

INTERVENTION

AN EDUCATION GUIDE

The A&E® Emmy® Award-winning and critically acclaimed series *Intervention*® profiles people whose addiction to drugs, alcohol or compulsive behavior has brought them to the brink of destruction and has devastated their family and friends.

The series brings attention to the enormous social, economic and environmental costs of addiction and shows how an intervention can help those who are battling this disease. Interventionists Jeff VanVonderen, Candy Finnigan, Ken Seeley, Sylvia Parsons and Donna Chavous present the life-changing opportunities of an intervention and rehab to individuals on each episode. Each addict must first confront their darkest demons in order to begin their journey to recovery. It can be used to start meaningful conversations either with young people or with anyone whose loved one or friend is struggling with addiction.

CURRICULUM LINKS

Intervention would be useful for Current Events, Journalism, Social Issues and Health courses. It would also be useful for after school programs, community programs or treatment programs. This series is appropriate for advanced high school students, college students and general adult audiences. Due to intense and sensitive content, teachers and parents should view the program before recommending or screening it to students.

Learn more about this series at

<http://www.aetv.com/intervention>.

PRE-VIEWING QUESTION

What does the term “*intervention*” mean? Students can look up the term and define it in writing or by discussing with a group.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

Students can explore the questions below in a group setting, in writing, or one-on-one with another student.

1. What are some of the reasons people become addicted to alcohol, drugs or destructive behaviors?
2. Based on this series, what do you think are some of the warning signs that someone has an addiction?
3. What are some of the ways people can help those who are dealing with addiction?
4. What is an intervention, and in what cases are they necessary? What are the terms of an intervention as presented in the series?
5. What do you think are some ways people can avoid addiction? What tools might they need to help stay away from addictive substances or behaviors?
6. What aspects of this series do you find most memorable, surprising or insightful?
7. How do you think society as a whole can support those who get trapped in an addiction?
8. Have you ever been personally impacted by addiction within your family or community?
9. On *Intervention*, viewers see how addiction can become a “family disease,” which affects everyone in the family. What are some examples of this? How can family members find help when a loved one is addicted?



WHAT IS DRUG ADDICTION?

Addiction is defined as a chronic, relapsing brain disease that is characterized by compulsive drug seeking and use, despite harmful consequences. It is considered a brain disease because drugs change the brain; they change its structure and how it works. These brain changes can be long-lasting and can lead to many harmful, often self-destructive, behaviors.

Source: National Institute on Drug Abuse (NIDA)



RECOVERY SPOTLIGHT

John Golden appeared on *Intervention*[®] in 2006. His story of recovery continues to inspire people.

Q: When did your intervention take place?

A: February 2, 2006 (the second season of *Intervention*) and I am happy to say I've been sober since.

Q: What effect did your intervention have on your life?

A: It was the first piece in my road to recovery. My family set their bottom lines and it forced me to look at myself. They weren't going to enable me anymore, but it showed me just how much they cared about me and the lengths they were willing to go to get me sober. The thought of losing them was enough to scare me into treatment. And I'm glad I decided to go. My recovery gave me the chance to have what I had always wanted. I reconnected with my family and have become closer with my siblings, and was able to start my

own family. I got married in 2011 and my little boy was born in 2012. The intervention turned my life around and allowed me to become responsible, reliable and productive.

Q: What tools and resources have been important to you in maintaining recovery?

A: The principles of the 12 steps of Alcoholics Anonymous have always been at the foundation of my recovery. I think it is important that people in recovery, and especially in early recovery, surround themselves with a strong support system of friends and family and people of good character — this has always kept me on track and encourages me to better myself. Being open-minded and teachable are other traits that are important to recovery.

Q: What advice do you have for those struggling with addiction or those who have family members who are struggling?

A: For those struggling, I would seek help from meetings and sponsors, and reach out to friends and family. Be open and honest about your addiction in order to get the most out of your mentors. Be willing to make changes and sacrifices - and some of those won't be easy — in order to maintain a meaningful recovery. I would

urge their family members to get educated on addiction, as much as they can. There are all kinds of support groups which can help family members gain the upper hand in dealing with an addict and to understand the addiction. Recovery is possible.

Q: Anything else you'd like to add about your experience on Intervention®?

