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New Report Provides Startling Look at Substance Abuse On An Average Day In The Life Of American Adolescents

In 2008 there were a quarter of a million drug-related emergency hospital visits by adolescents

On an average day, 508,000 adolescents aged 12-17 in the United States drink alcohol; 641,000 use illicit drugs; and more than 1 million smoke cigarettes, according to a national survey sponsored by the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA).

The report, which highlights the substance abuse behavior and addiction treatment activities that occur among adolescents on an average day, draws on national surveys conducted and analyzed by SAMHSA's Office of Applied Studies.

The study, *A Day in the Life of American Adolescents: Substance Use Facts Update*, presents a stark picture of the daily toll substance abuse takes on America's youth and is part of SAMHSA's Data, Outcomes, and Quality Strategic Initiative, designed to create an integrated data strategy that provides key public health information on a wide range of behavioral health issues.

Among the report's major findings is that on any given day during 2008, 563,000 adolescents used marijuana, nearly 37,000 used inhalants, 24,000 used hallucinogens, 16,000 used cocaine and 2,800 used heroin.

"This report is a wake up call about the extent to which our nation's youth engage in risky behavior by using illegal and potentially dangerous substances everyday," said SAMHSA Administrator Pamela S. Hyde, J.D. "Parents, families and people working in the public health and public safety professions can prevent substance abuse and promote emotional health. In the long run our efforts can improve health status and lower costs to families, businesses and governments."

"The burden of substance abuse casts a tragic shadow on the lives of far too many young people," said HHS Assistant Secretary for Health Dr. Howard K. Koh. "We must meet this public health challenge head on and do everything we can to promote prevention and treatment programs for youth that will ensure the overall health, success and well-being of our nation's next generation."

The report also sheds light on how many adolescents used illegal substances for the first time. On an average day in 2008:

- Approximately 7,500 adolescents drank alcohol for the first time;
- Approximately 4,360 adolescents used an illicit drug for the first time;
- Around 3,900 adolescents smoked cigarettes for the first time;

- Nearly 3,700 adolescents used marijuana for the first time; and
- Approximately 2,500 adolescents abused pain relievers for the first time.

In addition, the report also highlights how many people under age 18 were receiving treatment for a substance abuse problem during an average day in 2008. These numbers included:

- Over 76,000 in outpatient treatment;
- More than 9,000 in non-hospital residential treatment; and
- Over 700 in hospital inpatient treatment.

The study showed that in 2008, there were about a quarter of a million drug-related emergency hospital visits among adolescents of which 170,000 visits involved the use of illicit drugs, alcohol or intentional misuse or abuse of pharmaceuticals. On an average day in 2008:

- 151 visits involved alcohol;
- 129 involved marijuana; and
- 86 involved prescription or nonprescription pain relievers.

This report was drawn from SAMHSA's National Survey on Drug Use and Health, Treatment Episode Data Set and the National Survey of Substance Abuse Treatment Services, and the Drug Abuse Warning Network, and contains many other important facts about adolescent substance abuse, treatment and treatment admissions patterns.

SAMHSA is a public health agency within the Department of Health and Human Services. Its mission is to reduce the impact of substance abuse and mental illness on America's communities.