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# Parenting for Prevention

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Student Assistance Services Corp., 660 White Plains Road, Tarrytown, New York, 10591, October, 2011

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## “Awesome”



Last year 250 high school students from Westchester County attended the Youth Leadership Conference that was held in November. The event was a great success and the most common word that the students used to describe the event was AWESOME!!!

This year seventh and eighth grade students will get their turn! The Youth Leadership Conference will be held for middle school students at the County Center on December 9. Much of the program planned for the day will mirror the successful program from last year. Ty Sells and Shaun Derrick will be the keynote speakers.

A grant awarded to the Westchester Coalition for Drug and Alcohol Free Youth has made this conference possible for seventh and eighth grade students. The conference will provide these adolescents with an opportunity to think about making healthy decisions in an inspiring setting before they transition into high school. Contact PWarble@sascorp.org or at 914-332-1300 for more information.

**Editor, Patricia Murphy Warble, LMSW, CPP**

## Youth Leadership Conference



This year a county-wide Youth Leadership Conference is being planned for seventh and eighth graders. The Youth Leadership Conference is being underwritten and planned by the Westchester Coalition for Drug and Alcohol Free Youth and will be held on Friday, December 9 at the County Center from 9am to 2 pm. The conference is free and lunch is included.

### Ty Sells

The featured presenter at the conference will be Ty Sells from Youth to Youth International. Ty, a beloved speaker, has presented in middle and high schools throughout the county and he will be joined by student leaders from his organization. Using humor and his own experiences, Ty inspires students to be true to themselves, to make healthy decisions and to accept the differences in others

Shaun Derick, another popular presenter in the county, who regularly performs at the Youth to Youth conference held in Rhode Island each year will also be involved in the conference. Shaun gives a very clever, inspiring, motivational workshop based on the challenges he experienced in his own life and how his love of music was the catalyst to get him on a positive path. Using familiar songs, he challenges the students to make healthy decisions and to “write their own music, sing their own songs.” During this lively, interactive presentation, everyone will be on their feet singing, dancing and clapping along with Shaun, reminding students they can have fun without alcohol and other drugs.



**Shaun Derick**

Many of the high school students who attended the Youth Leadership Conference last year, when asked to rate the conference on a scale of 1 to 10, responded 100! That says it all. It is hoped that every middle school in the county will be represented at the conference. Each school is invited to send up to eight students who must be accompanied by a responsible school employee. Please register the students by sending their name, address, school, and parent contact information to PWarble@sascorp.org or by calling 332-1300 by December 1.

# Teen Drug Use

*A prediction of possible addiction?*

In the past few years, as a result of data collected under the auspices of the Westchester Coalition for Drug and Alcohol Free Youth, there is a clearer picture about the use of alcohol and other drugs, including prescription drug misuse by teens in the county. Alcohol is the most commonly used drug for Westchester teens, followed by marijuana. *Monitoring the Future*, the longitudinal study about teen drug use has been done yearly since 1975 and reported in 2010 that marijuana use by teens continues to rise after a considerable decline in the preceding decade.

Recent data collected by the Westchester Coalition from surveys of 9,225 8th, 10th and 12th graders were compared with data collected in 2009 and show the following trends. The 30 day use of alcohol decreased for 8th and 10th graders, but has been increasing for 12th graders. The 30 day use of marijuana has increased among 8th graders and slightly decreased among 10th and 12th graders.

Below is the data for past 30-day use of alcohol comparing 2009 to 2011:

- 8th grade use went from 19% to 17%
- 10th grade use went from 42% to 37%
- 12th grade use went from 60 to 61%

The data on marijuana for past 30-day use was as follows:

- 8th grade use went from 3.5% to 5.6%
- 10th grade use went from 16% to 15.3%

- 12th grade use went from 28% to 27.7%

The data also showed that the average age of onset of use of alcohol for 8th graders is 12, 13 for 10th graders and 14 for 12th graders. The average age of onset of use for marijuana is 12 for 8th graders, 14 for 10th graders and 15 for 12th graders.

