

# What Parents Need to Know About Adolescent Drug Use

## Attitudes

- Attitudes among fifth and sixth graders toward tobacco, alcohol, and other drugs—as well as their actual levels of drug use—foretell their attitudes and their levels of drug use four years later.

## Early Use

- Young people who use drugs most often begin at age 12 or 13. They tend to move from tobacco, alcohol, and inhalants to marijuana and then to other drugs.
- Few young people see the harm in using drugs. Yet understanding the harm associated with drugs is important to preventing drug use in youths.
- The earlier in life a young person starts using any drug, the more likely he or she is to become dependent and go on to other drugs.
- Early drug use is strongly associated with other problem behaviors such as lying, stealing, poor school performance, and promiscuous sexual activity.

## Positive Activities

- Activities that tend to discourage drug use include sports, exercise, and volunteer work.
- Most young people learn about drugs from their friends and are usually offered drugs the first time at home when no adults are around.

## Parents

- Drug-abusing adolescents may set themselves up to be “caught” by their parents. Such adolescents may flaunt or even advertise their drug use in an attempt to provoke parental attention and concern.

## MEETING 3 HANDOUT 1

- ❑ In a major study of 1,000 young people, a majority stated that all drugs, from alcohol to crack cocaine, are readily available to anyone who wants them. Many of those who did not use drugs explained, "My parents would be angry" or "I would not want to disappoint my parents." These young people felt that their parents' expectations and their family's open communication helped them resist drugs.

### Prevention

- ❑ Prevention efforts can work. When young people understand the harmful effects of drugs and when they know their friends and families disapprove of drug use, they tend to avoid drugs.

### Question for Group Discussion:

- ❑ What insights does this information give you concerning adolescents and drug use?