

# Coping with COVID:

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Under the Influence

# WW-P Policy 5530 - Substance Abuse



The Board of Education recognizes that a student's abuse of harmful substances seriously impedes that student's education and threatens the welfare of the entire school community. The Board is committed to the prevention of substance abuse and the rehabilitation of substance abusers by educational means, but will take the necessary and appropriate steps to protect the school community from harm and from exposure to harmful substances.

# WW-P Policy 5530 - Substance Abuse

Accordingly, the Board will establish policies and procedures in operating programs to support the social, emotional, and physical development of students in accordance with the provisions of N.J.S.A. 18A:40A-1 et seq. and N.J.A.C. 6A:16-4.1 et seq. The Board of Education will maintain a comprehensive substance abuse intervention, prevention, and treatment referral program in the schools of this district.



# Substance Abuse Prevention

- Push in Classroom Lessons
- Student Groups
- Parent Programming
- Teacher and Staff Training
- Individual Student and Family Support
- Health & Physical Education
- Community Partnerships (e.g. West Windsor-Plainsboro Municipal Alliance, Recreation Departments, Counseling Agencies, Police Departments)



# Our Student Assistance Counselors (SACs)

Community Middle School - Ariana Efstathios

Grover Middle School - Wendy Alley

High School North - Jamie Crystal

High School South - Chelsea Allen



# Role of the SAC

- Provide individual, confidential counseling to any student in our building for any **NON-ACADEMIC** issues
- To provide drug and alcohol counseling to students who are referred or seeking this support out
- Provide group counseling for interested students
- To provide families with outside resources and referral information
- To collaborate with outside providers when appropriate
- To train staff on updated information
- **Our Main Focus is to support students and their well-being, however THEY need**

# Confidentiality

## General

- Safe space - what is said in our offices, stays in our offices
- Exceptions:
  - Harm to self
  - Harm to others
  - Someone is harming them

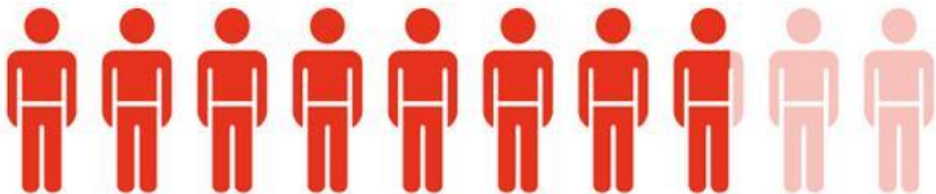


## Substance Use Specific

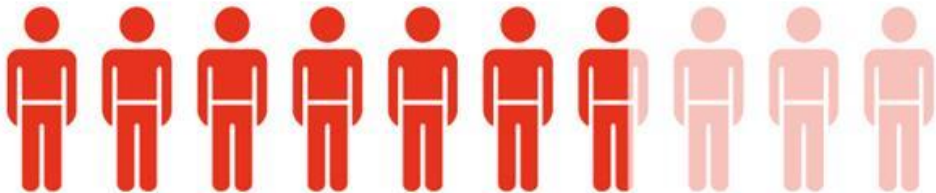
- 42 CFR Part 2
- Exceptions:
  - Suspect the student is under the influence
  - Student is in possession of drugs/alcohol or paraphernalia
- Need written permission from student to disclose information to others

STRESS IN AMERICA 2020: A NATIONAL MENTAL HEALTH CRISIS

## COVID-19 Is a Significant Stressor for Most Americans



Nearly 8 in 10 (**78%**) say the coronavirus pandemic is a significant source of stress in their life



Nearly 7 in 10 (**67%**) say they have experienced increased stress over the course of the pandemic





STRESS IN AMERICA 2020: A NATIONAL MENTAL HEALTH CRISIS

## Pandemic Impacting Future for Gen Z Teens (ages 13–17)



say the pandemic  
makes **planning**  
**for their future**  
feel impossible



say the pandemic  
**severely disrupted**  
their plans  
for the future

# Impact of the Pandemic on Substance Use

- Time spent with peers who engage in unhealthy behaviors is one of the strongest risk factors for substance use
- Among those who did use substances, the number of days of alcohol and cannabis use increased.
- Popularity and reputational worries about social distancing together predicted use of specific substances in specific contexts, as did depression and COVID-19 fears.
- Regarding coping motivations for substance use, the results highlight solitary drinking as greater among youth with more depressive symptoms and COVID-19 concerns.



# Prior Substance Use Trends: Are they accurate during COVID-19?

## Monitoring the Future Study: (\*25% of normal sample size- stopped abruptly in March 2020)

Vaping Nicotine (use within the past year):

- 8th grade went from 7.5% in 2017 to 16.5% in 2019 (16.6% 2020)
- 10th grade went from 15.8% in 2017 to 30.7% in 2019 (30.7 in 2020)
- 12th grade went from 18.8% in 2017 to 35.3% in 2019 (34.5% 2020)

Vaping Marijuana held steady with 2019 rates as well:

- 8th grade 8.1%
- 10th grade 19.1%
- 12th grade 22.1%

This follows a rapid doubling in use over the two prior years.

