

Assessing Risk for Teen Substance Abuse

What behaviors indicate less risk for substance abuse?

- ✓ Teens who don't smoke are less likely to use drugs.
- ✓ Teens with open and honest family communication in a drug-free home are less likely to be depressed, sexually active, or to use drugs.
- ✓ Teens are more likely to finish school if they believe this is what parents expect.
- ✓ Teens with a drug-free lifestyle with peers have a lower risk of depression, sexual activity, poor decision making, substance use, and suicide.
- ✓ Teens with school problems and friends who drink are more likely to use alcohol.
- ✓ Teens with positive adult role models beyond the family are less likely to be involved in substance abuse.

Myths about parenting and substance abuse:

- Once children become teenagers, parents no longer have control.
- If you talk to your child about drugs, alcohol, or sex, he or she will get ideas.
- Using drugs and alcohol is something all kids do.
- Sheltering children from alcohol and drugs will prevent my children from using them.
- Children who are involved at school will not use drugs.
- Children who are quiet will not use drugs.

Parents need to know:

- ✓ All teens are at risk for exposure to illegal substances.
- ✓ For teens, it is often difficult to refuse drugs.
- ✓ Teens may not perceive and weigh risks associated with behaviors such as drug abuse. This decision-making process is learned as decisions are made and consequences follow.
- ✓ For teens, drug use may provide peer group acceptance.
- ✓ Drug and alcohol use among teens often involves friendships with older teens or young adults. Be aware that such relationships often involve substance use as a common bond.
- ✓ Any use of alcohol or drugs by a teen is substance abuse.

Sources:

Zweig, J.M., Phillips, S.D., and Lindberg, L.D. Predicting Adolescent Profiles of Risk: Looking Beyond Demographics. Journal of Adolescent Health. 2002; 31pp. 343-353.

Kentucky Child Now, "Landmark Study of Kentucky's Youth Offers Mixed Results," May, 2001.

<http://www.nida.nih.gov/>

<http://www.health.org/>

<http://www.nationalyouth.com/substanceabuse.html>

<http://www.healthatoz.com/healthatoz/Atoz/dc/caz/suba/tnsa/tsindex.html>

For additional information on health issues in Kentucky, contact your local County

Extension Office or visit the HEEL website at: www.ca.uky.edu/HEEL

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