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# Parenting for Prevention

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

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## Love the Fall

*With some reservations*



I love the fall. My birthday is in September, the weather turns cooler, there are lovely fall flowers, pumpkins, the bounty of the earth, and the approaching holidays. And oh, my favorite holiday of the year, Halloween, comes at this time of year. What's not to love about a holiday that does not require cooking or buying presents, it just involves eating candy! My favorite candy is Mound's bars with almonds or not!

It is always hard and sad for me to realize that along with all the things that I love during my favorite time of year, I also know that it can be a risky time for teens. As I listen to the tooting of horns from the parade that occurs during Homecoming weekend in my community, I know that not all of those teens will be making healthy decisions during the evening.

And in fact, the presence of vaping mechanisms will make it easier for some of them to use marijuana or nicotine. This is because there is no discernable smell associated with this method of ingestion that would normally alert an adult to the use of these dangerous substances.

**Editor: Patricia Murphy Warble, MSW, CPP**

## Vaping Among Teens

*Mounting Concerns*

A new way to access nicotine and more recently, marijuana, has increased in popularity among teens. It is described as "vaping," which refers to the use of electronic devices that vaporize a product that is put into them.



The former Surgeon General, Vivek Murthy, MD described vaping as a public health threat to young people and reported that vaping had increased 900% from 2011 to 2015. His concerns were primarily related to the use of nicotine saying, "E-cigarettes went from being rare in 2010 to being the most common tobacco product used by our nation's youth. This represents a staggering development in a relatively short period of time, and it threatens 50 years of the hard-fought progress we have made curbing tobacco use and puts a new generation at risk for nicotine addiction."

However, an additional concern that has emerged is that teens are also using e-cigs to vape very potent marijuana concentrates referred to as wax, dab, shatter and oil. These marijuana concentrates may be odorless and therefore a parent does not know what their child is using in their device.

There is tremendous concern about teens using these marijuana concentrates as they have significantly higher levels of tetrahydrocannabinol (THC) which is the principal psychoactive ingredient of marijuana also referred to as cannabis. According to researcher, Jason Kilmer, PhD from the University of Washington, in 2016 the THC in a marijuana "cigarette" was 13.1% but in the concentrated form that is used in vaping the THC level is usually about 55% and can go as high as 71%.

Amelia M. Arria, Ph.D., from the University of Maryland School of Public has done extensive research on how the use of marijuana can have a negative impact on youth and interfere with a young person's academic success and college completion.

In an April, 2016 review article published in *Biological Psychiatry* by Broyd et al. considered the effect of young people using marijuana and

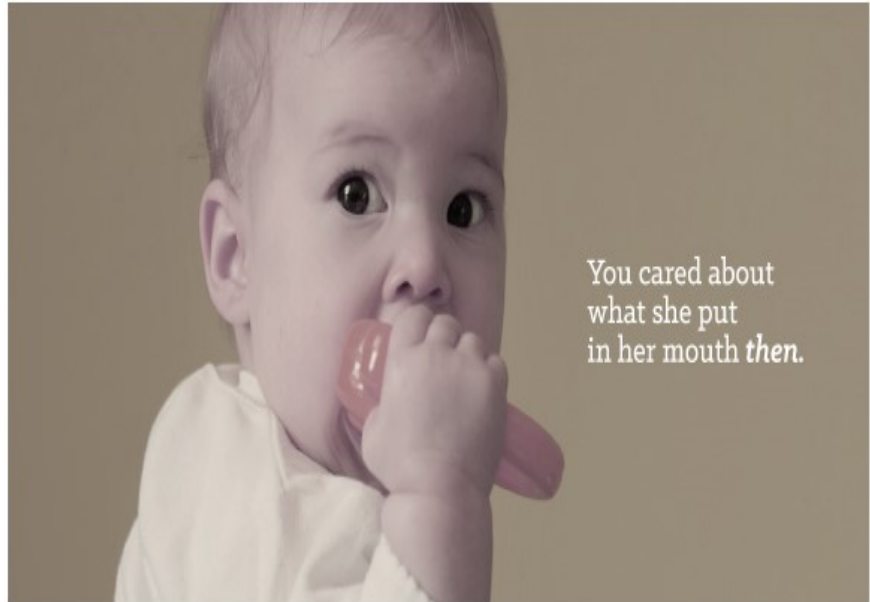
their ability to be successful students. This article titled *Acute and Chronic Effects of Cannabinoids on Human Cognition-a Systematic Review* stressed the importance of realizing that the marijuana that is being used today is significantly more potent than the marijuana in the past. The article specifically mentioned the use of “dabs,” that are made by extracting THC and other cannabinoids using a solvent like butane or carbon dioxide, resulting in sticky oils. The 2016 *Biological Psychiatry* article concludes that this increase in potency poses a higher risk for negative consequences to adolescents who use marijuana.

