

Drug Use Rises for Teenagers

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A recent report released by the Parents' Resource Institute for Drug Education (PRIDE) shows an increase in drug use at the junior and senior high levels, the largest increase since PRIDE's annual survey began in 1987.

Among twelfth-graders who were surveyed, 40.8 percent indicated that they had tried an illegal drug during the past year. Marijuana showed the highest increase, up from 9.5 percent in 1994-1995 to 13.6 percent in 1995-96 for junior high students, and from 28.2 percent to 34 percent for senior high students. According to the report, all categories of illegal substance abuse showed an increase, including cocaine, uppers, downers, inhalants, and hallucinogens.

This reported increase has occurred despite substance abuse education within school systems and increased warnings from teachers. The sixth-through twelfth-graders who were surveyed indicated that they were more likely to receive warnings about drugs from their teachers (88.9 percent) than from their parents (29.6 percent) or their peers (11.7 percent).

Consequently, teen drug use has become a key campaign issue for this election year. Since the release of the report, Barry McCaffrey, the drug policy director for the White House, has lobbied against House plans to cut federal funding for drug prevention programming. This work, combined with the efforts of other groups, may have influenced the development of a new bill that would increase education funding by \$3.5 billion for the new year. This new omnibus bill was passed by Congress and signed by the president on September 30. There are several programs affected by the increase, including the Safe and Drug Free Schools program, which will receive approximately \$100 million more than last year.

Of particular concern when developing substance abuse education programs for junior and senior high

school students is including parents in that education. The PRIDE survey showed that almost half of parents thought their children would try drugs or presented an indifferent attitude towards drug experimentation. Douglas Hall, PRIDE's executive director, warns, "Our data reveal that seven out of ten parents are essentially sitting on the sidelines as teen drug use spirals out of control" (*Education Daily*, 9/26/96). This new funding should be used to develop collaborative educational efforts within school communities, including parents, teachers, and students in meaningful partnerships to reverse this spiraling trend.

Further information about resources is available at:

- Growing Up Drug Free
<http://npin.org/pnews/1996/pnewn96/pnewn96m.html#growing>
- What Works: Schools without Drugs
<http://npin.org/pnews/1996/pnewn96/pnewn96m.html#whatworks>
- Turning Awareness into Action: What Your Community Can Do about Drug Use in America
<http://npin.org/pnews/1996/pnewn96/pnewn96n.html#turning>
- Prevention Plus II: Tools for Creating and Sustaining Drug-Free Communities
<http://npin.org/pnews/1996/pnewn96/pnewn96n.html#prevention>
- National Clearinghouse for Alcohol & Drug Information
<http://www.health.org>

Sources

HHS Survey Shows Rising Tide of Youth Drug Use. (1996, August 22). *Education Daily*. Capitol Publications Inc., P.O. Box 1453, Alexandria, VA 22313-2053, p. 5.

Cucarro, Khela., Teen Drug Use Surging, Despite Teachers' Warnings. (1996, September 26). *Education Daily*. Capitol Publications Inc., P.O. Box 1453, Alexandria, VA 22313-2053, pp. 1-4.

ED Wins \$3.5 Billion in Last Minute Deal. (1996, October 1). *Education Daily*. Capitol Publications Inc., P.O. Box 1453, Alexandria, VA 22313-2053, pp. 1-3.

Source of This Document

Robertson, Anne S. (1996). Drug Use Rises for Teenagers. *Parent News* [Online], 2(11). Available: <http://npin.org/pnews/1996/pnewn96/pnewn96f.html>