



# Parents Are Heroes

A Newsletter of the Making Sobriety Attractive (MSA) Program,  
a SAMHSA-funded Drug-Free Communities Project  
to Prevent Adolescent Alcohol and Other Drug (AOD) Use  
Supported by the Kent County Prevention Coalition and Mothers Against Drug Driving

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To see previous Parent Newsletters, click below  
[alertlabs.org/newsletter.php](http://alertlabs.org/newsletter.php)

Most teens don't use alcohol, but those who do, need a professional intervention like STARR. MSA Outcomes for Project Objectives

Adolescents who live within walking distance of a liquor store or other alcohol outlet are more likely to engage in binge drinking or drive drunk. American Journal of Public Health, Jan 2009.

Suggest [www.thecoolspot.gov](http://www.thecoolspot.gov) to your middle and beginning high school students:

There they will learn some simple truths:

The Good?

One or two drinks can make some ADULTS feel less tense or anxious and

## Abstinence from Marijuana Use Grows at MSA Schools by 12.5% -- But Teens Continue to Believe Marijuana is NOT "Harmful" to Them

Three years ago, 78% of students at a Making Sobriety Attractive (MSA) school reported that they abstained from using marijuana. This year 87% of the students reported that they abstained from marijuana. However, we are also seeing an

**increase in the percent of students reporting that marijuana is NOT harmful to people their age.**

| Substance | 2006 "Is Harmful" | 2009 "Is Harmful" | % Change     |
|-----------|-------------------|-------------------|--------------|
| Alcohol   | 87.3%             | 86.7%             | -0.7%        |
| Marijuana | 85.6%             | 80.1%             | <b>-6.4%</b> |
| Tobacco   | 93.7%             | 94.3%             | 0.6%         |

This change in perception of marijuana is **statistically significant**, meaning that there is a **REAL attitude shift that is likely to result in increased use in the future** if not directly addressed by parents, schools, and peers.

We parents need to be aware of the harm marijuana use does to teenagers and talk to our children about the dangers. The brain damages and resulting behaviors are--not surprisingly--similar to those resulting from alcohol use. Also, both drugs are *addictive* to those with a family history of alcohol or other drug (AOD) problems and those with ADHD/ADD. Remember: **98% of our teenagers who use marijuana also use alcohol.**

### Harmful Effects of Marijuana (and Alcohol) Use on Teenagers re. Brain Development:

- problems with **thinking, learning and remembering**, and **solving problems**, leading to academic and social difficulties
- **altered perception** of light, sound and touch leading to sexual exploitation
- **increased appetite** for sweets, leading to obesity and/or malnutrition
- **increased heart rate**, heightened blood pressure leading to hypertension
- **substance use disorders**, including addiction for those genetically predisposed, leading to crime, injuries, other anti-social behavior
- **paranoid thoughts and intense anxiety** resulting in fights and/or isolation
- 3-fold increase in **depression**, leading to increased suicidal thoughts
- 40% increase in risk for **adult mental illness**

Read more: <http://www.theantidrug.com/pdfs/teen-marijuana-depression-report.pdf>;  
<http://teenadvice.about.com/od/marijuanause/a/marijana.htm>  
[www.drugfree.org/](http://www.drugfree.org/); [www.starttalkingnow.org/](http://www.starttalkingnow.org/) [www.timetotalk.org/](http://www.timetotalk.org/)

more relaxed. TEENS get hyper from one drink and usually drink four, five, or more.

The Bad...

Heavier drinking can turn good feelings into bad and bad feelings into worse. Since alcohol affects memory, people often don't remember feeling bad. TEENS may believe they had a good time last night but they actually became depressed and frightened or angry and hurtful.

The Ugly...

People who drink heavily often wind up doing things they really didn't want to do. They end up in accidents, fights, and sexual situations that harm other people, and themselves.

