

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

February 2020 Newsletter

New Data Released from Monitoring the Future Study

Each year, the National Institute of Health (NIH)'s Monitoring the Future survey measures drug and alcohol use and related attitudes among students in grades 8, 10 and 12 nationwide.

- **One in four 12th graders say they vaped nicotine in the past month**, along with one in five 10th graders, and nearly one in ten 8th graders.
- One in five 12th graders reported that they **vaped marijuana sometime in the past year**, nearly double the year before.
- When asked why they vape, many teens said they like the flavor, to experiment, for social reasons, or to feel good. Notably, **the number of high school seniors who say they vaped because they are “hooked” more than doubled in the last year.**
- **The past 30-day use for seniors vaping marijuana also increased from 7.5% to 14%**, representing the second largest one-year increase in any drug use that has ever been recorded in the 45-year history of the MTF survey.
- **Annual use of any illicit drug**, which tends to be driven by marijuana—by far the most prevalent of the illicit drugs— **did not change significantly in any grade in 2019**. Since 2006 there has been rather little systematic change in this index. The index of any illicit drug other than marijuana showed no significant change in lifetime, annual, or 30-day prevalence in 2019. It has shown a very gradual decline since 2001 when it was 16% compared to 2019 when it was 9%.
- **Alcohol remains the substance most widely used by today’s teenagers. After a long period of decline among adolescents, the use of alcohol appears to be stabilizing.** For alcohol, prior to 2019 lifetime prevalence and annual prevalence for the three grades combined both declined by roughly 40-45% from the peak levels of use reached in the mid-1990s; 30-day prevalence was down by about one-half since then; and daily prevalence by three-fourths. These are dramatic declines for such a culturally ingrained behavior and good news to parents.
- **Use of narcotics** other than heroin without a doctor’s orders (reported only for 12th grade) **continued a decline** begun after 2009, when annual prevalence was 9.2%; it was 2.7% after a decline of 0.7 percentage points in 2019.
- **Cigarette smoking continued its long decline in 2019 and is now at or very close to the lowest levels in the history of the survey.**
- **Initiation of cigarette use also continues its long-term and extremely important decline in 2019, but only in 10th and 12th grades.** (National Institute on Drug Abuse, 1/15/20)

Opioid Crisis Harming Aging Community: The National Council on Aging recently surveyed 200 community-based organizations on topics related to addressing the opioid crisis among older adults. The survey found that 70 percent of responding organizations were increasing efforts in these areas, but only 28 percent were routinely screening for substance misuse or abuse among the adults served. The survey also found that more than 80 percent of older adults did not understand safe opioid alternatives and faced additional difficulties getting needed opioid prescriptions due to increased scrutiny and/or changing prescribing patterns. (Indiana State Department of Health, 12/17/19)

A new study finds a striking rise in the number of teens overdosing on common anxiety medications including Xanax, Valium and Ativan, according to HealthDay. Researchers found a 54% increase in cases of benzodiazepine overdoses involving children ages 12 to 18 that were reported to U.S. Poison Control Centers between 2000 and 2015. They also found an increase in intentional abuse, with almost half of all reported exposures in 2015 documented as intentional abuse, misuse or attempted suicide. "While benzodiazepine overdose by itself is typically not life-threatening, the findings of this study show an increase in teens taking one or more additional substances, which increases the severity of the effects, including death or life-threatening symptoms that can affect future health," lead researcher Diane Calello said in a news release. (drugfree.org, 1/2/20)

A growing number of people in the United States are using methamphetamine and fentanyl, often together, according to a new analysis of urine drug tests. Between 2013 and 2019, urine samples that tested positive for meth rose sixfold—from 1.4% of samples in 2013 to 8.4% in 2019, HealthDay reports. The percentage of samples testing positive for fentanyl more than quadrupled during that period. Just over 1% of urine samples tested positive for fentanyl in 2013, compared with almost 5% in 2019. The rate at which urine samples testing positive for fentanyl also tested positive for meth increased almost 14-fold, the researchers reported. The rate at which fentanyl-positive urine samples also tested positive for cocaine and heroin rose by more than sixfold. (drugfree.org, 1/9/20)

Many deaths associated with drug use are not being counted as drug-related. The reported number of drug-related deaths among 15- to 64-year-olds in 2016 was 63,000. A new study concludes the actual number could have been as high as 142,000, HealthDay reports. Estimates of drug-related deaths do not count other ways that drugs can lead to death, such as infectious diseases like HIV/AIDS and hepatitis, impaired judgment, suicide and circulatory disease, the researchers found. "The drug epidemic is probably killing a lot more Americans than we think. That's the main point we're trying to make," study co-author Dana Gleib of Georgetown University said in a news release. Study co-author Samuel Preston added, "It's obvious that the drug epidemic is a major American disaster. The basic records being kept are annual reports on the number of deaths from drug overdose. But that's only part of the picture." (drugfree.org, 1/16/20)

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