A: I'm very grateful to the show for changing the course of my life. I have always felt that I wasn't just chosen in order to get myself sober, but also to be an example to others who are struggling. The show has been an amazing journey for me. I've had supporters from all over

who relate to my story and are inspired to make changes in their own lives. I use the show when I visit local schools and it provides the students with a visual of my life pre- and post-intervention. Watching the show is a reminder to myself of where I was and where I never want to go back to. I have stayed in touch with some of the staff from the show and they have been incredibly supportive. Without *Intervention*, I'm honestly not sure of where I would be now or how strong my recovery would have been.

I'm very grateful to the show for changing the course of my life. I have always felt that I wasn't just chosen in order to get myself sober, but also to be an example to others who are struggling.

— JOHN GOLDEN



WARNING SIGNS OF DRUG ABUSE

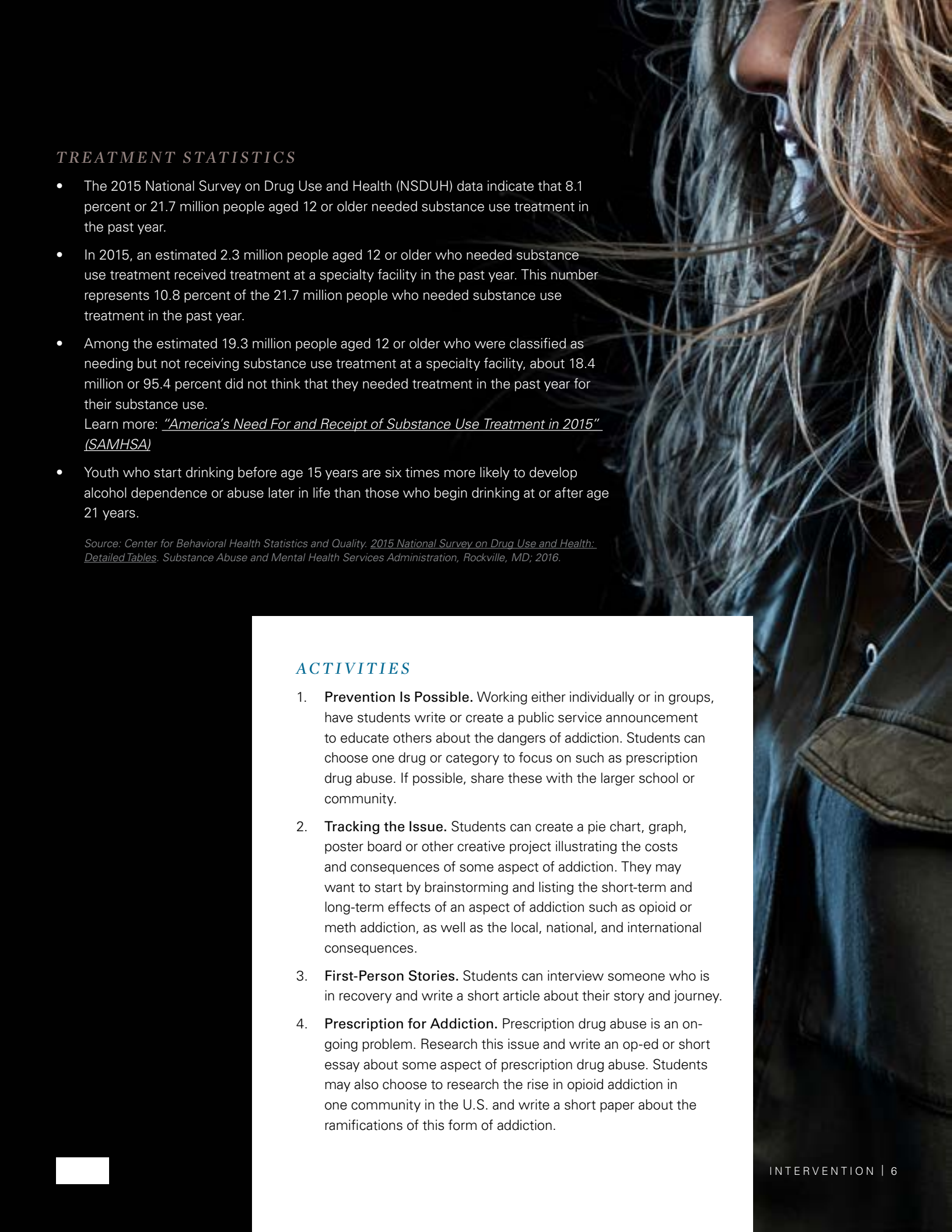
Physical Signs of a Substance Abuse Problem:

- Loss of short-term memory
- Trouble stringing together simple sentences and slurred speech
- Decrease in appetite and severe mood swings
- Poor personal hygiene
- Active one minute and subdued the next
- Inability to concentrate for even short periods of time
- Dilated pupils
- Serious changes in facial coloring

