
Parenting for Prevention

Student Assistance Services Corp., 660 White Plains Road, Tarrytown, New York, 10591, November, 2012

Next Step for the Westchester Coalition For Drug and Alcohol Free Youth



The “umbrella” organization for the substance abuse prevention coalitions or councils in Westchester County is launching its own web-

site, PowertotheParent.org in December. This website will be a research-based resource for Westchester families.

The website has been a dream since the coalition began its work in the county almost 10 years ago. However, it was the support of the federal Drug Free Communities grant and the Prevention First NY! grant from New York State that made the dream become a reality.

In addition to providing useful information about events and resources, the website will also have a *Parent Toolkit* section that is designed to help parents keep their children safe from drug and alcohol use. It will include among other information, *How To Talk to Your Teen*, *20 Tips To Keep Your Teen Safe* and *Myths and Facts About Teens & Drugs and Alcohol*.

Check it out and let us know what you think!

Patricia Murphy Warble, LMSW,

Teen Drinking & Drug Abuse: The Statistics are Sobering

New website helps Westchester parents understand the risks and gain resources for prevention

There is great power in being a parent: the power to reason, to influence, to make sense, to counter temptation. The power comes from the heart and, make no mistake, teenagers are fueled by it, sustained by it. To use it is to keep them alive. To ignore it is to risk everything. But where is a parent to turn to know the risks that teenagers face and find the resources to maximize their parenting power?



Beginning in December, parents in Westchester can go to PowerToTheParent.org, a new website designed to help parents be the first line in the defense against one of the biggest threats to teen health and safety: underage drinking and drug use. Nationally, every 15 minutes a teenager dies from underage drinking or other drug use. But when parents understand this risk, and when they talk to their teen, set and follow through with clear no use messages, they can help them slip safely past that terrible and deadly 15th minute.

In Westchester, the statistics are sobering. In 2011, 17% of 8th graders, 37% of 10th graders, and 61% of 12th graders reported having consumed alcohol in the past 30 days. All of these numbers exceed the national rates. 20% of Westchester high school students, including 34% of high school seniors, reported “binge drinking” in the past two weeks. Binge drinking is the most dangerous practice of drinking- consuming a large amount of alcohol in a short period of time – and it is associated with many consequences for youth including car crashes, academic issues, problems with peers, unplanned/unwanted sexual activity, ruined reputations, and other concerns.



That's the bad news. The good news is that prevention works. Every time a young person is in possession of alcohol it means that an adult somewhere gave it to them, sold it to them, or left it somewhere that they could get it. Both Westchester teens and parents tell us that teens get their alcohol from parents and friends and that they consume the alcohol at people's homes – often at parties and unsupervised gatherings. To make a difference in teen alcohol use, adults need to clean-up the alcohol environment, and this starts with parents.

Parents are concerned. In a recent survey of Westchester parents, 80% of respondents perceived underage drinking to be a problem in their community. 60% are concerned that youthful alcohol consumption threatens the health and safety of their children. Therefore, the majority of Westchester parents care about this problem and want to make a difference. However, many report needing the tools - words and strategies - to be most effective.

Funded by federal grants to the Westchester Coalition for Drug and Alcohol Free Youth, the new PowerToTheParent.org website offers parents the tools to help prevent underage drinking. Parents can visit the website to learn about the risks associated with

alcohol and other drug use and discover resources to help keep their teens safe and healthy. Parents, want their teenagers to live the best life possible. There are so many wonderful moments ahead for them. We want to work together to ensure that their hopes and dreams become their reality. That's the mission of PowerToTheParent.org.



Boys More Prone to OTC Drug Abuse Than Girls, Study Suggests

A new study suggest that boys may be more likely than girls to abuse over-the-counter drugs. University of Cincinnati researchers looked at over-the-counter (OTC) drug abuse among students in grades 7 through 12 in 133 schools across greater Cincinnati who took part in a 2009-2010 survey.

Early analysis of the data showed that 10 % of students said they abused over-the-counter drugs such as cough syrups and decongestants. This type of drug abuse

can result in accidental poisoning, seizures and physical and psychological addictions, the study authors pointed out in a university news release.

The investigators found boys had a higher risk of longtime use of over-the-counter drugs compared with girls. Teens who reported abusing over-the-counter drugs were more likely to report that they had gone to parties where such drugs were available or had friends who abused over-the-counter drugs, the study authors noted.

Adolescents who said they were involved in positive activities such as school clubs, sports, community and church organizations, were less likely to report over-the-counter drug abuse.

"Findings from this study highlight and underscore OTC drugs as an increasing and significant health issue affecting young people," Rebecca Vidourek, an assistant professor of health promotion, said in the news release.

The early results of the study were presented Oct. 29 at the annual meeting of the American Public Health Association in San Francisco. The data and conclusions of research presented at medical meetings should be viewed as preliminary until published in a peer-reviewed journal.



