



## Whose Kids?...Our Kids!

### Lincoln-Woodstock Cooperative School District Teen Use of Alcohol, Tobacco and Other Drugs

Recently, the Lincoln-Woodstock Cooperative School District, Grafton County UNH Cooperative Extension, Lin-Wood Drug and Alcohol Committee and community members joined together to learn more about the youth in our community by conducting the Teen Assessment Project (TAP).

Approximately 75% of the students were surveyed in the Lin-Wood School District. In all, information from 153 surveys was used for this newsletter.

		Male	Female
31	7th graders	20	11
25	8th graders	10	15
29	9th graders	13	16
24	10th graders	10	14
23	11th graders	8	15
21	12th graders	10	11

"Whose Kids?...Our Kids!" is a parent newsletter series of the Teen Assessment Project (TAP), a program of the University of New Hampshire Cooperative Extension. Support for this project was provided by a grant received from the State Incentive Grant. The Teen Assessment Project (TAP) originated at the University of Wisconsin at Madison under the direction of Stephen A. Small, Ph.D. TAP in Grafton County is under the direction of Deborah Maes, UNH Cooperative Extension Family Development Educator in cooperation with Charlotte W. Cross, UNH Cooperative Extension, Youth Development Specialist. For more information about TAP call Charlotte W. Cross at (603) 862-2495 or e-mail at [charlotte.cross@unh.edu](mailto:charlotte.cross@unh.edu).

This issue of WHOSE KIDS?...OUR KIDS! looks at the topic of alcohol and other drugs. How often do teens drink and use drugs? Is this part of growing up? Should we be concerned?

Today's teenagers hear mixed messages about drinking alcohol and using other drugs. One minute they hear the simple message, "Just say NO!" or they hear "Don't Drink and Drive." Television commercials, magazine ads, and billboards have a different message. These state that drinking is "fun," "sexy," "romantic," "adult," or "macho." On top of this, teens know adults who use alcohol or pills to relax, to get rid of stress, or to socialize.

#### Alcohol and Drug Use Among Local Teens

About 1 in 7 males (15%) and 2 in 5 females (21%) smoke cigarettes monthly in grades 7-12. Smoking increases from the middle school years to the high school years. Far more high school boys smoke regularly as compared to middle school boys (7%, middle school; 21%, high school). The same is true for girls. In middle school, no females smoke, but in high school, 1 out of 3 girls (31%) smoke.

Teens Who Smoke Tobacco  
(Monthly or More Often)

Percent

■ Male □ Female

Number Responding 150

## Warning Signs of Teenage Alcohol or Drug Abuse

When can you tell a teen has gone beyond trying out drinking or drugs? There are signs that show that a teenager may be abusing, or often using, alcohol or other drugs. The following warning signs show a teen may frequently be drinking or using a drug:

- missing work
- not saying where he or she is going
- lying about where he or she has been
- stopping activities the teen used to enjoy and not filling the time with other fun activities
- getting angry easily and often
- borrowing money from parents or friends
- can't explain loss of money or valuables
- sniffing, running nose; losing appetite; dilated or red eyes
- associating with a new group of friends, often with those who use drugs
- hiding things that would show alcohol or drug use.

Source: National Institute on Drug Abuse

Clearly, teens who think they will get in trouble at home are much less likely to smoke on a monthly basis.

"If your parents knew you were smoking cigarettes, do you think you would get in trouble at home?"

Relationship Between Teens' Level of Smoking and Thinking They'll Be in Trouble at Home

Percentage of Teens Who Smoke Tobacco Monthly

Total  Male  Female

Number Responding 148

Our survey shows more local teens are using alcohol than their parents may expect. The following chart shows many youth have tried alcohol (beer, wine, or hard liquor) even in middle school. The number of youth who have tried alcohol generally increases with age.

Ever Used Alcohol

Percent

Male  Female

Number Responding 151

## Ways Parents Can Help

- Encouraging teenager's abilities and interests.  
Parents need to encourage their teens in activities that develop interests and skills. These activities should help teens feel good about themselves without the use of alcohol or drugs. Hobbies, school events, sports, and volunteer work may keep youth from using alcohol and drugs out of boredom.
- Helping your teen or pre-teen deal with peer pressure.  
Parents can help their teens say no to alcohol/drugs without "losing face." Here are some things teens can say: "I don't like the way it (beer, cigarettes) tastes." "I don't like what it does to my body." "No thanks." "Not today."
- Telling your teen to involve you when needed.  
Let your teen know it is okay to bring you into the conversation if they need to. For example, "My mom is going to give me a driving lesson this afternoon." "If my dad finds out I've been drinking, he'll never let me use the car again."
- Knowing the facts about alcohol and other drugs.  
Parents should know the effects of alcohol/drugs on the body and on driving, and the risks of alcohol/drug abuse.
- Creating strong family ties.  
Strong family ties can help protect against alcohol/drug problems in young people. Family activities (for example, sports, movies, or family meetings) along with open discussions and flexible rules can be particularly helpful. Really listening to your teen, even when you don't agree, will strengthen the ties between you.

