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# Parenting for Prevention

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

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## Busy Start to the 2016

The last week in January over 100 school nurses attended a conference which included updates on the latest teen alcohol and drug use trends in Westchester County. Also, Dr Mark Herceg, Commissioner, Westchester County Department of Community Mental Health, gave a compelling presentation on concussions and the relationship with youth substance abuse.

On March 29, Jermaine Galloway will give a presentation, *You Cannot Stop What You Don't Know* on how community members can gather clues about the "drug culture" that exists in their area. I promise some surprises when you become attuned to the significance of things that appear innocent or benign. Contact [rql6@westchestergov.com](mailto:rql6@westchestergov.com) for more information about this presentation.

Ty Sells will give a two-day training on April 4 and 5 for individuals who work directly with youth. This training will give skills and strategies to help people engage youth in an effective and positive manner. To register: <http://www.youthto youth.net/conference/making-the-way-easy-training-conference/>

Patricia Murphy Warble, LCSW, CPP

## Painkillers to Heroin, A Generation Lost

One cannot read the local Westchester papers and not be aware of a new trend in drug abuse among young people in our area. More young people are becoming addicted to painkillers and then when they can no longer obtain those medicines, they move on to using heroin as it is cheaper and not as difficult to obtain.

The majority of young people getting involved in this downward spiral are in their 20s but high school students are also using this potent drug. Although the number of teens using heroin is still low, the results can be so devastating it is import for adults to be aware of the relationship between prescription drugs and heroin.

A 2013 study done by the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMSHA) indicated that 80 percent of people who recently started to use heroin said they had previously used prescription painkillers illegally. The most common sources for youth to obtain medication are from family or friends and 22% get it from a physician who prescribes it for pain associated with a sports injury or a dental procedure.

The signs of heroin use includes constricted (pin-dot) pupils, loss of weight, and money or valuables missing from the home. Withdrawal can include flu-like symptoms, nausea and cramps.

### What parents need to do

First of all, keep medications out of easy access. It is recommended that medications should not be kept in the medicine cabinet as that is the first place most teens will look for unused medications. Instead, keep them in a locked box or in a place that is not easily accessible to your teen or visitors to your home.

Dispose of unused medications in a safe way. Westchester County residents can do this easily as there are MedRetun units located in police departments throughout the county. Unused or unwanted prescription and over-the-counter drugs can be disposed in these units anonymously. Visit <http://powertothe parent.org/toolkit/how-to-discard-unused medication/> for a list of sites in Westchester County.

If your child is prescribed opioid pain killers for oral surgery, a sports

injury or any other reason, speak to your teen and your teen's physician about preventive measures to avoid potential abuse. Physicians may be open to considering prescribing a non-narcotic alternative to strong pain killers and may also be willing to prescribe fewer pills.

Talk to your teen about this issue and think about using the media coverage of celebrity addiction to engage your children in a meaningful conversation. Express your concerns to your teen about drug addiction in general and more specifically about the connection between prescription drug abuse and heroin.

If your child has taken prescription drugs and you are concerned that there is something "wrong," then "trust your gut," as you know your child best. Seek a consultation with a substance abuse or mental health professional if your concern persists. Not all adolescent angst is part of normative mood swings.

If your teen is misusing prescription drugs or using heroin, free consultation for parents is available at Student Assistance Services, 914-332-1300. Also visit the [powertothe parent.org](http://powertothe parent.org) website to obtain a list of licensed substance abuse prevention and treatment programs in the county.

## Heroin

### *A Dangerous Drug*

#### **What is Heroin/Why is it so dangerous?**

Heroin is a powerful narcotic and central nervous system depressant that is particularly addictive and dangerous because it enters the brain so quickly.

#### **What is a heroin overdose?**

When heroin enters the body, breathing and heart rate may slow to dangerous levels. This can lead to overdose. An overdose may result in serious, harmful symptoms and even death. Brain damage can occur if the brain is deprived of oxygen for any length of time.

Death from overdose can take anywhere from several minutes to several hours because of anoxia (lack of oxygen) resulting from the breathing reflex being suppressed. An overdose is immediately reversible with an opioid antagonist injection such as Narcan/Naloxone. But treatment must be administered quickly as time is of the essence in preventing an overdose fatality.

#### **What factors impact overdose?**

Potency - street heroin varies widely in potency so it is difficult for users to know how potent a particular batch of heroin is.

Heroin tolerance (the amount of a drug that you need to use in order to get "high" decreases rapidly with even small periods of abstinence (several days). So the amount one needs to get high one day may cause an overdose the next day or after a short period of non-use.

Street heroin is often cut with adulterants and these can cause additional problems including increasing the risk of overdose. Many of the additives in street heroin may include substances that do not readily dissolve and result in clogging the blood vessels that lead to the lungs, liver, kidneys, or brain. This can cause infection or even death of small patches of cells in vital organs. Immune reactions to these or other contaminants can cause arthritis or other rheumatologic problems.

