
Parenting for Prevention

Student Assistance Services Corp., 660 White Plains Road, Tarrytown, New York, 10591, April, 2011



Hooray, Hooray

The news that the Westchester Coalition for Drug and Alcohol Free Youth received a \$832,000 grant to fund their prevention activities is very welcome during this time of state and federal cutbacks and reorganization.

The monies will give the coalition the opportunity to continue their important work in the county. All Westchester communities will benefit from this grant as there will be prevention initiatives that everyone will be invited to attend or participate in during the three-year funding period. For instance, the second Teen Leadership Conference will be held in the fall for high school students.

If you live in a community that has not been an active member of the Westchester Coalition for Drug and Alcohol Free Youth, now is the time to start attending the monthly steering committee meetings so that your community participates fully in all the initiatives and activities that will be made possible by this grant. Call me at 914-332-1300 to add your name to the list and for additional information.

**Patricia Murphy Warble, LCSW,
CPC**

Westchester Coalition for Drug and Alcohol Free Youth *Awarded A Grant*

Coalition leaders, representatives from government, and staff from Student Assistance Services joined Nita Lowey, United States Representative for New York's 18th congressional district to announce and celebrate a federal and state grant given to the county to target teen alcohol abuse. The grant was awarded to Student Assistance Services to fund activities of the Westchester Coalition for Drug and Alcohol Free Youth. The money will fund needs assessments, planning, public awareness projects, and educational programs for parents and youth leaders.



L to R-Theresa DelGrasso, Ardsley SAYF; Mike Grubiack, Aide to Senator Jeffrey Klein; Colleen Casey, National Guard; Vito Pinto, Director of the Westchester County Office of Drug Prevention and STOP DWI; Nita Lowey, Congresswoman for MY; Bruce Kelly, New Rochelle FOCUS, Patricia Tomassi, Assistant Director of the Westchester County Office of Drug Prevention and STOP DWI; Patricia Warble, Coalition Coordinator of Westchester Coalition for Drug and Alcohol Free Youth; Mary Korman, Chief of the Bureau of Strategic Planning and Crime Control Westchester County District Attorney's Office; Carmel Belles, Coordinator of Special Events, Student Assistance Services; Dr Jeffrey Capuano, Principal of Eastchester High School; Ellen Morehouse, Executive Director, Student Assistance Services; and Judy Mezey, Assistant Director

"We look forward to continuing to work closely with the Westchester Coalition for Drug and Alcohol Free Youth and all the local community coalitions to implement countywide prevention strategies" said Ellen Morehouse, Executive Director of Student Assistance Services Corp., "This grant will fund activities to better understand why Westchester teens use alcohol; fund social and traditional media messages for high school students and parents; and fund training for youth leaders, healthcare professionals, and law enforcement on how to intervene with alcohol using teens; and promote being alcohol free."

The funding which began March 1, is from the federal Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration's (SAMHSA) Center for Substance Abuse Prevention (CSAP) to the NY State Office of Alcoholism and Substance Abuse Services (OASAS). Westchester was one of 11 coalitions funded in NY State because teen alcohol rates exceed the state average (as determined by a 2008 NY State survey) and because of the coalition's strong capacity to meet the grant requirements. The current underage drinking prevalence among students in grades 9-12 in Westchester County is over 13% higher than the state average, according to the 2008 survey with past 30 day use rates in Westchester exceeding the state rates at each grade level. (See charts below.) In addition data from the same survey indicated that Westchester 9-12 graders' binge drinking rates are also higher than the state's rates.

“Drinking among high school students is a serious issue that we must confront, and that requires a productive partnership between parents, students, schools, and government” said Lowey. “As a mother and grandmother, I know there is nothing that is more important than ensuring our children are safe and healthy. I am thrilled Student Assistance Services Corp. will receive this important grant to help fight underage drinking among high school students.” Vito Pinto, the Director of the Westchester County Office of Drug Prevention and STOP DWI and the Director of Veterans Affairs, who chairs the Westchester Coalition for Drug and Alcohol Free Youth stated, “Since 2003, the Westchester Coalition has worked to prevent and reduce teen drinking. We have made some real progress but there is more work to be done. The grant provides valuable resources for us to increase our efforts to protect the health and safety of our youth.”

NY State Office of Alcoholism and Substance Abuse Services Commissioner Arlene González-Sánchez said, “Underage drinking continues to be a serious and persistent problem across the state and nation. This funding will allow the Westchester communities to implement effective prevention programs, policies and practices that best address their local needs in reducing underage drinking and its related problems. There is strong evidence that the earlier in life a person starts drinking alcohol, the more likely he or she is to have alcohol-related problems throughout life. Community leaders, such as the Westchester Coalition for Drug and Alcohol Free Youth, have a critical role in shaping the environment to prevent underage drinking, and can guide adolescents through this very important period in their lives.”

NY State Youth Development Survey, 2008

Grade	Past 30 day Alcohol Use - Westchester	Past 30 day Alcohol Use - State
9 th	25.5%	24.9%
10 th	38.9%	31.9%
11 th	46.4%	39.6%
12 th	56.6%	48.8%
Average	41.8%	36.3%

Grade	Binge Drinking - Westchester	Binge Drinking - State
9 th -10 th	20.2%	17.8%
11-12 th	32.4%	28.2%

Opioid Concerns

A Public Health Crisis

In the past few years, there has been increasing concern over the number of teens abusing prescription and over-the-counter drugs. Yearly figures from the annual *Monitoring The Future* study has shown an upward trend for prescription drug use over the past few years. Now, there is an additional concern related to this issue. For the first time since the 60s and 70s, Westchester County substances abuse prevention professionals are reporting an increase in the use of heroin and other narcotics by young people. Sadly, there have been a number of deaths and near-fatal overdoses from heroin in this age group since the beginning of the new year. Although somewhat shocking, it may be a predictable event in the continuum of the increasing prescription and over-the-counter drug use by teens today. First, this generation of students is use to seeing their friends and parents take drugs to treat a variety of conditions.