Emotional Signs of a Substance Abuse Problem:

- Highs and lows, a negative outlook on life
- Loss of interest in all social activities even with close friends
- Withdrawn, depressed, serious self-esteem issues
- Happy one minute and angry the next
- Fighting with family members and friends for no reason
- Sleeps in all day after a night out with friends
- Refusal to participate in school and family activities
- Denies there is a substance abuse problem even after they've been caught with drugs in their possession
- Promises to get help but then doesn't follow through with those promises

Visit [Intervention 911](#) for a full list of warning signs and to find additional resources.



TREATMENT STATISTICS

- The 2015 National Survey on Drug Use and Health (NSDUH) data indicate that 8.1 percent or 21.7 million people aged 12 or older needed substance use treatment in the past year.
- In 2015, an estimated 2.3 million people aged 12 or older who needed substance use treatment received treatment at a specialty facility in the past year. This number represents 10.8 percent of the 21.7 million people who needed substance use treatment in the past year.
- Among the estimated 19.3 million people aged 12 or older who were classified as needing but not receiving substance use treatment at a specialty facility, about 18.4 million or 95.4 percent did not think that they needed treatment in the past year for their substance use.
Learn more: [*“America’s Need For and Receipt of Substance Use Treatment in 2015” \(SAMHSA\)*](#)
- Youth who start drinking before age 15 years are six times more likely to develop alcohol dependence or abuse later in life than those who begin drinking at or after age 21 years.

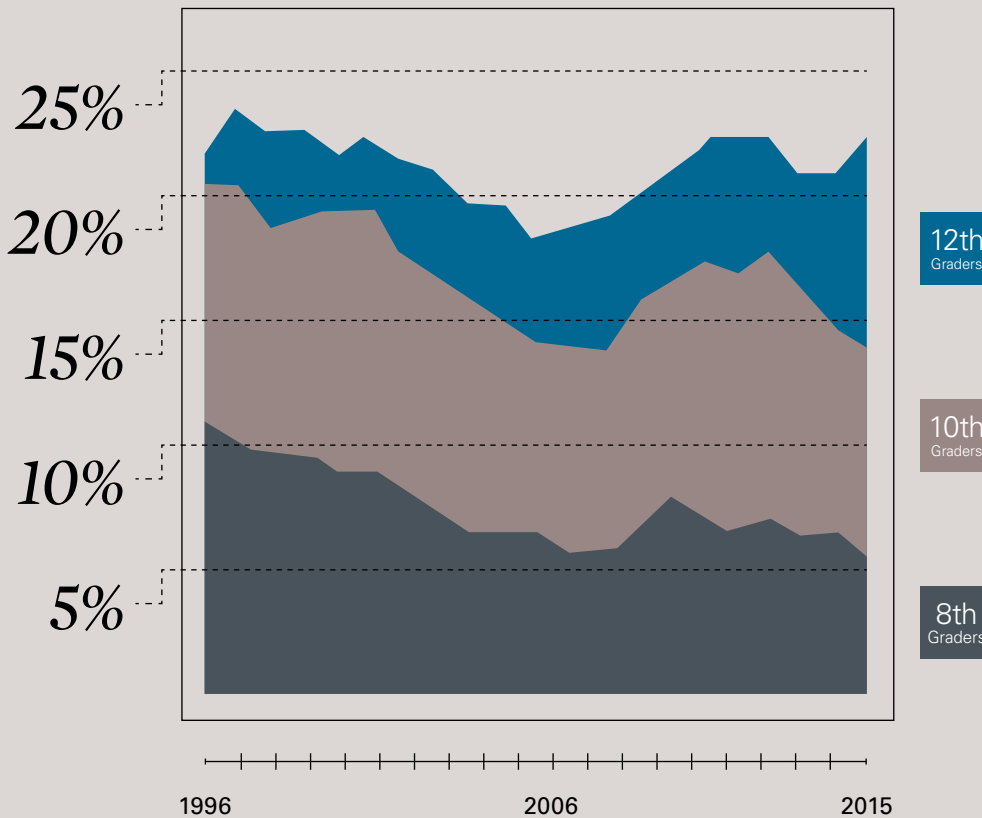
Source: Center for Behavioral Health Statistics and Quality. *2015 National Survey on Drug Use and Health: Detailed Tables*. Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration, Rockville, MD; 2016.