Learning involves many cognitive skills that allows one to focus, memorize, interpret and analyze information and internalize the concepts. The use of marijuana impacts these critical skills that are essential to learning and achieving academic success.

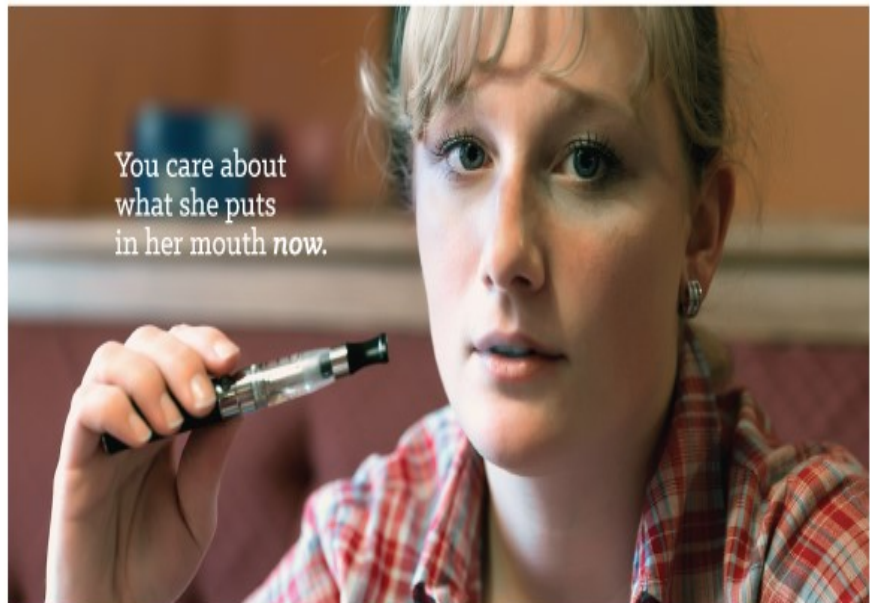
Whether a teen is vaping nicotine or marijuana, researchers and health care professionals are worried about the negative impact these substances may be having on a teen’s brain including **addiction characterized by physical withdrawal** making it difficult for the teen to stop use. However, even if they don’t have nicotine in them, when vaping devices have other chemicals such as formaldehyde or produce other chemicals, they can be cancer causing.

The challenge for parents is that it is very difficult to keep up with the many iterations of what is a “vape” pen or other devices as there are many different versions of vape pens including hookah sticks, cig-alikes, Juuls, pen mods and box modes. Many vaping

products have also been developed to look like common items that a teen could easily have in their backpack, in their pocket or in their room. They include highlighters, coffee cups, lipsticks, inhalers and USB drivers. All parents need to be vigilant and notice whether any of these devices are in your teen’s possessions.



You cared about what she put in her mouth *then*.



You care about what she puts in her mouth *now*.