Young Women are Especially likely to Suffer Combined Obesity, Alcohol Use Disorders, and Depression, see Longitudinal associations among depression, obesity and alcohol use disorders in young adulthood.

What/Who is MSA? The MSA Project is Sponsored by the Kent County Prevention Coalition and Implemented by the ALERT Labs Group\* (Alcohol Laboratories for Education, Research, and Training). MSA is funded by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services through SAMHSA's "Drug Free Communities Support Program." [www.alertlabs.org](http://www.alertlabs.org)

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**Did You Know?** (See more at [www.alertlabs.org/articles.php?category\\_id=3](http://www.alertlabs.org/articles.php?category_id=3))

**Why does the brain become addicted? Those who have inherited the genetic predisposition "activate" the disease the first time they use an addictive substance:** certain medicines, over the counter drugs, alcohol, tobacco, etc. "No one chooses to become addicted," says Nora Volkow, M.D., Director of the National Institute for Drug Abuse (NIDA). "They simply are cognitively unable to choose not to be addicted." <http://pn.psychiatryonline.org/cgi/content/full/39/11/32>

**MSA Research Results from ALERT Labs:**

[www.alertlabs.org/accomplishments.php](http://www.alertlabs.org/accomplishments.php)

- Increases in Abstinence at all three schools in the MSA program:

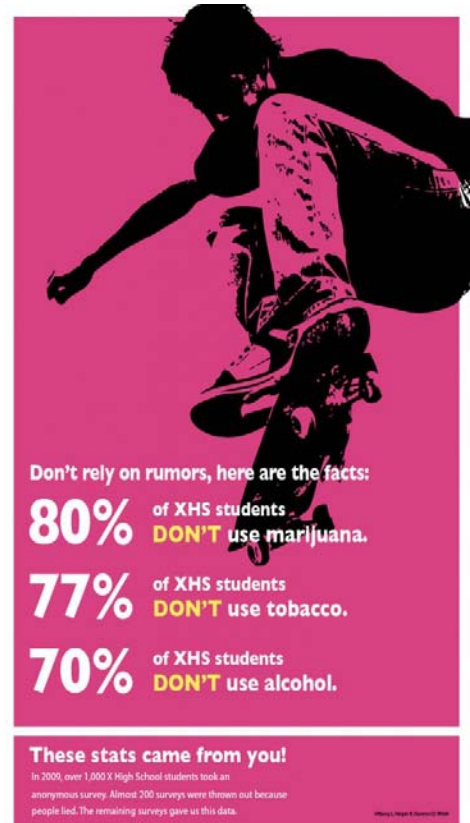
**Change in Percent Abstaining**

| Year      | School | Alcohol | Marijuana | Tobacco |
|-----------|--------|---------|-----------|---------|
| 2006-2008 | 1a.    | 4.7%    | 28.6%     | 71.6%   |
| 2008-2009 | 1.     | 10.2%   | 12.5%     | 8.4%    |
| 2008-2009 | 2.     | 9.8%    | -6.1%     | 0.1%    |

Statistically significant change – could not have happened by chance, ie., without the MSA or another intervention. Change in alcohol use is nearly significant.

- The number of drinks twelfth graders report having per occasion dropped in 2009, compared to 2007, by **18.5%**.
- The MSA Project has reduced rates of alcohol use to **18% below** -- and tobacco use to **6% below** -- the average rates for high school students in Michigan.
- Minority students use *less alcohol, less marijuana, and less other drugs than white students do*. However, minorities experience more consequences: the percentage needing intervention is **36.5%** of all minority students; for whites the percentage is **27.7%**. This is a statistically significant difference. See [Minority Consequences Report](#).
- 100%** of Parents say they welcome calls from other parents to assure that no AOD will be served at teen events in their home; **97%** wait up for their teens to get home from events.

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**MSA School Poster:**  
**Don't Rely on Rumors, Here are the Facts**  
[www.alertlabs.org/media.php](http://www.alertlabs.org/media.php)

