



# FACT SHEET

## Office of National Drug Control Policy

Executive Office of the President

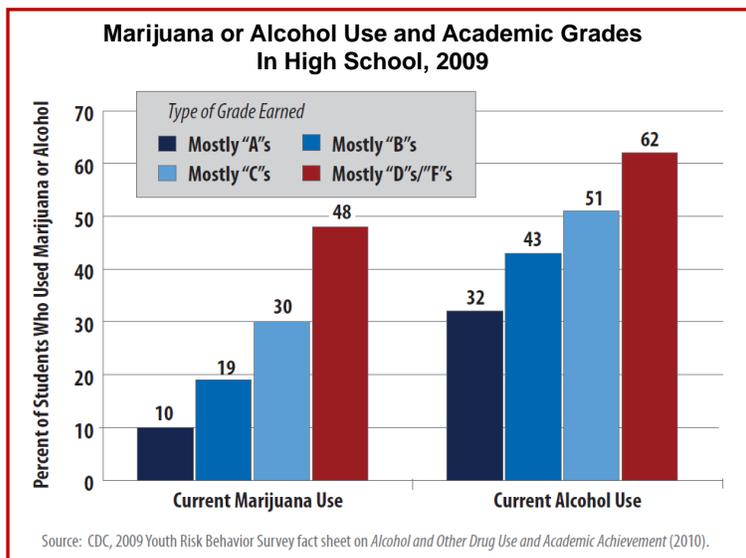
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## Preventing Substance Abuse In Our Communities

Drug and alcohol use affects public health, workforce preparedness, family life, military readiness, and academic outcomes. Findings from national surveys show that, while rates of illicit drug use did not change from 2009 to 2010, rates increased between 2008 and 2010, mostly due to increased marijuana use. Meanwhile, there has been a decline among youth in the perceived risk of marijuana use. Research shows that youth drug use increases when the perceived danger of using drugs decreases.<sup>1</sup>

Substance use has been shown to be associated with poor academic performance:

- 9th to 12th graders who received mostly grades of Ds and Fs were twice as likely to be current alcohol users, five times more likely to be current marijuana users, and 13 times more likely to be current cocaine users, compared to students mostly receiving A grades.<sup>2</sup>
- About 25 percent of college students report negative academic consequences of their drinking, such as missing class, falling behind, doing poorly on exams or papers, and receiving lower grades overall.<sup>3</sup>



America's young people deserve every opportunity to live up to their full potential, and exposure to effective drug prevention programming in our schools, homes, and communities improves their chances of doing so. This not only makes good common sense, it is also cost-effective: Recent research has shown that each dollar invested in an evidence-based prevention program can reduce substance abuse costs by \$2 to \$30.<sup>4</sup>

***ONDCP seeks to foster healthy individuals and safe communities by effectively leading the Nation's effort to reduce drug use and its consequences.***

## A Comprehensive Approach to Drug Use Prevention

Risk factors specific to substance use (e.g., access to drugs or peers and/or parents who use drugs or have favorable attitudes toward drug use) must be taken into account when designing prevention programs. Effective drug prevention should be comprehensive in scope and include a combination of:

- Evidence-based interventions (e.g., school-based programs) to address factors that can increase and/or decrease the likelihood of use.
- Tested public education (e.g., mass media) campaigns to emphasize the importance of a healthy lifestyle that includes avoiding drugs.
- Sound environmental strategies (e.g., road compliance checks, alcohol server training) that change community policies and practices to reduce access to illicit substances and enforce the consequences for substance-related offenses.

## Guiding Prevention Principles

The *National Drug Control Strategy* (available online at <http://www.whitehouse.gov/ondcp>) provides a blueprint for the Administration's approach to preventing drug use. Specifically, this entails 18 action items that, taken together, are designed to reduce drug use in our Nation. These action items are based on five guiding principles:

1. ***A national prevention system must be grounded at the community level.*** The community is where substance abuse occurs and where prevention must happen.
2. ***Prevention efforts must encompass the range of settings in which young people grow up.*** Effective community-based prevention requires coverage of a broad range of domains in which young people grow up, including families, schools, clubs, worksites, faith communities, and recreational programs.
3. ***Information on youth drug, alcohol, and tobacco use must be developed and disseminated.*** Despite extraordinary advances in prevention science, the expanse of new information on the causes, consequences, and solutions to youth substance use has not been as widely shared as it should be.
4. ***Criminal justice agencies and prevention organizations must collaborate.*** Too often, different agencies with different missions and limited resources operate in separate worlds.
5. ***Preventing drugged driving must become a national priority on par with preventing drunk driving.*** Drugged driving poses similar threats to public safety due to adverse effects on judgment, reaction time, motor skills, and memory.

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<sup>1</sup> Johnston, L. D., O'Malley, P. M., Bachman, J. G., & Schulenberg, J. E. (2011). Monitoring the Future national results on adolescent drug use: Overview of key findings, 2010. Ann Arbor: Institute for Social Research, The University of Michigan.

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<sup>2</sup> Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (2009). Alcohol and other drug use and academic achievement: 2009 National Youth Risk Behavior Survey. Retrieved from [http://www.cdc.gov/HealthyYouth/health\\_and\\_academics/pdf/alcohol\\_other\\_drug.pdf](http://www.cdc.gov/HealthyYouth/health_and_academics/pdf/alcohol_other_drug.pdf).

<sup>3</sup> Engs RC, Diebold BA, Hansen DJ. The drinking patterns and problems of a national sample of college students, 1994. *Journal of Alcohol and Drug Education*, 41(3):13-33, 1996.

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<sup>4</sup> Aos, S., Lee, S., Drake, E., Pennucci, A., Klima, T., Miller, M., Anderson, L., Mayfield, J., and Burley, M. (2011) Return on investment: Evidence-based options to improve statewide outcomes (Document No. 11-07-1201). Olympia: Washington State Institute for Public Policy.

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