Other drugs also increase the likelihood of heroin overdose.

Alcohol and benzodiazepines (Valium, Xanax): since both are depressants, increase the chance of death due to lowered heart rate and respiration.

Methamphetamines: since the effects of this stimulant with the later part of heroin's depressant side may mask the effects of one another, it makes it more likely to overdose.

Cocaine: When used in a combination with heroin it is known as “speedball.” Cocaine can completely throw off the rhythm of the heart resulting in death since cocaine and heroin both initially raise heart rate and then heroin decreases it rapidly.

Ecstasy/Molly: masks the effects of the depressant heroin and makes overdosing more likely.

Location of use may also impact overdose. A chronic user who always uses in the same place may experience an overdose if the same dosage is taken in a new environment.

Different people even of the same size and using the same amount of the drug, can become addicted and overdose at different rates and from the same amount of heroin.

Addiction and overdose may occur with any route of administration (injecting, snorting, or smoking).

### What are the signs of a heroin overdose?

Shallow breathing	Drowsiness
Pinpoint pupils	Dry Mouth
Bluish skin, fingernails, lips	Tongue Discoloration
Weak pulse	Stomach spasms
Constipation	Coma
Cold/Clammy Skin	Disorientation
Seizures	Muscle spasms/rigid muscles

### What to do in case of an overdose?

**CALL 911 immediately.**

Make the decision to help save a life. Remember that time is of the essence; there may be only a narrow window of opportunity to get help for someone who is overdosing.

New York State has a Good Samaritan Law that will help protect people who call for help in an alcohol or other drug emergency. The law says (in part): “A person who, in good faith, seeks health care for someone who is experiencing a drug or alcohol overdose or other life threatening medical emergency shall not be charged or prosecuted for a controlled substance offense.” (Please note that the Good Samaritan Law applies to controlled substance and marijuana offenses and does not apply in offenses involving drug sales or to prosecutions for oth-

er offenses that, depending on the facts, might be charged.)

### Where can I get more information and/or help?

In New York State, treatment at a licensed substance abuse agency is available regardless of ability to pay.

Call the New York State Hopeline at 877-8HOPENYN(877-846-7369) for a list of programs.

Prescribed drugs are available from physicians and treatment agencies that can ease discomfort and lessen cravings for opiate use. For more information visit <https://www.combatheroin.ny.gov/>

### Some cautious optimism!

The concern about the use of heroin is great because an overdose of this drug is so catastrophic in most cases. However, the latest information from the Monitoring the Future (MTF) survey about youth substance use offers some hope.

Despite the ongoing opioid overdose epidemic, past-year prescription opioid misuse (reported in the survey as ‘narcotics other than heroin’) continued to decline among high school students reflecting a significant decrease over the past five years. In addition, heroin use is at the lowest rate among 8th, 10th and 12th grade students since the MTF survey began. There was a continued steady decline in the perception of availability of heroin among students surveyed despite increasing use among adults.

In addition, there is a continued high rate of disapproval of taking heroin occasionally—95.3 percent among 12th graders. High rate of disapproval of drugs are associated with lower rates of use.

**Youth to Youth International Presents**  
***Making The Way Easy***  
**April 4&5**  
**9 to 5**  
***CV Rich Mansion, White Plains, NY***

This is a unique, and amazing one-time opportunity to join Ty Sells and his team to participate in an interactive and intensive 2-day program designed to energize, enlighten and empower any adult involved in the positive development of young people.

This training will provide practical resources and strategies proven to be effective to those who are involved in youth organizations. If you have been working with teens for a long time, if you are new to this work or are just looking for some ideas on how to involve youth in your coalition and other prevention activities, you will find something at this training to enhance your effectiveness.

Westchester Coalition for Drug and Alcohol Free Youth will be sponsoring limited number of adults from Westchester County to attend this training. Adults in the county just need to fill out the registration form online at <http://www.youthtoyouth.net/conference/making-the-way-easy-training-conference/> and select "Westchester County participant."

**March 29, 2016**

*You Can't Stop What You Don't Know*

Police Officer Galloway

Two sessions, sign up for one  
8:30 to 11:30am

**OR** 1 to 4:00pm

Westchester Marriott Hotel  
670 White Plains Road,  
Tarrytown, NY

Contact:

[rql7@westcehstergoove.com](mailto:rql7@westcehstergoove.com)

**April 4-5**

*Making The Way Easy*

Ty Sells and Youth to Youth  
April 4&5

9am to 5pm

White Plains Woman's Club  
CV Rich Mansion, White Plains,  
NY

To register:

<http://www.youthtoyouth.net/conference/making-the-way-easy-training-conference/>