

# PREVENTION OF ILLICIT DRUG & YOUTH MARIJUANA USE IN THE U.S.

Illicit drug use is a widespread problem in the United States. This includes the use of marijuana/hashish, cocaine (including crack), heroin, hallucinogens, and inhalants, as well as the nonmedical use of prescription-type pain relievers, tranquilizers, stimulants, and sedatives.<sup>1</sup> This Action Sheet focuses on the first group of drugs (marijuana, cocaine, heroin, etc.). Drug use among people of all ages is dangerous because it can lead to addiction, reduced self-control, and impaired decision-making,<sup>2</sup> in addition to other serious consequences. Some drugs can alter the brain in ways that persist after the person has stopped taking drugs, and may even be permanent.<sup>3</sup>

LEARN MORE TO BE THE ONE WHO MAKES A DIFFERENCE.

## What Communities Can Do



### Parents

Get involved in your child's day-to-day activities and discuss the risks of using illicit drugs. By being involved early and consistently, you can help prevent problems before they occur.<sup>4</sup>



### Health Care Providers

- Inform patients who use marijuana that, contrary to what many people believe, marijuana is harmful and addictive.<sup>5</sup>
- Have a conversation with patients about how use of cocaine, inhalants, and other drugs may be putting their health at risk. Apply the Five A's of Intervention: Ask, Advise, Assess, Assist, and Arrange. Refer to the Resource Guide on Screening for Drug Use in General Medical Settings, available at [http://www.drugabuse.gov/sites/default/files/resource\\_guide.pdf](http://www.drugabuse.gov/sites/default/files/resource_guide.pdf), for more information.<sup>6</sup>



### Educators

- Improve the learning environment by addressing students' aggressive behaviors and poor concentration, which are risks associated with the eventual onset of drug abuse and related problems.<sup>7</sup>



### Community Organizations and Leaders

- Implement effective prevention programs – SAMHSA's **National Registry of Evidence-Based Programs and Practices (NREPP)** provides an online registry of more than 250 proven prevention interventions (<http://nrepp.samhsa.gov>).
- In partnership with schools or others in your community, use SAMHSA's **Factors Influencing Potential Substance Abuse** handout (<http://www.ncsacw.samhsa.gov/files/TrainingPackage/MOD2/FactorsInfluencingPotential.pdf>) to identify and consider factors that have the most impact for young people in your community. An important goal of prevention is to change the balance between risk and protective factors, so that protective factors outweigh risk factors. Risk factors can increase a person's chances for drug abuse, while protective factors can reduce the risk. Assess risk and protective factors associated with drug problems in your community to target prevention services.<sup>8</sup>
- Visit the Center for the Application of Prevention Technologies' (CAPT) website to learn more about the risk and protective factors associated with youth marijuana, available at <http://captus.samhsa.gov/access-resources/risk-and-protective-factors-associated-youth-marijuana-use>.



## Workplaces<sup>9</sup>

Drug-free workplace programs can help employers create cost-effective, safe, and healthy workplaces. Studies have indicated that successful drug-free workplace programs generally have at least five key components:<sup>10</sup>

- A written policy;
- Employee education;
- Supervisor training;
- An employee assistance program (EAP); and
- Drug testing.

Before considering these five components, employers should examine the needs of their organizations and take steps to ensure that the programs they design will work well in their workplaces. Download SAMHSA's **Drug-Free Workplace Kit** from <http://store.samhsa.gov/product/Making-Your-Workplace-Drug-Free/SMA07-4230> for more information about implementing a drug-free workplace program.



## Everyone

Many signs may indicate that someone is using illicit drugs, and could also point to other problems. Signs to look for include:<sup>11</sup>

- Evidence of drug paraphernalia or inhalant products;
- Changes in friends, the use of secretive language, increased secrecy about possessions or activities, negative changes in school or job performance;
- Increased use of sprays, perfumes, or mouthwash to mask smoke or chemical odors; and
- An increase in borrowing money.

## Helpful Resources

- **SAMHSA's Treatment Locator**, available at <http://findtreatment.samhsa.gov>, is a searchable directory of drug and alcohol treatment programs. The Treatment Locator shows the location of facilities around the country that treat drug abuse and alcohol problems.
- **SAMHSA's Center for the Application of Prevention Technologies** has a suite of tools to help practitioners prevent youth marijuana use, available at <http://captus.samhsa.gov/access-resources/new-suite-capt-tools-target-youth-marijuana-use>.
- **The Partnership for Drug-Free Kids' National Youth Anti-drug Media Campaign** provides materials directed toward teens through its "Above the Influence" campaign. More information is available at <http://www.abovetheinfluence.com>.
- The "**NIDA for Teens**" website from NIDA, available at <http://teens.drugabuse.gov>, offers facts for teens about prescription drug abuse and illicit drug use. **NIDA DrugFacts**, available at <http://www.drugabuse.gov/publications/finder/t/160/DrugFacts> also provides updated information on the health effects of specific drugs, including marijuana and club drugs.

If you are concerned that you or someone you know may be abusing or addicted to illicit drugs, help is available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, and 365 days a year through SAMHSA's National Helpline, 1-800-662-HELP (4357) or 1-800-487-4889 (TDD). The Helpline provides free and confidential information and treatment referrals in English and Spanish.

## Sources

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