**The good news.** Cigarette smoking is down among high-school age teens.

**The bad news.** Vaping, e-cigs and hookah smoking is on the rise, leading to nicotine addiction.

**Talk to your teens about not smoking and not vaping.**  
For more information, go to [www.hrdphc.org](http://www.hrdphc.org)

**Vampires, witches,  
zombies, goblins,  
peer pressure, drugs,  
and alcohol.**

**Some Halloween dangers  
are much more real  
than others.**

Halloween is one of the biggest nights for teen drinking and drug use. Combined with unsupervised parties and careless drivers, Halloween can be a frightful night for families. Power to the Parent is here to empower Westchester parents. Learn the facts, strategies and information to help you get through to your teens. Teach your teen how not to get tricked this Halloween. **PowerToTheParent.org.**



A program of the Westchester Coalition for Drug and Alcohol Free Youth. Funding was made possible (in part) by Grant Number 5U79SP01556 from Substance Abuse Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) and through a Drug Free Community grant from SAMHSA. For more information call 914-332-1300 or email: LetsDoThis@PowerToTheParent.org

## The Three H's

There are times during the year that are associated with higher levels of teen experimentation and use of alcohol and other drugs. In the spring there is concern about proms and graduation parties and there are worries associated with the summer as teens have more free time and can have more opportunities to be in unsupervised settings without a responsible adult present.

During the beginning of the school year there are three times that are cause for concern; Homecoming, Halloween and the holidays. The risk for each of these times is that they provide an opportunity for "celebrations" that can be associated with the use of alcohol and other drugs.

Homecoming and Halloween celebrations can begin in the afternoon and continue into the night with opportunities for young people to be in places where it is hard for parents to keep close tabs on their children. Parents may know where their teen is going but they may not know what they are actually doing and who they are with at the various parties in the woods, under the bleachers, in vacant homes or at other gatherings. Nighttime settings provide teens with the opportunity to hide and use alcohol and other drugs in areas that are not readily visible to adults. The key for parents is to do the best they can to monitor the whereabouts of their teen. Cell phones have provided a more accessible way to do this by asking your teen to give you updates on where they are and who they are with and if there any doubts about where they are, ask them to send you a picture.



## Opioid Crises

In mid-October, almost 400 high school students gathered at a conference sponsored by Westchester County dealing with concerns associated with the opioid crises in the county. The statistics for an opioid use among middle and high school students in Westchester County remains low. However, there is concern about the way young people can get involved with opioids. There are very compelling stories about how teenagers in our county did get involved with opioids after being prescribed painkillers for surgical or dental procedures or after becoming “bored” with marijuana or alcohol and in some cases died.

The misuse and abuse of opioids can have such disastrous results that all parents need to know where the danger lurks and how to protect their children. Prescription opioids usually come in pill form and are given to treat severe pain and for teens that usually means pain from dental surgery, usually involving the removal of wisdom teeth, from a serious sports injuries or accidents

Before your child is prescribed an opioid for pain, talk to your medical professional to find out if other options are available. If prescribed, closely monitor the number of pills prescribed, the frequency that your child is taking them and the protocol for tapering down. Check on the level of pain that your child is having and in consultation with your child’s health care provider begin the weaning process and switch from the opioids to an over-the-counter pain reliever. Once the opioids are no longer needed dispose of them in a responsible manner. MedReturn units are available in many of the police headquarters throughout the county.

### Upcoming Events

Dec 7 8:15am-3:15pm  
Marriott Hotel, Tarrytown  
**When The Holidays Aren’t So Happy**

Registration and Coffee at 7:45

*The Impact of Marijuana on Student Achievement*  
Amelia Aria, PhD

*Cultural Considerations in Preventing and Reducing Marijuana Use With Latino Youth*  
Lynn Hernandez, PhD

*The Relationship Between Marijuana and Mental Health: Clinical Strategies for Treating Cannabis Disorders*  
Mohini Ranganathan, MD

*Helping Parents Set Limits and Facilitate Treatment Involvement*  
Lorraine Chastant, LMFT