

UNDERSTANDING TEEN SUBSTANCE USE: A GUIDE FOR PARENTS



Phoenix Associates, Inc.

STARTING CONVERSATIONS

Understanding teen substance is an essential first step to getting your child help. It's important to have open conversations with your teen about drugs and alcohol and to recognize the signs of use.

Signs of drug use in teens

Physical	Psychological	Social
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Eye dryness or pupil shrinkage or dilation• Slurring speech, tremors• Poor coordination• Sniffing or runny nose• Strange smells on breath or clothing• Weight loss• Sores	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Appearing "spaced out"• Paranoia or agitation• Increased energy or mood instability• Unexplained changes in mood, attitude or personality	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• New crowd• Unexplained drop in school functioning• Unexplained absences• Lying about whereabouts• Increased hostility

Signs of paraphernalia

Injection	Smoking	Snorting
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Injection marks• Needles• Spoons with burn marks• Rubber cord or belt for tying the arm	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Glass or metal pipes• Lighter• Straws• Tin foil• Water pipes	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Razor blades• Rolled dollar bills• Snuff bullets• Metal or plastic straws

Talking Points

I care about you. Can we talk?

Focus on "Why?" Reasons might include trauma, stress, peer pressure, pop culture or adult example

Set a goal for the conversation: Understanding why, offering support, or setting boundaries

Actively listen: Be calm, be open, don't criticize and avoid interrupting

Be honest about your own drug or alcohol use if your child has observed you using

Discuss the dangers of substance use. Provide facts about harmful or deadly drugs

NATIONAL AND LOCAL RESOURCES

SAHMSA helpline 1-800-662-HELP (4357)

Fort Wayne: Phoenix Associates Substance Use Program (260) 424-0411

Avenues Recovery Center (260) 909-8343