youth that it is safer to use prescription drugs to get high rather than use illegal drugs, because they are prescribed by a doctor or dentist and dispensed by a pharmacist. The fact is, any use of prescription drugs without a doctor's recommendation can be as dangerous as using illegal drugs. Improper use can have serious health effects including addiction and overdose. Prescription Drug Abuse is defined as: taking a medication prescribed to someone else, taking your own prescription in a way not intended by a doctor or dentist or taking a medication to get high.

Most abused prescription drugs fall under three categories: Pain Killers (i.e. OxyContin, Vicodin, Codeine), Depressants (i.e. Valium or Xanax) or Stimulants (i.e. Adderall, Ritalin). Many teens are accessing medications from their own medicine cabinets at home, from friends or from relatives. Law enforcement and substance use prevention/intervention specialists have identified an alarming trend in accessibility of prescription drugs. Some teens are accessing prescription drugs by attending Pharm Parties in which a combination of over-the-counter and prescription drugs are combined in a bowl and distributed without heeding the dangers. Effects of prescription drug misuse and abuse varies depending on the drug but combining multiple medications or combining with alcohol can be especially dangerous. It is important to talk with youth about the proper use of prescription medications and the dangers associated with misuse. To learn more about prescription drug misuse, SCIP recommends watching "Out of Reach", a powerful documentary created by a teen filmmaker that captures the issue of teen prescription drug abuse. It was created in collaboration with the director of "Intervention" and the Partnership for Drug-Free Kids' Medicine Abuse Project. To access this documentary please visit:

<http://medicineabuseproject.org/resources/out-of-reach-medicine-abuse-through-the-eyes-of-a-teen>

THE POWER OF SCHOOL CONNECTEDNESS IN PREVENTION

The collaboration of families, schools and communities can help foster an environment that facilitates healthy youth development. Importantly, connectedness to school can serve as an important protective factor for youth. According to the CDC, research shows that students who feel a genuine sense of belonging at school are more likely to do well in school, stay in school, and make healthy choices. Studies on youth risky behavior have shown that students who feel connected to their school environment are less likely to use alcohol, tobacco or other drugs, have emotional distress or consider or attempt suicide. Strong family involvement, belonging to a positive peer group, supportive school personnel and inclusive school environments can help students feel more connected. Just as schools can take steps to promote youth connections to school, parents can play an important role in fostering a positive relationship between their children and their school environment.

- Encourage your child to talk openly with you, teachers, counselors, and other school staff about his/her needs, ideas and worries.
- Get involved in your child's school through parent advisory boards, committees or groups to help plan school policies and school-wide activities.
- Meet regularly with your child's teachers to build positive relationships
- Keep informed about the expectations of your child's school by talking to teachers and staff, attending school meetings and reading information the school sends home. Then, **support these expectations at home.**

TIPS FOR PARENTS

- Stay informed and educated on the latest drug trends amongst youth.
- Lock up alcohol and prescription medication.
- Engage in open dialogue with your child about substance abuse and risks associated with substance use.
- Set a "family policy" around drug use and underage drinking (i.e. expectations, consequences, communication).
- Talk with the parents of your child's peers and know who your child spends time with - peers are the leading influence in youth substance use/abuse.
- Help your child plan how to deal with social pressures to drink or try other substances.
- Talk with your child about important issues like anxiety, depression, relationships and academic concerns. Teen substance abuse can be due to another underlying factor, such as a means to cope with stress.
- Assist your child in utilizing positive coping skills.
- Partner with your child's school and other community resources.
- Promote Protective Factors: characteristics associated with a lower likelihood of negative outcomes or that reduce a risk factor's impact.
 - Examples Include:
 - Parental involvement
 - Positive parenting practices
 - Positive peer groups
 - Involvement in after school activities
 - Positive relationships with caring adults
 - School connectedness

Resources for Parents:

SCIP (School Community Intervention and Prevention) :

www.scipnebraska.com

National Institute on Drug Abuse (NIDA and NIDA Teen):

<https://www.drugabuse.gov/>

Lancaster County Prevention Coalition:

www.talkaboutalcohol.org

Prescription Drug Safety:

<https://awarerx.pharmacy/>

School Community Intervention and Prevention Presents: A Community Forum on Youth Marijuana Use

Marijuana continues to be one of the most prevalent substances of abuse among our youth. The purpose of this forum is to increase awareness of trends in use by adolescents, the effects of marijuana use on a youth's developing brain, the increase in potency of marijuana, new modes of delivery and mixed messages our youth are receiving surrounding legalization and the medicinal use of marijuana.