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About 1 in 3 students (38%) who said they use alcohol only drink a couple of times a year. Almost 9 out of 10 of the students (88%) in middle school have either never tried alcohol or are not currently drinking. The same holds true for almost half (45%) of high school youth.

### Frequency of Alcohol Use (Of Those Who Drink)

Number Responding 79

How often do teens drink? This is an important question. Frequent drinking can be serious and may hurt a teen's school work, personal relationships, emotional development and health. Of all teens surveyed, only a few (1%) drink every day. One in 20 students (5%) drink alcohol once or more per week (middle school, 2%; high school, 7%). Very few middle school students (2%) and 1 out of 3 high school students (30%) drink alcohol at least once or more per month. Over half (52%) of students report drinking alcohol at some point in the past.

### Teens Who Use Alcohol (Monthly or More Often)

■ Male □ Female

Number Responding 151

Binge drinking is when teens have 5 or more drinks in a row at one time. In response to a question about binge drinking in the past month, about 1 in 10 middle school students (9%) reported they binge drank at least one time in the past month. This rose to 30% by the high school years.

### Ways Parents Can Help

- **Keeping calm.**  
Parents shouldn't get too alarmed. Most teens will use alcohol once in a while and experiment with some other drugs. This doesn't mean parents should accept such use. Still, parents shouldn't overreact. Don't assume your child is an alcoholic or drug addict. Parents should worry if a teenager is involved in frequent, heavy, or very early use of alcohol or other drugs (see "Warning Signs" section of this issue).
- **Guiding and limiting.**  
Prevention of alcohol and drug abuse can begin at home. Parents need to guide their youngsters and set clear and reasonable rules. To do this, parents should:
  - clearly state rules about alcohol and drugs (for example, tell teens not to drink and drive)
  - calmly talk about alcohol/drug use before problems start (for example, use news reports of alcohol-related accidents to discuss the harmful outcomes of drinking)
  - encourage teens to be healthy (for example, eat nutritious foods, exercise, and drive safely).
- **Making a contract.**  
Many families have found it helpful to sit down together. They write up a parent-teen "contract" for no drinking and driving. In the contract, teens agree not to ride in a car when the driver has been drinking. They agree to call their parents for a ride if they or the driver of the car has been drinking. Parents agree to pick up their teens and not discuss the event that night. Discussion is saved for the next morning.

Use of marijuana is lower than alcohol use for both middle and high school youth. Overall, no middle school youth and 1 in 4 (25%) high school youth use marijuana monthly or more often.

### Teens Who Use Marijuana (Monthly or More Often)

■ Male □ Female

Number Responding 151

Alcohol and marijuana are used by local teens more than any other drugs. Most people believe alcohol is not as harmful as other drugs. Still, more Americans die each year from alcohol-related illnesses and accidents than from the use of all illegal drugs combined. Motor vehicle accidents involving alcohol are the leading cause of death for 15- to 19-year-olds.

What role does parental monitoring play in lowering the levels of teen drinking? Parental monitoring is important in preventing adolescent problem behavior. Parental monitoring means parents supervise their children or know where they are and what they're doing. Higher levels of parental monitoring are related to lower levels of alcohol drinking in youth. Young people who are closely supervised rarely drink on a monthly basis.

### Relationship Between Parental Monitoring and Levels of Monthly Teen Drinking

■ Total ■ Male □ Female

Number Responding 151

Where do teenagers get their alcohol?

Almost 1 out of 6 (17%) of local youth get alcohol by taking it from their parents or friend's parent.

Where Teens Get Alcohol  
(Of Those Who Drink)

Number Responding 71

Where do teenagers drink alcohol?

When asked where they drank alcohol, more kids said they drank at parties than any other place. Others said they drank at their homes or their friends' homes with or without permission.

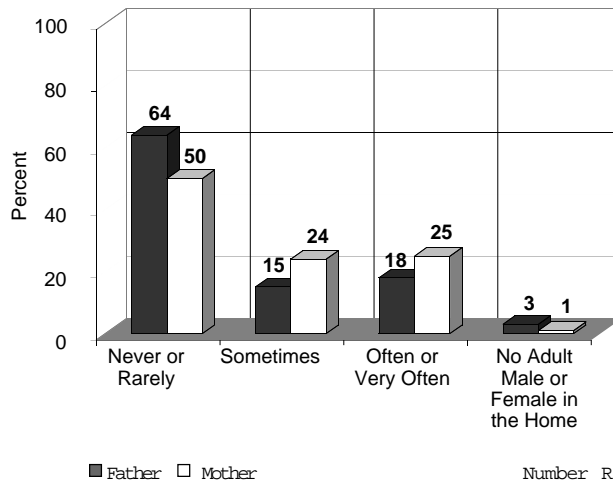
Where Teens Drink Alcohol  
(Of Those Who Drink)

Number Responding 63

## Parent-Teen Communication

Many parents express concern over possible problem drinking and drug abuse among teens. But, they don't always discuss their views and concerns with their children. Or, parents may wait until a problem actually arises before bringing up the topic at all. Our survey of local youth shows many have rarely or never talked with their mothers or fathers about the risks of drinking or taking drugs.

