
Parenting for Prevention

Student Assistance Services Corp., 660 White Plains Road, Tarrytown, New York, 10591, June, 2017

Summer is Here

One of our goals is to empower parents to set clear no-use norms around “high-use” times such as back to school, homecoming, prom and the holidays.

Summertime is another one of those seasonal times when teens are more likely to use alcohol or other drugs. Another time of concern is when a teen is in a transition period. The summer between eighth and ninth grade and between high school graduation and college can be a challenging time for teens as they think of themselves as “older” and able to assume more adult behaviors including using alcohol and other drugs.

It is not uncommon for teens to drink too much as they do not fully understand the impact of alcohol on their body. As a result, they can end up in the emergency room with alcohol poisoning.

It is important for parents to be especially vigilant this summer with the rise in marijuana and prescription drug use, the growing myth that marijuana is safe and the astounding increases in “vaping.” Many parents do not even know what vaping is and that teens can use the devices for nicotine and marijuana.

The staff at Student Assistance Services wishes everyone a safe, restful and renewing summer.

Patricia Murphy Warble, LMSW,
CPP

Summer, 2017

Although we all think of summer as a more carefree and relaxed time, the summer can present challenges if you have teenagers. Summer is a time when parents need to be particularly alert to what their children are doing, where they are going and who they are spending time with during their vacation.

This is not always easy to do as teens usually have more freedom during the summer and have more opportunities to gather in unsupervised settings where no responsible adults are present.

Times of transition can be difficult for students and the eighth to ninth grade and twelfth grade to college are identified as times when teens are more likely to begin or increase their use of alcohol and other drugs. Research also shows that the summer is the time that many teens try marijuana for the first time.

Robert DuPont, MD, the former Director of the National Institute for Drug Abuse and the former “drug czar,” spoke at the Community Anti-Drug Coalition of America conference in February and spoke last month at the Westchester Coalition for Drug and Alcohol Free Youth and meeting about the need to keep teens from using the three gateway drugs; alcohol, marijuana, and nicotine.

At a time when there is grave concern about the opioid crises, Dr. DuPont made the point that most opioid users begin their drug use with one of the three gateway drugs. Dr. Du Pont went on to say, “Drug prevention is not drug by drug, rather it is about any and all drug use by youth. Prevention needs to support the primary goal of no use of any alcohol, tobacco, marijuana or other drugs to maintain the health of our young people.”

During the summer, it is important for parents to understand that keeping teens away from the three gateway drugs will be a positive step to ensuring that their lives will not be impacted by the serious consequences of drug use and addiction.



Alcohol

In 2016, the US Surgeon General, Vivek Murthy, MD released the first report dedicated to substance misuse and related disorders entitled, *Facing Addiction in America: The Surgeon General's Report on Alcohol, Drugs and Health*.

“Although substance misuse problems and use disorders may occur at any age, adolescence and young adulthood are particularly critical at-risk periods,” Dr. Murthy said. “Preventing or even simply delaying young people from trying substances is important to reducing the likelihood of a use disorder later in life.”

He went on to point out that people who use alcohol before the age of 15 are four times more likely to develop an alcohol use disorder later in life compared to those who have their first drink at age 20 or older.

It is not surprising to find that teens who use alcohol are more likely to engage in risky behaviors. Using alcohol or other drugs can lower a teen's inhibitions and impact their judgement by influencing their ability to assess that a situation is dangerous or even deadly.

The Center for Disease Control and Prevention's, Division of Adolescent and School Health collects data every year for their Youth Risk Surveillance System which monitors six categories of priority health-risk among adolescents at the national, state, territorial, tribal, and local levels. Their 2016 data showed that 22% of teens who are already sexually active, drank alcohol or used drugs before engaging in sexual intercourse which in turn put the teens at risk for pregnancy and sexually transmitted infections.

Using alcohol or other drugs can lead to serious problems for teens

including poor performance at school, loss of friends and becoming alienated from their family. Substance abuse is also related to car crashes, suicides and injuries. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) reports that in 2010 excessive drinking was responsible for more than 4,300 deaths among underage youth and there were approximately 189,000 emergency department visits by persons under 21 for injuries and other conditions linked to alcohol.

