

The Solution



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Message From The Chair

I am often asked about the term “drug free” in our coalition’s name. As an organization, we are not abolitionists; our concern is with the potential negative impact of all drugs – we seek a community free of the problems drugs can create. All drugs, including the legal drug alcohol, legal prescriptions, and illegal drugs like marijuana and cocaine can have a negative effect on the lives of individuals and on our community as a whole. One of the Coalition’s goals is to bring together all who can best address the prevention and treatment of substance abuse to help Charlotte/Mecklenburg free itself of the negative effects.

Drug addiction and alcoholism are diseases that not only affect the addict, but also their families, communities and the entire society and economy. From the specific dangers of addiction in the home to the staggering expenses incurred by individuals and our community as a whole, drug addiction has a widespread reach. With the rising number of addiction cases and the decreasing average age of addicts, society’s problem with drug addiction and alcoholism is gravely serious. Drug addiction is not limited to the poor and underprivileged, where society can choose to look the other way. Drug addiction is also found among the community’s brightest, richest and most respected members.

According to the National Library of Medicine, an estimated 20% of Americans have used prescription drugs for non-medical reasons. This kind of drug addiction is a major contributor to the rising costs of emergency department admissions from overdoses and complications. The Drug Abuse Warning Network recently reported that benzodiazepines (Alprazolam, Lorazepam, Clonazepam, and Diazepam) and pain killers (Oxycodone, Hydrocodone, and Morphine) are the two most frequently reported prescription medications in ED cases. When these statistics are added to those of the already staggeringly high numbers from heroin, cocaine, and methamphetamine abuse in society, we are faced with overwhelming facts which must be addressed directly and forcefully.

Drug and alcohol addiction is a progressive and insidious disease that creeps up on individuals, and unfortunately most don’t recognize the problem until addiction has completely taken over. The signs are so subtle and easily overlooked that millions of people today are struggling with addictions and don’t even realize the fact that they are on a dangerously slippery slope. Addiction is a brain disease that will try to convince the addict that they need drugs and/or alcohol to function, despite negative consequences. Addiction is a disease that turns the human brain into a dangerous killer, constantly giving excuses and justification for drug and alcohol abuse.

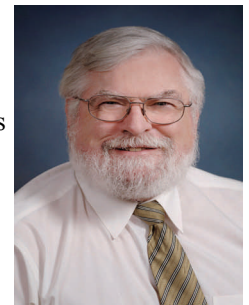
There is no way to know when, or if, recreational drug and alcohol use will become an addiction, since it is not an immediate onset. The progression of addiction in itself is subtle and grows with each individual’s tolerance and continued use of one or multiple substances. Although many who use drugs and alcohol recreationally do not become addicts, millions more do, and a large majority of those people and their families never see it coming. Addiction is a very serious problem and the most disturbing of all facts associated with addiction is that the disease is subtly progressive and, more often than not, undetectable by the victims themselves until life seems completely out of control. With such devastating consequences, it is imperative that our Coalition pay serious attention to the problems.

Every day, millions of people struggle with addiction and millions more watch with feelings of hopelessness as addiction coldly and systematically destroys lives. We hope that our coalition and the information on our website can be valuable resources in this community’s fight to free itself from the negative effects of abuse and addiction.

<http://www.nlm.nih.gov/medlineplus/prescriptiondrugabuse.html>

<http://www.nida.nih.gov/ResearchReports/Prescription/prescription5.html>

Paul Friday, Ph. D.
Chairperson
pfriday@uncc.edu



Charlotte Mecklenburg
Drug Free Coalition
1117 E. Morehead St.
Suite 101
Charlotte, NC 28204
704-375-3784
www.drugfreecharlotte.org

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Join the Solution...

Achievements Unlimited

Written by Rachelle Lucero



Students were able to see the effects of alcohol by the use of intoxication simulation goggles while performing a lay up shot. The goggles mimicked the vision of an individual who is intoxicated. Students were missing shots right and left, losing their balance and finding it difficult to get a shot in.

Fred Whitfield, President of the Bobcats and COO of the Bobcats Sports and Entertainment, brought Achievements Unlimited to Charlotte, North Carolina. This was the 26th year for the basketball camp and the first time the camp was held here in Charlotte.

