



MCFARLAND RADAR (Relevant Alcohol & Drug Awareness Resources) COALITION

AODA PREVENTION NEWSLETTER

AUGUST 2023

Social Media and Peer Pressure

Peer pressure involves young people being influenced by others in a similar (or older) age group, and typically involves them being persuaded to do something they wouldn't be likely to do under other circumstances. When this happens in social media platforms, video games, apps, group texts, or any other digital space we refer to it as "online peer pressure".

The constant influence and pressure from peers, which includes things like social media comparison each time they scroll these apps, can leave kids feeling stressed, anxious, depressed, and overwhelmed. Online pressure is particularly challenging for kids to navigate because it doesn't stop when they leave school or aren't physically around other kids. The pressure can be present 24/7 in online spaces, and kids often feel they can't get a break from it.

Negative peer pressure can affect mental health. It can decrease self-confidence and lead to poor academic performance, distancing from family members and friends, or an increase in depression and anxiety. Left untreated, this could eventually lead teens to engage in self-harm or have suicidal thoughts.



How Teens Deal with Peer Pressure:

- Create an environment of open communication with your child from an early age. Look for opportunities to ask your child about pressure they have seen or experienced and how that made them feel. Let them know you are there to listen and help if they need it.
- Teach your child how to set boundaries and be assertive in their communication. Ask them to think about what they would say in a negative situation, and practice saying no in different ways.
- Establish a plan and a backup plan with your child for situations of negative peer pressure. Let them know there is nothing wrong with making an excuse if they are unsure what to do and help them brainstorm creative ways to exit an uncomfortable situation.
- Make an effort to get to know your child's friends and their parents. If possible, encourage your child to invite friends over as one way to become familiar with them.

Social Media and Substance Use

Seven in ten Americans (or 69 percent of the population) use social media. Engagement on these platforms is even higher among teens and young adults, with only two percent of 13 to 33-year-olds not actively using any social media platform at all. That means 98 percent of teens and young adults are engaged with at least one social media platform today.

Columbia University's National Center on Addiction and Substance Abuse reports that teenagers who typically spend any length of time on social networking sites every day are more likely to smoke, consume alcohol and take drugs compared to teens who don't use.

Teens on social media are:

5x more likely to have used tobacco

3x more likely to have used alcohol

2x more likely to have used marijuana

National Survey of American Attitudes on Substance Abuse XVI: Teens and Parents - August 2011



Connection Between Social Media and Substance Use

- Glamorizing Drugs and Alcohol
 - Many people argue that social media glamorizes drugs and alcohol, and it is easy to see why. One study found that 97% of alcohol-related posts of youth on Instagram and Facebook showed alcohol in a positive social context.
 - Not only are the average young adults posting pictures of themselves with fancy alcoholic drinks or out drinking with friends, but celebrities are doing it too. Instagram especially has long been criticized as being a highlight reel and a lead cause of FOMO (fear of missing out).
- Poor Mental Health
 - Mental health problems and substance abuse are often connected. Because excessive social media use often leads to poorer mental health, these frequent users may be turning to drugs or alcohol to help them cope.
- Increased Exposure
 - Companies also use social media sites to post glamorous looking ads for alcohol. When these substances are seen repeatedly in a positive way, they become normalized by the brain. For vulnerable populations like young adults, this increased exposure could make them more willing to try drinking or drugs for themselves.
- Means of Buying Drugs
 - Besides just being more likely to use drugs or alcohol because of their social media activities, your child could be buying drugs online. Social media outlets especially provide a seemingly safer, less intimidating, and easier means of buying drugs than going to a drug dealer on the street.