ACTIVITIES

1. **Prevention Is Possible.** Working either individually or in groups, have students write or create a public service announcement to educate others about the dangers of addiction. Students can choose one drug or category to focus on such as prescription drug abuse. If possible, share these with the larger school or community.
2. **Tracking the Issue.** Students can create a pie chart, graph, poster board or other creative project illustrating the costs and consequences of some aspect of addiction. They may want to start by brainstorming and listing the short-term and long-term effects of an aspect of addiction such as opioid or meth addiction, as well as the local, national, and international consequences.
3. **First-Person Stories.** Students can interview someone who is in recovery and write a short article about their story and journey.
4. **Prescription for Addiction.** Prescription drug abuse is an on-going problem. Research this issue and write an op-ed or short essay about some aspect of prescription drug abuse. Students may also choose to research the rise in opioid addiction in one community in the U.S. and write a short paper about the ramifications of this form of addiction.

TEEN MARIJUANA USE REMAINS STEADY

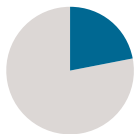
1996 - 2016



DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. What is most interesting or notable to you about this chart?
2. Why do you think the percentage of high school seniors who do not perceive regular marijuana smoking as harmful is so high?

2016



22.5%

12th Graders



14.0%

10th Graders



5.4%

8th Graders

68.9% of high school seniors do not view regular marijuana smoking as harmful, but 68.5% say they disapprove of regular marijuana smoking.

Source: drugabuse.gov.

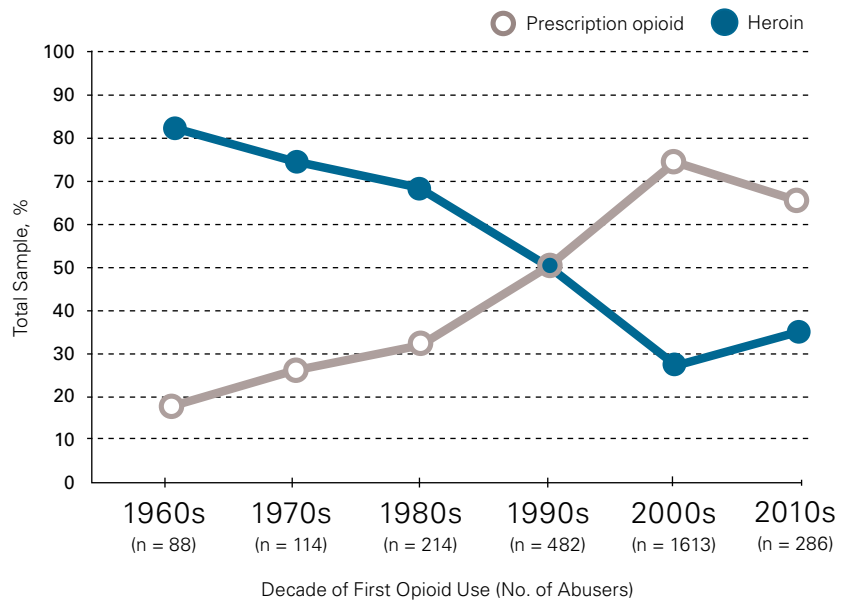
MEDICINE ABUSE PROJECT: DID YOU KNOW? FROM RX TO HEROIN

Nearly half of young people who inject heroin start by abusing prescription (Rx) drugs, in particular, opioids.

Teen abuse of Rx pain medicine usually starts in two ways. Some teens start abusing it at a party or with friends because they're curious or think it will make them feel good. Others start taking it legitimately when prescribed by a doctor, usually after a medical or dental procedure, which in some cases turns to dependence, abuse, addiction and then heroin use.

80% of heroin users reported using prescription opioid prior to heroin.

Source: [National Institute on Drug Abuse](#)

