
Parenting for Prevention

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

The Holidays Are Here!

The cold weather has arrived after a very mild fall. The decorations are up throughout the country and yes, the holidays are here!

My favorite part of the holidays is the beautiful music that is played during this time of year. My family has had a tradition of listening to or going to “The Nutcracker” since I was a little girl. I am now sharing that tradition with my grandchildren. I also love the music of various cultures and try to listen to as many different kinds of music as I can.

To me, it is important, in the midst of the holiday frenzy, to try to be quiet during this time of year. I love cooking my families favorite foods, I try to avoid stores to the extent that I can and I only go to gatherings that I want to be attend. Being mindful about the true meaning of the holidays provides me with the opportunity to be thankful for and concentrate on the important parts of my life which are my family and friends.

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Alcohol and Risky Teen Behaviors

It is not surprising to find that a teen who uses alcohol or other drugs is more likely to engage in risky behaviors. Using alcohol or other drugs can lower a teen’s inhibitions and cloud their judgement by influencing their ability to assess that a behavior is risky and can have lasting consequences.

Using alcohol or other drugs can lead to serious problems for teens including poor performance at school, loss of friends and becoming alienated from their family. Substance abuse is also related to car crashes, suicides and injuries. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) reports that in 2010 excessive drinking was responsible for more than 4,300 deaths among underage youth and there were approximately 189,000 emergency department visits by persons under 21 for injuries and other conditions linked to alcohol.

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention’s, Division of Adolescent and School Health collects data every year for their Youth Risk Surveillance System which monitors six categories of priority health-risk among adolescents at the national, state, territorial, tribal, and local levels. Their 2016 data showed that 22% of teens who are already sexually active, drank alcohol or used drugs before engaging in sexual intercourse which in turn put the teens at risk for pregnancy and sexually transmitted infections.

A report conducted by the National Center for Alcohol and Substance Abuse at Columbia (CASA) several years ago found that there is a relationship between using alcohol or drugs and engaging in sexual behaviors. Other data from the Guttmacher Institute reported that, after making adjustments for demographic factors, substance use was associated with young adults who were sexually active and had a history of multiple partners.

A more recent study by CASA indicated that teens who have friends who are sexually active, were more likely to engage in risky behaviors like getting drunk, smoking and were more likely to try marijuana. The chairman of CASA, Joseph Califano was careful to point out that the results did not indicate that sexual activity caused substance abuse or vice versa, but rather indicated an increased risk. However, it may indicate that if a peer group is engaging in one risky behavior, they may be engaged in other risky behaviors.

This research shows that it is important for parents to know their children’s friends and who they are dating and spending their time with in

and out of school. There is an old proverb that says “Tell me who you walk with, and I’ll tell you who you are,” which speaks to the influence of peers on a teen for, good or bad. If a teen is hanging out with a group of students who are engaging in risky and negative behaviors, it is likely that your teen is also doing the things that his/her friends are doing.

Youth Leadership Conference

The first week of December, 350 high school students attended the Youth Leadership Conference at the Westchester County Center. The conference was a great success and there were many positive comments from the chaperones who brought students to the event.

“As a first time attendee....I was very impressed with the day. Our students left feeling empowered and ready to take positive messaging back to our community.”

“All our students really enjoyed both speakers and want to bring their positive message back to the students in our school.”

“My students really enjoyed it and were inspired to bring some of what they heard from Ty/Javier back to our school!”

“My students were apprehensive when they walked into the conference but the friendly and enthusiastic welcome that they received from the Y2Y students put them at ease and they had a great day.”



The holidays are happy occasions for many families when relatives and friends gather to celebrate together. But there can also be challenges during the holiday season. The holidays can be very emotional and can create stressful situations where families drink too much, misuse drugs, get overwhelmed, work too hard to have a nice celebration, spend too much money or have unrealistic expectations about the holidays. The holidays can also be difficult when there has been the loss of a loved one or an absent family member.

In addition, during the holidays, teens can have more access to alcohol at intergenerational parties where alcohol is available but not necessarily monitored. Another issue is that students returning home after being at college may “invite” younger siblings to parties where alcohol and or other drugs are available. This is a great concern given the increase in the use of marijuana and prescription drugs.

