

MEDIA CAMPAIGN

NEWS ROOM

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Parents Pivotal in Keeping Teens Away From Drugs, Reveals New Data

Drug, Alcohol, Cigarette Use, and Sexual Activity Prevalent in U.S. High Schools; ONDCP and Prevention Organizations Partner to Support Parents

(Washington, D.C.)—Parents are a powerful influence in keeping their teens off of drugs and other risky behaviors, such as underage drinking, cigarette use, and sexual activity. And according to new data, the majority of teens say the greatest risk in using marijuana is upsetting their parents (69%), followed by losing the respect of friends and family (67.2%). To better help parents prevent all types of risk-taking among teens, the White House Office of National Drug Control Policy (ONDCP), and health and prevention leaders have partnered to raise awareness about the consequences of risky behaviors among teens, including drug use, drinking, smoking, and sexual activity.

More Resources

[Teen Risky Behaviors:
Fact Sheet](#)

[Read the Open Letter](#)

Compared to a generation ago, most of today's teens are thriving. Drug, alcohol, tobacco, and teen pregnancy rates are all down. But recent surveys show that among the Nation's 12-17-year-olds, each day 3,430 try marijuana for the first time; 7,500 try alcohol; 3,900 try cigarettes; and one in five teenage girls has at least one birth by age 20. In a typical high school class in America today, the number of students engaging in risky behaviors is staggering: seven out of 30 kids are using drugs; 13 drink alcohol; six smoke cigarettes; and 10 are sexually active. Indeed, new data also shows that more than four in 10 adolescents have been offered drugs, and about one in four have been offered drugs at school.

At a press conference in Washington, D.C. today, ONDCP unveiled a new "Open Letter" print ad that highlights proven actions parents can take to help their teens successfully navigate the minefield of risky behaviors during the adolescent years, including setting rules and consequences, keeping close tabs on their teens, and monitoring their teens'

time on the Internet. The Open Letter ad, signed by 16 prevention and parenting organizations, including the American Legacy Foundation, the Leadership to Keep Children Alcohol Free, and the National Campaign to Prevent Teen Pregnancy, will be published next week in the top 25 media markets in national and local newspapers, and in select magazines.

Research shows that teens who have a positive relationship with their parents are less likely to engage in risky behaviors:

- Positive relationships or connectedness between parents and adolescents is linked to avoidance or lower use of alcohol, tobacco, and illicit drugs;
- Adolescents who have high-quality relationships with their parents are less likely to initiate sex or be sexually active;
- Teens whose parents use a "balanced" parenting style—are warm, and involved, firm in setting limits, and show respect for their teen—do better in school, report less depression, and anxiety, have higher self-esteem and self-reliance, and are less likely to engage in all types of risky or problem behavior, including drug and alcohol use, sex, or violence.

"We're here to tell parents they are not alone. Research tells us there are some straightforward steps parents can take not only to help prevent drug use, but to reduce risk-taking across-the-board," said John Walters, Director of National Drug Control Policy. "We think parents and caregivers will find the information on how to monitor their kids practical and useful in their everyday lives."

ONDCP also unveiled new resources for parents, including a parent handbook and an interactive CD-ROM, new parent television ads created by Grey Worldwide New York (the ads may be viewed at www.mediacampaign.org: <http://www.mediacampaign.org/mg/television.html>), and announced a nationwide "Risky Behaviors Educational Tour" to support parents of teens in 10 cities through local media outreach and roundtables across the country, in the next few months. Markets include: Atlanta, San Diego, Miami, Denver, Raleigh-Durham, Chicago, Dallas-Fort Worth, Milwaukee, Los Angeles, and Houston.

The two new resources for parents, produced by ONDCP's National Youth Anti-Drug Media Campaign, include, "Navigating the Teen Years: A Parent's Handbook for Raising Healthy Teens," and "The Teen Years: A Road Map for Parents" CD-ROM. These resources offer parents research-based information and skills shown to help prevent teen risk-taking, and provide hands-on tools to help them address the challenges of raising teens. In its endorsement of the handbook, the American Academy of Pediatrics said, "From setting expectations and rules, to monitoring your teen, to being a good role model, the advice is simple and easy to do, with suggestions for actions to take daily, weekly, or monthly." The handbook and CD-ROM will be available free of charge to the public beginning today and can be viewed and ordered through www.TheAntiDrug.com, the Media Campaign's Web site for parents.

The 16 health, prevention, and parenting organizations and telecommunications firms that signed the nationwide Open Letter include: American Academy of Child and Adolescent

Psychiatry; American Academy of Family Physicians; American Academy of Pediatrics; American Legacy Foundation; American Lung Association; CTIA-The Wireless Association; Cox Communications; Leadership to Keep Children Alcohol Free; National African American Tobacco Prevention Network; National Asian Pacific American Families Against Substance Abuse; National Cable and Telecommunications Association; National Campaign to Prevent Teen Pregnancy; National Families in Action; National Latino Children's Institute; Qwest Communications; and The Partnership for a Drug-Free America. The Open Letter can be viewed at: www.mediacampaign.org.

Since its inception in 1998, the National Youth Anti-Drug Media Campaign has conducted outreach to millions of parents, teens, and communities to reduce and prevent teen drug use. Counting on an unprecedented blend of public and private partnerships, nonprofit community service organizations, volunteerism, and youth-to-youth communications, the Campaign is designed to reach Americans of diverse backgrounds with effective anti-drug messages.

For more information on the ONDCP National Youth Anti-Drug Media Campaign, visit www.MediaCampaign.org

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