Spring Break

Can be “risky business”

Students are making plans now for spring break and many parents are receiving pressure from their children to allow them to go on a trip during spring break that is unchaperoned or will have little adult supervision. Before making a deposit on such a trip one might like to consider some of the points that David Sachs, MDs makes in an article about issues associated with spring break.

He starts the article by saying, “Spring break is a time when even the most trustworthy, well-behaved youth may seize the opportunity to release their inhibitions and overindulge.” Here are five of the most significant threats facing young people on spring break.”

#1 Binge Drinking

Spring break has become synonymous with binge drinking. get sick. Not surprisingly, alcohol is a factor in most spring break accidents, arrests, violent crimes and deaths. The American Medical Association (AMA) reports that during spring break alcohol is cheap and easy to access regardless of age. Younger drinkers and those who typically drink lightly or not at all are at greater risk of acute harm if they increase their alcohol consumption on spring break, according to a 2009 study in Psychology of Addictive Behaviors.

#2 Drug Overdose

Many young people use spring break as an opportunity to experiment with drugs other than alcohol, especially marijuana and "club drugs" like ecstasy. The White House Office of National Drug Control Policy warned that first-time use of marijuana and alcohol by teens increases dramatically during spring break.

In addition to the health risks posed by these drugs, many youth obtain the drugs wherever they're vacationing, which means they may not come from a trustworthy source, may be cut with other substances or may be more potent than expected. Young people also frequently overlook the potentially fatal consequences of mixing drugs and alcohol.

#3 Driving Under the Influence

Where there's alcohol, there's the danger of drunk driving. In 2009, the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration reported that drunk/drugged driving claimed the lives of more than 10,000 motorists.

In popular spring break destinations, additional police officers are often hired during March and April to crack down on drunk and drugged driving, potentially resulting in a suspended license, prison time, a fine and a criminal conviction on their permanent record. The combination of alcohol, drugs, friends and the beach also puts youth at increased risk

for distracted driving (because of cell phones, texting or rowdy passengers) and alcohol-related accidents like drowning.

#4 Risky Sex

With their judgment clouded by drugs or alcohol, some young partygoers engage in risky sexual behaviors they later regret. Aside from the obvious risks of unintended pregnancy and sexually transmitted diseases (many of which perhaps non-coincidentally peak from March to May).

#5 Crime

Drinking alcohol and using other drugs dramatically increases the risk of rape and other violence. During spring break, hospitals around the country report an increase in rapes, injuries, assaults, deaths and arrests. A report by the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration shows that intentional poisonings (including date rape drugs such as Rohypnol, ketamine and GHB) caused almost 15,000 emergency room visits in 2009. In Daytona, Fla., a popular spring break hotspot, officials have reported twice as many rape cases during the month of spring break.

Where your child goes for spring break can be as important as who they go with and what they do. Some locations, such as Orlando and West Palm Beach, have been ranked among the most dangerous spring break getaways. Don't be fooled into

believing that US destinations are safe. Be alert to the opinion of Forbes Magazine that if your child is planning a trip to Las Vegas, Key West, South Padre Island, Daytona Beach or Myrtle Beach, they are headed to what Forbes calls the "trashiest spring break destinations" for 2012.

Young people traveling to foreign countries, most notably in recent years, Mexico, should be aware of additional risks, particularly if they leave popular tourist areas. In the past, crimes against U.S. citizens have included drug violence, theft, rape, sexual assault, abduction and murder. Those who violate the laws of the country they're visiting may be subjected to harsher penalties and more complex legal troubles than they'd face on home soil.

Healthy and Safe Alternatives to A Spring Break "Trip"

There are many religious and charitable organizations that offer trips during spring break that can

be an alternative to going on an unchaperoned trip. These trips can provide an opportunity for teens to help people who are in need, can provide an opportunity for cultural enrichment, community service or give teens an educational experience.

This spring there will probably be opportunities to help people who live close by who will still be recovering from the effects of "Sandy." It is expected that there will still be many organizations who will be looking for volunteers as the clean-up activities associated with the storm will last for a long period of time.

The best way to identify opportunities is to contact religious organizations, schools, and national organizations like Habitat for Humanity. Also check advertisements or information in local papers and check the Internet. Be sure to obtain references and policies for supervision. In addition, it is expected that the Red Cross or similar organizations will still be asking for volunteers well into 2013.

There is safety in numbers when trying to offset the pressure your teen may be putting on you about spring break. Perhaps, a group of families could make plans together. This way a group of teens could all be together doing something that has some merit. This may help a teen be more accepting of the fact that they will not be on a traditional spring break trip.

Another option is to explain that while there will be opportunities in the future to vacation with peers, this may be the last, or one of the last opportunities to vacation as a family, visit cousins or grandparents in a different state. Also, if the family can afford it, planning a vacation that is more desirable than the spring break trip will make it easy for a teen to tell friends he or she isn't going with them. Remember, many times teens are hoping parents will not allow them to participate in a group spring break but need an reason that is acceptable to friends.