



COMMUNITY POLICING in Snohomish County

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Teens & Drugs– A Potential for Disaster

Teens and drugs are a consistent concern for parents, educators as well as law enforcement. During the middle school and high school years, a teen can be introduced to drugs or alcohol. Not all teens who experiment with these substances get hooked on them. The danger is that they will begin a lifetime of addiction and health problems. For marijuana users this includes reduced learning capability, symptoms of chronic bronchitis, more frequent chest colds, increased intake of carbon monoxide. For meth users problems can include symptoms similar to Parkinson's Disease, cardiovascular problems, and loss of teeth.

According to a national survey of attitudes of substance abuse by The Center on Addiction and Substance Abuse at Columbia University released in August 2005:

- Teens who attend schools where drugs are used, kept or sold are three times likelier to have tried marijuana, three times likelier to get drunk in a typical month, and twice as likely to have tried alcohol, compared to teens who attend drug-free schools.
- 62% of high schoolers--some 10.6 million--and 28% of middle schoolers--some 2.4 million--will go to schools where drugs are used, kept or sold.

- 48% of surveyed parents said that drugs are used, kept or sold on the grounds of their teen's school, and 56% of these parents believe that the goal of making their child's school drug free is unrealistic.
- 42% of 12- to 17-year olds (11 million) say they can buy marijuana within a day, and 21% (5.5 million) can buy marijuana in an hour or less.
- Teens pay attention more to their perceptions of immorality, parental disapproval and adverse health consequences than they do to legal consequences.
- The study points out that positive family relationships are a powerful deterrent to teen drinking and drug use. The best situation is for a teen to live in a household with frequent family dinners, low levels of tension and stress between family members, parents who are proud of their teen, and a parent in whom the teen can confide.

To head off your teen from becoming involved with drugs: 1. **Learn** about drugs; 2. **Evaluate** your teen's behavior; 3. If you suspect your teen is taking drugs **Take Action**.



Washington State Trends

A survey of Washington State youth taken in 2004 concerning youth health and drug use found a 5% drop in marijuana use by 12th graders since 2002 (19.5% in 2004 vs. 24.7% in 2002).

The same survey found that regular use of alcohol has increased by 3% among 10th graders in 2004.

Why it matters:

- *Alcohol is involved in about 35% of driver fatalities and about 40% of drowning of 15- to 20 year-olds.*
- *1-in-4 10th & 12th graders report riding in a vehicle within the past month, driven by someone who had been drinking.*
- *About 40% of those who start drinking at age 14 or under develop alcohol dependence compared to 10% of those who start drinking at age 21 or older.*

Teens & Drugs— Learn About Drugs

The first step that you can take to keep your child away from drugs is to learn about drugs, their affects, symptoms and risks. An excellent place to research drugs is the web site www.theantidrug.com an initiative of the White House Office of National Drug Control Policy and the National Youth Anti-Drug Media Campaign.

One of the points that this group makes is that marijuana is the number one illicit drug used by youth.

This may be because marijuana is considered to be harmless. However, marijuana is more potent than ever. Marijuana use can lead to a host of significant health, social, learning, and behavioral problems at a crucial time in a young person's development. Getting high also impairs judgment, which can lead to risky decision making on issues like sex, criminal activity, or riding with someone who is under the influence of drugs or alcohol.

Many believe that you can't get addicted to marijuana. Research shows that marijuana use can lead to addiction. Each year, more kids enter treatment with a primary diagnosis of marijuana dependence than for all other illicit drugs combined.

Methamphetamine is also a major concern given its prevalence and cheapness to produce. 1.4 million persons ages 12 and older used methamphetamine in the past year, nationwide.

Methamphetamine is a highly addictive stimulant drug that strongly acti-

vates certain systems in the brain. Methamphetamine is closely related chemically to amphetamine, but has a greater effect on the central nervous system. Both drugs have some medical uses, primarily in the treatment of obesity, but their therapeutic use is limited.

