

PARENT RESEARCH 2002 EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Concern about Teenage Substance Use:

Overall, parents are quite concerned about teenage substance use in their community.

? Parents are concerned (either “very” or “somewhat”) about the use of the following substances by teenagers in their community:

- ✍ Alcohol – 98.0%
- ✍ Tobacco – 96.0%
- ✍ Marijuana – 95.6%
- ✍ Other illegal drugs – 78.8%
- ✍ Prescription drugs (not prescribed by a doctor) – 75.2%

? **More than half of parents surveyed (55.6%) are most concerned about alcohol.**

Effective Parenting Behaviors:

The 12 Effective Parenting Behaviors are discreet, positive parental behaviors that reduce the incidence of alcohol and other substance abuse among teenage children. These behaviors can be taught and measured and are as follows:

Norms (behaviors and beliefs)

1. Talk to your kids
2. Know who your kids' friends are
3. Teach kids how to have fun without drinking
4. Regularly help with homework
5. Encourage your teen to seek your help on important decisions
6. Eat dinners frequently as a family

Regulation and Enforcement (setting and upholding rules at home, in school, and in the community)

7. Know where your kids are and what they are doing
8. Set and enforce limits and boundaries
9. Praise and discipline your teen when merited

Availability (controlling it through involvement with your child)

10. Do not furnish alcohol to teenagers
11. Do not allow teenagers to consume alcohol in your home
12. Support the legal drinking age of 21

Due to the time constraints of what was a long telephone survey, the parent survey instrument did not measure all 12 behaviors. Several questions on the survey, however, are related to some of the 12 Effective Parenting Behaviors.

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Talk to your kids

- ? Approximately one-third of parents surveyed (34.2%) indicated that they have serious talks about alcohol with their child once a month or more, and 56.0% said that they have these discussions several times per year. The primary topics covered in these discussions are: “drinking and driving” (71.0%), “effects of alcohol on judgment or decision-making” (50.7%), “peer pressure” (48.9%), “negative medical impacts of alcohol” (34.9%), and “parental feelings about underage drinking” (34.1%).
- ? Nearly all parents surveyed (95.8%) believe that they have an open relationship with their child.

Know who your kids' friends are

- ? Ninety-nine percent of parents (98.6%) indicated agreement (either “agree” or “strongly agree”) with the statement, “I know most of my child’s friends”.

Teach kids how to have fun without drinking

- ? Ninety-five percent (95.0%) of parents answered that they “agree” or “strongly agree” with the statement, “I have talked with my child about alternatives to drinking or other ways to have fun.”

Know where your kids are and what they are doing

- ? Parents “always” or “often” ask the following when their child goes out for an evening:
 - ✍ Where s/he will be – 97.4%
 - ✍ Whom s/he will be with – 96.8%
 - ✍ What s/he will be doing – 97.2%
 - ✍ If there will be adult supervision – 80.2%
 - ✍ If alcohol will be present – 51.0%
 - ✍ What the consequences will be if s/he breaks any pre-established rules – 47.8%
- ? Ninety-five percent (95.4%) of parents normally have a conversation with their child about activities and events of the evening when the child comes home. The vast majority of these conversations (91.0%) take place that night. Just over one-third of the total sample of parents (35.2%) have a goal of checking to see if their child has been drinking when the child comes home.

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Set and enforce limits and boundaries

- ? Eighty-six percent (86.2%) of parents have set curfews for their child when s/he goes out for an evening.
- ? Nearly all parents (98.8%) agreed with the statement, “The rules in our family regarding alcohol use are clear”.

Praise and discipline your teen when merited

- ? Six in ten parents who have curfews for their child (60.6%) ground their child when s/he breaks curfew, and others take away privileges for the car (14.8%), phone (6.7%), computer (6.0%), and television (3.7%). Only 3.7% of parents who have curfews for their children indicated that there is no consequence if their child breaks curfew, and 9.0% give warnings when curfew is broken.

Do not furnish alcohol to teenagers

- ? While 80.2% of parents have never allowed their child to drink alcoholic beverages in their presence, 19.8% of those surveyed have allowed their child to drink alcohol in their presence. The circumstances in which parents allow their child to drink alcoholic beverages in their presence include: weddings (42.4% of these parents), holidays (36.4%), family gatherings (23.2%), wine tasting (7.1%), celebrations (6.1%), church (6.1%), and graduations (5.1%).

Support the legal drinking age of 21

- ? Eighty-seven percent (87.4%) of parents indicated that their policy on alcohol as it relates to their child is a “zero tolerance” policy.
- ? Nearly all parents surveyed believe that it is “very inappropriate” for parents to allow a 14 year old to drink alcoholic beverages with no adult supervision (99.0%) or with parental supervision (91.4%). While the vast majority of parents think that it is “very inappropriate” for parents to allow a 17 year old to drink alcohol without an adult present (95.8%), only 69.4% believe it is “very inappropriate” for parents to allow a 17 year old to drink alcoholic beverages with parental supervision.

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Comparisons to the MYDAUS Survey:

The Maine Youth Drug and Alcohol Use Survey (MYDAUS) was instituted by the State of Maine to obtain information about the nature, severity, and range of substance use and abuse among adolescents. The MYDAUS has been administered periodically by the Office of Substance Abuse (OSA) since 1988. The 2002 MYDAUS measures the prevalence of alcohol, tobacco, and other drug use, as well as risk factors for such use. It is important to note that although all public schools in Maine with any grades 6 through 12 were solicited to participate in the survey, the following analysis looks at only grades 8 through 12 so that it can be compared to the research at hand.

