

## **November Is Substance Abuse Awareness Month in Bedford**

Bedford's Substance Abuse Awareness Month, November 2013 is upon us and it is time for an update on trends in the ongoing efforts to keep our community safe. According to the "National Survey of American Attitudes on Substance Abuse XVII: Teens," the 17<sup>th</sup> annual back-to-school survey by the National Center on Addiction and Substance Abuse (CASA) at Columbia University, nearly 9 out of 10 of American high-school students, or 86% say that some classmates are drugging, drinking and smoking during the school day. High school students say that about 17 percent of their classmates , or 2.8 million teens, drink, smoke, or use drugs during the school day.

The CASA Columbia teen survey also revealed that 44 percent of high schoolers know a student who sells drugs at their school. Asked what drugs students sell on school grounds, 91 percent said marijuana; 24 percent said prescription drugs; 9 percent said cocaine; and 7 percent said ecstasy.

The survey also revealed that 52 percent of high school students say that there is a place on school grounds or near school where students go to get high during the school day. Thirty-six percent say it is easy for students to use drugs, drink, or smoke during the school day without getting caught.

For the sixth straight year, and for seven of the past eight years, 60 percent of high school students say that they attend a "drug-infected" school, which means drugs are used, kept, or sold on school grounds.

According to the 2012 Bedford Youth Risk Behavior Survey, alcohol is the most popular substance among our youth, with 22% of Bedford high school students reporting drinking alcohol in the past 30 days. Marijuana use is much more common than any other illegal drug use, with 11% of Bedford high school students reporting current use of marijuana, and the rate of current cigarette use remained well below prior averages at 5%.

### **Increase in Drug-Infected Private High Schools**

For the first time in the survey's history more than half of private high school students say their school is drug-infected, a 50 percent increase over the past year, from 36 percent in 2011 to 54 percent in 2012. The survey showed that the gap between drug-infected public and private schools is closing.

"For millions of American teens, drugs and alcohol, not more advanced education, are what put the 'high' in the high schools they attend," said Joseph A. Califano, Jr. Founder and Chairman Emeritus of CASA Columbia and former US Secretary of Health, Education, and Welfare. "For millions of parents trying to raise drug-free kids, the 'high'

school years are the most dangerous times their children face, and the ‘high’ schools are a dangerous place to send their kids.”

### **Social Networking: Digital Peer Pressure**

This year’s survey took a deeper dive into the world of teen social networking. The CASA Columbia survey found that 75 percent of 12- to 17-year olds say that seeing pictures of teens partying with alcohol or marijuana on Facebook, MySpace, or another social networking site encourages other teens to want to party like that. Forty-five percent of teens, or about 10.9 million youth, have seen pictures online of other teens getting drunk, passed out, or using drugs. Forty-seven percent of teens who have seen these pictures say that it seems like the teens in the pictures are having a good time.

Compared to teens who have not seen pictures on Facebook or another social networking site of kids getting drunk, passed out, or using drugs, teens who have seen such pictures are:

- Four times likelier to have used marijuana;
- More than three times likelier to have used alcohol; and
- Almost three times likelier to have used tobacco.

“This year’s survey reveals a new kind of potent peer pressure—digital peer pressure. Digital peer pressure moves beyond a child’s friends and the kids they hang out with. It invades the home and a child’s bedroom via the Internet,” said Califano. “So parents should be aware of what their children are viewing on social networking sites. If their teens are seeing pictures of other teens partying with marijuana and alcohol, getting drunk or passed out, or using drugs, they may think it looks like fun and want to try it.”

### **Teens Home Alone Overnight Likelier to Use Substances**

For the first time this year the survey asked 12- to 17-year olds if they are ever left alone without adult supervision overnight. Nearly one-third of teens or 29 percent say they have been left alone overnight.

Compared to teens who are never home alone overnight, those who are left home alone overnight are:

- Twice as likely to have used marijuana;
- Almost twice as likely to have used alcohol; and

- Almost three times likelier to have used tobacco.

### **Parental Disapproval and Teen Substance Use Attitudes**

Parental expectations, particularly expressing strong disapproval of teen substance use, can be a decisive factor in a teen's decision not to drink alcohol, use drugs, or smoke tobacco. Compared to teens who say that their parents would be extremely upset to find out that their child smokes, drinks, or uses marijuana, those teens whose parents would not be extremely upset are:

- Eight and a half times likelier to say it's okay for teens their age to use marijuana;
- Ten times likelier to say it's okay for teens their age to get drunk; and
- Nine times likelier to say it's okay for teens their age to smoke cigarettes.

“The take away from this survey for parents is to talk to their children and get engaged in their children's lives. They should ask their children what they're seeing at school and online. It takes a teen to know what's going on in the teen world, but it takes parents to help their children navigate that world,” said Emily Feinstein, CASA Columbia's Senior Policy Analyst and the project director of the teen survey.

### **Other Notable Findings Related to Teen Substance Use**

Fifty-two percent of high school students know at least one friend or classmate who uses illegal drugs like acid, ecstasy, meth, cocaine or heroin; 33 percent know at least one friend or classmate who abuses controlled prescription drugs or over the counter medicines to get high.

It is easier for teens to get prescription drugs than marijuana within an hour or within a day.

Teens who attend religious services at least four times a month are less likely to have used marijuana, alcohol, or tobacco.

### **Relationships between Parents and Teens are Important**

Teens who have excellent relationships with their parents are less likely to use drugs, drink, or smoke. Compared to teens who say they have an excellent relationship with Dad, teens who have a less than very good relationship with their father are almost four times likelier to have used marijuana; twice as likely to have used alcohol; and two and a half times as likely to have used tobacco. And compared to teens who say they have an

excellent relationship with Mom, teens who have a less than very good relationship with their mother are almost three times likelier to have used marijuana; two and a half times as likely to have used alcohol; and two and a half times likelier to have used tobacco.

Source:

The findings in this report come from *The National Survey of American Attitudes on Substance Abuse XVII: Teens*, released on August 22, 2012.

For more information visit [www.casacolumbia.org](http://www.casacolumbia.org)

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