

Facts and Recommendations for Educators and Academic Institutions

FACING ADDICTION IN AMERICA

*The Surgeon General's Report on
Alcohol, Drugs, and Health*

How do we define substance use problems?

Substance misuse is the use of any substance in a manner that causes harm to users or to those around them. Prolonged, repeated misuse of a substance can lead to a substance use disorder, a medical illness that impairs health and function. Severe and chronic substance use disorders are commonly referred to as addiction. Binge drinking is defined as having 5 or more drinks for men and 4 or more drinks for women on the same occasion on at least 1 day in the past 30 days.¹

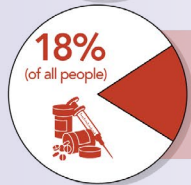
Why should we be concerned about these problems?



Over **66 million** people reported binge drinking in the **past month**

1.4 million were between the ages of **12 to 17**

13.6 million were between the ages of **18 and 25**



Nearly **48 million** people said they used an illicit drug or misused prescription drugs in the **past year**

4.3 million were between the ages of **12 to 17**

13.1 million were between the ages of **18 and 25**

Source: Center for Behavioral Health Statistics and Quality (CBHSQ), 2016

- Alcohol and drug misuse is a pervasive and increasing problem throughout the U.S. Alcohol misuse alone contributes to 88,000 deaths each year.²
- In 2015 more than 52,000 people died from a drug overdose. Over 63 percent of these deaths involved a prescription or illicit opioid.³ More than 1,700 of the deaths from prescription drug overdoses occurred among young people, age 18 to 25.⁴
- Adolescents' perceptions of risk associated with substance use have declined over the past 13 years. In

2015, only 32% of 12th graders perceived risk of harm from regular marijuana use, down from nearly 80% in 1991. Only 58% of 8th graders and 43% of 10th grade students perceived risk of harm from regular marijuana use.⁵

¹ Center for Behavioral Health Statistics and Quality (CBHSQ), 2016.

² Stahre et al., 2014.

³ CDC MMWR, 2016.

⁴ CDC Wonder, 2016.

⁵ Johnston et al., 2016.



3 in 4
people

aged **18 to 30** who were admitted to substance use disorder treatment programs began using substances at the age of **17 or younger**

Source: Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration and CBHSQ, 2014.

How can educators successfully reduce substance misuse and substance use disorders?

School-based programs focus on building social, emotional, cognitive, and substance refusal skills. Evidence-based initiatives (EBIs) are effective in preventing alcohol and drug use among young children, adolescents, and young adults. Cost benefit analysis of EBIs found that the programs below demonstrate a positive benefit for each dollar invested into the program. Some examples of school-based EBI programs, discussed in Chapter 3 of the *Surgeon General's Report*, include:

- *Raising Healthy Children* (Grades 1 through 6) combines social and emotional learning, classroom instruction, management training for teachers, and training for parents, and has shown to reduce heavy drinking at age 18 and rates of alcohol and marijuana use.^{6,7}
- *Project Toward No Drug Abuse* is intended for youth attending alternative high schools who are at high risk for drug use and violence; this program has twelve 40-minute interactive sessions and has shown reductions in alcohol and drug misuse.⁸
- *Life Skills Training*, a school-based program delivered over three years, has been shown to delay early use of alcohol, tobacco, and other substances up to five years after the intervention ends in youth aged 10 to 18.⁹
- *Brief Alcohol Screening and Intervention for College Students* (BASICS), which consists of two 1-hour motivational interviews with a brief online assessment after the first session, has shown reductions in the amount of alcohol consumed among the general college population, fraternity members, heavy drinkers who volunteer to participate, and those who are required to use the program by college disciplinary bodies.^{10,11,12}

⁶ Hawkins et al., 2005.

⁷ Brown et al., 2005.

⁸ Sussman et al., 2002.

⁹ Botvin et al., 2006.

¹⁰ Jonas et al., 2012.

¹¹ Marlatt et al., 1998.

¹² Terlecki et al., 2015

What can educators and academic institutions do to help?

- 1 **Implement evidence-based interventions.** Schools should implement interventions that provide a strong return on investment both in the well-being of youth and reduced long-term societal costs.
- 2 **Teach accurate, up-to-date scientific information about alcohol and drugs and about substance use disorders as medical conditions.** Teachers, professors, and school counselors play a central role in educating students, parents, and community members; preventing youth substance use; and promoting language that underscores the medical nature of substance use disorders.
- 3 **Enhance training of health care professionals.** Professional schools of social work, psychology, public health, nursing, medicine, dentistry, and pharmacy; formal post-graduate training programs; and board certification and continuing education requirements should include curricula that reflect the current science of prevention, treatment, and recovery.
- 4 **Provide treatment and recovery supports.** Schools and universities can provide an entry into treatment and an environment that fosters ongoing recovery by providing screening, brief counseling, and referral to more comprehensive treatment services.

How can you find out more?

More information about the topics summarized in this fact sheet can be found in Chapter 3 of the Report, entitled Prevention Programs and Policies. *The Surgeon General's Report on Alcohol, Drugs, and Health* provides information on effective and sustainable strategies for addressing alcohol and drug problems. The *Report* offers hope, practical solutions, and resources for educators, who play a critical role in prevention, treatment, and recovery for those affected by substance use disorders and their consequences. To read the *Report*, visit, <http://addiction.surgeongeneral.gov/>