E-Cigarettes/Nicotine/Vaping

Nationally, teen cigarette smoking has been decreasing for many years and after a dramatic rise in e-cigarette use between 2011 and 2015, e-cigarette use by teens fell from 16% in 2015 to 11.3% in 2016 according to a Jun3 1027 report by the OOC. The decline is believed to be due to a combination of tobacco restrictions, public education, and taxes. An e-cigarette sometimes called an electronic nicotine delivery system (ENDS), e-cig, hookah pen, hookah stick or vaping device is designed to mimic smoking a cigarette.

In NY State cigarette smoking by high school students fell to a record low of 4.3% in 2016, down from 27.1% in 2000. But **e-cigarette use nearly doubled in the last two years** from 10.5% in 2014 to 20.6% in 2016 according to the NYS Department of Health. This underscores the need for New York parents to reinforce the harmfulness of these products.

The device can resemble a real cigarette or look more like a pen or marker. The device delivers nicotine or non nicotine “ejuice” or other substances to the smoker in a vapor form. A battery powers a heating element that vaporizes the liquid nicotine contained within a cartridge in the e-cigarette so that what's inhaled and then exhaled looks like smoke, but is usually odorless. They often come in colorful packaging and have flavors marketed to young people such as strawberry, apple, bubblegum, or watermelon. For some teens the appeal is being able to compete with peers on who can “blow” the best smoke rings.

It is hard for parents to identify all forms of ENDS but currently a popular brand of e-cigarettes is *Juul*. The device is usually filled with a flavored nicotine, however, it can also be used for marijuana. The device can be plugged into a USB charger in order to work to vaporize the nicotine or other substances a teen chooses to put into the device. There is usually no odor when one chooses to use this device so if a parent is not aware of what this device is, they may think it is a flash drive. The reality is that it is delivering a harmful substance into the lungs.

Previous studies have identified some troubling trends. In the first analysis of the relationship between e-cigarette use and smoking among adolescents in the United States, University of California at San Francisco researchers found that adolescents who used the devices were more likely to smoke cigarettes and less likely to quit smoking.

The 2015 report on ENDS in New York State found the following:

- The prevalence of ENDS use among high school students (10.5%) and young adults (12.7%) is about twice as high as the prevalence of ENDS use among adults (5.7%).
- There is no evidence that youth are substituting ENDS for cigarettes. In fact, more than half of high school students and young adults who smoke cigarettes also use ENDS, making dual use of cigarettes and ENDS the norm.
- Among the 7.3% of high school students who are current smokers, 56.5% also use ENDS.
- Among the 14.2% of young adult smokers (age 18-24 years), 54.9% use ENDS. Among the 17.3% of adult smokers (age 25 and older), ENDS use is significantly lower, at 24.0%.

E-cigarettes can contain various levels of nicotine a highly addictive drug. People who regularly use nicotine and then suddenly stop experience withdrawal symptoms, which may include cravings, anxiety, depression, moodiness, irritability, and inattentiveness. The American Heart Association says that nicotine from smoking is one of the hardest substances to quit.

According to the U.S. Food and Drug Administration, tests of e-cigarette samples found that they contain carcinogens and toxic chemicals such as diethylene glycol, an ingredient used in car antifreeze. The potential harm from exposure to secondhand vapor from e-cigarettes is unknown. Two initial studies have found

formaldehyde and cancer causing substances coming from secondhand vapors (American Lung Association, 2011).

Marijuana

During the past year, this publication has highlighted the many concerns associated with the use of marijuana and the vulnerability of the teen brain.

One of the concerns that substance abuse prevention professionals have about marijuana is that among students the perception of harm is declining in regards to this drug. "Perception of harm" is the benchmark for drug use and a decline predicts the probability of future drug use.

Professionals feel that the approval of marijuana for medical conditions in New York State and the legalization of marijuana in some states have been contributing factors to the decline of the perception of harm by teens.

