

*During the school year, NNHS distributes a monthly "Healthy Huskies Letter." The goal of the newsletter is to enhance our school's partnership with families, particularly by sharing our knowledge of various topics related to your child's social, emotional, and physical health, and what families and the school can do to promote teen healthiness. Each issue addresses a different health topic and will contain resources for further exploration of that topic. Professional staff at NNHS as well as the School, Family, Community Partnership (SFCP), are advisors for these newsletters; we encourage parents and students to suggest topics and resources. Send suggestions to [kpobst@naperville203.org](mailto:kpobst@naperville203.org).*

## **Healthy Huskies Letter**

### **Vol. 1, No. 5, March 31, 2013**

Our first Healthy Huskies Letter in November of 2012 was primarily an encouragement to parents to have conversations with their sons and daughters about where their family stands on use of illegal drugs. The November HHL offered tips on how to prepare for and to conduct that conversation. It was intended to be "Part One" of several HHLs focused on teen use of illegal drugs. This March edition of the HHL (today is still March!) is "Part Two." As a handy reference, and reiteration, the November HHL is reproduced below after this March HHL.

This "Part Two" describes indicators of teen drug use, followed by links to current information about the drugs most commonly used by DuPage County teens.

Data collected in our school district show that a substantial majority of teens are not using illegal drugs. However, our experience at NNHS shows that those who do use illegal drugs come from varied backgrounds and from all "types" of families. Stereotypes do not apply. We advise all parents to be vigilant in lovingly but carefully monitoring their teens' activities and behavior patterns.

#### **Specifically, for what can a parent watch?**

##### **SIGNS of DRUG USE**

*Often teens' lives are not characterized by consistency. However, dramatic changes, or persistent change in the trajectory of behavior, may accompany drug use:*

- Grades. Grades drop; homework is not completed.
- Conscientiousness. A student whose pattern has been to take care in completing work and projects begins a new pattern of carelessness and superficiality.
- Truancy and Tardiness. Teachers report lateness to class; the Dean reports cutting classes. He may be late to family events or out-of-school activities.
- Friends. New friends are in and old friends are out. The new friends may not be interested in activities that she has been involved in for many years and the new friends may be kept at a distance from you.

*Many healthy teens do each or all of the following. A significant increase in the frequency and degree of these behaviors is what may accompany drug use:*

- Secrecy. Many teens keep the details of their life as private as they possibly can, but unhealthy behavior can be accompanied by a significant increase in the degree of secretiveness.
- Lying. In order to keep the details of their life private, and to increase freedom, some teens will lie about their activities and behavior.
- Mood. Substantial mood swings are characteristic of teens. But if the depth and persistence of mood swings increases, it can be a signal.

- Activity. Like mood, activity levels can swing dramatically. High energy followed by lethargy, or long hours awake followed by long hours sleeping, can be a signal.
- Your Relationship. Teens who use drugs can become much more defensive, argumentative, disrespectful and hostile.

*In many cases physical symptoms of drug use may appear:*

- Out of It. The teen may appear to be dazed, dull, or just “out of it.”
- Coloring. He may appear pale or flushed.
- Giddy. Alternatively, the teen may seem excessively and unaccountably giddy.
- Eyes. Her eyes may be blood-shot or have dark circles beneath them.
- Weight loss. He may have a dramatically reduced appetite and have significant weight loss.
- Perpetual Cold. She may seem to have a cold that won’t go away—sniffing, coughing, red eyes.

**The latest information about drugs used by teens is made available to us from the Rosecrance Health Network:**

- [Prescription Drugs](#)—More teens abuse prescription drugs than any illicit drug except marijuana;
- [Alcohol](#)—consuming energy drinks mixed with alcohol results in an increase in the number of alcohol-related injuries because the perception of impairment is diminished;
- [Marijuana](#)—Marijuana is the most widely available and used illegal drug;
- [K2 Herb](#)—K2 is illegal in Illinois, but it is still legal in other states. K2 is sold as an herbal incense in stores and over the Internet;
- [Heroin](#)—Heroin overdose is a particular risk because the amount and purity of the drug cannot be accurately known to the user;
- [Cocaine](#)—Cocaine and alcohol is the most common two-drug combination that results in drug-related deaths;
- [Methamphetamines](#)—High doses of methamphetamines can elevate body temperature to dangerous and sometimes lethal levels, as well as causing convulsions.

Below, the November 2012 Healthy Huskies Letter is reproduced for your review. Monitoring your son’s or daughter’s activity and behavior is an act of caring and love, not meddling and disrespect. If you see the behavioral or physical symptoms that might indicate drug use, take on the conversation you need to have with your son or daughter and reach out to the resources listed at the bottom of the November Healthy Huskies Letter. As noted in November, now is the time to act, when the consequences of his or her substance use can be modest.

Please, consider Naperville North High School to be your partner.

