

Warning and Indicators of Under-Age Alcohol and Illegal Drug Use

There are many resources available to educate parents and teens about the impact alcohol and drug use can have on an individual's life and health. Additionally, parents must be aware of warning signs often associated with adolescent illegal drug use. The following list of warning signs and indicators is **not** intended to be all-inclusive and some warning signs may stand alone while others may be part of the larger picture. Overall, it is important to communicate and listen to your son or daughter.

Warning signs and indicators include:

- Change in friends and family involvement
- Negative changes in schoolwork, missing school, or declining grades
- Increased secrecy about possessions or activities
- Increased need for privacy
- Mood swings, increase in temperament, depression, or hyperactivity
- Change in appetite
- Use of incense, room deodorant, or perfume to hide smoke or chemical odors
- Subtle changes in conversations with friends
- Change in clothing choices
- Increase in borrowing money
- Evidence of drug paraphernalia such as pipes, rolling papers, etc.
- Increase use of use of inhalant products such as hairspray, nail polish, air duster, spray paint, gas, correction fluid, or other common household products that may be huffed. Rags and paper bags are sometimes used as accessories for inhalants
- Bottles of eye drops-which may be used to mask bloodshot eyes or dilated pupils
- Track marks on arms or legs (or long sleeves in warm weather to hide marks)
- Burns or soot on fingers
- Mouthwash or breath mints to cover up smell of alcohol
- Health issues like nosebleeds, sores, spots around mouth, wetting lips or excessive thirst (known as "cotton mouth"), sudden or dramatic weight loss or gain, skin abrasions/bruises, accidents or injuries, depression, etc.
- Missing prescriptions
- Missing alcohol or cigarettes of adults that use in the household

Drug, alcohol and tobacco use in adolescents often is a sign of deeper issues. If you have a feeling your adolescent is using, get help before it is too late. Contact your school guidance department to talk about your concerns or to receive assistance in accessing local support services.

Information compiled from www.drugfree.org and www.theantidrug.com