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# Parenting for Prevention

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Student Assistance Services Corp., 660 White Plains Road, Tarrytown, New York, 10591, April, 2016

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## Spring is Here



Although the news from the Monitoring the Future and Westchester data about the declining use of alcohol by teens is encouraging, the level of alcohol use is still high. It is imperative to continue efforts of community coalitions, schools, law enforcement and other members of the community so underage alcohol use continues to decrease.

At this time of year when the warmer weather arrives, and prom and graduation events are being planned, increased vigilance is needed to keep teens healthy and safe. Most communities hold programs, events and other initiatives to highlight the challenges encountered at this time. While many communities now require that students take a bus to the prom, "after-prom-parties" remain a problem. It is important for communities to make sure that their teens are not only safe AT the prom but AFTER the prom too.

**Editor: Patricia M. Warble,  
CMSW, CPP**

## April is Alcohol Awareness Month

The results from the latest national survey from Monitoring the Future (MTF) on the use of drugs by American youth indicates that some important improvements are taking place. The use of both alcohol and cigarettes reached their lowest points since the study began in 1975. Use of several particularly dangerous illicit drugs including MDMA, heroin, amphetamines and synthetic marijuana also showed a decline this year. Marijuana use, however, remained level.

Monitoring the Future looks at trends in substance use by surveying over 40,000 8th, 10th and 12th grade students each year located in about 400 public and private secondary schools across the contiguous 48 states. Now in its 41st year, MTF is conducted by a team of research professors at the University of Michigan and is sponsored by the National Institute on Drug Abuse.

Alcohol use by the nation's teens continued its long term decline in 2015. The three grades combined (8, 10 and 12) showed a further decline in the proportion of students reporting any alcohol use in the 12 months preceding the survey and also in the 30 days preceding the survey. In 2015, these rates are at 40% and 22 %, and are at the lowest levels seen since the study began. Although the one year decline in these two measures did not reach statistical significance, their longer term declines were highly significant.

Furthermore, binge drinking, which is having five or more drinks in a row on one or more occasions in the prior two weeks, did decline significantly in 2015. Binge drinking is now reported by five percent of 8th graders, 11 percent of 10th graders and 17 percent of 12th graders. "The recent peak rate in annual prevalence of alcohol use was in 1997, at 61% for the three grades combined. Since then, there has been a fairly steady downward march in alcohol use among adolescents," said Professor Lloyd Johnston, the study's principal investigator. "The rate has fallen by about a third, to 40%. More importantly, the percentage who report binge drinking has fallen by half, from 22% to 11%."

Some 12th graders drink even more heavily than five or more drinks in a row, reporting 10 or more, or 15 or more, drinks in a row on at least one occasion in the prior two weeks. This is dangerously high levels of consumption that the investigators have labeled "extreme binge drinking."

Since 2005, the first year that these rates were measured, these rates have declined, from 10.6 % in 2005 to 6.1% in 2015 reporting having had 10 or more drinks in a row in the prior two weeks, and from 5.7% to 3.5% for having had 15 or more drinks in a row. In addition, peer disapproval of binge drinking had been rising since 2000 among teens, though it did not rise further in 2015.

Declines in availability may be another contributing factor to the declines in teen drinking. "In recent years, there has been a fair decline in all three grades in the proportion saying that alcohol is easy for them to get, with the steepest decline among the youngest teens," Johnston said. "This suggests that state, community and parental efforts have been successful in reducing underage access to alcohol." Johnston points out, however, that the majority of students in all three grades still report that they can get alcohol if they want some.

### Westchester County Data

The data about the use of alcohol among the youth of Westchester County is reflecting, for the most part, the same trends in declining alcohol use as reported in the

MTF data. Since 2006 to 2015, alcohol use by eighth graders has gone from 23.0% to 12.5%, in 10th grades from 39.6% to 33.5% and in 12th grade from 52.5% to 51.8%.

Binge drinking (five or more drinks in one sitting) went during the same time period went from 12.1% to 12.4% in 9th/10th grades. However, in 11/12th grades there was a significant decline from 28.9% to 22.5%.

Across the country and in Westchester County these declines are attributed to an increase in the number of community coalitions that have raised awareness about the dangers of underage alcohol and drug use. As a result law enforcement, schools, parents and other community members are more involved in adopting initiatives to keep our youth healthy and safe.

### Alcohol and Marijuana

According to a Psychology Today, May, 2014 article, little research has been done on combining alcohol and marijuana, but indications are that there can be major risks. The article goes on to say that alcohol and marijuana are two drugs often used by people at the same time and combining the two may cause individuals to over use both substances which in some cases, can result in death.

Negative reactions to marijuana are sometimes referred to as "greening out" and are more likely to occur if a person drinks alcohol before smoking.

Marijuana "greening out" is a term used to describe a situation where a person may feel sick after smoking marijuana. The individual may become pale and sweaty, feel dizzy with "the spins," nauseous, and may even start vomiting. This is often followed by the need or strong desire to lie down.

Smoking marijuana and then drinking alcohol can lead to alcohol poisoning. When drinking alcohol and smoking marijuana are combined, it is easier to drink excessively and the risk for alcohol poisoning increases because vomiting (the body's way of getting rid of too much alcohol) is reduced. Marijuana has an antiemetic effect, meaning that it makes it more difficult for the body to vomit.

