

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

September 2020 Newsletter

## **September is Recovery Month**

National Recovery Month is an observance held every September to educate Americans that substance use treatment and mental health services can enable those with mental and substance use disorders to live healthy and rewarding lives. Now in its 31st year, Recovery Month celebrates the gains made by those living in recovery. This year's theme is Join the Voices for Recovery: Celebrating Connections. For more information, visit [recoverymonth.org](http://recoverymonth.org).

## **Did You Know?**

**Overdose Deaths Hit Record High in 2019** Despite a decline in drug overdose deaths in 2018, preliminary data shared by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) show that national deaths have soared to a record high in 2019. For overdose-related deaths in 2019, the CDC reported 70,980 deaths occurred. Across the U.S., eight states had an increase of more than 20 percent in overdose-related deaths for 2019, with South Dakota leading the pack with a 54.4 percent increase in cases from 2018. Based on early data from 2020, the number of overdose-related deaths is again expected to grow compared to 2019. As the coronavirus pandemic continues to spread across the United States, experts worry that the disease is fueling anxiety and social isolation across the nation, thereby increasing substance use. Data released by the Office of National Drug Control Policy's Overdose Mapping Application Program in June showed that overdose-related deaths had increased 11.4% in the first four months of 2020 compared to the same period in 2019. In Indiana, preliminary data collected by ISDH shows that there was about a 2.6 percent decrease in overdose deaths from 2018 to 2019. Unfortunately, we are seeing an increase in overdose trends for 2020. (Indiana State Dept of Health, 8/4/20)

## **A recent statement from the American Heart Association is ringing the alarm about marijuana's effect on the heart.**

"The American Heart Association recommends that people not smoke or vape any substance, including cannabis products, because of the potential harm to the heart, lungs and blood vessels," Dr. Rose Marie Robertson, who serves as the deputy chief science and medical officer for the American Heart Association, said in a statement. According to the statement, using marijuana could potentially interfere with prescription meds, and also trigger heart attacks or strokes. (CNN, 8/5/20)

## **A new, dangerous TikTok challenge has recently emerged: teenagers taking large amounts of Benadryl to "trip," also known as a "Benadryl challenge."**

Three teenagers were hospitalized in the Fort Worth, Texas hospital system after overdosing on diphenhydramine (aka Benadryl). All three told medical staff that they got the idea after watching videos on TikTok that said they could get high and hallucinate if they took a dozen or more Benadryl tablets. This is just one example. Too much Benadryl can impact the body causing: high body temperature; confusion; blurred vision; nausea; vomiting; unsteadiness; high blood pressure; hallucinations; seizures; brain damage; heart attack; and death. Benadryl is also dangerous when combined with pain medications and decongestants—taking Benadryl along with either type of medication can lead to an unintentional overdose. ([health.com](http://health.com), 7/15/2020)

**The COVID-19 pandemic may be reducing risk factors for youth substance use,**

according to Linda Richter, Ph.D., Vice President of Prevention Research and Analysis at Partnership to End Addiction. She noted that teens are spending more time at home with family and away from their peers. Time spent with peers who engage in unhealthy behaviors is one of the strongest risk factors for substance use. Remote learning may reduce stress and anxiety for some teens who feel academic and social pressure at school, she said. It also has alleviated sleep deprivation caused by early school start times, another risk factor for substance use. Stay-at-home orders have made it difficult for teens to go shopping or receive illicit online orders in the mail without their parents' knowledge, Richter said. This reduces their ability to have easy access to nicotine, alcohol, and drugs. It is likely that for some younger teens, social distancing has delayed their initiation of substance use, Richter said. "Such delays would be expected to reduce the odds of future addiction among these youth," she wrote. (drugfree.org, 8/13/20)

**Teen vapers up to 7 times more likely to get Covid-19 than non-e-cig users, says new Stanford study.**

An online survey of 4,351 teens and young adults ages 13 to 24 conducted last May finds that those who vape e-cigarettes were 5 times more likely and those who vaped and smoked regular cigarettes were 7 times more likely to get Covid-19. Other studies show that e-cigarette use is as harmful to the lungs as regular cigarette use, which may make e-cigarette users and dual users more susceptible to severe Covid-19 symptoms. The survey defined e-cigarettes as disposable vapes like Puff Bar or pod-based vapes like Juul but did not ask about marijuana. Teenagers often swap nicotine pods in Juul vaporizers with pods containing marijuana oils. (The Marijuana Report, 8/12/20)

**Drug overdoses spiked 18% in the United States in the first two months after pandemic stay-at-home orders began in mid-March, according to a new report.**

Researchers with the Overdose Detection Mapping Application Program (ODMAP) at the University of Baltimore compared overdose statistics from January 1 through March 18, before stay-at-home orders began, with the period from March 19 through May 19. They found 62% of participating counties experienced an increase in overdoses during the mid-March through mid-May stay-at-home period. "Overdose clusters have shifted from traditional centralized urban locations to adjacent and surrounding suburban and rural areas," ODMAP program manager Aliese Alter told NPR. "We did find the number of spike alerts and also the duration of those spikes had increased nationally since the commencement of state-mandated stay-at-home orders." (drugfree.org, 8/20/20)

**Frequent cannabis use in depression tripled over past decade.**

A new study finds that past-month marijuana use has doubled and daily or near-daily use tripled over the past decade among people with depression compared to those without depression. Researchers at Columbia University assessed data from some 16,000 adults participating in the National Health and Nutrition Examination Survey. Of these participants, 7.5 percent had probable depression based on a question in the Survey. "Misleading media information and advertising suggests that cannabis is a good treatment for depression, although studies show that cannabis use may actually worsen depression symptoms," says Deborah Hasin, PhD, professor of epidemiology at Columbia University. (The Marijuana Report, 8/26/20)

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