
Parenting for Prevention

Student Assistance Services Corp., 660 White Plains Road, Tarrytown, New York, 10591, May, 2013

It's That Time OF Year

It looks like we made it, although one cannot be totally sure about that as the cooler air has been stubborn about leaving our county. But overall, the flowers are blooming, the sun is shining more frequently and soon the summer will be here.

This is the time for proms and graduations and a time for parents to talk to their teens, set clear limits, and provide consequences in regard to alcohol and drug use. There is a wonderful poster in this newsletter that will be in newspapers and online forums about alerting parents to talk to their teens about acting responsibly at their proms and other parties.



Our powertotheparent.org website has information and suggestions on ways to talk to teens in an effective manner. Summer presents its own set of problems and again, the website can help parents be aware and proactive in regards to the safety of their children.

Everyone at SAS joins me in wishing you all a happy, relaxing, refreshing and safe summer!

Patricia Murphy Warble, MSW, CPP

Links Between Sleep-Deprivation & Drug Abuse

A study that was done in 2010 by researchers at the University of California San Diego suggest that sleep-deprived teens are more likely to use drugs, thereby increasing their vulnerability to dependence. According to Sara C. Mednick, lead researcher and assistant professor of psychiatry at the university says that sleep patterns and drug habits are two habits that spread easily in an adolescent's social group and one can influence the other.

Data from the National Longitudinal Study of Adolescent Health were analyzed to determine how sleep deprivation and the spread of drug use within social groups are related. About 8,349 teens in grades 7 through 12 were studied for a period of eight years. Each of these participants was asked to name five friends who also participated in the study.



The findings of the study revealed that participants belonging to the same large social group with poor sleep had tried marijuana. It was also found that teens' sleep and drug habits are influenced by their friends and even the friends of their friends.

"Our behaviors are all connected to each other and we need to start thinking about how one behavior affects our lives on many levels. Therefore, when parents, schools, and law enforcement want to look for ways to influence one outcome, such as drug use, our research suggests that targeting another behavior, like sleep, may have a positive influence," says Mednick.

Another key finding in another study that was released this month done by Kathleen Merikangas, PhD of the National Institute of Mental Health shows that 3% of teens said that they have been experiencing extreme fatigue for about three months. In addition about 50% of those reporting this fatigue also had a depressive or anxiety disorder. Teens who are depressed and/or anxious are more likely to use alcohol or other drugs to help them deal with these conditions.

A 2013 study published online in the [Journal of the American Academy of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry](#) revealed a significantly higher prevalence of marijuana and cigarette use by adolescents with attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD) histories than in those without ADHD.

“This study underscores the significance of the substance abuse risk for both boys and girls with childhood ADHD,” said Brook Molina, PhD, professor of psychiatry and psychology at the University of Pittsburgh School of Medicine and lead author of the report. “These findings also are the

strongest test to date of the association between medication for ADHD and teenage substance abuse.” This research was supported by cooperative agreement grants and contracts from the [National Institute of Mental Health](#) (NIMH) and the [National Institute on Drug Abuse](#).

Prom Season Is Here *Keep Your Children Safe*



**Just your typical
prom issues:**

**The date.
The dress.
The drinking.**

Prom is a flurry of dresses, corsages, tuxedos, limos and photos. But the most important thing you can do as a parent is take the time to talk about peer pressure and making good decisions before you send them off. Some teens will use alcohol and/or drugs to cope with the stresses they face during prom night. In addition, the use of these substances can cause relaxation, loss of inhibitions and altered perceptions. It can also cause them to make questionable choices and get involved in other behaviors that put their health and safety at risk. Get strategies. Learn what every parent needs to know about prom night. [PowerToTheParent.org](#).



Power to the Parent is a program of the Westchester Coalition for Drug and Alcohol Free Youth. The Coalition is an “umbrella coalition” for 30 local coalitions and works with the Westchester County Office of Drug Abuse Prevention and STOP:DWI. Robert P. Astorino, Westchester County Executive, and Janet DiFiore, Westchester County District Attorney, serve as co-chairs of the Coalition. 914-332-1300 or email: LetsDoThis@PowerToTheParent.org

Summer Time

Summer vacation is a time that most families look forward to all year, as it enables them to spend more time together and for many, there are fewer responsibilities. It is a great time of year as the good weather provides more opportunities for leisure time activities. Even something as simple as a walk on a summer evening can be a lovely way for a family to spend time together.

The summer can also provide students with the opportunity to develop new skills and explore different and perhaps new activities. A teen may have a job or look for opportunities to volunteer at a local agency or hospital. Taking accelerated courses or investigating a new interest at one of the local Westchester colleges can expand the student's interests. Some colleges offer language immersion courses that can be very beneficial to a child.

