



National Substance Abuse Prevention Month

In 2020, more than 93,000 Americans died as a result of a drug overdose. And in 2022 alone, more than 20 million Americans ages 12 and older have been diagnosed with a substance misuse disorder.

Since 2011, October has been embraced as a time to acknowledge the harm substance misuse can cause to individual and community health.

Additionally, this time is also used to remember those who have lost their lives to drug addiction and to acknowledge those in recovery, as well as children, parents, family, and friends supporting them. This month should also be used as a time for schools and communities to form drug misuse education programs that arm youth with the knowledge to lead drug-free lives – because when it comes to avoiding addiction, preventative steps are the best steps.



Understanding the Basics of Substance Misuse

- **How Addiction Happens:** Substance misuse happens with both legal and illegal drugs (the current drug epidemic is actually being driven by the former in the form of prescription painkillers). Whether or not a person willingly chooses to use a drug, it's fair to say that addiction was never the intended outcome. In many cases, it's accidental.
- **Why some turn to drugs in the first place:** Drug use is most often a symptom of extreme stress (trauma) or mental illness. These underlying conditions can effectively reshape and even rewire the brain, making it respond differently than normal. This can cause a person to have a heightened stress response, which in turn can make them more likely to turn to drug use as a means of self-medicating.
- **Genetics play a factor:** Having a direct family member with a substance abuse problem can increase a person's likelihood of developing one themselves.

Teen Addiction

According to the National Institute on Drug Abuse, about 47% of youth in the United States between the ages of 12-17 have used an illicit substance by the time they graduate from high school.

What leads youth to start engaging in substance misuse:

- To try new things – Many view it as just “experimenting”, even if the user has crossed over from occasional to frequent.
- To be competitive – Pressures on teens to perform well academically and/or athletically are often intense. Not only can drug misuse be an outlet, but some see using stimulants or prescription pills as a means of getting ahead.
- To self-medicate – A lot of teens do not yet know how to effectively express their feelings or when to ask for help. Depression, anxiety, and other mental health disorders often affect adolescents just as they do adults, but those who are younger may find turning to substance abuse easier than trying to actually get help. Many may not even be aware that they are suffering from a mental health disorder.
- To fit in with the crowd – Being a teen comes with the natural desire to want to fit in with classmates and “be cool”. When others around them are engaging in substance misuse, it can be extremely difficult for teens to turn the other way. Some may even go out of their way to introduce a new substance to their friends in order to achieve a better status.



Effects on the Body:

- Developing Brain
 - Substance misuse can also have effects on teen brain development by interfering with neurotransmitters and damaging connections within the brain, reducing the ability to experience pleasure, problems with memory, ingraining expectations of unhealthy habits into brain circuitry and inhibiting development of perceptual abilities.
- On the Body
 - Drug misuse by teens significantly increases their risk of death from illness, accidents, homicide, or suicide. Teen substance misuse can lead to risky behaviors such as driving under the influence or unsafe sexual practices
- Social Life
 - Teen drug use is detrimental in terms of social acceptance and interaction with peers. It is common for substance misusing youth to disengage from clubs, sports, and activities at school. Lack of engagement can then lead to social alienation and stigmatization by peers
- Academics
 - Lower grades, poor attendance, and an increased likelihood of dropout before graduation are all associated with teen substance misuse. The physical and behavioral health effects of teen drug misuse can be an obstacle to academic success



Prevention: What Can Be Done?

Prevention strategies targeting the root of the problem are essential to curb drug use and help people lead healthier lives. Early intervention helps prevent substance misuse and reduce the negative consequences of addiction before they occur. Through community-based efforts involving youth, parents, educators, and government officers, drug prevention programs can thrive. According to the National Institute on Drug Abuse, substance misuse costs the country an estimated \$740 billion annually. Research shows that for every dollar invested in an evidence-based prevention program, the costs related to substance use disorders decrease by an average of \$18.



What Parents Can Do:

- **Ask your teen's views:** Avoid lectures. Instead, listen to your teen's opinions and questions about drugs. Assure your teen that he or she can be honest with you.
- **Discuss reasons not to use drugs:** Avoid scare tactics. Emphasize how drug use can affect the things that are important to your teen — such as sports, driving, health and appearance.
- **Consider media messages:** Social media, television programs, movies and songs can glamorize or trivialize drug use. Talk about what your teen sees and hears.
- **Discuss ways to resist peer pressure:** Brainstorm with your teen about how to turn down offers of drugs.
- **Be ready to discuss your own drug use:** Think about how you'll respond if your teen asks about your own drug use. If you chose not to use drugs, explain why. If you did use drugs, share what the experience taught you.
- **Know your teen's activities:** Pay attention to your teen's whereabouts. Find out what adult-supervised activities your teen is interested in and encourage him or her to get involved.
- **Establish rules and consequences:** Explain your family rules, such as leaving a party where drug use occurs and not riding in a car with a driver who's been using drugs. If your teen breaks the rules, consistently enforce consequences.
- **Keep track of prescription drugs:** Take an inventory of all prescription and over-the-counter medications in your home.
- **Provide support:** Offer praise and encouragement when your teen succeeds. A strong bond between you and your teen might help prevent your teen from using drugs.
- **Set a good example:** If you drink, do so in moderation. Use prescription drugs as directed. Don't use illicit drugs.

RED RIBBION WEEK

(October 23rd-31st)

Red Ribbon Week was started after the death of Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA) Special Agent Enrique “Kiki” Camarena, who in 1985 was murdered by drug traffickers he was investigating in Mexico. As a tribute to Special Agent Camarena, his high school friend Henry Lozano and Congressman Duncan Hunter, created “Camarena Clubs” which wore red ribbons and was dedicated to leading drug-free lives and to honor the sacrifices made by Kiki Camarena and others for the United States.

Red Ribbon Week eventually gained momentum throughout California and later across the United States. In 1985, club members presented the "Camarena Club Proclamation" to then First Lady Nancy Reagan, bringing it national attention.

Later that summer, parent groups in California, Illinois, and Virginia began promoting the wearing of red ribbons nationwide during late October. The campaign was then formalized in 1988 by the National Family Partnership, with President and Mrs. Reagan serving as honorary chairperson. Each year, on October 23-31, more than 80 million young people and adults show their commitment to a healthy, drug-free lifestyle by wearing or displaying the red ribbon.



Ways to Celebrate:

- Display a basket of red ribbons in the reception area of your organization for visitors to take, along with copies of the Red Ribbon Week fact card.
- Display red ribbons on the interior and exterior surfaces of your organization’s building.
- Sponsor a special drug abuse prevention seminar for the community. Invite a speaker who is an expert on drug prevention and invite the community to attend.
- Submit a public service announcement about Red Ribbon Week activities to your local radio station.
- Sponsor an in-service educational program for your employees and community leaders.
- Organize a drug prevention awareness fair. Invite local nonprofit organizations to participate by staffing exhibit booths, disseminating educational materials, offering free health screenings, and much more.
- Set up and staff an exhibit table at a local hospital, doctor’s office, community center, or shopping center to promote Red Ribbon Week and to distribute drug prevention information and materials.
- Post fact sheets and Red Ribbon Week event notices and other materials on community webpages, and on bulletin boards in libraries, hospitals, local churches, synagogues, gymnasiums, grocery stores, parks and recreation departments, health clinics, universities, and other public places.

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.