



MEDIA CONTACT

Nicholas Eckhart
Public Information Officer
O: 616-500-0246
C: 575-405-9082
E: neckhart@dhd10.org



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Crawford
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DHD#10 OBSERVES NATIONAL DRUG AND ALCOHOL FACTS WEEK

March 18, 2024 – From March 18, 2024, to March 24, 2024, District Health Department #10 (DHD#10) is observing National Drug and Alcohol Facts Week and encouraging community members to have conversations about substance use and addiction among youth. National data collected in 2023 from high school seniors in the U.S. found that approximately 46% reported using alcohol, 29% reported using marijuana, and 23% reported vaping nicotine in the last year. The brain undergoes substantial developmental changes during adolescence, which puts teenagers at an increased risk for developing a substance use disorder. This is commonly referred to as an addiction.

Although this week focuses on youth, anyone can have a substance use disorder. Substance use disorders are characterized by the inability to control the use of a substance. This difficulty is not due to a lack of self-control; it is caused by biochemical changes in the brain circuits for reward and impulse control.

Common signs of a substance use disorder include:

- Intense cravings for a substance that make it difficult to think about anything else.
- Needing more of the substance to get the same effect on the body.
- Spending money on the substance when it's not affordable. Some individuals may sell their possessions or steal from others to obtain money for substances.
- Problems at school or work, such as a drop in grades or decreased work performance.
- Change in appearance, such as weight loss or neglected grooming.
- Unable to stop using the substance, despite quitting attempts.

Addiction is not the only risk associated with substance use. Other dangers can include, but are not limited to:

- Increased feelings of depression and anxiety
- Seizures, heart attack, coma, or death
- Inhibited judgement, resulting in unhealthy decision making
- Increased risk for contracting a sexually transmitted infection (STI)
- Legal trouble

For teens with developing brains, it can be hard to say no to substance use, even with its negative effects. In the event you or someone you know is in a situation where substances are offered, it is helpful to have excuses prepared. You can:

- Change the subject: "No, thanks. Did you guys see the game last night?"
- Place the blame on someone/something else: "No, I can't. I have random drug tests for sports."
- Suggest a different activity: "Do you want to go biking in the park?"

- Be honest: “No, thanks. I’m not into that.”
- Pretend you didn’t hear them and walk away.

It is important for teens to have a trusted adult they can reach out to in times of trouble. Creating a codeword to text that trusted adult during an emergency can be an efficient way to get out of a dangerous situation. For example, a teen may need a ride home to avoid riding in a vehicle operated by an intoxicated friend.

Lastly, it is important that teens know they will not get into legal trouble for calling 911 if they see symptoms of alcohol poisoning in a peer. In the state of Michigan, anyone who accompanies a minor, as well as the minor who needs medical assistance, are protected by the law.

If you or someone you know is struggling with substance use, there are resources available to help you quit. SAMHSA’s National Helpline is free and available 24/7 at 1-800-662-HELP (4357) for treatment referrals and information in both English and Spanish.

DHD#10 also has resources available. For more information and resources for substance use prevention, please visit <https://www.dhd10.org/parents-families/substance-use-prevention/>

For specific information about substance use prevention and teens, visit <https://www.dhd10.org/teens/substance-use-prevention-teens/>

To read more about substance use in the U.S, visit: <https://monitoringthefuture.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/12/mtf2023.pdf>

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