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Preventing Substance Abuse in Kids and Teens

Counseling Partners of Los Angeles

The childhood and teenage years can be a difficult time for students as they face peer pressure and negative influences from the media. It is important to talk about the dangers of substance use with children as 90% of individuals who struggle with addiction started using in their teenage years. CPLA's hope is that this newsletter will empower you with the knowledge and resources needed to combat substance abuse in your family.

<https://drugfree.org/article/guide-for-policy-makers-prevention-early-intervention-and-treatment-of-risky-substance-use-and-addiction/>

MISSION OF CPLA

The mission of Counseling Partners of Los Angeles is to support at-risk and under-served students living in Los Angeles by providing a low-cost, school-based program that delivers essential counseling and support services students need in order to grow toward their full potential emotionally, intellectually, morally and socially.



Interested in Counseling for your Child?

CPLA's counseling services are FREE to all students attending one of our partner schools! Reach out to the school principal or your child's teacher or request a CPLA referral form from the school.

SUBSTANCE USE AND SUBSTANCE USE DISORDER (SUD)

Substance use, otherwise known as the use of illicit drugs or alcohol, is common among older children and teens. Any use is problematic, but recurring use can become especially dangerous and lead to serious consequences.

Parents should consider the possibility of substance use when their child:

- Has increased moodiness
 - Changes friend groups
 - Is secretive
 - Gets into fights
 - Declines in academic performance
 - Forgoes previously enjoyed activities
 - Other changes in behavior
- or there is evidence of:
- Alcohol or smoke smells
 - Rolling papers or cigarettes in laundry
 - Missing pills

According to the Child Mind Institute, a **substance use disorder (SUD)** occurs when kids and teens use alcohol or drugs in detrimental or unhealthy ways. As a mental health condition, SUD can encompass an addiction or any behavior driven by drugs that impairs daily functioning. A mental health or medical professional is needed to diagnose the disorder.

There are many ways parents and caregivers can help prevent the use of substances and substance use disorder. While there are multiple factors at play that contribute to the development of SUD, it is important to know that early prevention and the delay of onset of use of substances can go a long way in protecting a child against a substance use problem.

Spotlight on Fentanyl

Fentanyl is considered the most dangerous drug in America.

- Fentanyl is a synthetic opioid that is very common in overdose deaths, and is often added to other drugs because of its potency.
- It is 50x more potent than heroin and 100x stronger than morphine.
- Fentanyl has become very popular among youth. The danger is in this drug's potency and versatility. It can be put into powder and liquid form, and made to resemble other prescription opioids. Fentanyl has even been made into colored candy-looking pills.
- The key is to TALK to your child about drugs and the dangers of this specific drug. Please see the next page for how to prevent substance use in youth.

For more information, please see:

<https://www.cdc.gov/stopoverdose/fentanyl/index.html>

Resources used:

https://www.aacap.org/aacap/Families_and_Youth/Resource_Centers/Substance_Use_Resource_Center/Home.aspx

<https://www.samhsa.gov/data/sites/default/files/2022-12/2021NSDUHFRHighlights092722.pdf>

<https://childmind.org/guide/quick-guide-to-substance-use-disorder/>

It only takes one time to become addicted or overdose.



HOW TO PREVENT SUBSTANCE USE AND ABUSE

According to the Mayo Clinic, there are several ways you can help prevent youth from using substances:

- Have an open conversation about drugs. Do not rely on lecturing. Instead, ask your child what they think about drugs.
- Share reasons that using drugs will harm things your child cares about. Avoid scare tactics, but point out how areas of their life would be impacted, like school, sports, friendships, and health.
- Talk about messages from the media. Youth are bombarded with messages everyday. Encourage your child to open up about what they are seeing and hearing.
- Brainstorm ways to resist drugs with your child. Address peer pressure.
- Be willing (and ready) to discuss your own history with drugs. Share what you learned from the experience and what it taught you.
- Model healthy behavior. Drink in moderation and take prescription drugs as prescribed.
- Be aware of your child's activities.
- Set up rules that discourage exposure to substances.

Treatment is possible.

Please call your child's doctor or the hotlines below for resources and referrals

1. Substance Abuse Service Helpline (SASH) at 1-844-804-7500
2. National Substance Abuse Hotline 1-800-662-HELP (4357)
3. National Suicide Prevention Lifeline: Dial 988

Or consider reaching out to your child's school for a CPLA referral form.



There is hope and help.

Some ideas for family traditions:

- Movie night
- Game Night
- Have a particular meal on certain days of the week
- Parent-child dates
- Weekly gratitude jars
- Annual family vacation
- Family volunteer days
- Bury a time capsule



How Family Traditions Can Protect Against Substance Use

Establishing and maintaining family traditions can reduce and act as a buffer against the reasons why youth seek out drugs and abuse substances. Here are some ways family traditions protect youth from drugs.

Traditions connect family members together, giving children a sense of belonging.

Traditions provide a solid and grounding routine in the midst of life's problems and chaos.

Traditions allow family values to be taught.

Traditions allow children to form positive core memories that they will carry for the rest of their life.

Resources used: <https://www.mayoclinic.org/healthy-lifestyle/tween-and-teen-health/in-depth/teen-drug-abuse/art-20045921>, <https://www.naturalhigh.org/the-importance-of-family-traditions/>