Talking to teens about these issues can be very helpful. First it gives a parent the opportunity to restate expectations, boundaries, and consequences in terms of alcohol and other drug use. It also can provide your teens with a chance to share some of their concerns and expectations in regards to the holidays. A useful dialogue between teens and their parents can provide both with the opportunity to “clear the air” and be on the same page.

Surgeon General Issues Landmark Report on Alcohol, Drugs and Health

A new Surgeon General's report finds alcohol and drug misuse and severe substance use disorders, commonly called addiction, to be one of America's most pressing public health concerns. Nearly 21 million Americans – more than the number of people who have all cancers combined – suffer from substance use disorders.

“Alcohol and drug addiction take an enormous toll on individuals, families, and communities,” said U.S. Surgeon General Dr. Vivek Murthy. “Most Americans know someone who has been touched by an alcohol or a drug use disorder. Yet 90 percent of people with a substance use disorder are not getting treatment. That has to change.”

The report, *Facing Addiction in America: The Surgeon General's Report on Alcohol, Drugs, and Health*, marks the first time a U.S. Surgeon General has dedicated a report to substance misuse and related disorders. The report addresses alcohol, illicit drugs, and prescription drug misuse, with chapters dedicated to neurobiology, prevention, treatment, recovery, health systems integration and recommendations for the future. It provides an in-depth look at the science of substance use disorders and addiction, calls for a cultural shift in the way Americans talk about the issue, and recommends actions we can take to prevent and treat these conditions, and promote recovery.

One in seven people in the U.S. is expected to develop a substance use disorder at some point in their lives. Yet only 1 in 10 receives treatment. Among other things, the report shows that substance use disorders typically develop over time following repeated episodes of misuse that result in changes to the brain circuitry.

The *Report* makes clear that substance misuse – which includes use of a substance in any way that can cause harm to oneself or others – is an underappreciated but critical public health challenge that can lead to substance use disorders, such as addiction. In 2015, nearly 48 million Americans used an illicit drug or misused a prescription medication, approximately 67 million reported binge drinking in the past month, and nearly 28 million self-reported driving under the influence in the past year. This large, at-risk population of Americans can benefit from appropriate screening, prevention, and treatment services.

“Although substance misuse problems and use disorders may occur at any age, adolescence and young adulthood are particularly critical at-risk periods,” Dr. Murthy said. “Preventing or even simply delaying young people from trying substances is important to reducing the likelihood of a use disorder later in life.”

For example, people who use alcohol before the age of 15 are four times more likely to develop an alcohol use disorder later in life compared to those who have their first drink at age 20 or older.

One of the findings of this report is that substance use disorder treatment in the United States remains largely separate from the rest of health care and serves only a fraction of those in need of treatment.

The Mental Health Parity and Addiction Equity Act of 2008 and the Affordable Care Act in 2010 have increased access to these services, making it possible for more people to get the treatment and support services they need to get and stay well. Yet for a variety of reasons, including stigma, a treatment gap remains. This treatment gap can also be attributed to factors, including lack of screening for use disorders, fear of shame and discrimination associated with addressing substance use disorders, lack of access to and costs of care, and fragmentation of services in our health care system. Additionally, many people seek or are referred to substance use disorder treatment only after a crisis, such as an overdose, or through involvement with the criminal justice system.

“Families across this country are fighting addiction -they're fighting an illness, as well as a stigma. They're doing all they can, and we should do no less. At the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, we have worked hard to make our nation healthier and save lives by increasing access to evidence-based treatment for those who need it,” said HHS Secretary Sylvia M. Burwell. “While there's more to do, this historic report provides us guidance and outlines important steps we can take to move forward, build on our progress to address this public health crisis, and make a difference for more Americans.”

The report identifies substance use disorders as a public health problem that requires a public health solution. It recommends taking action by eradicating negative attitudes and changing the way people think about substance use disorders; recognizing substance misuse and intervening early; and expanding access to treatment.

“It's time to change how we view addiction,” said Dr. Murthy. “Not as a moral failing but as a chronic illness that must be treated with skill, urgency and compassion. The way we address this crisis is a test for America.”

