

Maryvale High School has implemented the High School Health and Wellness (HSHW) grant in partnership with the Governor's Office of Youth, Faith and Family. HSHW is a substance use prevention grant that allows the Maryvale community to utilize a comprehensive evidenced based prevention curriculum, provide prevention resources, and workshops/in services to all stakeholder groups. The goal of the HSHW grant is to create a drug-free learning environment by increasing awareness to prevent, reduce or eliminate risk behaviors. The HSHW team has created this newsletter to educate staff members on substance use trends and empower staff to support and refer students who may be at-risk. For more information or to schedule a workshop, please reach out to a HSHW Prevention Team member.

### Side Note

How do I help students that are engaging in underage drinking?

Staff can also help develop and create a sense of belonging, attachment and protection for students, which counteracts tendencies toward abuse of alcohol. The Center of Addiction and Mental Health suggest the following actions that staff can take to support students:

- Set clear classroom boundaries with clear rules and consequences
- Praise youths achievement and accomplishments
- Acknowledge success and abilities
- Model a sense of optimism and positive view of learning
- Keep clear channels of communication open
- Be a good listener
- Keep an open mind
- Ask students for opinions
- Encourage participation in extra curricular activities

### What's impacting schools today? Alcohol



Each year, approximately 5,000 young people under the age of 21 die as a result of underage drinking; this includes about 1,900 deaths from motor vehicle crashes, 1,600 as a result of homicides, 300 from suicide, as well as hundreds from other injuries such as falls, burns, and drownings. Yet drinking continues to be widespread among adolescents. Let's look at some of our state and school data.

#### Arizona Statistics

- According to the Arizona Youth Survey (AYS) the #1 most commonly reported substance ever used across 8th, 10th, and 12th grade youth was alcohol (45 percent).
- In 2018, the most frequently reported source for youth obtaining alcohol was at a party (47.1 percent) and from a relative over 21 (22.6 percent).
- 20% of 8, 10, and 12 graders in Arizona have drank alcohol in the last 30 days.

#### Phoenix Union High School District Statistics

- 45% of 10 and 12 graders have tried alcohol at least once
- 17% of 12 graders have drank alcohol in the last 30 days
- 35% of students (who reported using substances) said the #1 reason they consumed substances was to 'get high' or 'feel good'
- The highest reason for 10 and 12<sup>th</sup> graders **not** using substances was 'lack of interest' (75%).

### Alcohol Affects the Teenage Brain

Mounting evidence suggests that underage drinking causes greater damage to the teenage brain than previously thought. The two areas of the brain at the greatest risk of damage are the hippocampus, which is responsible for learning and memory, and the prefrontal cortex, which is responsible for decision-making.

Damage from underage drinking can lead to loss of motor skills, difficulty in learning new things, and problems with memory. Adolescent drinkers scored worse than non-drinkers on vocabulary, general information, memory recall, and visual-spacing functioning assessments. Research on underage drinking continues to prove that alcohol is not a harmless drug. It is actually associated with many real and serious consequences

**Did you know?** binge drinking during adolescence may permanently change brain function



## Why do some adolescents drink?

There is **no single** reason why teenagers use alcohol but here are some of the core issues and influences behind the behavior of teenage alcohol use.

**Risk Taking** - Research shows the brain keeps developing well into the twenties. Scientists believe that this lengthy developmental period may help explain some of the behavior, which is characteristic of adolescence—such as their propensity to seek out new and potentially dangerous situations. For some teens, thrill-seeking might include experimenting with alcohol.

**Expectancies** - How people view alcohol and its effects also influences their drinking behavior, including whether they begin to drink and how much. An adolescent who expects drinking to be a pleasurable experience is more likely to drink than one who does not.

**Sensitivity and Tolerance to Alcohol** – Many young drinkers are able to consume much larger amounts of alcohol than adults before experiencing the negative consequences of drinking, such as drowsiness, lack of coordination, and withdrawal/hangover effects. This unusual tolerance may help to explain the high rates of binge drinking among young adults.



**Personality Characteristics and Psychiatric Comorbidity**— Children who begin to drink at a very early age (before age 12) often share similar personality characteristics that may make them more likely to start drinking. Young people who are disruptive, hyperactive, and aggressive—often referred to as having conduct problems or being antisocial—as well as those who are depressed, withdrawn, or anxious, may be at greatest risk for alcohol problems.

**Hereditary Factors**—Being a child of an alcoholic or having several alcoholic family members places a person at greater risk for alcohol problems. Children of alcoholics (COAs) are between 4 and 10 times more likely to become alcoholics themselves than are children who have no close relatives with alcoholism.

**Environmental Aspects**— Environmental factors, such as the influence of parents and peers, also play a role in alcohol use. For example, parents who drink more and who view drinking favorably may have children who drink more, and an adolescent girl with an older or adult boyfriend is more likely to use alcohol and other drugs and to engage in delinquent behaviors.



*Contrary to popular belief, the peer effect is not entirely due to 'pressure' from peers to use but often indicates a choice by some young people to hang out with friends who use substances or hold similar attitudes.*

## What to Watch For!

How can I tell if a student has been drinking? Here are some warning signs:

- Exhibits mood changes or emotional instability
- Academic and/or behavioral problems in school
- Rebelliousness
- Changing groups of friends
- Low energy level
- Less interest in activities and/or care in appearance
- Finding alcohol among a young person's things
- Smelling alcohol on a young person's breath
- Problems concentrating and/or remembering
- Slurred speech
- Coordination problems

There are many tell tail signs of alcohol use, but it is important that staff are vigilant and paying attention to behavioral or physical changes in students. Do not be afraid to reach out to your HSHW Team and ask how you can support students you think might be using illicit substances.

Our culture has a habit of justifying certain types of teen and young adult substance use as perfectly normal, but research indicates otherwise. Ninety percent of addictions begin during the teen years