

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.

Healthy Huskies Letter

Vol. 2, No. 2, November-December, 2013

In November, 2012 and March, 2013, we posted "Healthy Huskies Letters" through which we shared with our parents encouragement to have conversations with sons and daughters about use of illegal drugs. The danger of drug use for students grows in an atmosphere of silence and stigmatization. One of the most powerful weapons against student drug use is open communication within families, between families, and between families and various organizations in our community, including schools. Below, we are re-sending to you those Healthy Huskies Letters. First, immediately below, is a letter from our Director of Students Services, Jeff Farson. Please read and reflect on his letter.

Huskies and Huskie families,

It's time to be frank. We have a national epidemic, a suburban nemesis, and a DuPage County crisis on our hands. It is robbing our young people of their dreams and has parents, police, legislators, and educators pacing – and gasping – at an intensity not seen in years. Describing it as a "bad, dirty disease," County Coroner Rich Jorgenson is calling for all of us, including Naperville North High School, to "wake up" with respect to heroin use among our youth.

*Heroin is a highly addictive drug that inhibits the central nervous system and can be injected, snorted, orally ingested, or smoked. It is classified as a Schedule I Drug under the Controlled Substances Act of 1970, and, as such, has **no** acceptable medical use in the United States. It's cheap, easy to find (some students claim that "Heroin is easier to get than alcohol"), and it's here – in Naperville – tempting the invincibility of teenagers with its promised euphoria and escape.*

Heroin is a monster. It hides in plain sight of intelligent, motivated students. It makes its way into supportive, tight-knit families. It doesn't necessarily have a "look" or a "culture" surrounding it, but it's loaded like a mousetrap, just waiting for an unsuspecting or uneducated athlete, musician, scholar, square peg, or troubled kid to wander in to its grip. Heroin is not recreational, and it's not keen on test-drives. As a matter of fact, one in four users becomes addicted. How powerful is it? Physical addiction symptoms can occur within three days of use.

The drug provides users with an initial "rush" which can be felt within a matter of a few seconds to a few minutes. After that, users describe "an incredible feeling of peace, joy, and contentment." This is evident for 4-6 hours . . . until a tolerance for heroin is developed. Once that occurs, the high dwindles to 2-4 hours before more of the drug must be taken. Let's be honest, though; very few daily heroin users exist. They are usually faced with three choices very quickly: 1) Stop using; 2) Go to jail; 3) Die.

All staff members at Naperville North High School have access to a reporting system called the Blue Card. The Blue Card itself is divided in to four descriptors: Academics, Attendance, Behavior, and Health. Staff members report student changes in any of these areas and send this notification (either electronically or in writing) to the appropriate, alpha-assigned Problem-Solving Team. The described student is then fully on our "radar." Not all completed Blue Cards indicate a life-threatening concern by any means, but NNHS has entered in to a time where changes in "routine" may warrant an immediate call to the student's parents. At a basic level, the Blue Card can initiate an honest family discussion. In some cases, however, a staff member (or multiple staff members) may identify behavior that is particularly troubling.

The school is an ally. Over the years, I have had conversations with parents that begin solidly, only to splinter off in to sidebars about athletic eligibility, out-of-school suspensions, or reputation. While all of these concerns are indeed important, the most significant – albeit rudimentary – goal for NNHS is to fortify a student’s well-being and safety. Without either of these, a student’s true success and true experience at Naperville North High School will be unremarkable.

Moving forward, Naperville North is making this promise: If any staff member hears a story, admission, or rumor – or engages in any conversation regarding a student’s alleged involvement with heroin (either direct or peripheral), an administrator will make a call to the student’s parent. This phone call is not meant to imply student guilt; it is not meant to be an attack on anybody’s parenting. The call will be merely an invitation to partnership so that we can identify student barriers – and propose feasible solutions. We too love and celebrate our 3,000 strong – your sons and daughters – and mustn’t shy away from courageous or tough conversations.

We are facing a challenge. Heroin is in our community, and the casualties continue to increase at some of the highest rates in the United States. We are waging a war with you on this evil and non-discriminating drug.

I hope that I never have to make a call to anyone’s home, but if I do, please know that in this case, I want to be wrong.

Together,

*Jeffery Farson
Director of Student Services*

REPRINT

Healthy Huskies Letter **Vol. 1, No. 5, March, 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.

REPRINT

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

www.theantidrug.com

www.drugabuse.gov

www.drugfree.org

www.robertcrown.org/HeroinEducation/index.html

www.monitoringthefuture.org

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.