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# Parenting for Prevention

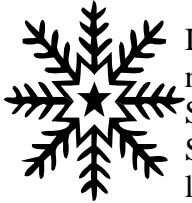
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Student Assistance Services Corp., 660 White Plains Road, Tarrytown, New York, 10591, February, 2009

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## New Initiative and Old Concerns



I am happy to announce that Student Assistance Services has launched a Problem Gambling

Prevention Program, funded by the New York State Office of Alcoholism and Substance Abuse Services. This program will provide screening, referral, early intervention, and awareness activities, to learn more information call Ann Marie Linden at Student Assistance Services at 914-332-1300.

Last month's newsletter reported that the *Monitoring The Future* longitudinal study showed that the results for marijuana suggest that a pattern of steady decline may be ending. This year, the 8th and 12th graders showed modest increases in use and for the second year in a row, the 12th grade use did not decline. With more students reporting that they feel stressed, our focus on preventing marijuana use becomes more important.

Thanks to everyone who did the Super Bowl surveys. We will report on the local outcomes in the next newsletter, the national results are in this newsletter.

Patricia Murphy Warble, LMSW, CPP

## Problem Gambling Prevention Program Launched in Westchester County

Youth gambling is a concern in many of our communities. A 2006 New York State Office of Alcoholism and Substance Abuse Services school survey estimated that nearly 10% of New York's adolescents, nearly 150,000 youth, had a problem with gambling. Another 10% were at risk for developing problem gambling behaviors.

**Gambling may seem like a harmless and safe alternative to underage drinking or other drug use but, for some young people, engaging in gambling activities can develop into problem behavior.**

Gambling is defined as putting something of value at risk in hopes of achieving something of greater value. According to Marc Potenza, MD, PhD from the Yale University, School of Medicine, problem gambling is characterized as having an uncontrolled urge and preoccupation with gambling and efforts to control, stop, or cut back on gambling are unsuccessful.

In response to these notable statistics on youth gambling, Student Assistance Services has launched a Problem Gambling Prevention Program, funded by the New York State Office of Alcoholism and Substance Abuse Services. Our goals include educating both youth and adults about the potential risks and consequences associated with teen gambling and the development of problem gambling behaviors. As parents and educators, you play a critical role in teaching children and modeling healthy and balanced behaviors and attitudes toward gambling.

According to research done by Marc Potenza, MD, PhD, there is a relationship in adolescents between gambling and substance abuse. There is also a connection between gambling and other risky behaviors like

tobacco use, violence, sexual behaviors, and non-use of seat belts.

Dr. Potenza's research indicates that this connection may be associated with neurotransmitters and the release of norepinephrine, serotonin and dopamine in the brain. To put it simply, it is thought that gambling impacts the same parts of the brain that alcohol does. As a result of the release of these substances in the brain, young people are likely to be impulsive and have a high level of excitement and arousal when gambling or using drugs.

Gambling today is more accessible than ever before. It is portrayed on television, radio, and other media as an exciting and easy way to make money quickly. Young people are exposed to gambling images every day. Texas Hold'Em tournaments are popular to watch on television and gambling opportunities pop up simply by connecting to the internet.

A trip to the local grocery store exposes our young people to an upcoming lottery drawing while a radio commercial highlights the newest instant scratch off games. Though adults may enjoy these activities in a recreational way, we need to be aware of the messages we are giving our children.

Gambling can get out of control and become addictive in a similar way to alcohol and drugs. Gambling may seem like a harmless and safe alternative to underage drinking or other drug

use but, for some young people, engaging in gambling activities can develop into problem behavior.

An increased preoccupation with gambling may develop as more time is spent on gambling activities, often resulting in escalating losses. These losses include not only money and possessions, but can also encompass the loss of trust and destroyed relationships with family and friends.

Studies indicate that the earlier a child engages in risky behaviors, the greater the likelihood those behaviors will become problematic later in life. Maintaining the awareness that gambling can potentially develop into a serious problem is key. Communicating with your child openly about the risks and consequences of gambling, while listening carefully to their perceptions and attitudes about it, can often create the perfect opportunity for healthy discussion.

Our education, awareness, and prevention services are available both in the schools and in the community. We are available to deliver presentations to youth, parent groups, school administrators/faculty, and staff at community centers or other local organizations.

Our goal is to help both young people and adults distinguish the difference between recreational gambling and problem gambling, as well as help them recognize the warning signs and symptoms of a developing problem.

If you would like to contact our Problem Gambling Prevention Coordinator, please feel free to call Ann Marie Linden at 914-332-1300 for more information.

## **Help! I Think My Child is Drinking/Using Drugs**

It is a very upsetting for most parents to realize that their child may be drinking or using drugs. Most parents feel isolated, ashamed, and confused about what to do about their concerns.

The Partnership for a Drug Free America has a new video and multimedia presentation entitled *Time To Act!* to help parents deal with this situation. Go to [thepartnership@drugfree.org](mailto:partnership@drugfree.org) to access these presentations which offer step-by-step advice and guidance from substance abuse experts to help direct families through the process of understanding alcohol and drug use, how to effectively confront a child, how to set boundaries and how to access professional help.

