



236 Massachusetts Avenue, NE
Suite 505 ■ Washington, DC 20002
(202) 546-4600 ■ FAX: (202) 544-5712

Chief Executive Officer
Becky D. Vaughn

INVESTING IN AMERICA'S YOUTH: CONGRESSIONAL SUPPORT FOR YOUTH DRUG AND ALCOHOL PREVENTION AND TREATMENT SERVICES IS ESSENTIAL

President
Julie Shepard,
Iowa

Overall Youth Drug Use is on the Rise

President-Elect
Dick Dillon,
Missouri

- According to SAMHSA's 2009 National Survey on Drug Use and Health (NSDUH), after a number of years of declining use, overall youth drug use for youth 12 years old and older rose by nine percent in 2009.

Vice President
Connie Peters,
Massachusetts

- In 2009 there was also a significant increase in the number of young adults using prescription drugs non-medically. Recent studies have shown that one in five teens, roughly 4.5 million young people, report abusing prescription pain medications; one in five teens report abusing prescription stimulants and tranquilizers; and one in ten teens, 2.4 million youth, have abused cough medicine.

Secretary
Mark Fontaine,
Florida

- Data from the NSDUH and the most recent Monitoring the Future study show that marijuana use, which had been rising among teens for the past two years, continued to rise in 2010 for grades 8, 10, and 12. Both studies found that perceived risk for marijuana has been falling in recent years.

Treasurer
Mike Reagan,
Michigan

At-Large
Charles Bush,
Mississippi

Underage Drinking Among America's Youth Remains High

Alcohol remains the most heavily abused substance by America's youth. Although there has been a significant decline in tobacco use among teens, underage drinking has remained at consistently high levels.

Sara Howe,
Illinois

Shelia North,
Oregon

Past President
Richard Nance,
Utah

- The 2009 National Survey on Drug Use and Health estimates there are 10.4 million underage drinkers in the United States.
- Approximately 6.9 million teens are considered binge drinkers, typically meaning they drank more than five drinks on occasion, and more than two million are classified as heavy drinkers.
- According to the 2009 Monitoring the Future survey, alcohol use remains extremely widespread among today's teenagers. Despite recent declining rates, nearly three quarters of youth have consumed alcohol by the end of high school, and more than one third have done so by 8th grade. More than half of 12th graders and one sixth of 8th graders in 2010 report having been drunk at least once in their life.

Research Underscores the Need for Youth Prevention and Early Intervention Activities

- Young people who start drinking before the age of 15 are five times more likely to have alcohol problems later in life than those who begin drinking at age 21 or older.

- As they get older, the chance that young people will use alcohol grows. Over 11 percent of 12-year-old children (6th graders) say that they have used alcohol at least once. By age 13, that number doubles. By age 14 (8th grade), 41 percent of children have had at least one drink, and nearly 20 percent say they have been drunk at least once.
- Among older age groups, the prevalence of current alcohol consumption decreases with increasing age. However, among America's youth, the rate of current alcohol consumption increases with increasing age.

Drug and Alcohol Addiction Prevention and Treatment Services Work and are Cost-effective

- Substance use prevention is unique and effective. Fully-funded prevention activities specific to substance use are necessary across all sectors of States and communities that will explicitly:
 - Reduce access to and availability of alcohol, tobacco and drugs;
 - Inform attitudes and perceptions about the dangers and acceptability of alcohol, tobacco and drug use;
 - Change social norms about alcohol, tobacco and drug use;
 - Raise awareness about the costs and consequences of alcohol, tobacco and drug use; and
 - Build skills in youth, parents and communities to deal with substance use/abuse issues effectively.
- Studies over the last 25 years have shown that treatment effectively reduces not only drug and alcohol use but also criminal activity and a host of other health and social problems.
- Prevention efforts have been found to be effective in deterring youth drug use and improving academic performance. A recent University of Washington study found that the level of peer substance use in schools has a substantial impact on academic performance; students whose peers avoided substance use had test scores that were on average 18 points higher for reading, and 45 points higher for math.
- According to the Monitoring the Future Survey, the greater declines in reported alcohol consumption among 8th graders may reflect the decline in availability of alcohol. Reported availability of alcohol among 8th graders has declined 18% from a record high of 75% in 1996 to a new record low of 62% in 2007. Tenth and twelfth graders also noted a decline in the availability of alcohol over the past year.
- According to SAMHSA, for every dollar the United States Government spends on addiction treatment it saves \$7 to \$25 in other costs. In Minnesota, a recent study showed that one year after alcohol and drug treatment, 67 percent of investment from reductions in all other health care costs was recovered. In addition, a Washington state study of school-based prevention programs found that a number of these programs resulted in a \$70.34 benefit for each dollar of programming spent for each participating young person.

We must protect the promise of our young people by renewing support for alcohol and drug prevention and treatment services.

Please contact Gabrielle de la Gueronniere (gdelagueronniere@lac-dc.org) at the Legal Action Center (202-544-5478) with any questions.