

## Substance-Free Youth and Young Adults

When adolescents use alcohol or other drugs, at best they compromise their ability to make safe and healthy decisions. Teen substance use cuts across race and ethnicity, geographic and socioeconomic lines, and the cost to society is enormous.

### Tennessee Data

**Alcohol Abuse** – According to the 2007 CDC YRBSS, 69.9% of all Tennessee high school students have tried alcohol at least once. 36.7% of all high school students report having one or more drinks of alcohol on one or more of the 30 days preceding the survey. Also, 21.7% report episodic heavy drinking or five or more drinks in a row 30 days preceding the survey. White high school students (25.6%) reported binge drinking more than twice as often as African-American students (10.2%).

**Drug Abuse** – According to the 2007 CDC YRBSS, 38.1% of all Tennessee high school students report having used marijuana one or more times during their lifetime, an exact duplication of the national reported rate of compared to 38.1%. Approximately, 19.4% of all Tennessee high school students reported past-month use of marijuana compared to 19.7% nationally.

### Best Practices

- Parents – Parents can model responsible behavior, educate themselves about teen drug abuse, give and enforce clear messages about alcohol and other substances, and get involved and stay involved with local and school prevention efforts.
- Schools – Schools can systematically address risk behaviors through health education, communication and peer-resistance skills, family and community involvement, health services, and counseling.
- Communities – Health care providers who serve teens should routinely take a substance use history and provide counseling on common risk factors.
- Policy - Policy-level approaches include strengthening enforcement of DUI laws for youth; lowering the blood alcohol content threshold for youth and imposing a zero tolerance policy for drinking and driving; and enacting keg registration laws.

Other approaches include substance abuse training for all those who work with teens to recognize signs of substance abuse; improving, expanding and funding existing prevention programs; and encouraging the hospitality sector to engage in responsible alcohol service, making food available to patrons and not serving those under the age of 21.

Research has identified several risk and resiliency factors specifically related to substance use.

- Protective factors include parents who abstain from drugs, alcohol, or tobacco; strong and positive bonds within the family; parental monitoring; clear rules of conduct for youth and for adult drinking that are consistently enforced within the family; clear and healthy lines of communication between parents and children; parental support of children; and adoption of conventional norms about drug use, connections with adults and peers at school, involvement with school activities and religious influences.
- Risk factors include chaotic home environments, particularly in which parents abuse substances or suffer from mental illnesses; peers who use substances; and perceptions of approval of drug-using behaviors or drug commerce in family, work, school, peer and community environments. Some experts think that the relationship of use of substances is so linked to peer relations that adolescent substance use needs to be viewed more as a collective, rather than an individual behavior.

## **2010 Objectives**

### **Reduce Substance Abuse Among High School Students**

- By 2010, reduce the proportion of youth who had five or more drinks of alcohol in a row, within a couple of hours, on one or more of the past 30 days (binge drinking) from the 2003 baseline of 8.45% to 2%.
- By 2010, reduce the proportion of high school students who used marijuana in the past 30 days from the 2002 baseline of 6.68% to 0.7%.

## **Websites**

Alive @ 25: A Survival Course in Traffic Safety  
Developed by the National Safety Council  
[www.aliveat25.com](http://www.aliveat25.com)

American Council for Drug Education  
[www.acde.org](http://www.acde.org)

CDC YRBSS Youth Online: Comprehensive Results, 2007  
<http://apps.nccd.cdc.gov/yrbss/>

Mothers Against Drunk Driving (MADD)  
[www.madd.org](http://www.madd.org)

National Center on Addiction and Substance Abuse  
[www.casacolumbia.org](http://www.casacolumbia.org)

National Institute on Drug Abuse  
[www.drugabuse.gov](http://www.drugabuse.gov)

Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services  
Administration  
[www.samhsa.gov](http://www.samhsa.gov)

Talking With Kids About Tough Issues  
[www.talkingwithkids.org](http://www.talkingwithkids.org)

Tennessee Department of Health  
Bureau of Alcohol and Drug Abuse Services  
<http://www2.state.tn.us/health/A&D/index.htm>