However, the ongoing research into this drug shows a very different picture regarding marijuana's harmful effects. As was previously reported, there is an association between marijuana and psychosis and depression.

Researchers are learning more about the negative impact of marijuana on the cognitive skills of memory and attention. Marijuana also decreases motivation and there are short and longer term effects of marijuana on the ability to learn.

One can go to the website www.powertotheparent.org to read the articles in *Parenting for Prevention* newsletter to read more about the negative impact that marijuana can have on the teen brain.

Prescription Drugs/Heroin

Prescription drug use and its relationship to heroin is a major concern in our area as the results of using these potent drugs are so devastating and the number of people using these drugs is rising Robert Astorino, the Westchester County Executive, is combining the efforts of the Departments of Community Mental Health, and Public Safety to launch a new initiative entitled **Project WORTHY**, Westchester Opioid Response Team Helping You, to address the opioid epidemic in Westchester County. Through Project WORTHY, the Westchester Department of Community Mental Health initiated a special telephone number, 914-995-9100 and email address, projectWOTHY@westchestergov.com for the public and professionals to obtain training or information.

Many parents are not aware that teens report that it is not difficult for them to get access to prescription drugs. In some situations, a teen may have been prescribed the drugs by a healthcare professional to deal with pain associated with an injury or with a dental or orthopedic procedure. It is not uncommon for students to monitor who has had a surgery and ask the student to sell or give them some of their pain medications.

The most common place for a teen to find prescription drugs is in their own home. Many adults receive a prescription to deal with pain or anxiety and only take a few of the pills and then leave the rest of the medication in the medicine cabinet.

Teens can purchase drugs on the Internet without a prescription. All they need is a credit card and the drugs arrive in an unmarked package so most parents are not aware that their package contains dangerous drugs.

Heroin use often starts when a teen becomes addicted to the opioids and the sources for the drugs are no longer available. At this point a teen may contact a drug dealer. The street price for one tablet of a medication like Vicodin can cost \$80 and becomes prohibitive very quickly. However, a bag of heroin can sell for \$6.00.

Preventing access to these drugs is very important. Fortunately there are Med Return units in police stations throughout Westchester County. Go to: <http://powertotheparent.org/toolkit/how-to-discard-unused-medication/> for locations. If medications are needed to treat a chronic condition, they should be kept in a place that is not easily accessible. In addition, always monitor the number of pills in the bottle.

The Five A's Of Parenting

Mike Nerney, a prevention specialist, makes the following recommendations to parents about strategies they can implement to keep their children safe during the summer:

Aware

Every family should have a strategy in place so that they know where their teen is and who they are with during the day and at night. Be sure to check-in with other parents and make sure that all the teens are in a supervised setting with a responsible adult. Empty houses with no adult supervision have proven to be very dangerous places for teens in Westchester County. It is usually in this unchaperoned setting that many teens first try alcohol and drugs or have their first sexual encounter. Text messaging, talking on the cell phone and even asking your teen to take a picture of where they are and then have them send it to you, have made the job of knowing where your child is much easier.

Alert

Be alert to any behavioral changes in your child during the summer. **Teens are much more likely to try alcohol, cigarettes, and other drugs for the first time during the summer months.**

Awake

When your children get home, give them a hug or a kiss and

talk to them for a few minutes to make sure they are not under the influence of any substance.

It may be a deterrent for your children to use alcohol or other drugs if they know that they will have to pass the "hug/kiss/talk" test later on in the evening. If anything in their behavior concerns you, make sure they are safely in bed and wait until the morning to address the issue.

Important note: If your teen seems impaired, **DO NOT LEAVE THEM ALONE** "to sleep it off." Keep them awake and talking. Call 911 immediately if your teen cannot keep their head up or stay awake.

Assertive

Make sure you and your child have discussed appropriate consequences for inappropriate and unhealthy behavior. The consequences should be firm, respectful and related to the behavior. Furthermore, although this can be difficult, the consequences must be enforced.

Affirming

Let your children know that you love them and want them to have a wonderful summer. Help them understand that they are the most precious people in your life and if they feel that you are being too protective, it is because it is your job to keep them safe.