"To what extent have you spoken with your mother or father about the risks of drinking or taking drugs?"



Number Responding About  
Fathers 149 - Mothers 149

Most local teens aren't worried about family alcohol or drug abuse. Still, 1 student in 3 (33%) shows some level of concern. If youth have already started to drink or use drugs themselves, they may not worry quite as much about their parents' drinking or drug use.

"How much do you worry about your parent(s) drinking too much or using drugs?"

Number Responding 151

## Would You Like To Get Involved?

If you are interested in getting involved with others in the community to address teen issues, please call Deborah Maes at 787-6944, Grafton County Cooperative Extension, or Todd Dimmick, Lin-Wood School, 745-2214.

## Further Reading

- Pollack, W. (2000). *Real Boy's Voices*. New York: Random House.
- Pruitt, D.B. (1999). *Your Adolescent*. American Academy of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry. New York: Harper Resources.
- Riera, M. & DiPrisco, J. (2000). *Field Guide To The American Teenager*. Cambridge, MA: Perseus.
- Schaeffer, D. (1996). *Choices and Consequences: What To Do When a Teenager Uses Alcohol/Drugs*. Minneapolis, MN: Johnson Institute Books.
- Steinberg, L. & Levine, A. (1997). *You and Your Adolescent: A Parent's Guide for Ages 10-20*. New York: Harper & Row.
- U.S. Department of Education. (1993). *Growing Up Drug Free: A Parent's Guide to Prevention*. Washington D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office.

## UNH Cooperative Extension Resources:

- Publication Series:  
Living with your Teenager
- Workshop Series:  
Family Focus: Parenting the Adolescent

## Helpful Resources

Abuse	
NH Division for Children, Youth and Families (DCYF) .....	1-800-894-5533
Sexual Assault Support Services .....	1-888-747-7070
Task Force Against Domestic and Sexual Violence .....	536-3432
Alcohol and Drug Abuse	
Alcoholics Anonymous (AA) .....	524-1654 or 1-800-593-3330
Division of Alcohol and Drug Abuse Prevention and Recovery .....	1-800-804-0909
Treatment Hotline .....	1-800-662-4357
Counseling Services	
HELPLINE .....	1-800-852-3388
Parent to Parent of NH Family Support Network .....	1-800-698-5465
NH Legal Assistance .....	1-800-334-3135
Crisis Hot Lines	
Access Crisis Line .....	1-800-987-6562
Boys Town Hotline .....	1-800-448-3000
TeenLine (confidential, for any problem) .....	1-800-639-6095
Youth Crisis Hotline .....	1-800-448-4663
Family Planning/Health Services	
Plymouth Family Planning .....	536-3584
Franklin Family Planning .....	934-4905
Mt. Mooselauke Health Clinic .....	764-5704
Information and Referral	
Help Line (also crisis intervention) .....	1-800-852-3388
Info Link .....	1-888-499-2525
Poison Control .....	1-800-562-8236
Pemi-Baker Youth and Family Services Council .....	536-9773
Runaway	
Child & Family Services of NH Group Home .....	224-9313
National Runaway Switchboard .....	1-800-621-4000
Sexually Transmitted Diseases	
Plymouth Family Planning (testing, info) .....	536-3584
Franklin Family Planning (testing, info) .....	934-4905
Lakes Regional General Hospital .....	524-3211
NH AIDS Hotline .....	1-800-752-2437
Suicide and Depression	
Speare Memorial Hospital .....	536-1120
Franklin Regional Hospital .....	934-2060
Lakes Regional General Hospital .....	524-3211
TeenLine (confidential, for any problem) .....	1-800-639-6095
UNH Cooperative Extension	
Grafton County, Family and 4-H Youth Development .....	787-6944

Also see the "Self-Help Guide to Human Services in N.H." at the front of your telephone book

This newsletter was based on a publication by Susan Silverberg, University of Wisconsin at Madison. The UNH Cooperative Extension newsletter "Whose Kids?...Our Kids!" was edited by Charlotte W. Cross, Extension Specialist, Youth Development and Mary W. Tenke, Ph.D., Extension Specialist, Human Development, with technical assistance from Karen M. Watts, Program Assistant, UNH Cooperative Extension. Desktop publishing provided by UNHCE Educational Marketing & Information Office.

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