

# solutions

## NOT MY CHILD

Most parents believe that there is a teenage drug problem, but for other children, not their own. In a 2013 National Drug Survey, 52% of the 13-17 year old students polled reported experimenting with alcohol and/or marijuana. Interestingly, only 10% of these surveyed parents reported that their child used alcohol; and less than 5% reported that their child smoked marijuana. To close this gap between belief and reality, parents can acknowledge the possibility, in fact, the likelihood, that their children have experimented with alcohol and other drugs and begin to accept this challenge head-on.

Since parents are the most important influence on teens when it comes to curbing risky behaviors, (according to experts at the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration), Effective School Solutions welcomes this opportunity to offer you some tools to predict, detect, and address substance use with your children.

- **Be aware of the factors that may increase your child's susceptibility to drug use:**
  - A family history of substance use disorders
  - Depression, anxiety, ADHD
  - Feelings of unpopularity, boredom, or rebelliousness
  - Personalities requiring instant gratification or artificial "courage"
  - Softening societal and parental attitudes about the perceived risk of harm and disapproval associated with alcohol, marijuana and "legal" prescription drug use
- **Trust your instincts, if you suspect alcohol/drug use:**
  - Check for smells on breath, clothing, and hair
  - Check for red, glazed eyes, small pupils, heavy eyelids (marijuana)
  - Beware of a long-lasting cough
  - Check for flushed face, cheeks (alcohol)
  - Notice appetite and sleep disturbances

- Watch for mood or personality changes:
  - Rapid mood swings
  - Provoking arguments, breaking rules
  - Unusual fatigue or somatic complaints
  - Loss of interest in usual activities, friends, and family
  - Declining grades, cutting classes, discipline problems
  - Change in grooming and dress style
  - Frequent lying, often justifying behavior with outlandish stories

- **Communicate honestly with your child:**

- Develop a strong relationship with your teen.
- Talk about the dangers of drugs, early and often
- Set a zero tolerance for drug/alcohol use and identify and enforce consequences
- Plan ways to handle peer pressure
- Be prepared to discuss your own drinking
- Set a good example with your own behavior
- Lock up all prescription drugs and alcohol and keep track of both

- **When you suspect or discover signs of substance use:**

- Challenge your child immediately and tell what you're concerned about
- Search your child's room-it is your responsibility to keep them safe
- Do not blame yourself (or spouse) if your child does use
- Seek professional help sooner rather than later to evaluate the status of the problem and provide treatment if necessary.
- Consult with your ESS clinician for help in addressing these issues

**Resources:**

Call 1-855-NJ-HOPELINE (1-855-654-6735) for confidential telephone counseling, support and referrals to local resources

**Websites:**

[www.ncadd.org](http://www.ncadd.org) – National Council on Alcohol and Drug Dependence  
[www.drugabuse.gov](http://www.drugabuse.gov) – National Institute on Drug Abuse NIDA  
[www.samhsa.gov](http://www.samhsa.gov) – Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services

**PARENTS MATTER:** *A positive relationship with your children is the most significant influence in their lives.*