

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

July 2021 Newsletter

Did you know?

Women in their teens and early 20s are drinking more, which has negative consequences for their physical and mental health, [NPR](#) reports. Research shows young women report drinking and getting drunk at higher rates than their male peers. Alcohol leads to health problems such as liver disease, heart disease and cancer more quickly in women than in men. Studies have shown women are more likely than men to drink as a way to deal with stress. People who drink to deal with stress instead of drinking for pleasure, are at increased risk of developing alcohol use disorder. While alcohol may temporarily calm someone, it can actually increase anxiety and depression, according to the article. A study published last fall suggests women increased their heavy drinking episodes during the COVID-19 pandemic. According to Dawn Sugarman, a research psychologist at McLean Hospital in Massachusetts who has studied addiction in women, women are often less likely to get help for alcohol disorders. (drugfree.org, 6/10/21)

Drug Checking as a Harm Reduction Strategy

“Drug checking” is a form of harm reduction in which illicit drugs or illegally obtained prescription pills are chemically analyzed to determine the composition of the substance or the presence of an adulterant. While drug checking programs are more readily available in parts of Europe and Canada, the inconsistency and recent changes in the American illicit drug supply have led to an increased interest in drug checking in the United States. One form of drug checking is the distribution and use of fentanyl test strips (FTS), which are disposable, single-use tests that can detect the presence of fentanyl or fentanyl analogs in a substance. Fentanyl is increasingly being found in the illicit drug supply across the United States, where it is often added to or sometimes replaces other opioids such as heroin. Fentanyl has been found as an additive in stimulants like cocaine. Moreover, fentanyl is often pressed into counterfeit pills and sold as prescription medications (e.g., oxycodone or Xanax) to people who may believe that they are buying authentic pharmaceutical drugs. The effect of fentanyl is 50 times stronger than the effect of heroin. The unintended use of fentanyl, especially by people who have not built up a tolerance for opioids, has led to a spike in drug overdose deaths around the country. In Massachusetts, for example, in 2019, 93 percent of fatal overdoses in the Commonwealth involved fentanyl. In an effort to help curb the spike in drug overdose deaths largely driven by fentanyl and fentanyl analogs, the CDC and SAMHSA announced that federal funding can now be used to purchase FTS. The hope is that people will use FTS to determine if their drugs have been adulterated with fentanyl and take steps to reduce their risk of overdose, such as choosing to use slowly, use less, or use with others around. (CADCA Coalitions Online, 6/10/21, derived from Legislative Analysis and Public Policy Association – May 2021)

Harm Reduction Strategies to Prevent Overdoses Controversial in the U.S.

Fifty years after President Richard Nixon declared a "War on Drugs," harm reduction strategies to prevent overdoses remain controversial in the United States, NPR reports. These strategies include safe injection sites. They are facilities where people can use clean needles to inject drugs under the supervision of medical personnel, who can revive them in case of an overdose. Many of the nation's addiction researchers say the drug war model, which often treats people who use illegal substances as criminals, is ineffective. "The best outcomes come when you treat the substance use disorder [as a medical condition] as opposed to criminalizing that person and putting them in jail or prison," said National Institute on Drug Abuse Director Dr. Nora Volkow. Earlier this month, local leaders in Scott County, Indiana, voted to shut down a needle exchange program that helped dramatically slow a major HIV outbreak among people using intravenous drugs. West Virginia legislators approved a similar measure, which will go into effect in July. Public health experts told NPR that much of the harm reduction occurring in the U.S. happens underground. Churches, nonprofits and activist groups are illegally providing services, including clean needles. (drugfree.org, 6/24/21)

CDC Report Shows State-level Costs of the Opioid Crisis in 2017

Fatal opioid overdoses and opioid use disorder had a significant impact on some states in 2017, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's (CDC's) April 2021 Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Report. The study reports an estimated 56,000 opioid use disorder cases in 2017, with 1,176 of those cases being fatal. The total combined cost of opioid use disorder and fatal opioid overdose was \$26 billion in Indiana. The costs were calculated by combining spending on health care, opioid use disorder treatment, criminal justice, lost work productivity, and estimates of cost for lost quality of life and lives lost. The image above shows per capita combined costs of opioid use disorder and fatal opioid overdose divided by state population and are expressed in 2017 U.S. dollars. (Indiana Department of Health, 6/29/21)

THCA - Legal Cannabis Product?

THCA is a product on the legal cannabis market. It is mainly found in legal marijuana dispensaries and has seen increasing in popularity nationwide. The product is known as THCA Crystalline, and is a form of marijuana, that is known on the streets as "diamonds", "crystals" or "Crystalline." Visually, this drug does not compare to traditional cannabis, but resembles the look of methamphetamine or cocaine.



THCA looks like white crystals (see picture), larger crystals or a white, powder- like substance. Many users smoke THCA in a similar way to concentrates. THCA turns into THC when heated, and once heated, the THC content consistently reaches 95-99% THC levels. This product can be smoked out of a bong, also known as an "oil rig," and / or vaped, as well. (tallcopsaysstop.com)

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