

Follow Up Questions to “What Our Teens Are Really Saying: The Latest Survey on Alcohol & Marijuana Use” Presentation:

- How have usage trends changed year over year?
 - Nationally, youth substance use has declined for the last five consecutive years. Trends for various substances by grade level and year are available at monitoringthefuture.org.
- Why does the survey focus only on alcohol, marijuana, and tobacco? Why not other drugs?
 - The survey includes many other substances. However, reported use of these additional substances was very low, so we focused on those most relevant to our community.
- Is there a gender differential in the survey results?
 - There may be differences, but we have not yet conducted that level of analysis.
- Dr. Webb, do you have national statistics for slides 10–12 (Perception)?
 - We can compare the perception data to national statistics, but doing so would require additional analysis.
- What are the schools doing to manage dangers of vaping and marijuana?
 - Educational lessons in classes, communication to students, and restorative individualized and group sessions.
- Are there particular grades/ age groups where substance use behaviors are more prevalent?
 - Yes. Rates of substance use increase with age, with seniors generally reporting the highest levels of alcohol and drug use. Many adolescents have their first unsupervised drink between ages 13 and 15, and use rises sharply from 8th to 10th grade and again from 10th to 12th grade. The spring and summer after 8th grade are common times when youth initiate their first unsupervised drink. Youth who begin using alcohol or marijuana before age 15 have four to six times the rate of lifetime dependence compared with those who remain abstinent until 21. Each year that initiation is delayed reduces the risk of dependence. Protective factors include clear parental communication about harm and disapproval of

youth use—especially when there is a family history of substance use disorders—and encouraging involvement in prosocial activities after school and on weekends. Involvement in these activities reduces idle time and provides healthy outlets for stress and emotions.

- When does use start to increase?
 - An increase in usage varies by individual. Risk and protective factors—such as availability, genetics, temperament, trauma history, perceived risk of harm, peer and parental attitudes, friends' use of substances, and mental health challenges—all influence whether and when a teen initiates or escalates substance use.
- What can we do as a community to get the message across that we disapprove with substance use? (Thinking about how we continue to raise perception of harm).
 - Sharing research findings is essential. The successful reduction in youth cigarette use demonstrates that when people understand a substance to be harmful, use declines. Pricing, restrictions on sales to those under 21, and strong parental and peer disapproval all contributed to lower smoking rates. These same strategies can help prevent and reduce youth use of other substances. Social norming campaigns share statistics showing that the majority of students are NOT engaging in the undesired behaviors, thus changing norms over time.
 - Some methods to share research, statistics, and parental and peer disapproval include creating and posting infographics online and in public buildings, targeted media campaigns, and social norming posters and flyers throughout school buildings.
- What warning signs should parents look for?
 - Sudden withdrawal from family and longtime friendships
 - Ignoring curfews or breaking household rules
 - Frequently asking for money without explanation
 - Lying about whereabouts or being overly secretive
 - Loss of interest in school, sports or hobbies that they once enjoyed
 - Declining grades or skipping classes
 - Use of products such as eye drops, breath mints, mouth wash, air fresheners, or other items to mask signs of use
 - Changes in eating or sleeping patterns
 - Noticeable changes in appearance
 - Shifts in personality

- It is important to consider what may be normal adolescent development versus possible signs of substance use or mental health concerns, including gaming or gambling addiction.
- What is the best course of action when a student is under the influence of marijuana? What are the steps to take?
 - Effects vary based on the product, potency, method of use, presence of contaminants (e.g., pesticides, fentanyl), and interactions with medications or health conditions. Symptoms can appear suddenly. If a teen has a strong reaction, call poison control and take them to the nearest emergency room. Seek emergency care if they experience vomiting, hallucinations, seizures, rapid heartbeat, dizziness, or difficulty breathing.
- What are the signs and symptoms of alcohol poisoning?
 - Inability to hold up one's head
 - Mental confusion
 - Unresponsiveness or inability to be awakened
 - Vomiting
 - Slow or irregular breathing
 - Hypothermia (low body temperature)
 - Pale or bluish skin
 - Lack of response to painful stimuli
 - If any of these symptoms are present, seek emergency medical attention (call 911). A person's BAC can continue to rise even after they stop drinking.

Teens should understand the **Good Samaritan Law**, which protects those who call for help in a medical emergency. Also, many popular drinks such as BuzzBallz, White Claw, and BeatBox often contain more alcohol per container than teens realize, increasing the risk of poisoning.

- What advice can you give parents about discussing the dangers of fentanyl?
 - Fentanyl is tasteless, colorless and odorless making it a very risky drug that can be laced into many other drugs. Typically a person does not know they are consuming something with fentanyl until it has been ingested. Overdose does not always result in death, but can cause significant impairment. It's important to find opportunities to connect with your teen during daily activities, such as while driving in the car or while watching TV. Keep the conversation open and honest and [share facts](#) without focusing on scare tactics. Emphasize the unpredictability and potency of fentanyl.

- How do I get my child to stop vaping?
 - If your child is vaping nicotine and they have been doing so for some time, medical support may be necessary to manage withdrawal. Many vape devices contain high concentrations of nicotine, making cessation difficult. Some teens try to stop their use and feel they can't on their own. Helpful resources include: [Teen Smokefree](#), from the National Cancer Institute, personalized tools, quit plans, text support, and the [quitSTART app](#) which offers education, coping strategies, and live help—designed specifically for young people ready to take control of their health. The NYS Quitline also has a text program called “[DropTheVape](#)”. “DropTheVape” is a free, confidential text program tailored for young people. It's a great resource for people of any age seeking help to quit vaping and other nicotine and tobacco products. DropTheVape focuses on realistic goals, building on your strengths, and learning ways to cope, grow, and take control at your own pace. If they are vaping marijuana, there are many licensed out-patient substance disorder treatment programs in the County. These programs can provide an accurate assessment and determine the best course of treatment. They address stressors leading to use and help the teen develop healthier coping skills. For more information on resources for helping your teen stop vaping or other substances, please reach out to Ms. Loaiza, MHS Student Assistance Counselor or the [Larchmont Mamaroneck Community Counseling Center](#).

- How has the school been educating the students to prevent substance abuse?
 - Students in 10th grade receive education on substances through their health curriculum. 9th graders will also be receiving a series of lessons on risks of substance use with Ms. Loaiza during the school year. There are also new school-wide events and campaigns to educate and reach all grades.

Important contacts:

Nicolette Loaiza, MHS Student Assistance Counselor: nloaiza@mamkschools.org, 914-220-3142

Community Counseling Center: info@communitycounselingcenter.org, 914-698-7549