A study released in July, 2011, by the National Center on Addiction and Substance Abuse at Columbia University (CASA). The CASA study, *Adolescent Substance Use: America's #1 Public Health Problem*, found as our local data showed, that alcohol is the most commonly used drug among high school students.

What makes this information of such concern is that the CASA report also makes a connection between teen drug use and a prediction of possible addiction once those teens reach adulthood. The study found that 90% of the adults in our country who are diagnosed as meeting the criteria for being addicted started smoking, drinking or using drugs before they were 18.

The report underscores the vulnerability of teens to the consequences of substance use during this critical developmental time in their life. The CASA study reports that 1 in 4 Americans who began using any addictive sub-

stance before age 18 are addicted, compared to 1 in 25 Americans who started using at age 21 or older.

In addition, advances in brain imaging techniques has allowed researchers to get a clearer picture of the impact of alcohol and other drugs on the teen brain. Susan Ta-pert of the University of California, San Diego published a study in 2010 in the journal of *Psychology of Addictive Behaviors* that compared the brain scans of teens who drink heavily to teens who did not drink heavily. Drinking heavily was defined as consuming four to five drinks per occasion, two or three times a month, classic binge drinking behavior in teens.

Her team found that nerve tissue was damaged in the brains of teens who drink. The researchers went onto say that this can affect attention span in boys and the ability of girls to comprehend and interpret visual information. Tapert says,

“First of all, the adolescent brain is still undergoing several maturational processes that render it more vulnerable to some of the effects of substances.”

Richard A Friedman, MD wrote in an August 1, 2011 New York Times piece entitled, *Who Falls To Addiction, and Who Is Unscathed?* “Long term drug use usually begins in adolescence, a time when the brain is most plastic. In those that are most vulnerable, substance abuse must be confronted early in adolescence, before it has set the stage for a lifetime of addiction.”

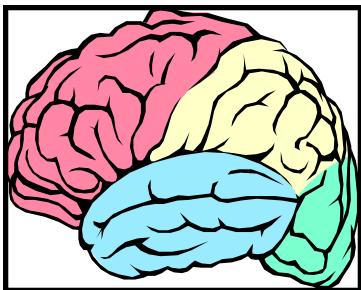
During adolescence the parts of the brain that are still forming are more sensitive to the toxic effects of drugs and alcohol. When the team compared teens who drank heavily, with those who did not drink, they found that those who drank also did worse on memory and thinking

tests.

Another study done by the Research Society on Alcoholism reported in June, 2011, found similar results to the study done by Susan Tapert. The study made a connection between binge drinking and thinning of the prefrontal cortex, the area of the brain referred to as “grey” matter. This is the area of the brain responsible for executive functioning.

During the teens years, the refining of executive functioning skills is a critical developmental task that impacts all aspects of a young person’s life but these functions are particularly important in terms of having the skills to learn and succeed academically.

Executive functioning skills include making plans, keeping track of time and doing assignments on time, keeping track of more than one thing at a time, including past knowledge in present discussions, evaluating ideas and reflecting on the quality of school-work, changing our minds and making new decisions while thinking, reading and writing, asking for help or seeking new information, and engaging in group dynamics.



## Prescription Drugs *Another Concern*

Over the last year, the Westchester Coalition for Drug and Alcohol Free Youth has been involved in several initiatives to deal with concerns about prescription drug use among teens. Letters were sent to orthopedists, sports medicine doctors and oral surgeons; a pamphlet was given to pharmacies to distribute to their customers; the county and community-based coalitions participated in drug take back days and data was collected about current use by teens.

The letters that were sent to medical personnel encouraging them to do the following if they prescribed medications for pain:

- Educate teen patients and, when appropriate, their parents/guardians, about the dangers of overdose and addiction.
- Consider having brochures available in your office with information about adolescent prescription drug use and abuse.
- Where appropriate, consider non-narcotic options for pain medication rather than the narcotic drugs such as OxyContin and Vicodin.
- Where appropriate, consider prescribing fewer pills to decrease the likelihood that they will be given to a friend, sold, or used after they are no longer medically necessary.

