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National Survey Finds More Youth Having Conversations with Parents about Substance Use

A new national report found that more young people are engaging in substance abuse-related conversations with a parent, which has been associated with lower rates of drug and alcohol use among youth. The report was issued last week by the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMSHA) to coincide with National Alcohol Awareness Month.

The report, based on a series of national surveys, shows a significant rise in 2007 in the level of adolescents who engaged in substance abuse-related conversations with at least one parent (from 58.1 percent in 2002 to 59.6 percent in 2007). The report shows that these conversations are associated with lower rates of current substance use by an adolescent.

Adolescents who had conversations with their parents about the dangers of substance abuse were significantly less likely to be current users of the following substances than those who did not have such conversations with their parents:

- Alcohol (16.2 percent versus 18.3 percent)
- Cigarettes (10.6 percent versus 12.5 percent)
- Illicit Drugs (9.5 percent versus 11.7 percent)

However, the report also found that a smaller percentage of adolescents (age 12-17) were exposed to substance use prevention messages in 2007 (77.9 percent) than in 2002 (83.2 percent). Similarly, a smaller percentage of adolescents are participating in out-of-school substance use prevention programs (from 12.7 percent in 2002 to 11.3 percent in 2007).

“Alcohol Awareness Month highlights the crucial role that parents play in informing and influencing their adolescent sons and daughters about alcohol and substance use,” said SAMHSA’s Acting Administrator, Eric Broderick, D.D.S, M.P.H. “The findings of this report indicate that we all must do more to get the message out to our young people that substance abuse is harmful to their health and happiness.”

Exposure to prevention messages provided in school settings were associated with lower rates of current substance abuse. The level of exposure to these messages, however, did not differ significantly between 2002 (71.4 percent) and 2007 (70.2 percent).

The report found mixed results regarding the association between media substance use prevention messages. As seen below, the prevalence of current cigarette and illicit drug use was lower among adolescents who received prevention messages through media sources, than those

who had not. However, the opposite was true in terms of current alcohol use:

- Cigarettes (10.8 percent vs. 13.4 percent)
- Illicit Drugs (10.1 percent vs. 11.9 percent)
- Alcohol (17.2 percent vs. 16.4 percent)

Exposure to Substance Use Prevention Messages and Substance Use among Adolescents: 2002 to 2007 is drawn from SAMHSA's 2002 through 2007 National Surveys on Drug Use and Health (NSDUH).

The full report is available at: <http://oas.samhsa.gov/2k9/prevention/prevention.cfm>