Generally, many teens believe that prescription drugs are not as dangerous as “street drugs” because their effects are “predictable” and because they are prescribed by health care professionals. Some teens begin by using a friend or family member’s prescription for relief of pain, to help with sleep, to stay awake to study, to relax or to get high. The effectiveness of these drugs can lead to the desire to continue use and to psychological and physical addiction. Since almost all drugs cause tolerance, users will need increased doses to produce the same benefit. When prescription drugs are no longer available, heroin may be used because it is less expensive and often easier to obtain than prescription drugs. Also, since the use of heroin is not so common, most teens are not aware of the dangers of using such a strong drug.

The following information is taken from *NIDA for Teens*, <http://teens.drugabuse.gov/peerx/the-facts/prescription#teens>, that is an excellent resource for information about teens and drug abuse. It is written in a way to give information to teens in a clear and simple manner. Another source is the *Monitoring the Future* website.

The *Monitoring the Future*, 2010 study reports the following; “The misuse of psychotherapeutic prescription drugs (amphetamines, sedatives, tranquilizers, and narcotics other than heroin) has become a more important part of the nation’s drug problem in recent years, in part because the use of most of these classes of drugs continued to increase beyond the point at which most illegal drugs ended their rise in the late 1990s, and in part because use of most of those same illegal drugs has declined appreciably since then. The proportion of 12th graders in 2010 reporting use of any of these prescription drugs without medical supervision in the prior year was 15.0%, up slightly from 14.4% in 2009 but a bit lower than in 2005, when it was 17.1%. Lifetime prevalence for the use of any of these drugs without medical supervision in 2010 was 21.6%.”

That makes painkillers one of the most commonly abused drugs by teens after tobacco, alcohol, and marijuana. The report goes on to note that on an average, 2,000 teenagers age 12 to 17 per day used a prescription drug without a doctor's guidance for the first time during this year. Unfortunately, other teens enter the world of opiate use when they are given a prescription for pain medication when they have a dental procedure or an orthopedic operation to repair an injury.

Prescription drug abuse is defined as when someone takes a prescription drug that was prescribed for someone else or in a dosage other than what was prescribed. It is also considered abuse when someone takes a friend's or relative's prescription to get high, to help with studying, or even to treat pain.

Opioids like OxyContin and Vicodin, central nervous system depressants and stimulants, are the most commonly abused prescription drugs. Other drugs that are available without a prescription, known as over-the-counter drugs, also can be dangerous if they aren't taken according to the directions on the packaging. For example, DXM (dextromethorphan), the active cough suppressant found in many over-the-counter cough and cold medications sometimes is abused, particularly by youth. Westchester County has passed laws that make this classification of drugs harder to obtain. One must show identification and a store will not sell to anyone under 18 or in large quantities.

However, most teens obtain the majority of prescription and over-the-counter drugs from friends, relatives, and from the medicine cabinets of people that hire them as babysitters or for other jobs. It is also not unusual for teens to share drugs with one another or to take drugs from a friend's parent's or sibling's bathroom. In one survey, 35 percent of high school seniors said that opioid drugs other than heroin like Vicoden are fairly or very easy to get. (NIDA, 2009) Most teens do not realize that sharing prescriptions with friends is illegal.

Teens who take stimulants sometimes share or sell a pill to a friend to help them study for an important test. Interestingly, teenage boys and girls tend to abuse some types of prescription drugs for different reasons.

There are short and long-term negative health consequences to using drugs. Stimulant abuse can cause paranoia, dangerously high body temperatures, and an irregular heartbeat. The abuse of opioids can cause drowsiness, nausea,

constipation, and, depending on the amount taken, slowed breathing. Abusing depressants can cause slurred speech, shallow breathing, fatigue, disorientation, lack of coordination, and seizures (upon withdrawal from chronic abuse). Abuse of any of these substances may result in physical dependence or addiction. **Once addicted and unable to get more prescription drugs, youth may turn to heroin which is often less expensive and easier to obtain**

Abusing over-the-counter drugs that contain DXM, can impair motor functions like walking or sitting up; produce numbness, nausea, and vomiting; and increase heart rate and blood pressure. Abusing any type of mind-altering drug can affect judgment and inhibition and may put a person at heightened risk for engaging in other risky behaviors including sexual activity.



Another reason teens believe using prescription drugs is safer than illicit drugs is because the manufacturing of prescription drugs are regulated or because they are prescribed by doctors. However, prescription drugs can have powerful effects on the brain and body. In fact, opioid painkillers act on the same sites in the brain as heroin.

If the dose is too strong for the individual or used with another drug, including alcohol, overdoses can result. 911 should be called when an individual appears to be sleeping and cannot be awakened. Every drug has side effects and they can be serious. Teens do not understand that a medical professional considers the benefits and risks before prescribing medications, base their decision on the patient's medical history, and then prescribes the medicine in a way that will help the patient. Any drug that is abused can lead to significant health consequences including addiction. Parents now need to talk to their teens about these risks in addition to the talking about the risks associated with tobacco, alcohol and other drugs.