

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

April 2020 Newsletter

## **Awareness Campaign**

**April is Alcohol Awareness Month.** A big part of Alcohol Awareness Month is to point out the stigma that still surrounds alcoholism and substance abuse in general. For many, denial is a common trait among those struggling with alcoholism. They often underestimate the amount they drink, the duration of their drinking problem, and the impact it has had on their life, or overestimate their ability to control their drinking or to quit. Denial is also common among friends and family members who are uncomfortable acknowledging the gravity and reality of the situation.

- The dangers of alcohol abuse go beyond college kids getting too drunk at parties. An estimated 14.4 million Americans ages 18 and older had an alcohol use disorder (AUD) in 2018 according to NSDUH. Across the nation, 26.45% individuals 18 and older reported that they engaged in binge drinking in the past month (typically 4 drinks for women and 5 drinks for men in about 2 hours) while 6.6% engaged in heavy alcohol use (binge drinking on 5 or more days in the past month) in the past month.
- Each year, an estimated 88,000 people die from alcohol-related causes annually and in 2014 alcohol-impaired driving fatalities accounted for 31% of overall driving fatalities (9,967 deaths). Unfortunately, these deaths could have been avoided, making alcohol the third leading preventable cause of death in the United States.
- Problematic alcohol use has taken a toll on our economy. Drinking-related costs reached an estimated \$249 billion in the U.S. in 2010, with binge drinking accounting for three-quarters of this economic burden. \$2 of every \$5 was paid by federal, state, and local governments, meaning all Americans are paying for excessive alcohol use—no matter your level of consumption.
- These numbers suggest that problematic alcohol use continues to plague our society, and awareness about addiction and its harmful effects on our lives is necessary in order to protect our loved ones and selves. For more information, go to <https://www.alcohol.org/awareness-month>.

## **Did You Know?**

**One in Four Opioid Overdoses Involves Kids and Teens:** According to preliminary research from a 13-year study period, more than a quarter of all opioid overdoses in the United States involve teenagers, with a fifth of those cases likely suicide attempts. The proportion of suspected child suicides due to an opioid poisoning increased from 14 percent in 2005 to more than 21 percent in 2018. Recommendations focus on keeping opioids out of sight and reach of children and teens to reduce accidental exposure and intentional drug misuse. (Indiana State Department of Health, 3/3/20)

**There may have been almost 100,000 more opioid-related overdoses between 1999 and 2016 than reported due to incomplete death records**, a new study suggests. Researchers at the University of Rochester found that 71.8% of unclassified drug overdoses during that period involved opioids, translating into 99,160 additional opioid-related deaths—28% more than reported. The undercount was greatest in several states, including Alabama, Mississippi, Pennsylvania, Louisiana and **Indiana**. “A substantial share of fatal drug overdoses is missing information on specific drug involvement, leading to underreporting of opioid-related death rates and a misrepresentation of the extent of the opioid crisis,” lead researcher Elaine Hill, Ph.D. said in a news release. “The corrected estimates of opioid-related deaths in this study are not trivial and show that the human toll has been substantially higher than reported, by several thousand lives taken each year.” (drugfree.org, 3/5/20)

## **The New Line of Nicotine Products Enticing Youth**

Have you heard of nicotine pouches? If you haven't, now's the time to learn about them and share the risks with your children, because these tiny pouches have all the makings to become the next big problem.

Nicotine pouches are pre-portioned, little white sacks filled with a crystal-like substance that contain nicotine but not tobacco. The user puts the pouch between the lip and gums, just like chewing tobacco, which is also known as dip or snus. The user's saliva then mixes to create a nicotine "juice" that is meant to be swallowed.

This product is promoted as discreet, fresh, and able to be conveniently enjoyed at any time—because there is no smoke, no smell, no need to spit, and no refrigeration required. One website even reassures the potential user that there is no need to worry, because the only person who will know you are enjoying your nicotine pouch is you.

Pouches are sold in different strengths of nicotine and in a variety of flavors, including black cherry, cinnamon, citrus, coffee, dragon fruit, peppermint, spearmint, and wintergreen. Plus, they say they won't stain your teeth and are billed as gluten-free.

These pouches and the flavors they come in are certainly enticing to young people. Unlike vaping, no smoke passes through the airways and into the lungs when using these pouches. However, nicotine is nicotine, no matter how you package it, and the dangers of this substance go beyond the airways. Nicotine can harm the developing adolescent brain. The brain keeps developing until about age 25. Using nicotine in adolescence can harm the parts of the brain that control attention, learning, mood, and impulse control. Using nicotine in adolescence may also increase risk for future addiction to other drugs. (Prevention Action Alliance, 3/9/20)

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