Where:

Lincoln Southeast High School (Commons Area)
2930 S. 37th Street
Lincoln, NE 68508

When:

Tuesday, April 11 at 6:30 p.m.

Who is Invited:

Parents, Students, School Professionals and Community Members

Presentation/Discussion Panel

Deputy Jeremy Schwarz with the Lancaster County Sheriff's office will be presenting. As a Certified Drug Recognition Expert (DRE), Deputy Schwarz has a great deal of experience in drug enforcement and evaluation as well as in training professionals. A discussion panel comprised of representatives from the treatment community, law enforcement, schools, the medical field and prevention will follow.

PROMOTING COMMUNITY COALITIONS AS A MEANS TO SUPPORT HEALTHY BEHAVIORS OF YOUTH AS RELATED TO SUBSTANCE USE

WANT HEALTHY, DRUG-FREE YOUTH? JOIN THE LANCASTER PREVENTION COALITION

The term **Coalition** seems to be one we hear associated with a number of topics and institutions. What are coalitions? Do they make a difference in whether or not youth will be involved in risky behaviors like underage drinking or other substance abuse? You are a busy parent/community member concerned about a safe, healthy place to raise a family, to run a successful business and thrive. How are you important?

A **Coalition** is defined as individuals and groups coming together to accomplish a common goal. Here in Lincoln and Lancaster County, the Lancaster Prevention Coalition works with community members and organizations to look closely at the issue of alcohol and other substance abuse, mental health promotion and other risk factors that impact our youth. Our goals are **to increase family communication around underage drinking and to reduce alcohol-related risks among 12-20 year olds**. Current prevention efforts are supported by the Strategic Prevention Framework Partnerships for Success Grant and Substance Abuse Prevention Block Grant through Nebraska DHHS in cooperation with Region V Systems. Here are a few strategies we are currently using to achieve this:

- Creation of the www.TalkAboutAlcohol.org website and campaign to reach families in Southeast Nebraska. The campaign is to encourage parents to have a heart-to-heart talk with their children about alcohol use and other potentially risky behaviors. The website helps parents identify the most effective communication style and gives them the tools to make a bigger impact when they talk with their youth about risky behaviors.
- Partnered with the Nebraska Prevention Center for Alcohol and Drug Abuse and the University of Nebraska-Lincoln to modify the College Alcohol Profile into a youth friendly version called the Nebraska Youth Alcohol Prevention Profile (www.neyapp.org). This is a personal assessment and educational piece for middle and high school youth to think about their alcohol use, risky behaviors and potential consequences.
- Providing parenting education and support by facilitating an evidence-based prevention program called Creating Lasting Family Connections in Arabic, Karen and Spanish languages through partnerships with the Asian Community and Cultural Center, El Centro de las Americas and Esperanza Family Services.
- Partnering with high schools to create and present positive social norming campaigns to encourage high school and middle school peers to focus on their future and not get involved with alcohol and drugs.

Coalitions are effective in making population level changes because they employ all sectors of the community to get involved in the process of problem solving. When parents, youth, teachers, businesses, faith communities and neighborhoods are involved and working toward the same goals, there is consistency, community buy – in, and support.

Do we know it works? We do know that youth are influenced by their parents when it comes to underage alcohol use. The data tells us 83% of teens say parents are the leading influence in

their decision not to drink alcohol. The latest data also shows that underage drinking and binge drinking rates in Nebraska are falling, something the Lancaster Prevention Coalition has been working on. Good news for certain, but there are other risk factors that need the attention and problem solving energy of a community that values its youth.

What does our coalition need most to succeed? In an answer: YOU. Whoever you are, whatever your age, whatever your role in the community, your unique perspective and ideas on these issues are important. We want your passion and input to help Lancaster Prevention Coalition achieve the vision of *Safe Families, Safe Schools and Safe Communities* and to help guide our efforts. For more information on how you can get involved in the Lancaster Prevention Coalition, contact Teri Vosicky at tvosicky@region5systems.net.