The camp is managed by a team of basketball coaches from our local Charlotte area as well as universities across the Carolinas. Campers learned a series of basketball techniques from defensive skills, rebounding, stamina and, most importantly, making that perfect shot.

The camp approached the Charlotte-Mecklenburg Drug Free Coalition to find resources on drug education for its campers. The Anuvia Prevention & Recovery Center and Substance Abuse Prevention Services agreed to provide drug education to over 80 campers from ages 5-16. The dangers of alcohol, marijuana, and cigarettes were discussed with the campers.



Fred Whitfield and Achievements Unlimited Basketball Campers



Former Charlotte Hornet, Alonzo Mourning, speaking on the importance of education

They were able to see how the use of alcohol can affect the mind whether it's on the basketball court or in their own personal lives. Students were also educated on the dangers of marijuana and cigarette use through a series of games and discussion.

Whitfield also brought in motivational speakers for the students. Those speakers included Alonzo Mourning, Everette Brown, Dre Bly, Stephen Jackson, Chris Paul and others. They all spoke on their success and emphasized the importance of education and perseverance. Mr. Whitfield encourages his campers to "work hard on the basketball court as well as study hard in the classroom and most importantly stay drug-free."

Photos by AU&HoopTee

What's your story?

Do you have any upcoming events or story ideas? Send your event information, pitch ideas, or share some pictures for the next edition of The Solution. Contact Kerry Burch at kerry.burch@carolinashealthcare.org

The California Marijuana Referendum

On Tuesday, November 2nd, registered voters in California will have an opportunity to vote in a referendum (Proposition 19) that, if passed, will legalize the use of marijuana for adults twenty-one and over in the state. In anticipation of that vote, the RAND Corporation, a nonprofit institution that works to improve policy and decision making through research and analysis, has published a study that looks at the possible consequences of legal marijuana use in California.

In the end, the study limits itself to predictions about the impact of legal marijuana use on the cost of the drug and the number of users. But the report, titled "Altered State?", is filled with other possible outcomes.

"California," the study informs us, "has always been on the cutting edge of marijuana policy reform. It was one of the first states to prohibit marijuana in 1913, predating the federal Marihuana Tax Act of 1937 by nearly 25 years. California was one of the first states to reduce the minimum sentence for possessing less than an ounce from incarceration to a small fine (\$100). In 1996, California was the first state to allow marijuana to be grown and consumed for medicinal purposes. And, in November 2010, California will become the third state to vote whether marijuana should be legalized and taxed – and potentially the first to pass such legislation."

And, the report acknowledges, "Our analysis reveals that projections about the impact of legalizing marijuana in California, on consumption and public budgets, are subject to considerable uncertainty."

According to the RAND report, marijuana use peaked in the United States in 1978-1979 and past 30 day use of marijuana was, in 2008, half of what it was during those peak years (A recent survey published by the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Administration (SAMHSA) found that marijuana use in the United States increased significantly in 2009.). But the percentage of those past 30 day users who used daily was similar for 1978 and 2008 at 29% and 28% respectively. The report states that "it seems reasonable that between 400 and 500 metric tons of marijuana are consumed in California each year."

The report establishes the price of an ounce of marijuana "that has THC content comparable to that of sinsemilla (high THC content, seedless marijuana) as currently between \$300 and \$450 in California." Post legalization, however, the RAND study estimates that "production costs would . . . be on the order of \$300-\$400 per pound . . . or only about one-tenth of the current wholesale price . . . (A) n important share of the price currently paid for marijuana comes from having to compensate suppliers for participating in a black market and for the inefficiencies created by having to operate covertly. " The report concludes, "The pretax retail price of marijuana will substantially decline, likely by more than 80%. . . (but) the price that consumers face will depend heavily on taxes, the structure of the regulatory regime and how taxes and regulations are enforced."

Proposition 19 would allow local governments in California to choose whether and how to regulate and tax production and distribution of marijuana. In its report RAND chooses to assume a uniform excise tax of \$50 per ounce throughout the state and it estimates that the excise tax will account for almost 55% of the cost of a legal ounce of marijuana.

And, the report states, "A typical finding is that a 10 percent fall in price will increase the number of users by about 3 percent."

But, if California does legalize the use of marijuana, "it would bring California law into direct conflict with federal law, as well as with international treaties that the United States has signed pertaining to drug control. . . The Obama administration has clearly sought to minimize conflict around the production of marijuana for medical purposes but it has not yet had to establish a position on production for recreational use."

