



Workshop B: The Effect of Family Substance Use on the Treatment of Adolescents and Improving the Recovery Environment

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For even the most well-trained professionals, adolescent substance abuse treatment has been difficult. This has been complicated by the legalization of marijuana. The teen population is asked to refrain from drug use but—and legalization has increased this likelihood—can come home to family members who smoke marijuana.

Family engagement in treatment is important. This presentation, in addition to providing considerable data (see power point), provided treatment professionals with strategies and techniques to engage juveniles when the family is *not* supportive of recovery. The significant developmental issues that arise when teens, pre-teens, and young adults use substances were examined, and include:

- Brain development
- Memory and cognition
- Motivational systems and reward
- Appetite
- Immunological function
- Reproduction
- Movement coordination
- Pain regulation

Further, there is growing documentation of increased incidents of substance-induced psychoses converting into schizophrenia, and adolescent cannabis use increasing the risk of psychosis.

Emerging statistics depict a serious and growing juvenile drug problem. Teens and young adults are the biggest abusers of prescription opioids, ADHD, and antianxiety medication.

For every death due to a prescription drug overdose in this population, there were 119 emergency room visits and 22 treatment admissions. Nationwide there is a huge uptick in first use of marijuana amongst the 12 to 17-year-old age group, and more users are becoming heavy users, using daily or almost daily. Of the 14% of users that meet the criteria for treatment, only 8% are referred for treatment.

Trauma-based, cognitive behavioral treatments are proving most effective. Helping professionals are encouraged to:

- Educate (self and others)
- Know the law
- Re-define success
- Refer (evidence-based practice)
- Use motivational interviewing tools



- Engage
- Listen
- Value relationship
- Know your role

While in all substance abuse treatment abstinence is the long-term goal, reaching that goal in a single intervention or treatment period will not often occur, but making a positive difference in the teen's life *is* possible. "If we can teach one skill to the youth, that's a win."