In the summer there is more time for parents to help their child refine and develop their emotional, social and coping skills. As a result, their teen may be better able to deal with the social and academic pressures once they return to school. For instance, helping anxious teens explore ways to deal with stress could help them develop skills that can be used for the rest of their lives. Some ways to do this might be to encourage your teen to explore meditation, take a teen yoga class, engage in regular exercise, take walks, run, and incorporating a regime that includes healthy eating, getting enough sleep, and avoiding too much sugar and caffeine.

There are many good reasons to help your teen develop social skills by doing role-playing or taking the time to discuss ways to handle challenging situations. The National Institute on Drug Abuse (NIDA) in its guide entitled *Preventing Drug Use Among Children and Adolescents* says that positive social skills, effective resistance skills and effective communication skills can prevent substance abuse. Emotional regulation and impulse control are also very important

The guide also discusses the value of strong connections between children and significant others including parents, peers, teachers or other important adults as a way of preventing drug abuse. Those strong relationships are more difficult to make if a child lacks social skills and the ability to make connections. Summer provides the opportunity for teens to practice these skills and develop relationships with new peers at camp, summer jobs, volunteer opportunities or during visits with extended family members.

Alcohol

Recent surveys done in the county show that the drug of choice for teens in Westchester is alcohol. The relaxed state of summer, the fact that it is easier for teens to gather in unchaperoned settings and the

reality that most teens are not supervised as closely during the summer, and therefore teens have more opportunities to experiment with alcohol and other drugs.

To counteract this reality, it is important for parents to know where their teens are, who they are with and what they are doing. Cell phones have made this an easier process. If a parent has any doubt about what their child is reporting to them, they can ask their child to send them a picture of their surroundings.

Keep the "no-use" conversation going and restate expectations that you have regarding the use of alcohol and other drugs. Teens need to know that there will be consequences to alcohol and drug use and as a parent make sure you enforce them otherwise your words have no meaning.

Marijuana

Research from the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Administration indicates that more teens try marijuana for the first time during the summer months than at any other time of year. The 2012 data from the Monitoring the Future study demonstrates that marijuana use is increasing among high school students. One of the reasons for this is the publicity regarding "medical" marijuana causes teens to believe that marijuana use is safe. As a result there has been a decrease in the perception of harm of marijuana use by teens, which is a benchmark for increased use. When the perception of harm decreases, the use of the drug increases.

Prescription Drug Use

A national trend has also been felt in Westchester County. The use of prescription drugs by teens is the drug trend that is increasing the fastest in terms of percentages. The Lower Hudson Valley, like the rest of New York State, has seen the level of prescription drug use increase among young people. Another trend that is related to this is the increase in heroin use.

Young people report that they take prescription drugs that may have been prescribed as a result of a dental or orthopedic intervention. Teens may also take narcotics like vicodin or oxycontin from their parent's or grandparent's medicine cabinet, at the home of a friend, or where they babysit. Eventually, their source for these drugs may not be available and if a teen has become addicted, drug dealers are eager to encourage them to switch to heroin. Compared to \$80 which is the street value of some prescription pills, heroin is cheap and available.

This may seem like an unlikely scenario for our Westchester teens, but anecdotally mental health providers and law enforcement

confirms this. In addition, local papers are reporting stories about young people becoming addicted to heroin.

As a precaution, all families should keep narcotic drugs and other medicines in a place that cannot be accessed by teens or others in the family. If the drugs are no longer needed, parents should dispose of them in MedReturn Drug Collection Units which are or will be in many Westchester police stations by the summer. These units are provided through the Westchester Office of Drug Prevention and STOP-DWI in many communities anyone can dispose drugs in any of the units in a safe and anonymous way.

911-Good Samaritan Law

It is important to remind everyone of the New York State 911 Good Samaritan law. This law provides immunity from prosecution for those who call for help for someone who is experiencing an overdose from alcohol or other drugs and for the person experiencing the overdose even if either person is in possession of alcohol or a

small quantity of any other drug.

Times of Transition

During times of transition, both adults and young people are more vulnerable. The transition from eighth grade to high school and from 12th grade to college can often be challenging. Eighth graders are particularly vulnerable as many have not had any experience with engaging in more "adult" behaviors and are often, not really aware of the consequences of their behaviors.

Hospitals in the county report that they usually get several young people admitted to the emergency room either with a drug overdose or with acute alcohol poisoning during the summer months. Many of these young people report that they did not realize the effects of the alcohol and other drugs and need urgent medical care. Interestingly, in many of these situations, it is often the first time that the child has actually used these substances.