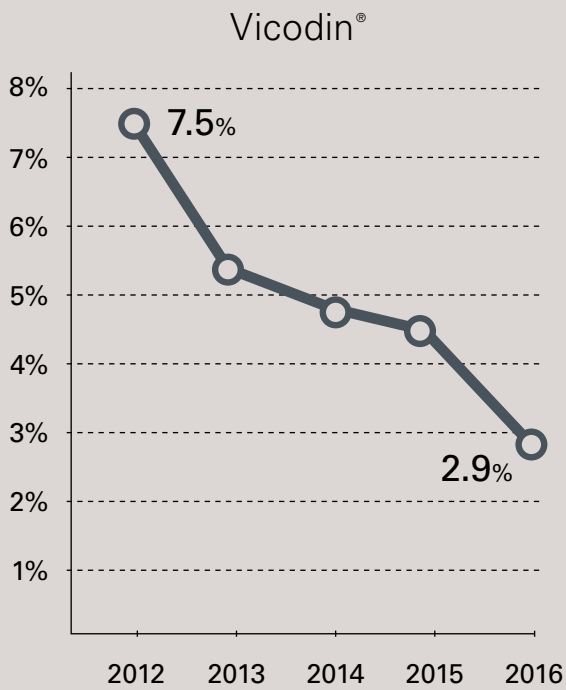


Source: Cicero TJ, Ellis MS, Surratt HL, Kurtz SP. The changing face of heroin use in the United States: a retrospective analysis of the past 50 years. *JAMA Psychiatry*. 2014;71(7):821-826.

DISCUSSION QUESTION

1. What does the chart above tell you about how the rates of abuse of Rx opioids and heroin have changed over the last 20 years?

PRESCRIPTION/ OVER-THE-COUNTER VS. ILLICIT DRUGS



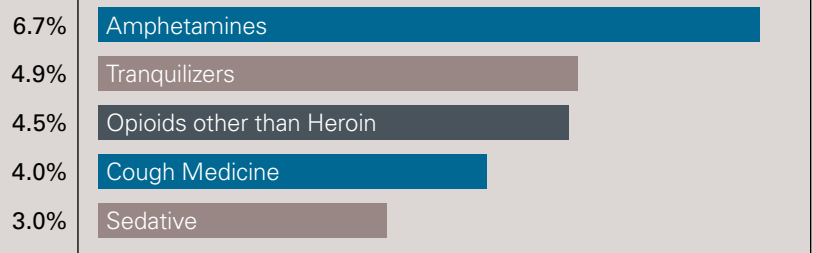
Past-year misuse of Vicodin® among 12th graders has dropped dramatically in the past 5 years. So has misuse of all Rx opioids among 12th graders despite high opioid overdose rates among adults.

Students report lowest rates since start of the survey.

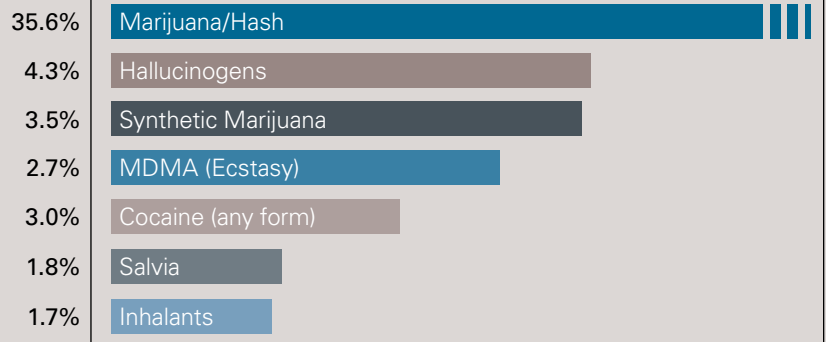
Across all grades, past-year use of inhalants, heroin, methamphetamine, alcohol, cigarettes, and synthetic cannabinoids are at their lowest by many measures.

Source: drugabuse.gov.

Prescription/OTC



Illicit Drugs



Past-year use among 12th graders.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Why do you think past-year use of inhalants, heroin, methamphetamine, alcohol, cigarettes and synthetic cannabinoids are at their lowest?
2. Why do you think there has been such a dramatic drop in use of Vicodin® among teens?
3. What do you think can be done to continue the downward abuse of these drugs?



ABOUT THE MEDICINE ABUSE PROJECT:

Medicine abuse is a national epidemic. More Americans are abusing prescription medicine than ever, and like other types of drug use, problematic behavior often begins during the teen and young adult years. The Medicine Abuse Project provides comprehensive resources for parents and caregivers, law enforcement officials, health care providers, educators and others so that everyone can take a stand and help end medicine abuse.

The Medicine Abuse Project website includes information about prevention of prescription drug abuse, painkiller addiction, and over-the-counter (OTC) medicine abuse. It provides information about how to dispose of medicine and how to safeguard the medicine in your home, as well as lists medicine abuse facts and includes comprehensive information about the most abused prescription drugs.

Visit [*The Medicine Abuse Project*](#) to learn more.



ALCOHOL ABUSE

THE NATIONAL INSTITUTE ON ALCOHOL ABUSE AND ALCOHOLISM (NIAAA) ON UNDERAGE DRINKING

Underage drinking is when anyone under the minimum legal drinking age of 21 drinks alcohol.



