
Parenting for Prevention

Student Assistance Services Corp., 660 White Plains Road, Tarrytown, New York, 10591, January, 2008

We Made It!



As much as I love the holidays, I have a sense of relief when they are over and the new year has arrived.

I have a new surge of energy that helps me greet the new year with optimism and hope. This year we got off to a very fast start in terms of the Westchester Coalition for Drug and Alcohol Free Youth.

We had an excellent training about involving youth in coalition work. For those of you who were unable to attend the workshop, we are going to continue to explore this topic during the next few months and invite you to join us at our next meeting on February 7 when we will discuss how some of the coalitions in Westchester are involving young people in the work of the coalition.

Also, we can share in the overall good news from the Monitoring The Future report that came out in December. It shows that overall, there have been positive strides made in the efforts to deal with the issue of underage drinking and drug use, this is a good start to the new year.

Editor, Patricia Murphy Warble

Monitoring the Future

Good News Over The Years

According to the Monitoring the Future (MTF) survey that was released in December, 2007, eighth, tenth and twelfth graders across the country are continuing to show a gradual decline in the percent of young people reporting use of illicit drugs.

Lloyd Johnston, the principal investigator of the MTF study, said, "The cumulative declines since recent peak levels of drug involvement in the mid-1990s are quite substantial, especially among the youngest students."

The proportion of 8th graders reporting use of an illicit drug at least once in the 12 months prior to the survey (called annual prevalence) was 24 percent in 1996 but has fallen to 13 percent by 2007, a drop of nearly half. The decline has been less among 10th graders, from 39 percent to 28 percent between 1997 and 2007, and least among 12th graders, a decline from the recent peak of 42 percent in 1997 to 36 percent this year.

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Drugs Declining In Use

The drugs that are responsible for the decline in illicit drug use are marijuana and stimulant drugs including amphetamines, Ritalin, methamphetamine and crystal methamphetamine.

Of the drugs mentioned above, the one that probably has the most relevance in terms of students in Westchester County is Ritalin. Ritalin is a prescription amphetamine drug used to treat attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD). Its use by young people not under medical supervision was first measured in the study in 2001. Since then its use has been falling, with total declines of between 25 percent and 42 percent at each grade level. Today, only 2–4 percent of students in these grades have abused Ritalin at least once in the prior 12 months.

The most widely used illicit drug is marijuana. This year, the decline in the annual prevalence of marijuana use among 8th graders was statistically significant. Falling from 11.7 percent in 2006 to 10.3 percent in 2007. Tenth graders showed a small decline in marijuana use which was not significant. And 12th graders showed no further change this year after a significant decline in 2006.

The recent peak years of marijuana use was in the mid 1990s and since then annual prevalence has fallen by over 40 percent among 8th graders, 30 percent among 10th graders and almost 20 percent among 12th graders. The prevalence rates for marijuana use in the prior year now stand at 10 percent, 25 percent, and 32 percent for grades, 8, 10, and 12, respectively .

Drugs Holding Steady

There was little change among some illicit drugs this year and most are at rates that are below their peak levels of use. These drugs include cocaine, crack cocaine, LSD, hallucinogens other than LSD, heroin and most of the prescription-type psychoactive drugs used outside of medical supervision, including sedatives, tranquilizers, narcotics other than heroin, OxyContin and Vicodin.

Cocaine– This drug did not show a decline this year. Cocaine use reached a recent peak among teens in the late 1990s, declined for a year or

two, and has held relatively level in recent years. Today, annual prevalence ranges between 2 percent and 5 percent in grades 8, 10, and 12.

Crack-The use of crack previously declined some in all three grades, but showed no further decline this year. Annual prevalence now ranges between 1.3 percent and 1.9 percent across the three grades; these rates are down by between a quarter and one half from what they were at their recent peaks.

LSD-This drug was once a widely used drug but has had a very sharp decline in use from about 2001 to 2005. Since then there has not been much change and annual prevalence now ranges between 1.1 percent and 2.1 percent in the three grades. These rates are about 75 percent below peak levels.

Hallucinogens other than LSD

LSD– These drugs have shown much less decline in recent years than LSD, however, they are still somewhat below their recent peak levels. Psilocybin, also known as “shrooms” or “magic mushrooms,” is the most widely used of these drugs today. There was little change in their use this year. Annual prevalence ranges from 1.6 percent in 8th grade to 4.8 percent in 12th grade.

Heroin–The use of this drug by students is down by a third to a

half from the recent peak rates seen in the mid to late 1990’s. Less than 1 percent of any of the three grades report heroin use in the past 12 months.

Prescription psychotherapeutic drugs

-Most illicit drugs have shown a decrease in use over the past ten years, however, this classification of drugs has seen an increase outside their legitimate medical use. As a result, they have become a more important part of the nation’s drug abuse problem. However, this year, most of them have shown signs of leveling off or beginning a gradual decline in use.

Sedatives-The use of sedatives is only reported for 12th grade and did not reach its recent peak until 2005, when annual prevalence reached 7.2 percent. Today, it is down only slightly to 6.2 percent.

Tranquilizers-The use of tranquilizers became very popular in the early 1990s, and the increase continued into 2001 in the upper grades. Since then use has declined somewhat in all three grades, including a further decline this year in 12th grade only, but the rates are still not far from the recent peaks. Annual prevalence ranges between 2.4 percent in 8th grade and 6.2 percent in 12th grade.

Narcotic drugs other than heroin

-These drugs are also reported only for 12th graders.