**DAILY** marijuana vaping significantly decreased among 10th graders from 3% in 2019 to 1.7% in 2020 \*





## Additional Trends from 2019-2020

- *Alcohol* use has not significantly changed over the past five years. However, there is a slight trend downward across all grades.
- Past year non-medical use of *amphetamines* among eighth graders increased from 3.5% in 2017 to 5.3% in 2020. However, 10th and 12th graders reported recent lows in past year use at 4.3% for both grades and significant 5-year declines.
- Among eighth graders, past 12-month use of *inhalants* has increased from 3.8% in 2016 to 6.1% in 2020, a 64% proportional increase, unlike 12th graders, who reported an all-time low use of inhalants.
- Past year use of *over-the-counter cough medicine* among eighth graders has gradually increased over the past five years, from 1.6% in 2015 to 4.6% in 2020, its highest rate since 2006. (Monitoring the Future Study. Drugabuse.gov)



# Marijuana & Perception of Risk

The use of marijuana has remained fairly level since 2010 (11.4%, 28%, 35.2% for grades 8, 10, 12 respectively) with gradual increases for 8th and 10th grades.

Since 2010, marijuana has been fairly mainstream, perceived as safe with medical marijuana in the U.S. starting in 1996.

**Low perception of risk equates to higher rates of use**

Legalized marijuana  Reduced perception of risk



**Legalization increases availability, and varying forms of the substance**



Use during adolescence affects brain development, increases risk of dependence; regular, chronic use is associated with low motivation, memory impairment, etc.

# Effects on the Developing Teenage Brain

Brain development in adolescence is marked by the reinforcing and pruning of neural pathways. Behaviors that are repeated become ingrained. This explains why *any* chemical, or even behavior, can become addictive.

**The pre-frontal cortex continues development until the age of around 25. It's functions:**

- Focusing attention
- Predicting consequences of our actions
- Ability to anticipate events in one's environment
- Impulse control
- Managing emotional reactions

(<https://www.pbs.org/wgbh/pages/frontline/shows/teenbrain/>)



This underscores the importance of participating in a range of interests, which is *challenging* during COVID-19.

# What To Look For

## Behavioral Signs

- Shifts in mood & personality
- Withdrawn, isolating, or depressed
- Irritable, hostile, angry
- Lack of motivation
- Loss of interest in hobbies and activities
- Decline in school performance
- Change in friend group
- Secretive or deceitful - making excuses or outright lying
- Difficulty focusing
- Unusually hyperactive or elated





# Additional Signs and Symptoms

## Physical Signs

- Poor hygiene/change in appearance
- Glazed or bloodshot eyes
- Pupils are larger or smaller than usual
- Sudden or dramatic weight loss or gain
- Unusually tired or constantly fatigued
- Frequent running nose or nosebleeds (not explained by allergies or cold)
- Frequent perspiration
- Sores, spots around mouth
- Frequently red or flushed cheeks or face



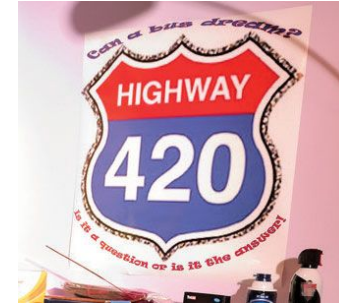
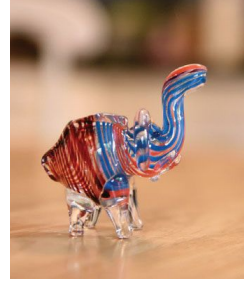
# How and Where to Look

- Use your nose
- Looks them in the eyes
- Watch their behavior
- Gift cards or Venmo
- Search their spaces
  - Inside drawers, in-between and underneath things
  - Small boxes or cases
  - Under the bed, mattress, and other pieces of furniture
  - In-between or inside books
  - Inside other over-the-counter medicine containers
  - Inside empty candy bags
  - Fake soda cans or other fake containers
- Cell phones or any other digital device



Be prepared to explain your reasons - can let them know it's out of concern for their health and safety

# Hidden in Plain Sight



# Starting the Conversation

- It's never too early
- Be realistic
  - Kids are exposed to the topics of drugs and alcohol at an early age
  - School programs, classroom lessons, media, friend groups, at home
    - DARE, Red Ribbon Week, health class, SAC introduction in middle school
- Where to talk?
- Ask about their perception
- Set expectation
- Play out scenarios - safety and decision making
- Make it an ongoing conversation
- Be a role model



# Modeling Behavior

As a parent or guardian, modeling a healthy relationship with alcohol can be key in protecting your child from the risks associated with underage drinking.

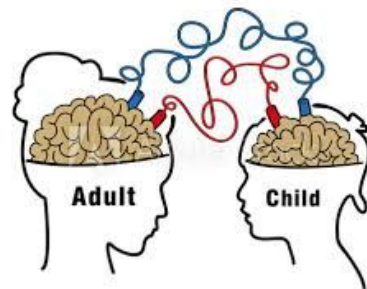
*Statistically speaking*, the earlier a child starts drinking, the more likely they are to become alcohol-dependent in their lifetime. The longer a child can delay their first drink, the higher the probability that they can have a healthier relationship with alcohol as adults. .

