

Regional Advisory Board (RAB) of Community Anti-Drug Coalitions

March 2019 Newsletter

Did you Know:

Almost 9,000 U.S. children and teenagers died from opioid poisoning from 1999 to 2016. More than 80 percent of the deaths to children and teens were unintentional, 5 percent were from suicide and about 2 percent were from homicide. Nearly a quarter of the children were younger than 5, and 35 percent of those younger than 1 were homicide victims. (Indiana State Department of Health, 2/12/19)

Half of the estimated 7.7 million U.S. children with a treatable mental health disorder do not receive treatment from a mental health professional, according to a new study. Researchers found 7.7 million of the 46.6 million children ages 6 through 18 whose parents completed the survey had at least one treatable mental health condition, such as depression, anxiety or attention deficit/hyperactivity disorder. Only half had received treatment or counseling from a mental health provider in the year before the survey was conducted. Treatment rates varied widely by state, the researchers wrote in JAMA Pediatrics. The number of children with a diagnosed mental health condition who did not receive treatment ranged from 29.5 percent in the District of Columbia to 72.2 percent in North Carolina. (drugfree.org, 2/14/19)

Teen marijuana use is linked to an increased risk of depression and suicidal behavior in young adulthood, according to a review of studies published in JAMA Psychiatry. Researchers from McGill University in Montreal analyzed 269 studies on adolescent marijuana use involving more than 23,000 individuals. They found teens who used marijuana were more likely to suffer depression and have suicidal thoughts, and were more than three times as likely to attempt suicide between the ages of 18 and 32, HealthDay reports. (drugfree.org, 2/14/19)

The FDA will take new steps to address the nation's opioid epidemic, according to The Wall Street Journal. The agency said it will require makers of opioid painkillers to conduct studies of the drug's long-term effectiveness. The FDA also will require the packaging of pills in small amounts, to reduce the chance drugs will be misused or diverted for resale. The agency said it will soon announce measures to reduce the prescribing of fentanyl. "Another critical part of our efforts for 2019 is new steps to promote the development of drugs to treat pain that are not addictive," FDA Commissioner Scott Gottlieb said. Earlier this month, CNN reported the FDA is weighing whether to recommend prescribing the opioid overdose antidote naloxone along with opioid prescriptions. (drugfree.org, 2/21/19)

Co-occurring mental health and substance use disorders (often referred to as dual diagnosis) are common. One in five young people struggle with a mental health disorder like ADHD, anxiety disorders, depression and millions of adolescents and young adults misuse alcohol, illegal drugs or prescription medications. 30% – 45% of adolescents and young adults with mental health disorders have a co-occurring substance use disorder, and 65% or more of youth with substance use disorders also have a mental health disorder. Often, it can be challenging to determine which one came first – a sort of ‘chicken or egg’ situation – and how to treat the symptoms and underlying causes of each.

Often, when a mental health disorder goes untreated, a young person will attempt to self-medicate — using substances to relax, fit in socially, numb emotional pain, or relieve anxiety. Studies show that ADHD, anxiety disorders, post-traumatic stress disorder and depression all increase risk of drug use and dependence in adolescents. At the same time, substance use poses a serious risk for developing mental health symptoms including psychosis, depression and manic or unusually irritable mood states. Self-medication may be understandable, but adolescents and young adults are usually not likely to admit it. When young people are referred for help for a mental health disorder, they can be reluctant to talk about substance use. Similarly, young people being evaluated for substance use problems will often avoid discussing emotional or behavioral problems.

In the new guide to substance use and mental health disorders in adolescents and young adults, the Child Mind Institute and Center on Addiction | Partnership for Drug-Free Kids recommend integrated care in situations where young people are suspected to have co-occurring disorders. Thorough evaluation, diagnosis and treatment planning for these cases requires a professional with expertise in both mental health and addiction.

Parental education and empowerment is a crucial component to improving outcomes. Parents are the first responders and key to noticing changes in thoughts and behavior, helping youth start treatment and supporting ongoing recovery. Their involvement sets the stage for success. Here are a few tips on how young people can be helped:

- It is critical for clinicians to talk with family members, teachers and other providers to get a full picture, and for family members to connect with clinicians.
- Parents should consider healthy alternatives (sports, music lessons, yoga) to begin the process of integrating healthy alternatives into their lives.
- A comprehensive treatment plan includes evidence-based therapy approaches, medications, family involvement, connection with positive social activities and is age and gender appropriate.
- Continuing care and relapse prevention are vital, including through mutual and peer support.
- Family involvement results in better outcomes for both children and parents.
- Support includes family counseling and ongoing community engagement.
- Knowing signs of relapse for both substance use and mental health help families intervene early. (drugfree.org, 2/14/19)

For more information, please e-mail kelly.sickafoose@comcast.net.