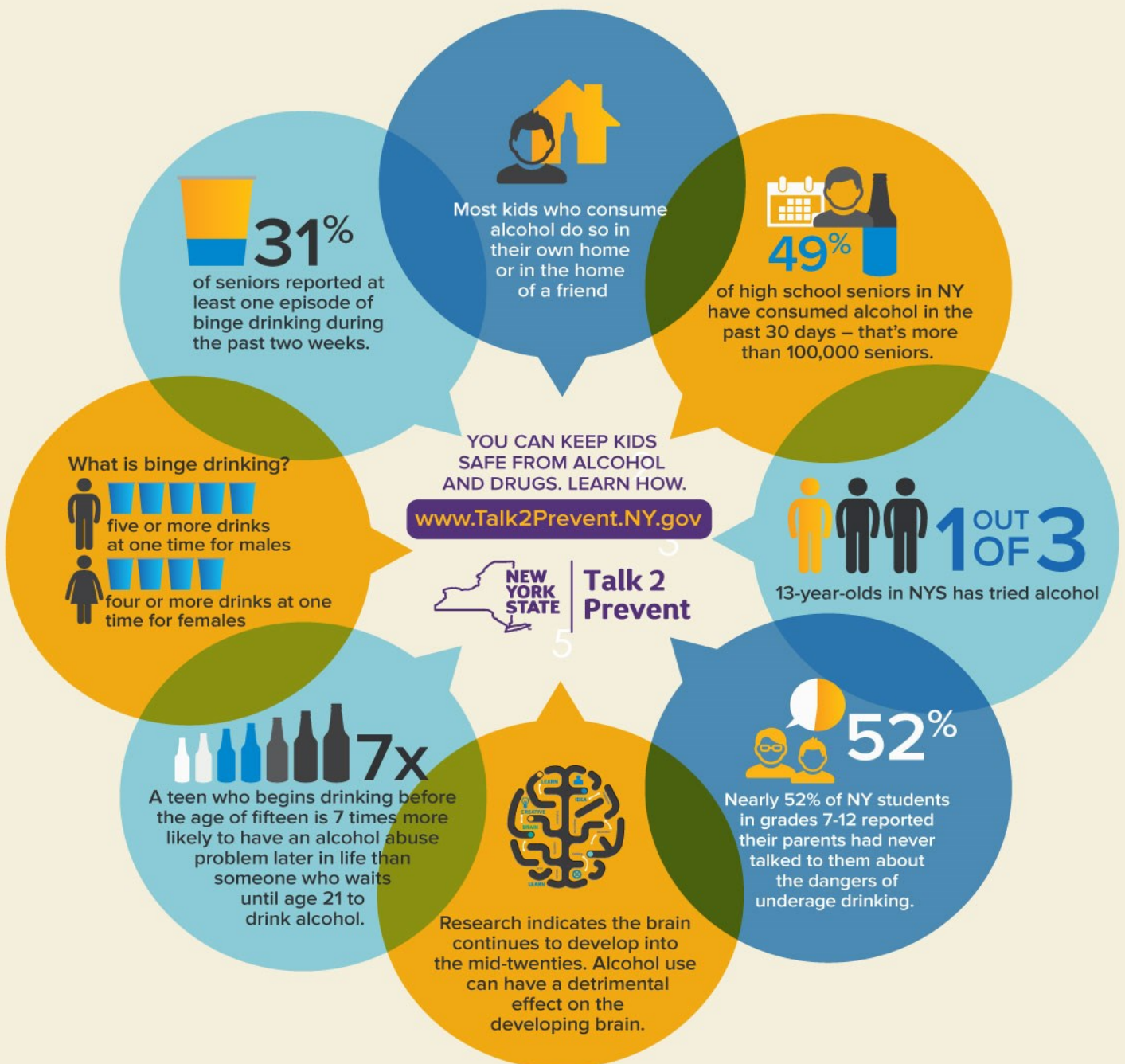
Usually, when a person drinks too much alcohol, the body responds by vomiting in order to rid itself of the excess alcohol. Since marijuana helps prevent vomiting, the body is less likely to rid itself of dangerous toxins or an individual may choke on the vomit that is produced.

Used together, alcohol and marijuana can also cause paranoia, causing people to make flawed and dangerous choices. Alcohol and marijuana are both depressants, which work by slowing down the central nervous system. The main psychoactive ingredient of marijuana is THC which is absorbed into the blood faster when alcohol is also present. Magnified effects of using these substances together can be unpredictable and cause panic, anxiety, or terror to occur in people who use both substances in the same period.

New York State recently launched a website, [www.talk2prevent.ny.gov](http://www.talk2prevent.ny.gov), to help parents navigate the teen years. Included on the site is this infographic which contains compelling information about the use of alcohol by students based on surveys that were given to teenagers who live in New York State.

## STATISTICS SPEAK VOLUMES. PARENTS, IT'S TIME TO TALK 2 PREVENT.

Alcohol is the most commonly used and abused drug among youth in the United States. Talk to your teenager about not drinking, and keep the conversation going. They'll listen.





Westchester  
gov.com  
Robert P. Astorino, Westchester County Executive



An updated edition of the prom brochure for parents is available. The colorful brochure provides practical information for parents on how to have a conversation with your teen before the prom and provides suggestions on what to do when the party van or limousine picks up the students.

The brochure also gives information to parents about how to handle after proms issues or challenges. To obtain this brochure, contact Pat Tomassi at the Westchester County Office of Prevention and STOP-DWI, at 914-995-4117.

## Offering Sips of Alcohol to Children

An article in the New York Times on April 25 considered the topic of offering sips of alcohol to children as part of a holiday or religious celebration like Passover.

The lead author, of a study published in the 2014 *Journal of Alcoholism: Clinical and Experimental Research*, John E. Donovan, a professor of psychiatry at the University of Pittsburgh, recently wrote that based on the cumulative research: "Child sipping is related to earlier initiation of drinking, which is a risk factor for a lot of other problem behaviors," and related to binge drinking and drug use. His conclusion: "Parents should not be providing alcohol to their kids."