

Health Awareness

Substance Abuse: What You Need To Know Now

(NAPSA)—If you or someone you care about is constantly late for work or school, misses deadlines, alienates family, feels isolated, helpless or ashamed and uses alcohol, marijuana, opiates or other drugs—or misuses prescription medications—the problem may be a substance use disorder. If so, it's important to recognize that treatment can help you recover your ability to live a full life.

“Substance use disorder is not a moral flaw or personal failing. It is a complex brain illness—commonly associated with genetic and biological factors—that interferes with a person's day-to-day ability to function,” said Martin Rosenzweig, M.D., senior medical director, Behavioral Solutions at Optum. “Unfortunately, the stigma associated with having a substance use disorder often deters people from seeking treatment.”

Young Adults at Risk

According to Dr. Rosenzweig, teens and those in their early 20s are particularly vulnerable to struggling with substance use. That's because their brains are still developing and they're susceptible to peer pressure and partaking in risky behaviors.

The rate of substance use disorder among people ages 18 to 25 is twice that of adults 26 and older, according to the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. More than one-third of the nation's 35 million 18- to 25-year-olds reported binge drinking (generally defined as having five or more drinks on the same occasion) and roughly one-fifth reported using an illicit drug in the past month. Heroin use more than doubled among this age group in the past decade.

Parents should be alert to poten-



When it comes to a substance abuse disorder, the good news is that timely treatment can help lead to recovery.

tial warning signs of substance use disorder among their children. Suddenly declining grades, peer group changes, moodiness, secretiveness and withdrawal from activities may be red flags.

Treatment

Effective treatment for substance use disorders includes:

- Medication
- Individual and group counseling
- Intensive outpatient treatment
- Treatment in a live-in health care facility supervised by trained staff
- Community-based support programs.

Treatment can occur in different settings. A person with a substance use disorder may not necessarily need medication or all the treatment services listed above.

“It is important to develop a support system to help avoid a relapse and promote long-term recovery,” said Dr. Rosenzweig. “Natural support systems such as family, friends and peers in your community can be involved in your recovery effort if you attend a local treatment clinic or center.”

Learn More

For further facts about substance use disorders, visit www.optum.com/recovery.

Note to Editors: Although October is National Substance Use Prevention Month, this information can be useful to your readers at any time.