The Partnership for Drug Free America makes the following recommendations if you think your child is drinking/drugging.

Do not talk to your child until you know that your child is sober.

Show your child that you are concerned and worried. Using "I messages" rather than "you" messages is usually more effective way to express your thoughts. "You" messages puts your child on the defensive.

Try to stay calm and cool. Try not to overact and focus on the future rather than the past.

Clearly state your concerns and the evidence you found that is causing you concern.

Listen to what your child has to say about the situation. Do not do all the talking, give your child a chance to speak.

Other resources are a DVD featuring the District Attorney, Janet DiFiore to assist parents and teens in communicating about alcohol and other drug use. Go to <http://www.dawestchester.ny.us/> and scroll down to the bottom of the home page for a link to download the DVD, "Let's Talk" and an accompanying brochure.

Some new resources are at <http://www.theantidrug.com/Resources/> which includes *Navigating the Teen Years: A Parent's Handbook for Raising Healthy Teens*, *The Teen Years: A Roadmap for Parents*, *Keeping Your Teens Drug-Free: A Family Guide* and *The Abuse of Prescription and Over-the-Counter Drugs*.

## Super Bowl Update

The following report is on a survey given to middle and high school students from the Drug Free Alliance in Ohio that is known in our area for developing the *Parents Who Host, Lose The Most* campaign. They re-

ported that among the young people's favorite commercials were the ones for alcohol, specifically beer commercials.

More than 8,400 youth in middle and high schools participated in this year's survey. Of those expressing a favorite commercial, the top two spots are for Doritos followed by three ads for Anheuser-Busch alcohol products.

Research has shown the negative impact that alcohol marketing has on youth. A study published in *Pediatrics and Adolescent Medicine* found that youth who saw more alcohol ads on average drank more than those who did not see the ads.

Patricia Harmon, Executive Director of Drug-Free Action Alliance says "Teen alcohol consumption is unhealthy, unsafe and unacceptable. Additionally, the ads that aired this year added violence to the mix. Punching a koala bear and getting thrown out of a window does not send good messages to our children."

Youth exposure to alcohol ads is a year round concern and the Super Bowl is an event that delivers record-breaking audiences nearly every year. This year was no exception as 98.7 million viewers tuned in to watch the game and commercials. With a large number of viewers under the age of 21 watching the championship game this year, it is not surprising that these witty and clever advertisements are remembered most often by youth.

## Marijuana: Health Hazards

The Monitoring the Future study has indicated that for the first time in years, the use of marijuana decline has ended. As in the past, their study also shows that alcohol and marijuana are the two drugs that are used most frequently by young people.

### *Facts Parents Need To Know*

There are several issues that are important for parents to understand when they think about marijuana. The first is the incorrect perception that some parents and their children have that marijuana is a rather benign, harmless, and non-addicting drug.

Many parents do not know that the marijuana of today is five to fifteenth times more powerful than the marijuana of the late sixties and early seventies. Another difference is the age of the young people using marijuana. During the seventies, most users began using marijuana when they were 17 and 19 years old. Many were in college or in the service. Today, students begin using marijuana as young as middle school.

There is a significant difference between the physical and emotional maturity of an early or pre-adolescent and that of an older teen. First of all, an adolescent's body is not fully developed and as a result young people are at greater risk for addiction to any substance. Also,

significant emotional and intellectual development takes place during the teen years and if a child is smoking marijuana or using other drugs, those developmental tasks are arrested.

In fact, a devastating result of drug use during adolescence is that if children become addicted and then go into recovery at a later age, they need to pick up their developmental tasks where they were when they started abusing drugs. Although much older, they need to go back and developmentally accomplish the tasks of an adolescent. These young people missed years of doing age-appropriate developmental tasks and enter adulthood with social and emotional deficits.

Another health issue is that smoking marijuana can impact the ability to drive safely. Responses slow down as a result of smoking marijuana which can effect a driver's ability to react quickly. In a report by the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration, a small amount of marijuana was shown to impair driving. If marijuana was used with alcohol,

the effects on driving ability were greater than for either drug alone.

According to the National Institute on Drug Abuse, longitudinal research on marijuana use among young people below college age indicates those who used marijuana are less likely to succeed academically than non-users. They also are more likely to have more deviant behavior, more delinquent behavior and aggression, are more likely to be rebellious, have poorer relationships with their parents, and are more likely to have associations with delinquent and drug-using friends.

Finally, it is now known that marijuana is physically addictive as well as psychologically addictive. People who stop using marijuana "cold turkey" experience agitation, difficulty sleeping, loss of appetite and other symptoms that characterize withdrawal.

## Upcoming Events

**March 23 7:30am**  
Ossining High School  
Scot Anthony Robinson in *Vision Warrior*.  
Contact: 762-4011

**March 25 9:30 to 11:00am**  
Katonah Village Library  
*Parenting During Difficult Economic Times*  
Gary Silverstein and Brian Gerety  
Contact: 234-3227

**March 26 7:00pm**  
Lakeland High School  
*Parenting Teens in Stressful Times*.  
Contact: 528-0521

**March 26 8:30, 9:30, 10:30as**  
Eastchester High School  
Ty Sells  
Contact: 793-6130x4259