Teen drug/alcohol use and those important parental conversations - what can we learn from the California Healthy Kids Survey?

One major goal of Pathway to Prevention is to stop teen drinking and drug use before it starts by educating, arming and empowering parents with evidence-based information about today's teen drug scene. Substantial evidence from the National Institute on Drug Abuse shows that educating parents about teen drug and alcohol use and abuse - and giving them information and tools so they can talk with their kids - can dramatically reduce their children's "experimentation" with drugs or alcohol.

So are parents having those potentially life-saving conversations with their teens? Unfortunately, local data from the California Healthy Kids Survey paints a disturbing picture: Across the Sacramento region, about 50% of 11th graders have NOT had a single conversation with their parents about drugs and alcohol in the prior 12-month period.

The same survey reveals equally distressing statistics about high drug and alcohol use across the region. As an example, consider the scores from one local school district, whose scores were typical of the region:

- Seventeen percent (17%) of 11th graders thought...
there was no or slight harm in drinking 5 or more drinks of alcohol once or twice a week.

- Thirty-six percent (36%) of 11th graders thought there was no or slight harm in smoking pot once or twice a week,
- Nine percent (9%) of 11th graders reported smoking pot ten or more times in the last 30 day period.

Alarmed by statistics like these, two local high schools have reached out to Pathway to Prevention to help them develop Parent Awareness Campaigns and educate families in their districts. Our resources are of value - and available - to high schools and parents nationwide.

Parents are the first line of defense in helping their teens understand the risks of "experimentation," and we are uniquely prepared to equip them with accurate information and tools. Please contact me if you'd like to learn more about what we offer or to help support our critical work with a tax-deductible donation.

Sincerely,

Kim Box
Executive Director, Pathway to Prevention

Parting Notes

Why don't parents talk with their kids about drugs and alcohol?

- Many parents erroneously believe that "good kids from good families don't experiment with drugs or alcohol" or that "smart kids don't drink or take drugs." Statistics show otherwise, and the majority of high school graduates have "experimented" with drugs or alcohol to some degree. Some walked away unharmed; others were injured or experienced deadly consequences.
- Parents may be worried about the stigma of appearing to be concerned about their child's drug or alcohol "experimentation," so they don't seek out facts.
resources or tools from family doctor's or their student's counselors. Many hesitate to attend school education events or to even pick up informational pamphlets, so they remain uninformed.

- Parents may be confused by the changing marijuana landscape in our nation and don't understand pot's dangerous impact on the developing teen brain.
- And even if they know they should have "The Talk," they don't know where to begin. **Start the conversation here** with our Parent Awareness Report about talking with your teens about drugs and alcohol (in **English** and **Spanish**).