Ease of Obtaining Substances:

		Very hard	Hard	Easy	Very easy
Tobacco/ Cigarettes	MYDAUS – teens	16.3%	15.0%	21.5%	47.2%
	Parent survey	2.6%	15.1%	31.3%	51.0%
Alcohol	MYDAUS – teens	16.5%	20.3%	30.5%	32.6%
	Parent survey	2.6%	19.5%	34.8%	43.1%
Marijuana	MYDAUS – teens	19.2%	12.3%	21.0%	47.5%
	Parent survey	3.9%	12.5%	41.8%	41.8%

Notes: For this analysis, MYDAUS results are a total of 8th to 12th grade only, and “Don’t know” answers were excluded from the parent survey.

- ? Parents appear to believe that it is easier to obtain tobacco, alcohol, and marijuana than teenagers who completed the MYDAUS survey.
- ✍ While 68.7% of teenagers indicated that cigarettes are easy (either “easy” or “very easy”) to obtain, 82.3% of parents answered similarly.
 - ✍ Concerning alcohol, 63.1% of teens reported that alcohol is easy to get (either “easy” or “very easy”). Seventy-eight percent (77.8%) of parents answered in a similar manner.
 - ✍ Sixty-eight percent (68.5%) of teenagers who completed the MYDAUS survey indicated that it is easy (either “easy” or “very easy”) to obtain marijuana, while 83.6% of parents said the same.
 - ✍ It is interesting to note that both parents and teens believe that it is easier to get marijuana than it is to get alcohol.

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Agree/Disagree Statements:

“My family has clear rules about alcohol and drug use.” (Teens)				
“The rules in our family regarding alcohol use are clear.” (Parents)				
	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
MYDAUS - teens	5.6%	15.5%	38.6%	40.3%
Parent survey	0.2%	0.6%	10.4%	88.8%
“Do you share your thoughts and feelings with your mother?” (Teens)				
“My child shares her/his thoughts and feelings with me.” (Female parents only, N=267)				
	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
MYDAUS - teens	11.9%	25.8%	37.3%	24.9%
Parent survey	0.4%	2.2%	48.9%	48.5%
“Do you share your thoughts and feelings with your father?” (Teens)				
“My child shares her/his thoughts and feelings with me.” (Male parents only, N=233)				
	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
MYDAUS - teens	21.0%	29.2%	33.6%	16.2%
Parent survey	0.4%	8.4%	52.0%	39.2%

Notes: For this analysis, MYDAUS results are a total of 8th to 12th grade only, and “Don’t know” answers were excluded from the parent survey

* Seventeen percent (17.0%) of the original parent sample answered “Don’t know” to this question.

? Overall, parents showed much more agreement with the statements listed above than did the teenagers who took the MYDAUS.

- ✍ While 99.2% of parents indicated agreement (either “agree” or “strongly agree”) with the fact that the rules in their family about alcohol use are clear, 78.9% of teenagers said that same.
- ✍ Ninety-seven percent (97.4%) of mothers surveyed agreed (either “agree” or “strongly agree”) that their child shares her/his thoughts and feelings with them. However, a much smaller percentage of teenagers – 66.2% - agreed that they share their thoughts and feelings with their mother.

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- Similarly, while 91.2% of fathers surveyed agreed (either “agree” or “strongly agree”) that their child shares her/his thoughts and feelings with them, only 49.8% of teenagers said the same thing.

Experience with Alcohol:

	8 th	9 th	10 th	11 th	12 th	Total
Ever had alcohol (more than a few sips)						
MYDAUS	44.9%	57.5%	68.4%	75.4%	79.2%	65.2%
Parent survey	2.0%	5.0%	9.0%	19.0%	50.0%	17.0%
Had alcohol in past 30 days						
MYDAUS	22.7%	32.1%	38.8%	45.0%	49.1%	37.6%
Parent survey	1.0%	1.0%	1.0%	0.0%	9.0%	2.4%
Binge drinking in past 2 weeks*						
MYDAUS	10.1%	15.4%	21.0%	26.0%	29.5%	20.4%
Parent survey	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	1.0%	0.2%

Notes: For this analysis, MYDAUS results are a total of 8th to 12th grade only;

* binge drinking is defined as having five or more drinks in a row in one sitting.

- Parents appear to greatly underestimate the extent to which their children drink alcohol and their ability to “catch” their children drinking without their permission.
 - A total of 65.2% of teenagers in 8th through 12th grade taking the MYDAUS indicated that they have had more than a few sips of alcohol in their lifetime. Only 17.0% of parents believe that their child has had more than a few sips of alcohol in their life.
 - Similarly, while 37.6% of teenagers reported having had alcoholic beverages in the 30 days preceding the MYDAUS, only 2.4% of parents thought that their child had been drinking alcohol in the month before the parent survey took place.
 - Perhaps the most striking discrepancy comes with binge drinking. While only one parent out of 500 thought that their child had participated in binge drinking in the two weeks prior to being interviewed, a full 20.4% of 8th through 12th graders taking the MYDAUS reported having participated in at least one episode of binge drinking in the two weeks prior to the survey.**