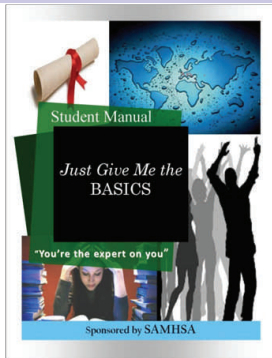
When the federal government wanted to establish a uniform, legal minimum and drinking age of 21, it informed state governments that they would forfeit 10% of federal highway dollars if they chose to have a legal minimum drinking age of less than 21.

Passage of Proposition 19 in California in November would create the first locality where it would be completely legal to produce, sell and use marijuana irrespective of quantity. There is every reason for providers of substance abuse services to be very interested in the effects that such legalization would have. The RAND corporation study (www.rand.org) is an excellent place to start your exploration.



BSCR BASICS Research Program at UNC Charlotte

Written by Sam Walford



The Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) has funded the UNC Charlotte School of Nursing (D. Kazemi, PI; M. Nies, Co-PI; grant # TI020209) \$1.2 million to enhance the current UNC Charlotte Wellness Promotion Department Brief Alcohol Screening and Intervention of College Students (BASICS) program for freshman students. BASICS is an evidence based peer-to-peer model that uses brief motivational interviewing to help research

participants understand the risks of alcohol use and guide them to make healthy choices.

Recruitment began during the Spring of 2009 and to date over 550 freshman students have participated. The grant is funded through September 2011.

For more information, contact Sam Walford in the School of Nursing at 704.687.7389 or swalford@uncc.edu.
<http://bscrbasics.uncc.edu/>



Back Row (left to right): Sam Walford (Project Manager), Donna Kazemi (PI), Melissa Morgan (Interventionist). Front Row (left to right): Kyle Raub (Interventionist), Eric Ottinger (Interventionist), Abhijit Deshmukh (Data Analyst), Eileen Chiaro (Interventionist), Mary Nies (Co-PI), Angela Cooke (Interventionist), Debbie Insley (Co-PI), Jacek Dmochowski (Data Analyst). Photo by Wade Burton.

Substance Abuse Awareness Month

“Changing Perspectives, Creating Opportunities, Improving Lives”—that is the theme of the October events planned in recognition of Substance Abuse Awareness Month (SAAM). Substance Abuse Prevention Services (SAPS) is leading and coordinating efforts in recognition of SAAM which has been observed in Mecklenburg County every October since 1989. The mission of SAAM is to heighten public awareness of substance abuse and promote healthy living.

The SAAM schedule includes a variety of events and activities throughout our community, some of the highlights include:

SAAM Kick-off Breakfast: Substance Abuse Prevention Services kicks off Substance Abuse Awareness Month with its annual breakfast on Friday, October 1st. The event will take place from 7:30 am to 9:00am at Hope Haven (3815 North Tryon Street). Enjoy this opportunity to celebrate and network with colleagues in the substance abuse field. Mecklenburg County Sheriff Chip Bailey will provide the keynote address. There is no charge for this event thanks to sponsorship from Addiction Professionals of North Carolina and Hope Haven, Inc.

SAPS Annual Luncheon: This event will recognize the dedicated individuals working to prevent and reduce substance abuse in our community. During the luncheon, the Jonnie H. McLeod Award for Excellence in Prevention, the Stephen H. Newman Award for Excellence in Volunteering and the SAAM Star Awards will be presented. The luncheon will take place on October 15th from 11:30 am to 1:30 pm at Maggiano’s Restaurant (4400 Sharon Road). Join SAPS and other community partners for a celebration highlighting the significant efforts of substance abuse professionals in the community. The keynote address will be provided by Mona Johnson-Gibson of the Ronald McDonald House of Charlotte.

The SAAM Family Festival: Come enjoy events for the whole family on Saturday, October 23rd from 12:00 pm to 3:30 pm at Sugaw Creek Recreation Center (943 W. Sugar Creek Road). Activities during the festival include free health screenings, music, food, a fire engine exhibit, group performances, appearances from Sur Purr and Dora the Explorer, and community resources. This event will help communities, families and youth celebrate positive living.

For more information, contact Chevonne DeWindt at 704-375-3784 ext. 10 or visit www.preventionservices.org.

