

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

January 2022 Newsletter

Did You Know?

Cigarette dependence is more prevalent and increasing among US adolescents and adults who use cannabis, 2002-2019 Researchers from Yeshiva, Wesleyan, and Columbia Universities and the City University of New York analyzed data from the National Survey on Drug Use and Health from 2002 to 2019. They find people who use both cigarettes and marijuana report a higher prevalence of cigarette dependence compared to people who use cigarettes but not marijuana. Given that cigarette use is also increasing among adolescents and young adults, the researchers say that “efforts to elucidate the nature of the association between cannabis and cigarette dependence are needed.”

Alcohol-involved overdose deaths in US Veterans *Drug and Alcohol Dependence* This study used National Veterans Health Administration (VHA) records from 2012-2018 to survey trends in alcohol-related overdose mortality. Categories of deaths (alcohol only, alcohol+opioids which may include additional substances, and alcohol+other substances without opioids) were examined. From 2012-2018, 2,421 Veterans died from an alcohol-involved overdose, a 57% increase during the study period. Only 32.5% of those who died received treatment in a substance use disorder clinic in the year preceding death, compared to 65.1% seen in mental health and 85.7% in primary care. These results emphasize the need to identify those at risk and to target treatment for this vulnerable population. [Alcohol-involved overdose deaths in US veterans - ScienceDirect](#)

On December 15, NIDA released the Monitoring the Future (MTF) Study data. The percentage of adolescents who report using **drugs** dropped in 2021, according to the latest *Monitoring the Future* survey. This survey, given each year to eighth, 10th and 12th graders nationwide, is conducted by researchers at the University of Michigan and funded by the **National Institute on Drug Abuse** (NIDA). Students are asked about their substance misuse and attitudes towards drugs. Overall, the study shows “the largest one-year decrease in overall illicit drug use since the survey began in 1975”. For example:

- Past-year alcohol use among 10th graders declined from 40.7% in 2020 to 28.5% in 2021, a rate of change of 29.9%.
- Past-year marijuana use among 10th graders declined from 28.0% in 2020 to 17.3% in 2021, a rate of change of 38.2%.
- Nicotine vaping among 10th graders decline from 30.7% in 2020 to 19.5% in 2021, a 36.5% rate of change.

The decreases in substance use could be related to changes adolescents faced because of COVID, such as:

- School at home with more parental supervision, instead of in person with peers
- No social interaction during lockdowns

We could see a significant rebound once children resume regular pre-COVID activities. COVID impacted the survey response rates which led to receiving only 75% of the typical year’s responses.

“We have never seen such dramatic decreases in drug use among teens in just a one-year period. These data are unprecedented and highlight one unexpected potential consequence of the COVID-19 pandemic, which caused seismic shifts in the day-to-day lives of adolescents,” said NIDA Director Dr. Nora Volkow. “Moving forward, it will be crucial to identify the pivotal elements of this past year that contributed to decreased drug use – whether related to drug availability, family involvement, differences in peer pressure, or other factors – and harness them to inform future prevention efforts.” [Percentage of adolescents reporting drug use decreased significantly in 2021 as the COVID-19 pandemic endured | National Institute on Drug Abuse \(NIDA\)](#)

[**A study finds that warning labels on flavored e-liquid vials are moderately effective in preventing e-cigarette use**](#) in young adults but fail to increase perception of addictiveness. [Impact of e-liquid warning labels on young adults’ perception of e-cigarettes and intention to use them: an experimental online study | Tobacco Control \(bmj.com\)](#)

[**Pandemic Fuels Indiana's Drug Epidemic; Overdoses Spike**](#) Shutdowns related to the pandemic led to isolations and a lack of recovery tools during an already existing substance abuse epidemic. In 2019, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention reported 1,704 overdoses and preliminary numbers for 2020 indicate over 2,200 overdoses in the state of Indiana. Emily Bailey is a 26-year-old mother of two from Columbus, Indiana in long term recovery. Emily said that by age 15, she had tried heroin, meth, prescription drugs and others. She emphasized how difficult it was for her to get treatment and how depression was the leading cause of her drug misuse. She shares her story to highlight how hard it was to get treatment without the additional barriers to treatment created by the pandemic.

There are several efforts across the state in effect to target barriers to treatment and better understand the drug abuse epidemic. Melissa Cyders is an IUPUI associate professor working along the state's campaign called [The Grand Challenge](#), which studies opioid addiction and recovery. Cyders said that she found individuals struggling with mental health and drug misuse affected the pandemic most. While many projects are in place for Hoosiers suffering from drug misuse, it is vital that we continue learning about these and sharing the information and resources. [Pandemic fuels Indiana’s drug epidemic; overdoses spike | Fox 59](#)

[**Drug Overdose Deaths, Fueled by Fentanyl, Hit Record High in U.S.**](#) For the first time ever, the United States had a 12-month period (April 2020 to April 2021) in which more than 100,000 individuals died from a drug overdose. That is a 28.5% increase in overdose deaths for the same period the year before. Preliminary [data](#) from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) shows that synthetic opioids, such as fentanyl, account for 64% percent of the deaths.

It is thought that the increased use of fentanyl and the COVID-19 pandemic are contributors to the overdose death increase. Director of the National Institute on Drug Abuse, Dr. Nora Volkow, emphasizes the cause of this increase might be due to access to drugs that are more dangerous and cheaper. Even before COVID-19, experts were paying close attention to the use of potent synthetic drugs, but the pandemic may have aggravated this issue.

The U.S. government seized enough fentanyl this year to give every American a lethal dose, U.S. Drug Enforcement Administration Administrator, [Anne Milgram said](#), “overdose deaths are seen as a national crisis, and many experts are focused on improving access to treatment, removing barriers to treatment, and supporting harm reduction strategies.” [Drug Overdose Deaths in the U.S. Top 100,000 Annually \(cdc.gov\)](#)