

Press Releases: Current

National Survey of American Attitudes on Substance Abuse XII: Teens and Parents

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CASA* 2007 TEEN SURVEY REVEALS AMERICA'S SCHOOLS INFESTED WITH DRUGS

80 PERCENT OF HIGH SCHOOLERS, 44 PERCENT OF MIDDLE SCHOOLERS SEE DRUGS USED, KEPT, SOLD, CLASSMATES DRUNK, HIGH ON SCHOOL GROUNDS

POPULAR KIDS AT DRUG INFESTED SCHOOLS MUCH LIKELIER TO GET DRUNK AND USE DRUGS

Washington, D.C., August 16, 2007 - Eleven million high school students (80 percent) and five million middle school students (44 percent) attend drug-infested schools, meaning that they have personally witnessed illegal drug use, illegal drug dealing, illegal drug possession, students drunk and/or students high on the grounds of their school according to the *National Survey of American Attitudes on Substance Abuse XII: Teens and Parents*, the twelfth annual back-to-school survey conducted by The National Center on Addiction and Substance Abuse (CASA) at Columbia University.

For the first time, this year CASA sought to survey in depth the drug situation in America's schools. The survey revealed that at least once a week on their school grounds, 31 percent of high school students (more than four million) and nine percent of middle school students (more than one million) see illegal drugs used, sold, students high and/or students drunk. At least weekly, 17 percent of all high and middle school students (4.4 million) personally see classmates high on drugs at school.

"This fall more than 16 million teens will return to middle and high schools where drug dealing, possession, use and students high on alcohol or drugs are part of the fabric of their school," said Joseph A. Califano, Jr., CASA's chairman and president and former U.S. Secretary of Health, Education, and Welfare. "Too many of our nation's high and middle schools have become marijuana marts and pill palaces. Parents should wake up to this reality and realize more likely than not, your teen is going to school each day in a building where drug use, sale and possession is as much a part of the curriculum as math or English and do something about it. For many of our middle and high school students, school days have become school daze."

The CASA survey also found that since 2002 the proportion of students who attend schools where drugs are used, kept or sold has jumped 39 percent for high school students and 63 percent for middle school students. From 2006 to 2007 the proportion jumped 20 percent for high school students and 35 percent for middle school students.

Teens at Drug-Infested Schools Likelier to Use

Compared to teens at drug-free schools, those at drug-infested schools are:

- 16 times likelier to use an illegal drug other than marijuana or prescription drugs;

- 15 times likelier to abuse prescription drugs;
- six times likelier to get drunk at least monthly;
- five times likelier to use marijuana;
- four times likelier to smoke cigarettes;
- four times likelier to be able to buy marijuana within a day; and
- nearly six times likelier to be able to buy marijuana within an hour.

Perils of Popularity

The CASA survey also found that popular teens who attend drug-infested schools are much likelier to smoke, get drunk, abuse prescription and illegal drugs.

Compared to teens who attend drug-free schools, teens who attend drug-infested schools are five and a half times likelier to say the popular kids at their school have a reputation for using drugs and three times likelier to say the popular kids at their school have a reputation for drinking a lot.

Among teens who consider themselves the most popular at their schools, compared to those at drug-free schools such teens at drug-infested schools are:

- at least 10 times likelier to abuse prescription drugs;
- nine times likelier to use illegal drugs other than marijuana or prescription drugs;
- five times likelier to get drunk at least monthly;
- four and a half times likelier to use marijuana; and
- four and a half times likelier to smoke or chew tobacco.

“CASA’s deeper dive into the American school system reveals that our nation’s youth are drenched in a culture where drug and alcohol abuse are commonplace and that drug-infested schools encourage the idea that it’s cool to get high and drunk,” noted Califano. “Over the past few years the corridors and classrooms of too many of our schools have become open drug bazaars for teens.”

Parental Attitudes and Teen Behavior

Teens are much likelier to smoke, drink and use drugs when their parents:

- believe it is very likely that their child will try drugs in the future;
- do not take steps to limit what their child is exposed to in movies, television and music, and on the Internet.

Only 11 percent of parents see drugs as their teen’s greatest concern, but twice as many teens (24 percent) say drugs are their greatest concern.

Other Striking Findings

- 59 percent of parents whose teens attend schools where drugs are used, kept, or sold believe the goal of making their child's school drug free is unrealistic, while 41 percent of parents consider this a realistic goal.
- Compared to their teen using marijuana, 48 percent of parents would be more bothered if their teen had sex, 82 percent would be more bothered if their teen drove a car while intoxicated and 52 percent would be more bothered if their teen shoplifted.
- Almost 10 million 12- to 17-year olds (37 percent) say they can buy marijuana within a day, and 4.4 million (17 percent) can buy marijuana in an hour or less.

QEV Analytics conducted *The National Survey of American Attitudes on Substance Abuse XII: Teens and Parents* from April 2 to May 13, 2007. The firm interviewed at home by telephone a national random sample of 1,063 12- to 17-year olds (554 boys, 509 girls) and 550 parents (53 percent of whom were parents of teens surveyed). Sampling error is +/- three percent for teens, +/- four percent for parents.

CASA is the only national organization that brings together under one roof all the professional disciplines needed to study and combat all types of substance abuse as they affect all aspects of society. CASA has issued 64 reports and white papers, published one book, conducted demonstration projects focused on children, families and schools at 201 sites in 73 cities and counties in 29 states plus Washington, DC and a Native American tribal reservation, and has been evaluating the effectiveness of drug and alcohol treatment in a variety of programs and drug courts. CASA is the creator of the nationwide initiative *Family Day – A Day to Eat Dinner with Your Children™* -- the fourth Monday in September – the 24th in 2007 -- that promotes parental engagement as a simple and effective way to reduce children's risk of smoking, drinking and using drugs. For more information visit <http://www.casacolumbia.org>.