

A Weekly FAX from the Center for Substance Abuse Research

University of Maryland, College Park

CASA Report Identifies Four Characteristics of “Problem Parents”

“Although virtually all mothers and fathers are concerned about the challenges of raising their kids in today’s world, many fail to take essential actions to prevent their kids from smoking, drinking or using drugs,” according to a report from the National Center on Addiction and Substance Abuse at Columbia University (CASA). Using data from a telephone survey of teens and parents, CASA defines “problem parents” as those who fail to 1) monitor their children’s school night activities; 2) safeguard prescription drugs in the home; 3) address the problem of drugs in schools; and 4) set a good example.

Failure to Monitor School Night Socializing

- Nearly one-half (46%) of teens say that they typically go out with friends on school nights, while only 14% of parents say that their teens do so.
- Once out, 53% of teens come home between 8:00 and 10:00 p.m. and 15% come home later.
- The later teens stay out, the more likely they are to use alcohol or other drugs—even among older teens. Nearly one-third (29%) of those who come home between 8:00 and 10:00 p.m. and 50% of those who come home after 10:00 p.m. say there’s alcohol or drug use among the kids they are with.

Failure to Safeguard Prescription Drugs

- One-third of teens who know someone who abuses prescription drugs say that person gets the drugs from parents, home, or medicine cabinets.

Failure to Address Drugs in School

- One-third of parents think that the presence of drugs in school does not make it more likely that their child will use drugs. Yet previous CASA surveys have found that teens attending schools where drugs are used, kept, or sold are 5 times more likely to use marijuana, 15 times more likely to use prescription drugs, and 16 times more likely to use an illegal drug (other than marijuana or prescription drugs).

Failure to Set a Good Example

- One-fourth of all teens know a parent of a classmate or friend who uses marijuana—and 10% say that this parent smokes with people the teens’ age.

According to CASA, “by identifying the characteristics of these problem parents, we hope to identify actions that parents can take—and avoid—in order to raise healthy, drug-free children and become part of the solution” (p. iii).

NOTES: Data are from a random sample of households in the 48 continental states who had a youth ages 12 to 17 living in the household. Telephone interviews were conducted between April 3 and May 13, 2008 with 1,002 teens and between April 17 and June 3, 2008 with 312 parents of interviewed teens. The margin of error is +/-3.1 percent for the teen survey and +/-5.5 percent for the parent survey.

SOURCE: Adapted by CESAR from The National Center on Addiction and Substance Abuse at Columbia University (CASA), *National Survey of American Attitudes on Substance Abuse XIII: Teens and Parents*, August 2008. Available online at <http://www.casacolumbia.org/articlefiles/380-2008%20Teen%20Survey%20Report.pdf>.