Youth Substance Use Prevention During COVID

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Objectives

- Education on how substance use trends have changed due to COVID
- Focus on the impact that vaping may have on risk of COVID infection
- Provide education on unique challenges that teens face
- Discuss ways that parents and professionals can support healthy ways to manage through these difficult times
COVID Teen Substance Use Trends

- Number of teens using down significantly (~30%) during COVID restrictions (binge drinking, THC, vaping) (J Adol. Health)
- No change in number with overall alcohol use
- Increase in days used among those that did use
Why Would Numbers be Down?

- Less social situations/pressure to use
- Lower access to substances
- More parental supervision
- More time at home
- Less sleep deprivation
- Potentially less academic pressure
- Delayed initial substance use
Use to Cope with COVID

• Reports of anxiety symptoms higher vs. last year (CDC)
• 50% of teens report anxiety struggles
• 43% depressive symptoms
• 2x increase in serious consideration of suicide
• Solitary drinking higher among depressed and COVID concerned teens
• For some teens…more responsibility like child care or jobs
The graph illustrates the relationship between the percentage of face-to-face social activities with friends and the percentage of solitary social activities, categorized by high, mean, and low popularity, as well as low reputation concerns (−1SD) and high reputation concerns (+1SD). The data shows a trend where increased solitary social activities correlate with higher popularity, while increased face-to-face social activities correlate with lower popularity. The graph also indicates that high reputation concerns are associated with a decrease in both solitary and face-to-face social activities, while low reputation concerns show a slight increase in solitary social activities and a decrease in face-to-face social activities. The data points are spread out across the graph, indicating variability within each category.
Increased Adult Alcohol Use

- Alcohol sales are up 55% (243% online) compared to last year. (Nielsen)
- In June alcohol sales had risen 27% since March 7
- What modeling does this provide for youth?
- Opportunity to emphasize adult vs. teen alcohol use
Vaping and COVID

- Shortness of breath, fatigue, chest pain, ventilators
- Growing evidence vaping compromises lung function
- Weakened immune response
Vaping and COVID

- Teens and young adults who vape are 5-7x more likely to get infected (4350 13-24 year olds)
- Results adjusted for confounding factors such as age, sex, race/ethnicity, body mass index, compliance with shelter-in-place orders, rate of COVID-19 diagnosis in the states where the participants were residing
Empathize with Unique Stressors

- Youth missing sports, clubs, dances, graduations, etc.
- Feeling isolation
- Absorbing stress from parents losing jobs, financial problems, health issues, possible death in extended family
Increased Social Media

- Connection
- Boredom
- Curiosity
- Self-medication
- Inaccurate information
- ‘What do I have to lose?’
Social Distancing and Warning Signs

- Extreme mood and behavioral changes
- Unusual smells
- Unreasonable insistence on hanging out with friends
Keep Busy and Healthy

- Allow/help them to continue to connect with friends virtually
- Expect some restlessness and irritability
- Maintain some time structure (schoolwork, chores, family dinner, etc.)
- Get outside if weather permits/exercise
- Use Facetime/talking on phone/social media yourself to connect
Taking Advantage of Time Together

- Use increased conversations (hopefully) to listen to/ empathize with the challenges of youth, including temptations/pressure to use.
- Reinforce expectations regarding substance use based on research (brain development, risk for progression).
Encouraging Virtual Support

• Empathize with initial awkwardness
• Benefits of virtual vs. face-to-face
• Treatment programs and support have embraced virtual
• Try something new!
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