“The Surgeon General's Report on Alcohol, Drugs, and Health provides a roadmap for working together to move our efforts forward,” said Kana Enomoto, principal deputy administrator for the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration. “I hope all who read it will be inspired to take action to stem the rising tide of this public health crisis and reduce the impact of substance misuse and addiction on individuals, communities, and our nation.”

Fortunately, both the Obama Administration and the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services has focused efforts at curbing addiction and progress has been made. The Obama administration has invested in the research, development and evaluation of programs to prevent and treat substance misuse and substance use disorders, as well as support recovery. The President has also called for an investment of \$1 billion to provide treatment to combat the opioid epidemic. In addition, HHS has developed a department-wide Opioid Initiative - PDF focused on improving opioid prescribing practices; expanding access to medication-assisted treatment for opioid use disorder; and increasing the use of naloxone to reverse opioid overdoses. The initiative concentrates on evidence-based strategies that can have the most significant impact on the crisis.

“We have the opportunity to transform lives and strengthen communities by addressing our country’s addiction crisis,” said Dr. Murthy. “There could not be a more important time for us to act.”

For the full report and executive summary, visit <http://addiction.surgeongeneral.gov/>.

If you or someone you know is struggling with a substance use disorder, call:

- NY State HOPE Line
1-877-8-HOPENY
(1-877-846-7369)
- 1-800-662-HELP or visit
<http://www.samhsa.gov/find-help>.

For more information on heroin and prescription drug misuse, go to: <https://combatheroin.ny.gov>.

For prevention information for parents go to:

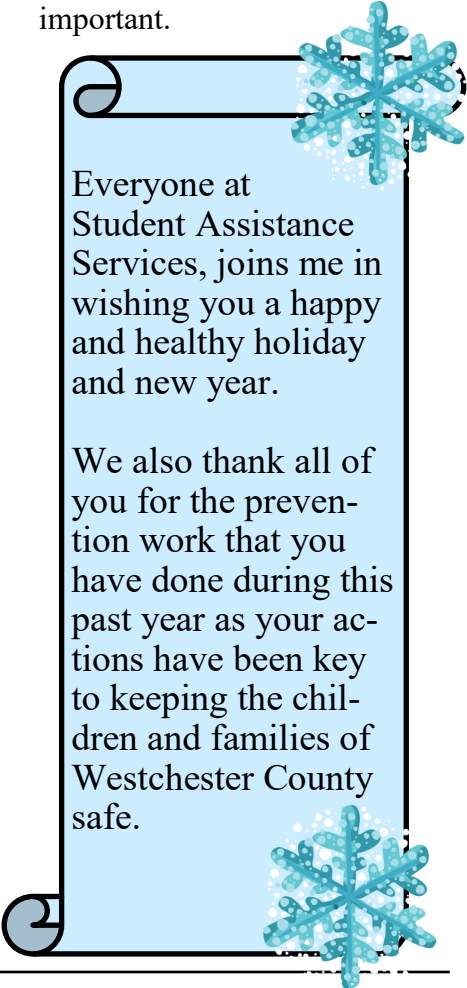
- www.powertotheparent.org
- combatheroin.ny.gov/kitchen-table-toolkit

Surgeon General’s Report and Teens

As Dr Murthy mentions, adolescence is a critical time for a young person. Research has documented the compelling and salient information that shows that young people who use alcohol before the age of 15 are four times more likely to develop an alcohol use disorder later in life compared to those who have their first drink at age 20 or older.

This research is the rallying cry for all who are involved in substance abuse prevention. It is critical for schools and communities to educate students and parents about this. It is also critical for everyone to know the other risk factors for substance use, such as not believing that alcohol and other drugs

are harmful for teens, family history of addiction, peer and parent approval of substance use, lack of connection to school, bullying, and difficulties with emotional regulation, to name a few. Knowing the strategies to reduce these risk factors is also important.



Everyone at Student Assistance Services, joins me in wishing you a happy and healthy holiday and new year.

We also thank all of you for the prevention work that you have done during this past year as your actions have been key to keeping the children and families of Westchester County safe.

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