- Underage drinking is a risk that attracts many developing adolescents and teens. When young people try alcohol, they often don't realize the damaging effects drinking can have on their own lives, their families and their communities.
- Aside from being illegal, underage drinking is a widespread public health problem that poses many risks.

Visit the [*National Institute on Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism \(NIAAA\)*](#) to learn more about underage drinking.

WIDESPREAD UNDERAGE DRINKING

- During the past month (30 days), 26.4% of underage persons (ages 12–20) used alcohol, and binge drinking among the same age group was 17.4%. ([*Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration \(SAMHSA\)*](#))
- Nearly three quarters of students (72%) have consumed alcohol (more than just a few sips) by the end of high school, and more than a third (37%) have done so by eighth grade. ([*National Institute on Drug Abuse \(NIDA\)*](#))
- Among race demographics, whites had the highest percentage of underage (ages 12–20) past-month alcohol use (30.4%). Asians had the lowest rate at 16.1%. ([*SAMHSA*](#))
- Among underage drinkers (ages 12–20), 30.8% paid for the alcohol the last time they drank — including 8.3% who purchased the alcohol themselves and 22.3% who gave money to someone else to purchase it. Among those who did not pay for the alcohol they drank, 37.4% got it from an unrelated person of legal drinking age; 21.1% received it from a parent, guardian, or other adult family member. ([*SAMHSA*](#))

ALCOHOL USE BY YOUNG PEOPLE

- Young people drink less often than adults, but when they do drink, they drink more than adults.
- On average, young people have about 5 drinks on a single occasion, which can be considered binge drinking.

RISKS OF UNDERAGE DRINKING:

- School problems, such as higher absence and poor or failing grades.
- Social problems, such as fighting and lack of participation in youth activities.
- Legal problems, such as arrest for driving or physically hurting someone while drunk.
- Physical problems, such as hangovers or illnesses.
- Unwanted, unplanned, and unprotected sexual activity.
- Disruption of normal growth and sexual development.
- Physical and sexual assault.
- Higher risk for suicide and homicide.
- Alcohol-related car crashes and other unintentional injuries, such as burns, falls, and drowning.
- Memory problems.
- Abuse of other drugs.
- Changes in brain development that may have life-long effects.
- Death from alcohol poisoning.

The 2015 *Youth Risk Behavior Surveillance System* found that among high school students, during the past 30 days.

- 8% drove after drinking alcohol.
- 20% rode with a driver who had been drinking alcohol.



DID YOU KNOW?

In a recent study, the U.S. Department of Justice estimated that a majority of criminal offenses were under the influence of alcohol alone when they committed their crimes. Alcohol is a factor in 40% of all violent crimes today.

Visit the [*National Council on Alcoholism and Drug Dependence*](#) for more resources and information.



ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

[Partnership for Drug-Free Kids](#)

[NIDA for Teens](#)

[Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration](#)

[Just Think Twice](#)

[A Prescription for Action](#)

[Intervention 911](#)

[Medicine Abuse Project](#)

[Addiction Recovery Guide](#)

FIND HELP ON AETV.COM

These [online resources for treatment](#) can help those who need addiction and recovery assistance.

MEET THE EXPERTS

Meet the [expert interventionists](#) featured on the award-winning A&E series.

BOOKS

Finnigan, Candy with Sean Finnigan. *When Enough Is Enough: A Comprehensive Guide to Successful Intervention* (Avery Press, 2008).

Sheff, Nic. *We All Fall Down: Living with Addiction* (Little, Brown Books for Young Readers, 2012).

Szalavitz, Maia. *Unbroken Brain: A Revolutionary New Way of Understanding Addiction* (Audible Studios, 2016).

Rodgers, Darryl. *A Life Half Lived: A True Story of Love, Addiction, Tragedy, and Hope* (CreateSpace Independent Publishing Platform, 2015).

Jay, Jeff and Debra Jay. *Love First: A Family's Guide to Intervention* (Hazelden, 2008).

Fisher, Gary L. *Understanding Why Addicts Are Not All Alike: Recognizing the Types and How Their Differences Affect Intervention and Treatment* (Praeger, 2011).

Keegan, Kyle. *Chasing the High: A Firsthand Account of One Young Person's Experience with Substance Abuse* (Oxford University Press, 2008).

Hart, Carl L. and Charles Ksir. *Drugs, Society, and Human Behavior* (McGraw-Hill Education, 2014).

