

ADDRESSING SUBSTANCE ABUSE IN JUVENILE COURT: IMPLEMENTATION GUIDE

In recent years, breakthrough research has examined how alcohol, tobacco and other drugs affect the developing adolescent brain. This research offers critical insights into the reasons youth use these substances, the behavioral and physical symptoms of use and abuse, and the short- and long-term consequences of use. All this information will be essential for your court as you design your responses to adolescent substance abuse, and as you tailor services and resources to the unique needs of adolescents who are struggling to attain and maintain sobriety.

Adolescent drug use trends and drug types change over time. And with the growing number of states legalizing medical and recreational use of marijuana there are changing attitudes toward drug use among young people. (See www.monitoringthefuture.org for current information on adolescent drug use, trends and attitudes).

In order to design effective processes to intervene and monitor juvenile justice-involved youth's drug use, you will also need a working knowledge of the substances most frequently used, including the impact of each on the body.

In selecting an area of focus as it relates to substance abuse, it will be helpful for you to create a stakeholder group that comes together for the express purpose of improving juvenile court operation. Your stakeholders should be made up of judges, representatives from the district attorney's office, representatives from the defense bar, chief probation, juvenile court management, court administrators, representatives from community service providers, representatives from youth oriented-prosocial activities (like youth sports leagues), youth and their families, and of course the community. Once you've

gathered your stakeholders together, there are a number of things your team needs to know about substance abuse including:

- The difference between use, abuse, and addiction;
- Short and long-term effects of alcohol, tobacco and other drugs on the adolescent brain;
- How alcohol and other drugs interfere with cognitive, biological, and social development;
- The health and behavioral consequences of adolescent use and abuse of alcohol and other drugs;
- Slang or street names for alcohol and other drugs;
- Current trends of substance use and abuse by adolescents, both nationally and in your jurisdiction;
- Adolescents' sources of information about alcohol and other drugs;
- How adolescents get the substances they use;
- Opportunities that exist in your community for parents to learn about drugs of choice and their effects;
- Signs of substance use, abuse, and addiction (specific to substances used);
- Signs and symptoms of withdrawal;
- Methamphetamines—issues around use and abuse, and treatment specific to adolescents;
- Over-the-counter drugs (OTCs), and prescription-drug abuse;

- Impact of new marijuana laws on enforcement and adolescent use (e.g., medical use, recreational use);
- Adolescent attitudes and beliefs about use of alcohol and other drugs (e.g., risk, danger, myths).

Recommended Resources

NIDA – Principles of Adolescent Substance Abuse Disorder Treatment: A Research-Based Guide. (January 2014)

<http://www.drugabuse.gov/publications/principles-adolescent-substance-use-disorder-treatment-research-based-guide>. Presents research-based principles of adolescent substance use disorder treatment; covers treatment for a variety of drugs including, illicit and prescription drugs, alcohol, and tobacco; presents settings and evidence-based approaches unique to treating adolescents.

National Survey on American Attitudes on Substance Abuse XVII: Teens:

<http://www.casacolumbia.org/addiction-research/reports/national-survey-american-attitudes-substance-abuse-teens-2012> - This article discusses the trends in attitudes toward substances and substance use among teens in schools. The article also explores substance use and abuse among peer group members along with attitudes toward peer substance use.

Adolescent Substance Use in the U.S. Facts for Policymakers 2011,

http://www.nccp.org/publications/pub_1008.html

Monitoring the Future Survey: Trends in Prevalence of Various Drugs

<http://www.drugabuse.gov/trends-statistics/monitoring-future/monitoring-future-study-trends-in-prevalence-various-drugs>. This chart shows drug trends of teenagers over the past 4 years.

NIDA - Information on Drugs of Abuse - Commonly Abused Drugs Chart.
<http://www.drugabuse.gov/drugs-abuse/commonly-abused-drugs/commonly-abused-drugs-chart> This reference chart lists drugs, street names, and effects. It links to other sites for further information.

Alcohol and the Teen Brain 2011 A brief interview with Dr. Aaron White, Assistant Professor in the Psychiatry and Behavioral Sciences at Duke University about alcohol and the teenage brain. <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=svZcChJozac>

Criminal Neglect: Substance Abuse, Juvenile Justice and The Children Left Behind. CASA, The National Center on Addiction and Substance Abuse, October 2004. Available in PDF format at <http://www.casacolumbia.org/addiction-research/reports/substance-abuse-juvenile-justice-children-left-behind>. A comprehensive examination of the relationship between substance abuse and juvenile delinquency.

Questions for Discussion

How do we provide accurate and current information about alcohol, tobacco, and other drugs to youth in our court and their families?

Alcohol, tobacco and other drugs affect the teenage brain and body differently than they affect adults. How does this knowledge guide our decisions in operating our juvenile court?

What are the trends of alcohol, tobacco and substance abuse in our jurisdiction?
Where do the youth in our jurisdiction get their alcohol? Tobacco? Other drugs?

In addition to drug testing, what processes do we have in place to monitor juvenile justice-involved youth's use of alcohol and other substances?

What process do we have in place to make sure all court staff and system stakeholders have current knowledge about the pharmacology, and the trends, of alcohol and other drug abuse in our jurisdiction?

How do we take into account recent changes in marijuana laws as we address adolescent substance use?