

# Keeping Kids Safe



## Signs of Youth Substance Abuse

### Knowing What to Look For

Signs of substance abuse overlap with symptoms of other behavioral issues. When the behaviors listed below become patterns or intensify, professional assessment is appropriate.



### Behavior & Mood Indicators:

- Mood Swings: uncharacteristic and unexplainable, e.g. sullen, agitated, hostile, crying jags, euphoria, despair
- Motivation and Energy Deficits: abnormally unmotivated,
- "I don't care" attitude, lethargic, lost interest in activities
- Loss of Inhibitions and Self-Controls: shy and quiet becomes gregarious or maybe obnoxious, unusual elation and laughing "at nothing", agitation and restlessness, fidgety
- Physical Coordination and Speech Disruptions: unusually clumsy, stumbling, poor balance, unexplained bruises, cuts or other injuries, slurred or rapid speech

### Relationship & Social Indicators:

- Changes in Peer Group: new friends replace old friends without explanation, friends no longer "come around", social activities reduced to "hanging out"
- Changes in Attitude: disrespect, indifference and insensitivity, deceitful and secretive
- Withdrawn and Isolative
- Silent and Uncommunicative

### School & Work Indicators:

- Drop in effort and grades
- Loss of interest in activities
- Increased absences
- Caught in possession or intoxicated

### Physical & Health Indicators:

- Frequent illnesses and/or unexplained symptoms: runny or bloody noses, sores around mouth, picking at skin, unusual abrasions or bruises, vomiting, headaches and sweatiness
- Dramatic weight loss or gain
- Fluctuations in sleep