An annual prevalence in 2007 of 9.2 percent is just barely below that reached in the recent peak year of 2004 (9.5 percent). Two specific drugs, OxyContin and Vicodin, also did not show much change this year.

OxyContin use was first measured in 2002. The 2007 figures for all three grades are slightly higher than they were in 2002, but the trend lines have been somewhat erratic. For the three grades combined, there was no change in annual prevalence in the past year. Annual prevalence rates in 2007 for OxyContin use are 1.8 percent, 3.9 percent, and 5.3 percent for 8th, 10th, and 12th grades, respectively. In other words, at least one in every twenty high school seniors has at least tried this powerful narcotic drug in the past year.

Vicodin— This drug also shows no systematic change in use this year, and the reported rates remain close to recent peak levels. Annual prevalence rates in 2007 are even higher than for OxyContin: 2.7 percent, 7.2 percent, and 9.6 percent in 8th, 10th, and 12th grades, respectively.

Drugs Increasing in Use

The only drug showing signs of an increase in use is MDMA (ecstasy). The use of this drug sharply declined in the early 2000s because of concerns about the consequences of using this drug. However, the proportion of students seeing great risk in us-

ing this drug has been in decline for the past two or three years at all three grade levels, and use has begun to increase, at least in the upper grades.

Dr Johnston commented “These prevalence rates are not very high yet but there is evidence here of this drug beginning to make a comeback, young people are coming to see its use as less dangerous than did their predecessors as recently as 2004, and that is a warning signal that the increase in use may continue.”

Over-the-counter Cough and Cold Medications

The study first asked questions about taking over-the-counter cough and cold medications to get high in 2006. The 2006 rate of use was relatively high with annual prevalence rates of 4 percent, 5 percent and 7 percent in grades 8, 10, and 12.

This year saw no change in the lower grades (still at 4 percent and 5 percent) and a slightly lower rate at grade 12 (6 percent). (The decline at 12th grade was not statistically significant.) Dr Johnson commented, “At least this problem of youth misuse of these over-the-counter medications does not seem to be getting worse but there is little evidence yet of much improvement.”

Anabolic Steroids

There was a sharp increase in the use of anabolic steroids by male teens in the late 1990s, with peak levels reached in 1999

among 8th-grade males, in 2000 among 10th-grade males, and in 2001 and 2002 among 12th-grade males. Since those peak years, the annual prevalence rate has dropped by more than half among the 8th and 10th grader males (to 1.1 percent and 1.7 percent, respectively), and by 40 percent among 12th-grade males (to 2.3 percent annual prevalence in 2007). Dr Johnston feels that students are more aware of the risk of trying anabolic steroids and that may help to account for the decline in use.

The use of anabolic steroids among females is considerably lower than among males, and has also been declining since 2002 in the lower grades, and since 2004 in grade 12. In 2007 the annual prevalence of anabolic steroid use for girls ranges from 0.4 percent in 8th and 10th grades to 0.6 percent in 12th. These rates are down by about two thirds from their recent peak levels

Trends in Alcohol Use

Teen alcohol use has declined since the mid-1990s. The **30-day prevalence of alcohol use** (reporting drinking an alcoholic beverage at least once in the 30 days prior to the survey) has fallen by 40 percent among 8th graders since their peak level in 1996.

Proportionally, the declines since recent peak rates are smaller for the older students, however there is about a one-fifth decline for 10th graders and about one sixth for 12th graders.

All three grades showed small declines in use this year. The thirty-day prevalence of alcohol use now stands at 16 percent, 33 percent, and 44 percent for grades 8, 10, and 12.

The reason for the greater decline in use among 8th graders may be the fact that the students report a decline in the *availability* of alcohol. While there has been some decline in reported availability among the upper grades, the 8th graders have shown by far the greatest decline. In 1996, 75 percent of them thought that they could get alcohol if they wanted some, whereas by 2007 the number had fallen to 62 percent.

Self-reports of being drunk continued a long slow decline into 2007. Again, the long-term decline was most pronounced among 8th graders. The percent saying that they got drunk in the prior 30 days was 5.5 percent in the 2007 survey, down from what it was in 1996 (9.6 percent). The declines are much smaller for the older students, with 18 percent of

the 10th graders admitting to drunkenness within the month, down almost one-quarter from their recent peak rate, and 29 percent of 12th graders admitting drunkenness, down only about one sixth from their peak rate in 1997. Here also, none of the one-year declines in 2007 reached significance, but all three grades showed some decline.



Cigarette Smoking Trends

The number of U.S. teens who smoke has shown significant declines in recent years, particularly among those in their early teens. These declines can be seen in their lifetime, 30-day, and daily smoking rates. Including the further decline this year, the rate of smoking in the prior 30 days is now down by two-thirds among 8th graders to 7 percent from the peak level reached in 1996 of 21 percent.

Upcoming Events

January 31, 2007 7:30-9:00pm
White Plains High School
(Library)

A Discussion on Sexual Relations and Adolescent Health Issues for Hispanic Parents
Rosalia Kullock-Sosa
Contact: 422-2115

February 1 9:30-11:00am
Bedford Historical Hall
Skills and Strategies To Deal With Bullies
Andrea Fallick, LCSW
Contact: 234-3227

February 7 11-1pm
Steering Committee Meeting
Westchester Coalition for Drug and Alcohol Free Youth
Contact: Patty Warble at 3321300

March 25 10-11:30am
Katonah Village Library
Bullyproofing Your Child For Life
Joel Haber, PhD
Contact: 234-3227