

Healthy Androscoggin

Sub-cultural Needs Assessment of Young Adults

July 2006

Introduction and Problem Statement:

- ❖ Healthy Androscoggin Community Coalition created a survey and held five focus groups to learn more about the substance use of young adults, ages 18-25, who live and work in Androscoggin County and who are not enrolled in college full-time.
- ❖ Little research on the substance use patterns and characteristics of this group exists and few strategies have been tested or proven effective in preventing or reducing substance use for young adults not enrolled in college.
- ❖ These young adults are sometimes referred to as “emerging adults” meaning that they no longer see themselves as adolescents, but also do not yet fully view themselves as adults. Societal changes, including delaying marriage and having children, have in some ways lengthened the maturation process; hence the concept of emerging adults.

Interesting Findings from our Survey:

- ❖ In our survey of 218 young adults, we found that 58.3% of the respondents reported smoking tobacco at least once in the past 30 days.
- ❖ 63.8% of the respondents reported drinking in the last 30 days and drinkers also reported an average of 10.8 binges (defined as five or more drinks in one sitting) over the past 30 days.
- ❖ 27.5% of the sample reported smoking marijuana in the last 30 days, and 10.6% of the sample were frequent marijuana users, reporting more than 20 days of use in the last month.

Table 1. Percentage of Respondents Using Specific Drugs in Past 30 Days

Drug	Percent Using:
Any Tobacco	59.9%
Cigarette use	58.3%
Alcohol	63.8%
Binge Alcohol Use* (defined as 5 or more drinks in one sitting)	38.4%
Marijuana	27.5%
Any Illicit Drug Use	29.0%
Any Illicit Drug Use Other than Marijuana	7.3%



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Summary of Focus Group Findings:

- ❖ In addition to conducting a survey of young adults, we also held a series of five focus groups. In general, the focus group participants reported widespread substance use and noted that minors could purchase alcohol and cigarettes at a variety of sites with little difficulty.
- ❖ We discovered the young adults had much more confidence in people, and particularly health professionals, than in written materials or religious sources, for help with substance abuse. Health professional and friends were most often endorsed as advocates in situations when someone needed assistance with a drug or alcohol abuse problem.

Barriers to Culturally Competent Services and Recommendations:

- ❖ From our research, we learned that because few young adults have experienced negative effects of their substance use, they are less motivated to change their behavior. This is one barrier that needs to be overcome.
- ❖ One of the main goals in developing culturally competent services is to help young adults think differently about their choices. Recognizing that an emerging young adult is in a period of transition and using a non-judgmental and non-confrontational approach when discussing substance use is highly recommended.
- ❖ We also recommend multiple strategies to help young adults change their substance use behavior, some of which include:
 - Educating health professionals and social service providers who interact with young adults in medical offices, clinics, home visits, etc. to routinely ask about substance use
 - Increasing perceived risk of substance use with awareness campaign demonstrating the real and harmful effects of drug use
 - Implementing an effective social marketing campaign to target social norms surrounding substance use to encourage young adults to stop and evaluate their behavior
 - Decreasing the availability of substances by working with local law enforcement
 - Creating opportunities for young adults to critically examine their substance use with self-assessment tools

For general information call: Healthy Androscoggin at 207-795-5990

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