Eighty pharmacies agreed to give out a pamphlet about teen prescription drug use during August. This initiative was highlighted at a press conference

held at a local pharmacy that featured remarks by the County Executive Robert Astorino.

The Westchester Coalition for Drug and Alcohol Free Youth and other community based coalitions have cooperated with Westchester County government, local law enforcement and members of the medical community to participate in drug take back days. To date about 3000 pounds of drugs have been collected. This will be an ongoing initiative and drug take-back days will be held on a regular schedule.

The Westchester Coalition for Drug and Alcohol Free Youth has also collected data on teen prescription drug misuse trends from 2009-2011. The results are based on a comparison of data from surveys administered in the 8th, 10th, and 12th grades in 2009 and students in the same grades in 2011.

Narcotics and pain killers such as Oxycontin, Vicodin and Percocet are the prescription drugs most misused or abused by Westchester youth. While there is concern about this use, there has been a decline in use for all 8th, 10th and 12th grade students. However, the misuse of sedatives such as Ambien, Lunesta, Sonata, and Seconal has increased for youth in all three grades.

### **Eighth Graders**

After painkillers, sedatives are the most abused drug for this group. Also of concern is the misuse of stimulants like Adderall, Ritalin and Dexedrine. This was followed by use of tranquilizers.

### **Tenth Graders**

Painkillers are the most abused

drugs followed by stimulants and then sedatives. Tranquilizers were the least misused prescription drugs for this group.

### Twelfth Graders

Painkillers are first with this group followed by stimulants and then tranquilizers like Xanax, Sonata, Klonopin or Valium and then sedatives. The data showed that prescription drug use, like alcohol and marijuana use, increases as teens get older. Although the rates of use are small in Westchester County there is a concern in the country that more teens are using these drugs.

Many students report that they get prescription drugs from the medicine cabinets of their parents, grandparents, friend's homes, and places where they babysit. They also get drugs from friends who may have been prescribed these drugs for a legitimate reason but are willing to share or sell the drugs to friends.

### Precautions for Parents

- Do not keep prescription and

over-the-counter medications in the medicine cabinet. If possible lock them up or put them in a place that is not easily accessible.

- Keep a count of pills so that you will know if any are missing. Also, mark a line on any bottles containing liquid medications so that you will know if anything has been removed.
- If your children are taking medication, make sure they are not giving it or selling it to their friends. Again, take an inventory so that you know if any pills are missing or liquid is missing.
- Be aware that if your child has had oral surgery or any injury that requires pain medication, other students may target your child and ask them for some of their medications.

### Upcoming Events

**October 26** **8am to 3pm**

The Double Tree, Tarrytown, \$60  
*Critical Issues for Adolescents Evidence Based Strategies for Professionals: Bullying, Prescription Drug Abuse, the Economy and Emotional Regulation*

Keynote-Judith Siegel, PhD, LCSW  
*Addressing Adolescent Emotional Regulation & Stress*

Other presenters:

Emily Waldman, JD, Bullying  
Marc Fishman, MD, Drug Abuse  
Pat Colucci-Coritt, PhD, Economy  
Andrea Fallick, LCSW, Bullying  
Joel Haber, PhD, Bullying  
Ruth Rosen Cohen, LCSW, Economy

Lisa Syron, Bullying  
Gay-French-Ottaviani, LCSW.

Domestic Violence

For more information or to register, call 332-1300.

**November 9** **6 to 9pm**

**John Jay Middle School, \$15**  
*Katonah-Lewisboro Family U Coping With Best Friends, Worst Enemies and Everything In-between*

Rachel Simmons

[www.klfamilyuniversity.org/](http://www.klfamilyuniversity.org/)