## **Healthy Huskies Letter**

**Vol. 1, No. 1, November, 2012**

According to the latest *Power of Choice* survey (2012), only 29% of high school students reported that their parents talked to them about their family’s rules against underage drinking. In our school of about 3100 students, approximately 900 students heard from their parents, but over 2200 students did not. The primary work of NNHS is academic preparation; most of our staff members are classroom teachers. However, we also have staff with expertise in healthy teen decision making. We often work with

students and families who struggle with the consequences of not making healthy decisions. We want to share with you the expertise acquired through experience and training.

Lately, there has been a lot of attention paid to young adult substance abuse in DuPage County, particularly to the scourge of heroin. Our data shows that most NNHS students are making healthy decisions, rejecting drug and alcohol use. We do not have any indication that substance use by teens at NNHS is any greater than it has been throughout the last decade or greater than other DuPage high schools. However, we are concerned if any student uses illegal substances; the risk to their health, future, and life is real. The staff of NNHS is committed to partnering with families to help our young adults make healthy decisions.

Experts in substance abuse prevention are clear about a crucial factor in teen decision-making: parents are the “anti-drug.” Before the world embraced texting, Facebook, and other social media, face-to-face conversations were more common between parents and their sons and daughters. Research tells us that parent opinions positively influence their teens, especially conversations about the most challenging decisions they will face. We encourage you to have these important conversations with your teens.

Specifically what can a parent do?

#### **TALK**

- Educate yourself. Become knowledgeable about current patterns of drug use and addiction.
- Be clear. Talk to your son or daughter about the consequences your teen will face if they break your family’s rules against underage drinking and drug use.
- Disapprove. Tell your teen and his or her friends that you do not approve of teens using alcohol, tobacco, and other drugs.
- Family. Talk about how drug use not only affects your child, but family and friends as well.
- Set a good example. Model behaviors you want your children to emulate; your actions can drown-out your words.
- Legal consequences. Discuss negative consequences your child would face if he or she breaks the laws regarding use of illegal substances.
- Persist. Remind and repeat, again and again!

#### **ACT**

- Love. Your vigilance is genuinely a good way to love your child.
- Limits. Curfews, expectations, and rules are not oppressive, they are caring and smart. Set limits.
- Instincts. If you sense that your son or daughter may be using, you are probably correct. Trust your instincts.
- Check. It is not wrong to snoop. Check your child’s room for alcohol, drugs and paraphernalia.
- Check-in. Make sure your child checks-in with you when they come home from events; look at their eyes and smell their breath.
- Monitor. Keep track of the prescriptions and alcohol in your house.
- Confront. Respectfully confront your child if you think they are using; do it in a way that keeps them talking to you.
- Breathe. Take a deep breath when you hear things you don’t want to hear. Listen. Keep communication open.

## **REACH OUT**

- Consult. Contact school staff, especially Nurses, Social Workers and Guidance Counselors (see contact information below).
- Seek. There are many resources in the community and online that can provide advice, intervention and education (see list below).
- Reach Out. Not talking about “it” is a bad idea. If your child is using, this is no time to isolate yourself. Get over being embarrassed. Seek advice and help. Turn to your extended family. Talk to your friends. Your friends will understand, and if they don’t, your child’s health and future matter more than those friendships. The parents of young adults who have passed away from drug abuse consistently say that they made the mistake of withdrawing and isolating themselves because of the stigma attached to having a child involved in drugs and alcohol.

## **RESOURCES**

[NNHS Social Workers, Nurses and Guidance Counselors](#)

### **Local Resources:**

360 Youth Services, 630-717-9408

Naperville Police Social Workers, 630-420-6666

Rosecrance Health Network, 630-849-4295

Linden Oaks (Edward Hospital) 630-305-5500

Breaking Free, 630-4897-1003

Stepping Stones Treatment and Recovery Center, 815-744-4555

Timberline Knolls, 630-257-9600

Alexian Brothers Behavioral Health Hospital, 800-432-5005

Elmhurst Hospital 630-941-4577

Resurrection Behavioral Health-Addiction Services, 847-493-3600

### **Websites:**

[www.thepowerofchoice.info](http://www.thepowerofchoice.info)

[www.theantidrug.com](http://www.theantidrug.com)

[www.drugabuse.gov](http://www.drugabuse.gov)

[www.drugfree.org](http://www.drugfree.org)

[www.robertcrown.org/HeroinEducation/index.html](http://www.robertcrown.org/HeroinEducation/index.html)

[www.monitoringthefuture.org](http://www.monitoringthefuture.org)

[www.dea.gov](http://www.dea.gov)

Please, invest the time to talk now before the poor choices are made. If you make the time to talk to your child now, when he or she is a young teen, the consequences of his or her substance use can be modest. If you wait to have the conversations, or you avoid them entirely, the consequences of his or her use can be much worse. Your conversations could even be the difference between life and death.

Please, consider Naperville North High School to be your partner.