

## Drug Abuse

Drug abuse has been a hot topic in the news lately. Here's an overview of what's going on and what you may need to know.

The illicit drugs that people are using today are more potent than in years past. There's also a wider range of substances being abused such as over-the-counter and prescription drugs, which are more accessible to the public. According to the National Institute for Drug Abuse, these two types of drugs are abused more than alcohol, marijuana, and tobacco among high school students. Prescription drug abuse can be just as risky as using illegal drugs, whether it is a person's own prescription that they are taking inappropriately or someone else's.

It is important to know the signs of addiction to look for in your teens and loved ones. The sooner help is obtained the better. Keep an open conversation going about substance abuse (including alcohol). Your student or young adult may also be struggling with knowing a friend may be in trouble and not knowing what to do to help them. The symptoms vary depending on the type of drug, but some common signs of substance dependence include:

- bloodshot eyes
- shaking or staggering
- change in sleep pattern
- general change in appearance
- missing classes or days of school/work more frequently
- negative view of authority figures (parents, teachers, police)
- a defensive attitude
- avoidance of contact with others
- change in group of friends
- lower grades
- loss of interest in extracurricular activities
- mood swings
- increase in risk-taking behavior
- low motivation
- talks freely about drug abuse
- when nothing you do to change their behavior works

If you detect 4 or more of the above signs, you may want to seek counseling services. Remember to approach your child calmly and use matter of fact language. There are a couple hotlines you can use to get help and information: The National Suicide Prevention Life Line (1-800-273-TALK), which is a crisis line used for many different problems that will connect you with a professional in your area. The Treatment Referral Helpline (1-800-662-HELP) will also refer you to local organizations. In Madison, the Meriter NewStart Adolescent Treatment Program is another great resource (608-417-8144).

*Safeguarding medications in your home* is one of the best things you can do to prevent those drugs from being available in the first place. Keep medications in a locked cupboard or container. If you have old or expired prescriptions, dispose of them safely. The Lodi Police Department has a drop-off service Monday through Friday, 7:00-3:30 pm. Their number is 592-5401.

Many times, those who are addicted are in denial or unaware of what is really happening to them. They believe they are in control of the situation, instead of being controlled by the substance and the addiction. Below is a link to an online quiz that can give you a better idea of whether or not someone has an addiction.

<http://counsellingresource.com/lib/quizzes/drug-testing/drug-abuse/>

If you have concerns about your student, be sure to check in with the guidance counselor in your student's building and the school nurses. Also a good physical and your family physician's involvement may be helpful. This is a very difficult time for those families that deal with a loved one's addiction. There are many resources for family support also, available through the numbers listed above. We hope this information has been helpful!

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