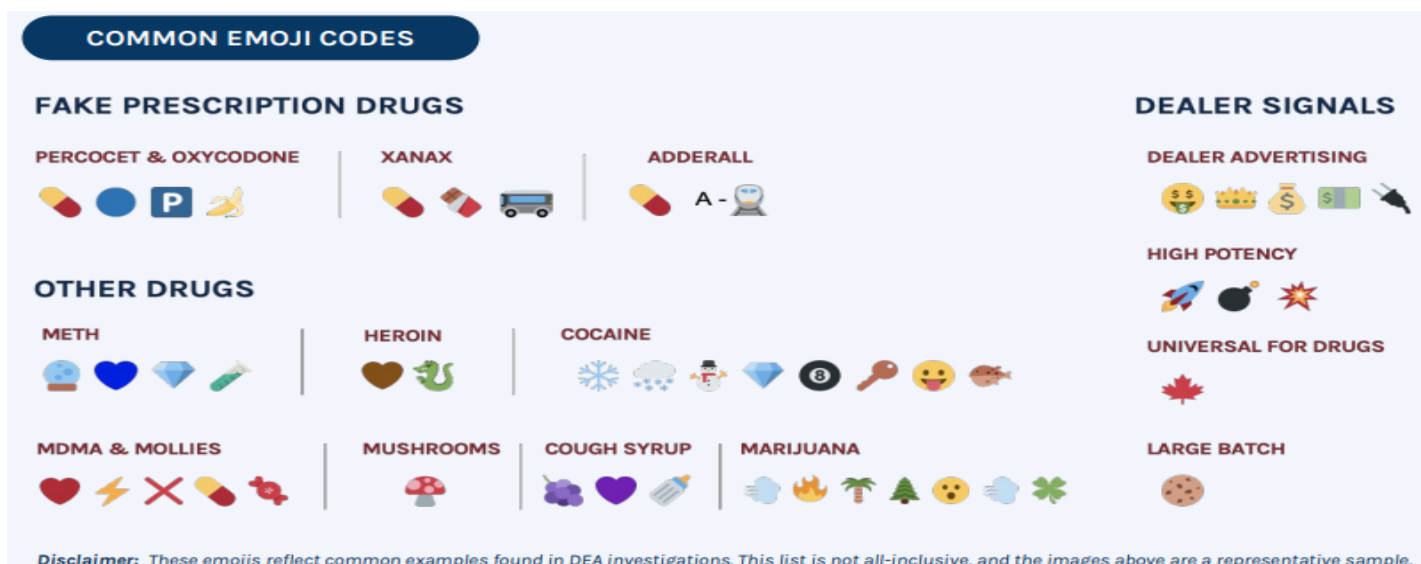


Means of Buying Drugs on Social Media

How easy is it to find illegal drugs on social media apps? Nearly as convenient as calling an Uber or ordering a pizza. The internet is embraced by dealers, and buyers, for its simplicity and global reach. But while large drug trading websites like Dream Market or Silk Road have been shut down by law enforcement, social media has emerged as a flourishing new marketplace made up of thousands of small-time dealers who sell tiny amounts of drugs to individual users.

How it works:

1. Drug traffickers advertise on social media platforms like Instagram, Snapchat, TikTok, Twitter and YouTube. These advertisements are in disappearing, 24-hour stories and in posts, which are promptly posted and removed. Posts and stories are often accompanied by known code words and emojis that are used to market and sell illicit and deadly drugs on social media.



2. Prospective buyers contact drug traffickers on social media apps in response to their advertisements – either using direct messaging or by commenting on a post. Once contact is made, drug traffickers and potential buyers often move to an encrypted communications app like WhatsApp, Signal, and Telegram. Drug traffickers typically switch to these encrypted communications apps to arrange drug deals with prospective buyers.
3. After a deal is made, drug traffickers request payment using one-click apps like Venmo, Zelle, Cash App, and Remitly.

New Challenge for Law Enforcement:

As the drug market becomes increasingly digitized, law enforcement is struggling to keep pace. The use of encrypted technologies, VPNs, offshore data and a lack of legislation to control digital platforms are some of the challenges facing police as they seek to crack down on drug dealers trading this way. The core problem is micro-importation, a form of drug trafficking that favors small, personal quantities of substances. Historically, law enforcement has focused on catching bigger figures and bulk seizures, but this approach doesn't necessarily translate to the changing drug market. When it comes to smaller, less infamous importers, however, law enforcement is often stifled by the need to priorities larger busts, alongside limited resources.