As parents, guardians and trusted adults, we have a lot of influence over our children's decisions. How we talk about and interact with alcohol can have a direct influence on the ways that our children perceive and use substances.

# Modeling Behavior

## Here are some guidelines:

- Limit your alcohol use in front of your child.
- Don't talk about drinking as a way to manage stress—for example, don't say, "I'm so stressed, I need a drink!", or "It's 5:00 o'clock somewhere". Instead, model healthy ways to manage stress like exercising, talking with your partner or seeing a therapist when life feels overwhelming.
- Don't romanticize drinking stories from your youth. If you share that you drank as a teen, discuss how you might have made different choices looking back.



# Modeling Behavior

- Never drive when you're intoxicated or get into a vehicle with a driver who is impaired. Designate a sober driver when necessary. Remember, our children are always watching us and the decisions that we make matter.
- If you're hosting a party with alcohol, also provide alcohol-free alternatives. Arrange for rides for guests who have been drinking.
- Explain to your child why alcohol is for adults only. Let them know their brain will continue to develop well into their twenties, so a legal age of 21 helps protect their health.

## Alcohol and Public Health

<https://www.cdc.gov/alcohol/faqs.htm>

# Tips to Help your Child Cope During COVID-19

1. Talk to your child about the COVID-19 pandemic.
2. Try to maintain a routine.
3. Monitor media consumption
4. Encourage your child to try something new that interests them.
5. Maintain family and other social ties
6. Be a role model



# TIPS TO HELP **teens** COPE DURING **COVID-19**

⋮

Maintain a daily **routine** with consistent sleep, activity and study patterns.

⋮

Stay **connected** with others and try to find moments of humor.

⋮

Talk to people you feel **comfortable** with about your feelings or worries, then give yourself permission to stop worrying.

⋮

**Limit** the amount of time you spend talking about or watching news media or social media.

⋮

Be **kind** to yourself and each other. We'll work through this together.



NATIONAL COUNCIL  
FOR BEHAVIORAL HEALTH

# Healthy Coping Skills

- Journaling
- Eating well
- Exercise/physical activity
- Art - drawing, coloring, painting
- Sleep
- Meditation
- Talking to a friend
- Engaging in positive self talk
- Engaging in a hobby



# Mindfulness Activities

- Deep Breathing
- Belly Breathing
- Finger Count Breathing
- Smiling Breath
  - <https://kidshealth.org/en/teens/relax-breathing.html>
- Meditation
- Progressive Muscle Relaxation
- Guided Imagery
  - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OyNYg85R1jc>



# 5,4,3,2,1 Grounding Activity



**5 - LOOK:** Look around for 5 things that you can see, and say them out loud.

**4 - FEEL:** Pay attention to your body and think of 4 things that you can feel, and say them out loud.

**3 - LISTEN:** Listen for 3 sounds.

**2 - SMELL:** Say two things you can smell. If you're allowed to, it's okay to move to another spot and sniff something. If you can't smell anything at the moment or you can't move, then name your 2 favorite smells.

**1 - TASTE:** Say one thing you can taste. It may be the toothpaste from brushing your teeth, or a mint from after lunch. If you can't taste anything, then say your favorite thing to taste.

# Mental Health Resources

**National Suicide Prevention Lifeline:** 1-800-273-TALK (8255)



**2NDFloor Youth Helpline** - call or text: 888-222-2228

**New Jersey Suicide Prevention Hopeline:** 855-654-6735, [www.njhopeline.com](http://www.njhopeline.com)

**Crisis Text Line:** text TALK to 741741

**National Institute of Mental Health (NIMH):** <https://www.nimh.nih.gov/index.shtml>

**American Foundation for Suicide Prevention:** [www.afsp.org](http://www.afsp.org)

# Parent Support Groups

MHANJ (Mental Health Association of NJ) NJ Hope & Healing:

<https://www.mhanj.org/content/uploads/2020/12/Jan-2021-NJHH-virtual-schedule.pdf>

NAMI (National Alliance on Mental Illness) Mercer County: Parent Support Network

<https://namimercer.org/find-support/parent-support-network>

# Mental Health/Mindfulness Apps

- Headspace
  - Netflix Series “Headspace: Guide to Meditation”
- Calm
- Insight Timer
- Clear Fear
- Daylio
- Mindshift
- MyLife Meditation



# Contact Information

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HSN, Jamie Crystal - [jamie.crystal@ww-p.org](mailto:jamie.crystal@ww-p.org), 609-716-5000 ext. 5115

HSS, Chelsea Allen - [chelsea.allen@ww-p.org](mailto:chelsea.allen@ww-p.org), 609-716-5000 ext. 7315

Student Assistance Counseling Webpage:

[http://www.west-windsor-plainsboro.k12.nj.us/departments/Guidance/student\\_assistance\\_counseling](http://www.west-windsor-plainsboro.k12.nj.us/departments/Guidance/student_assistance_counseling)