Press Release

PARENTS CAN PLAY A ROLE IN SUBSTANCE USE PREVENTION

According to a recent Logan County survey, out of 116 students in 12th grade who responded, 48% used alcohol within the past year. In addition, 9% of the students reported using illicit drugs (excludes marijuana) over the same year which included crack/cocaine (2%), hallucinogenic/LSD (6%), and Ecstasy/MDMA (4%). It was also found that 35% of the 12th graders used marijuana within the past year. Of the 178 students in 8th grade who responded to the same survey, 27% used alcohol and 9% reported using marijuana over the past year. The findings are part of an Illinois Youth Survey County Report released in 2022 from the University of Illinois Center for Prevention, Research, and Development, and the Illinois Department of Human Services.

Substance use is not only a local concern. According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) National Center for Health Statistics 2019 data, 13% of persons in the U.S., ages 12 years and older, used illicit drugs over the past month. In addition, CDC reports that in 2019, 37% of U.S. high school students used marijuana over their lifetime and 22% reported use within the past 30 days.

According to the National Institute on Drug Abuse, people take drugs for reasons which include the need to feel pleasure or euphoria, to relieve social anxiety or depression, to improve

focus at school, work, or abilities in sports, and from social pressure from peers. Although drugs may seem to be a quick solution, they can quickly take over a person's life. Not all users will become addicted; however, certain biological and environmental factors such as childhood home stability or strong peer influences can increase the chances of becoming addicted. Other factors such as early use and method of consumption, such as smoking or injecting of drugs, can also increase the risk of addiction.

Long-term drug use can cause a host of health problems. One area of impact in particular is the brain which does not fully develop until the age of mid to late 20s. The prefrontal cortex, which is still developing during adolescence, is the part of the brain that allows people to assess situations, make sound choices, and to keep emotions and desires under control. Introducing drugs during this period can cause brain changes that will have negative, and long-lasting mental health consequences which can even include memory and learning issues. Even alcohol and marijuana use in teens has been linked to problems such as social anxiety, depression, and other mental health disorders.

Early substance use can increase a person's chances of mental health illness and addiction. In fact, drug use at any age has its consequences. However, it is critical for youth to understand the dangers that drug use poses to mental health and well-being. Parents must also understand the importance of being involved in the lives of their adolescent children, both at home and at school, as this can reduce the chance of their child engaging in dangerous substance use. By communicating openly with their adolescents about the risks of substance, parents can help protect their health both now and in the future. For more information regarding how parents can play a more healthful and influential role in their child's life for making better choices, you can visit the CDC's website at https://www.cdc.gov/healthyyouth/substance-use/hrsu.htm.

For additional information, you can also contact the Logan County Department of Public Health at 217-735-2317. For more information regarding health department services,

you can visit their website at WWW.LCDPH.ORG.

Information Source: CDC, Illinois Department of Human Services, University of Illinois Center for Prevention, Research & Development, National Institute on Drug Abuse, National Institute of Mental Health

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