



Drug Dealers in Schools?

Q. My sister just found out that her son has been using drugs. His school caught him with marijuana and cocaine in his bag. Needless to say, my sister is distraught. He has admitted that he first tried drugs from another student who sells drugs in his high school. How can parents protect their children from drug dealers in school? How many teens use drugs?

A. You have triggered a discussion that I will answer in three parts. First the incidence of drugs use among our youth. Next how can parents/teachers tell if their student/child is using drugs? Last, what can parents/ school districts do? I

visited the US Department of Justice's website to obtain current information about drug use in teens. However, we have to note that children younger than 13 also use drugs. A study in 2006 asked youth if they had used drugs in the past 12 months. The results showed 66% had used alcohol and 31% had used marijuana with smaller percentages using cocaine, heroin, and prescription drugs. Although the numbers are going down minimally, abuse of prescription drugs is climbing. Self-reports of drug use among high school seniors may under-represent drug use among youth of that age because high school dropouts and truants are not included, and these groups may have more involvement with drugs than those who stay in school. Students were also asked how easy it was for them to obtain drugs. Easiest was marijuana (84%), then amphetamines (52%), Cocaine (46), Barbituates (43%), Crack (38), LSD (29%), and

Herion (27%) in that order. In 2005, 25% of all students in grades 9 through 12

reported someone had offered, sold, or given them an illegal drug on school property.

There was no measurable change with the percentage of students who reported that

drugs were offered, sold, or given to them at school between 2003 and 2005. Males

were more likely than females to report that drugs were offered, sold, or given to them

on school property in each survey year between 1993 and 2005. In 2005, 29% of males

and 22% of females reported availability of drugs. Cocaine was the most frequently

reported illicit drug. In drug misuse deaths, cocaine was among the top 5 drugs in

28 of the 32 metropolitan areas studied. On average, cocaine alone or in combination

with other drugs was reported in 39% of drug misuse deaths (range 8% to

70%). Alcohol was one of the 5 most common drugs in 30 of the 32 metropolitan

areas and 5 of 6 States. For more in depth information visit www.ojp.usdoj.gov for

the **Bureau of Justice Statistics**.

What are the signs of substance abuse?

The **Teenswithproblems.com** website and **Parentingteens.about.com** website offer these symptoms of drug abuse in teens:

Signs At Home:

- a. Went from being a nice kid to being angry all the time.
- b. Wears all black or has become sloppy in attire
- c. [Has become apathetic or loss interest in life](#)
- d. [Has been ignoring curfew or not coming home](#)
- e. [Frequently has red eyes or has eye drops](#)
- f. Finds reasons to use cleaning supplies or smells like chemicals
- g. Has a lot of cold preparations in room or schoolbag
- h. Has other strange house hold items in room or school bag along with gadgets
- i. Has close friends that are suspected of being drug users
- j. Looks thinner but denies losing weight
- k. Is eating a lot after a night out with friends

- l. Has questionable friends who disrespect you as a parent
- m. Withdrawal from responsibilities
- n. Verbally or physically abusive
- o. Lies often
- p. Steals money or disappearance of money
- q. Finding the following: cigarette rolling papers, pipes, roach clips, small glass vials,

plastic baggies, remnants of drugs (seeds, etc.)

Every day, our kids have to make choices that we, as parents, never even dreamed about when we were kids. Peer pressure is a powerful thing, and many times, our kids will reluctantly go along with the crowd and do things that they are not comfortable with and know are harmful in order to gain acceptance. However, if this behavior repeats itself, over time it will manifest itself in addiction. **This can lead to serious behavioral, emotional, and health problems**, with the symptoms of drug abuse mimicking attention deficit/hyperactivity disorder (ADHD), bipolar illness, or major depression. This can be misdiagnosed if the care provider does not know of an existing substance abuse problem. As parents, how can we tell if our children are abusing substances? This is a question many parents ask themselves when their child is having difficulties. Unfortunately, too many parents really don't want to know the answer, because this is one subject that can be too scary, frustrating, and guilt-laden to deal with.

We must equip ourselves as parents to know the signs and not assume our children are too smart to do drugs.

Signs At School:

- a. Sudden drop in grades
- b. Truancy
- c. Loss of interest in learning
- d. Sleeping in class
- e. Poor work performance
- f. Not doing homework
- g. Defiant to authority
- h. Poor attitude towards sports or other extracurricular activities
- i. Reduced memory and attention span
- j. Not informing you of teacher meetings, open houses, etc.

Physical and Emotional Signs:

- a. Changing of friends
- b. Smell of alcohol or marijuana on breath or body
- c. Unexplainable mood swings and behavior
- d. Negative, argumentative, paranoid or confused, destructive, anxious
- e. Over-reacts to criticism acts rebellious
- f. Sharing few if any of their personal problems
- g. Doesn't seem as happy as they used to be
- h. Overly tired or hyperactive
- i. Drastic weight loss or gain
- j. Unhappy and depressed
- k. Cheats, steals

l. Always needs money, or has excessive amounts of money

m. Sloppiness in appearance

Now What?

- a. See your physician or pediatrician
- b. Consult with your clergy to assist in spiritual and practical guidance
- c. Consult with an educational consultant to help you find the right program for your child.
- d. Consult with a therapist or counselor.
- e. Consult with an Educational Advocate to help you with your current school situation
- f. Consult with an Educational Consultant to find the right program for your child.

Visit www.nationalyouth.com/substanceabuse.html and www.nationaltreatmentcenters.org for more information and help in your state.

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