

## ***When to Be Concerned***

Vicki Winebarger, LMSW, Pathway Family Center  
and  
Melissa Hope, Street Outreach Youth Coordinator, Common Ground Sanctuary

Tuesday, December 11, 2007

December's Parent Education Program was ***When to Be Concerned*** presented by Vicki Weinberger, LMSW of Pathway Family Center and Melissa Hope, Street Outreach Youth Coordinator for Common Ground Sanctuary, on December 11, 2007 at the Doyle Center in Bloomfield Hills and Eton Academy in Birmingham. In addition, the presentation featured a panel of three young people who have experienced drug and alcohol addiction and successfully completed recovery programs.

Ms. Hope began the presentation with a description of Common Ground sanctuary and their many programs for teens and adults in crisis. She then described some facts about substance abuse among teenagers, including: most teens who use alcohol and drugs are doing so for months or even years before their parents find out; parents tend to deny that their children are abusing alcohol and drugs and minimize the problem even when it becomes undeniable; parents blame outside forces for their children's behavior, while teens themselves will admit that they are at fault; before admitting that there may be more serious reasons underlying substance abuse; marijuana use presents special difficulties because so many parents have used it themselves; and drugs available to teens today are much more dangerous than those that were around a few decades ago.

Ms. Hope noted that certain "gateway" drugs such as marijuana, inhalants, and prescription drugs have become the most common drugs abused by teens. Alcohol and cigarette use remains high: twenty percent of seventh graders have tried alcohol. Heroin use has increased because it can now be inhaled (which can itself lead to injection and the risk of HIV). She also discussed the popularity of abuse of over-the-counter and prescription drugs, which are more readily available than ever before.

Finally, Ms. Hope emphasized that strong family relationships and community connections are vital to preventing substance abuse among teens. She recommended that parents let parents know that they are opposed to drug use in clear, certain terms. Ms. Hope also noted that parents should serve as positive role models by using alcohol in moderation and by taking the law very seriously.

Vicki Winebarger began her portion of the presentation by discussing brain research showing that teens are too immature to make sound judgments about risky behaviors. The four stages of addiction are: experimentation; regular use and seeking out friends and occasions in order to make drug use easier; preoccupation with drugs or alcohol and use on most days, including while at school; and the final stage when drugs or alcohol become the sole focus of thoughts and actions.

Ms. Winebarger's talk was followed by personal accounts from the three former addicts, including stories of experimental drug use leading to regular use, harder drugs, lying and stealing to support habits, repeated punishments, and even jail.

Questions from the audience ranged from inquiries about the mechanics of inhalant and prescription drug abuse, the specific signs of substance abuse, what parents can do to prevent abuse, and the effectiveness of recovery programs. Ms. Hope and Ms. Winebarger agreed that substance abuse can often be traced to major losses in a child's life during the pre-teen years. They also emphasized that the best prevention for parent is to spend time with their children, listen to their concerns, and set down clear rules with serious consequences in the event of substance abuse.

**For more information or assistance:**

**Common Ground Sanctuary/[www.commongroundsanctuary.org](http://www.commongroundsanctuary.org)/248-456-8150**

**Pathway Family Center/[www.pathwayfamilycenter.org](http://www.pathwayfamilycenter.org)/800-261-4605**

# Notes from Pathway Family Center

## Prescription Drugs

Many times symptoms are made up in order to get prescription drugs. Adderal and Ritalin are more available & are sometimes stolen from siblings or parents.

### Symptoms of substance abuse to look for include:

Insomnia, extreme weight loss, shakes, increased energy (i.e., constant cleaning) & energy rushes, physical exhaustion, can't sit still, more focused than usual, muscles and bones hurt, increased visibility of veins, mentally drained, mood swings (depending on dosage), anxious and angry, irritability, frequent urination, constipation, sweats, cold hands & feet, euphoria, confidence, introspective, truthful, expressive, body odor (especially from amphetamines)

### Side effects of withdrawal include:

Extreme fatigue, depression, changes in brain wave patterns (altered sleep patterns and potential seizures)

## Warning Signs for Parents

Children who are using drugs often exhibit the following physical signs:

- Loss of appetite, drastic increase in appetite or any other unexplained changes in eating habits
- Slowed or staggering walk, poor physical coordination
- Inability to sleep, awake at unusual time, unusual lack of energy/motivation
- Red, watery eyes or pupils that appear larger or smaller than usual; blank stare
- Cold, sweaty palms or shaking hands
- Puffy face, blushing or paleness
- Smell of substance on breath, body or clothing
- Extreme hyperactivity or excessive talkativeness
- Runny nose or hacking cough
- Needle marks on lower arm, leg or bottom of feet
- Nausea, vomiting or excessive sweating
- Tremors or shaking of feet or head
- Irregular heartbeat

## Drug List

<p><b>Alcohol</b>            Beer            Wine            Liquor            Champagne            Mouthwash            Malt Beverage            Mixed Beverage            Moonshine            Wine Coolers</p>	<p><b>Barbituates</b>            Sleeping Pills            Anti-Depressants            Seroquel            Quaaludes            GHB            Muscle Relaxers            Ultram</p>	<p><b>Amphetamines</b>            Crack            Cocaine            Crystal Meth            Diet Pills            Caffeine</p>
<p><b>Opiates</b>            Heroin            Oxycontin            Codeine            Vicodin            Demerol</p>	<p><b>Marijuana</b>            Hash            Resin            Chronic</p>	<p><b>Hallucinogens</b>            PCP – Angel Dust            LSD            Ecstasy            Mushrooms            Ketamine (Special K)            Peyote            DXM            Mescaline</p>
<p><b>Inhalants</b>            Nitrous            Tetra-Floride            Paint Products            Gas            Glue            Rubber Cement            Freon            White Out            Duster            Aerosol            Cleaning Fluids            Nail Polish Remover            Markers</p>	<p><b>Prescription</b>            Adderal            Ritalin            Concerta            Anti-Depressants            Tylenol            Codeine            Antibiotics</p>	<p><b>Over-Counter</b>            Coricidin            Cough Syrup            Dramamine            Sudafed</p>

*From: Pathway Family Center*