Other drugs that teens sometimes abuse include:

- Alcohol
- Club drugs (Ecstasy, GHB, Rohypnol, ketamine, LSD, etc.)
- Cocaine
- Heroin
- Inhalants
- Over the counter drugs
- Prescription drugs
- Steroids
- Tobacco

While we cannot go into the symptoms and affects of these drugs in this newsletter, three excellent sources for information on drugs are:

1. The Anti-Drug web site: www.theantidrug.com
2. The National Clearinghouse on Alcohol and Drug Information web site: <http://ncadi.samhsa.gov/>
3. The National Institute on Drug Abuse web site: <http://www.nida.nih.gov/>



Teens & Drugs— *Evaluate Your Teen's Behavior*

Recognizing teen drug use and drinking can be difficult. Teenage years are often plagued with mood swings and attitude changes. But sometimes, these changes are signs of other issues going on in their lives – like drug use or underage drinking. These changes can mean a big difference between a teen going through growing pains or a teen living a dangerous life. And as a parent, it's important for you to know the warning signs.

What should you look for? Some signs appear in the form of depression, withdrawal, carelessness with grooming or hostility. Consider every area of your teen's life to determine whether changes are out of the ordinary.

Consider this watch list:

- Changes in friends
- Declining grades, negative changes in schoolwork, or missing school
- Increased secrecy about possessions or activities
- Use of incense, room deodorant, or perfume to hide smoke or chemical odors
- Subtle changes in conversations with friends, e.g. more secretive, using "coded" language
- Change in clothing choices: new fascination with clothes that high-

light drug use

- Increase in borrowing money
- Evidence of drug paraphernalia such as pipes, rolling papers, etc.
- Evidence of use of inhalant products (called huffing) such as hair-spray, nail polish, correction fluid, common household products. Rags and paper bags are sometimes used as accessories
- Bottles of eye drops, which may be used to mask bloodshot eyes or dilated pupils
- New use of mouthwash or breath mints to cover up the smell of alcohol
- Missing prescription drugs—especially narcotics and mood stabilizers

These changes often signal that something harmful is going on—and often that involves alcohol or drugs. You may want to take your child to the doctor and ask him or her about screening your child for drugs and alcohol. This may involve the health professional asking your child a simple question, or it may involve a urine or blood drug screen. Be on the watch for these signs so that you can spot trouble before it goes too far.

As a Parent- You Matter!

Connect: *Do things as a family. Show that fun doesn't involve drugs.*

Listen: *Take an active interest in what is going on in your child's life. Listen to their cares and concerns.*

Learn: *Sit down together and learn about the risks drugs pose.*

Educate: *Spend at least thirty minutes with your kids every month explaining, with simple facts, how drugs and alcohol can hurt youngsters and destroy their dreams.*

Care: *Spend at least a few minutes each day telling and showing your children that you care. Make sure they know to come to you first for help or information.*

Set Limits: *By setting limits on what is acceptable behavior, you show your children you care and help guide them to a safer, drug-free future.*

Get Involved: *Get involved in your community. Ensure that your community's streets, playgrounds, and schools are safe and drug-free.*



Other Parents Can Provide Support-

It may also help to talk to other parents who have experienced what you are going through. Some communities have parent action groups or parent peer groups that meet informally to discuss parenting issues and discuss solutions. You may also find support via online parenting groups and community message boards. For more information on establishing a parent peer group, visit the National Families In Action Web site:

www.nationalfamilies.org

For More Information-

For more information on how to keep your teen drug-free, visit
www.TheAntiDrug.com.

You can help educate your teen on the dangers of drug use by encouraging them to visit
www.Freevibe.com, a Web-site dedicated to educating teens on making drug-free choices.

Teens & Drugs– Take Action If Your Child Uses Drugs

When you discover or suspect that your child uses drugs or alcohol you are at a critical crossroads for you, your family and your child. This can be difficult to deal with, and sometimes the situation gets worse before it gets better.

Understand that you are not alone. Many other families have had to work through these difficult times just like you. The most important thing is for you to take action on your child's behalf the first time that you suspect drug or alcohol use. Don't make excuses — your teen's future lies in your actions (or non-actions) right now.

You might say to yourself-

“Well, I won't say anything now since it's only his/her first time using.” – If you do not set rules and a clear policy against drugs by having clear and consistent conversations, you enable your teen and encourage continued use. It is never too early or too late to take action regarding your teen's drug use. You are the most important part of your child's life; your actions now can make all the difference.

“If I'm too tough, my child will push away. I want them to like me.” – Overcoming your own fears is an important step in getting help for your child. Some parents feel that their children will push away if they are firm, set restrictions, or talk to them frankly about not using drugs or alcohol. But parenting is about setting boundaries in order to keep your child safe.

“I'm a failure as a parent. Where did I go wrong?” – Many parents are ashamed or feel they've somehow failed when their son or daughter is using drugs. Don't be paralyzed by your own feelings of inadequacy. Instead of feeling bad, do all that you can now to fix the situation.