How Parents Can Protect Their Youth:

- Ask your teenager what they think about content posted by their friends and peers e.g. “do you think what your friends post on social media is a true representation of their lives?”
- Ask your teenager to think critically about alcohol-related advertising e.g. “do you see alcohol advertising on social media?” and “how do the advertisers make you feel about drinking alcohol?” . You can find some ideas on how to get your teenager to think critically about alcohol-related advertising in this worksheet.
- Encourage open communication about what your teenager thinks about social media. Ask questions such as “how does social media benefit you?”, “why do you enjoy using social media?” and “is there anything you don’t like?”. You could also work together with your teenager to think about the pros and cons of using social media and create some household guidelines.
- Speak to your teenager about how they can have safe and enjoyable experiences online.
- Encourage involvement in other activities they enjoy that don’t involve social media. Research shows that young people are less likely to use drugs or drink alcohol if they are participating in activities such as sports, art, and cultural activities.
- Follow your child’s social media accounts
 - As a family, let your children know that you will regularly check in on their texts and social accounts. This is not to police, but rather to protect.
- Check for hidden accounts
 - It’s possible your child may have hidden social media accounts. Find out what you can do if you discover these accounts.
- Have your social media safety conversations.
 - Discuss the danger of purchasing items from strangers or shady businesses on social media. These products, including prescription drugs, nutritional supplements, and diet pills, can and often will be counterfeit or tainted.
 - Talk to your child about the dangers of substance abuse, and especially this newer danger of Fentanyl poisoning. While taking unprescribed prescription drugs is never safe, children need to realize that the dangers of taking social media-purchased prescription drugs have increased significantly. With Fentanyl circulating, taking any of these drugs, including Vicodin, Xanax, and Percocet, now has a greater risk of death.
- Learn about the slang and emojis that kids use while texting on their phones, posting on social media, or DMing (direct messaging) other users.



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| AUGUST | COOLDRINK | LAKE | SWIMMING | WEATHER |
| BARBEQUE | FAMILY | LEMONADE | SCHOOL | |
| BASEBALL | FAMILYVACATION | OCEAN | SWIMSUIT | |
| BEACH | FISHING | PARK | SUN | |
| BEACHBALL | FLOATIE | PICNIC | SUNBURN | |
| BIKING | FOREST | POOL | SUNSET | |
| BIKETRAIL | GARDEN | POPSICLES | TIMEOFF | |
| BOAT | HOT | READING | TOWEL | |
| CAMPFIRE | HUMID | RELAX | TRAVEL | |
| CAMPING | HURRICANE | SHADE | VACATE | |
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McFarland is a small community south of Madison in Dane County. In January of 2017, a group of concerned citizens came together to discuss substance abuse problems in the McFarland area. The McFarland RADAR is a result of these meetings

We are comprised of local representatives from schools, businesses, churches, village administration as well as parents, and youth—all working together to promote healthy lifestyles

For more information go to: <https://www.radarmc.com/>



For time, day and place of meetings, please contact Cathy Kalina at CathyK@fsmad.org

The McFarland RADAR (RADAR stands for Relevant Alcohol & Drug Awareness Resources) Coalition works to develop, implement and support environmental strategies to reduce substance abuse.

We believe by working together, we can nurture social and environmental changes to make the McFarland area a safer and healthier place, brightening the future of our children, youth and families.

McFarland RADAR Mission Statement

“The mission of McFarland’s RADAR Coalition is to promote healthy lifestyles in the McFarland area through alcohol and drug abuse prevention and education efforts.”

HOW CAN YOU HELP?

We are asking you to give the gift of time. Make a difference in the lives of our youth and our community by

1. Working with us in providing support for planning, project management and awareness campaigns
2. Helping with coalition events, conferences, workshops, and fairs held throughout the year.
3. Being a voice for change in our community, it is time to come together and be that force for change in the McFarland area.