

MARIJUANA & KIDS: SUMMER FACT SHEET

Don't Let Your Teen's Summer Go to Pot

Teenage initiation of marijuana use is a problem during every season of the year. **However, it may come as a surprise to many adults that during the summer months, when young people have more free and unsupervised time, more teens use marijuana for the first time than during any other time of the year.** First use of alcohol and cigarettes among teens also jumps during the summer months.

According to a recent Substance Abuse & Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) report on marijuana initiation that analyzed data from the 1999 & 2000 National Household Surveys on Drug Abuse (NHSDA):

- Each year more than 1.5 million teens (aged 12-17) try marijuana for the first time¹ -- more than the entire population of North and South Dakota combined.² Approximately 40% of these teens are 14 or younger.³
- More youth under the age of 18 smoke marijuana for the first time in the summer months of June and July than in other months of the year.⁴
- Each day in June and July, approximately 5,800 teens (aged 12-17) try marijuana for the first time.⁵ This is equal to the enrollment of eight average-sized U.S. high schools.⁶

Additional analysis of the same NHSDA data shows:

- The number of new drinkers (aged 17 and under) jumped during June and July, accounting for nearly a quarter of yearly initiates in just two months.⁷
- The summer months of June and July had the highest incidence of first time cigarette smokers, accounting for more than a quarter of new smokers aged 17 and under.⁸

Research shows that kids with unsupervised time are more likely to use drugs and alcohol. Higher summer initiation rates are likely due to teens having more unsupervised and unstructured time. In fact, studies have shown that:

- Unsupervised teens are three times more likely to use marijuana or other drugs. The majority of teens aged 14-17 in the U.S. are left unsupervised after school at least one day per week (59 percent).⁹ Forty-one percent of 12-14 year olds care for themselves after school, each for an average of 9.2 hours per week.¹⁰
- Teens whose parents monitor TV viewing or Internet usage know where their teen is after school and expect their teen to tell them where they are going are at half the risk of substance abuse as teens whose parents do not.¹¹
- Middle school youth who are left unsupervised after school two or more days per week are four times more likely to have gotten drunk in the past month, and three to five times more likely to use cigarettes, marijuana, and inhalants.¹²
- Urban students who are unsupervised for more than 30 hours per week are significantly more likely to use marijuana than students who are unsupervised for five or fewer hours a week.¹³
- The Department of Health and Human Services found that 10th graders who spend no time in school-sponsored extracurricular activities are 49 percent more likely to use drugs.¹⁴

Parents can and do make a difference in a teen's decision to stay drug-free. They can help keep kids drug-free by closely supervising their time, knowing who they are with, and setting clear rules.

- Two-thirds of youth ages 13-17 say that upsetting their parents or losing the respect of family and friends is one of the main reasons they don't smoke marijuana or use other drugs.¹⁵
- Kids who learn about the risks of drug abuse from their parents or caregivers are about 36 percent less likely to smoke marijuana, 50 percent less likely to use inhalants, 56 percent less likely to use cocaine, and 65 percent less likely to use LSD than kids who don't.¹⁶
- Parents of teens with summer jobs still need to know how their teens are spending disposable income, what type of work place setting they are in, and who they are working with.

In addition to parents, other adults who influence the lives of teens, such as camp counselors, coaches and employers, can and do play a vital role keeping teens drug-free during the summer months. Not only are these adults well-positioned to reach teens this summer with marijuana prevention messages, but by just being role models or mentors they help prevent youth drug use.

- Many teens engage in summer activities such as camps. Each year, an estimated nine million young people attend a summer day or resident camp program.¹⁷ *The Media Campaign has partnered with the YMCA of the USA, the national resource office for this country's 2,493 YMCA's, to reach nearly two million teens with drug prevention messages this summer.*
- Last summer, one-third of teens aged 16-19 were enrolled in summer school (up from 20 percent in 1994).¹⁸
- According to the Department of Labor, a majority of 16-19 year olds have summer jobs. In July 2002, 58 percent of teens (aged 16-19) were either working or looking for work.¹⁹ *This summer, Cinemark, a large employer of teens, will disseminate the Media Campaign's marijuana prevention messages to their employees and will display posters in employee break rooms.*

¹ Gfroerer, J.C., Wu, L.-T. & Penne, M.A. (2002). *Initiation of Marijuana Use: Trends, Patterns, and Implications* (DHHS Publication No. SMA 02-3711, Analytic Series A-17). Rockville, MD: SAMHSA, Office of Applied Studies, NHSDA.

² U.S. Census Bureau, Census 2000 Summary File 1, http://factfinder.census.gov/servlet/BasicFactsServlet?_lang=en

³ Gfroerer, J.C., Wu, L.-T. & Penne, M.A. (2002). *Initiation of Marijuana Use: Trends, Patterns, and Implications* (DHHS Publication No. SMA 02-3711, Analytic Series A-17). Rockville, MD: SAMHSA, Office of Applied Studies.

⁴ Ibid.

⁵ Ibid.

⁶ National Center for Education Statistics, <http://nces.ed.gov/pubs2001/overview/table05.asp>, (average size of a public high school in the U.S. is 751)

⁷ SAMHSA, National Household Survey on Drug Abuse, 1999 and 2000 Surveys, Public Use Data File.

⁸ Ibid.

⁹ U.S. Department of Justice, Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention fact sheet "The YMCA's Teen Action Agenda," May 2001 #14.

¹⁰ U.S. Census Bureau, "Who's Minding the Kids? Child Care Arrangements: Spring 1997"

¹¹ CASA, Columbia University, National Survey of Teens, 2001

¹² Mulhall PR, Stone D, Stone B. "Home Alone: Is It a Risk Factor for Middle School Youth and Drug Use?" *Journal of Drug Education* 26 (1) 39-48, 1996.

¹³ Cohen DA, Farley TA, Taylor SN, Martin DH and Schuster MA. "When and where do youths have sex? The potential role of adult supervision." *Pediatrics* 110:6 (December 2002)

¹⁴ U.S. Department of Health & Human Services, "Adolescent Time Use, Risky Behavior and Outcomes: An Analysis of National Data," 1995.

¹⁵ PDFa, Partnership Attitude Tracking Study, 2002.

¹⁶ PDFa, Partnership Attitude Tracking Study, 1998.

¹⁷ American Camping Association, "Today's Camps."

¹⁸ U.S. Department of Labor, Bureau of Labor Statistics, Current Population Survey, Occupational Outlook Quarterly, Winter 2002-03

¹⁹ Ibid.