“I don't want to talk to anyone about this. It could cause more trouble for my child.” – Some parents feel that if they ask for help or reach out to professionals that their child will be labeled a trouble maker and that it may affect his or her ability to qualify for scholarships or get a job. Turning this problem around requires a lot of parenting muscle. So reach out for support in your family, community or at your child's school. Find someone to talk to that can offer confidentiality.

“My kid doesn't have a problem. I drank and I turned out OK.” – Unfortunately, some teenagers are predisposed to drinking and drug use throughout their childhood years if their parents have an abusive relationship with drugs and alcohol. It's critical that you take an honest look at your own drug and alcohol use before you can help your children with a substance problem.

“I don't know what to do about this problem. Where do I begin?” – It's easy to feel overwhelmed with emotion, guilt, anger, and insecurity when you discover your teen is using drugs.

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Teens & Drugs– Take Action If Your Child Uses Drugs, cont.

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If you don't think you can handle this problem yourself, there are people in your area ready to help. Contact someone at your child's school, a coach, a counselor who specializes in working with families, a local prevention agency, or member of your church for advice. See if there is an informal or formal parent support group in your area. This problem is more common than you think. While it may be difficult to get past the feelings of shame and failure, the truth is, asking for help may be the only way to get the assistance you need.

“I'm a single parent and I'm having trouble keeping things together. I'll let my ex-husband deal with the problem.” – Your son or daughter relies on you even more if you are a single parent. You are their compass. You're doing the best you can. Now is the time to engage your child in a discussion and let them know you care enough not to let this slide. Seek support from your ex-spouse or another family member to reinforce the commitment to a drug-free lifestyle.

Once you get past your own fear about these issues, you can then help your family. You are your child's most important advocate and, whether they realize it or not, they need you to guide them during this difficult time.

Taking Action– Building Your Support Group

The key step in dealing with a substance abuse problem is finding a trusted, professional counselor. They are trained to listen and can help you find solutions to your problems. Whatever path you take at this point, know that there are many caring professionals that want to help you successfully work through the situation. Although it may be difficult to make the call, the earlier that you seek help for your child the better.

Ask your child if there is someone they trust (like a coach or student adviser) and feel comfortable talking to. They shouldn't necessarily make the final decision, but they are more likely to be an active participant if they have a say in what happens.

Seek advice from a health professional. Take your child to the doctor or talk to the school nurse and ask him or her about screening your child for drugs and alcohol. This may involve the health professional asking your child a simple question or it may involve a urine or blood drug screen. Sharing your concerns with your health professional can help you get the advice and assistance you need. If you have an appointment with your child's doctor, call ahead to make time to discuss this issue.

Taking Action– Where to Look for Help

These are community and health 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*

Smoked Pot?– You're Not a Hypocrite

If you took drugs when you were young, you are not a hypocrite if you discourage your child from taking drugs. You are in an excellent position to point out opportunities that you or your friends missed or problems you encountered as a result of drugs. Even if you made mistakes in the past, be clear you do not want your child to repeat them.



COMMUNITY POLICING in Snohomish County

Snohomish County Sheriff
M/S 606 - 3000 Rockefeller Ave.
Everett, WA 98201

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*Rick Bart, Sheriff
Snohomish County
3000 Rockefeller Ave.
M/S 606
Fourth Floor County
Courthouse
Everett, WA 98201
(425) 388-3393
www.co.snohomish.wa.us/sheriff/*

Steve Moller– Editor



1-800-
CRIME-13

Washington State Resources– Alcohol/Drug Clearinghouse

The Washington State Alcohol/Drug Clearinghouse (WSADC) provides educational materials, including videos, national and state reports and studies, and email newsletters. Their website is:

<http://clearinghouse.adhl.org/>

You can contact them at:

- Phone: 206-725-9696 (Seattle)
- 1-800-662-9111 (toll-free within Washington)
- Email: clearinghouse@adhl.org
- Fax: 206-760-0589

Alcohol/Drug 24 hour help line:

This is a confidential, 24 hour, state-wide service that provides assistance and guidance for people with alcohol and other drug related problems. It is staff by full time professionally qualified staff as well as well trained part-time staff and volunteers. Its web site is:

<http://www.adhl.org/intro.html>

You can contact the help line at:

- Phone numbers: (800) 562-1240
(206) 722-3700
- Email: Staff@adhl.org