



Prevention Facts

Issues Associated with Substance Abuse

What is substance abuse?

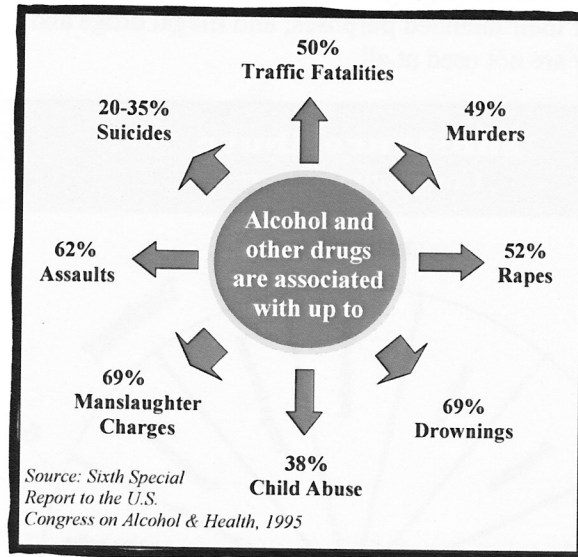
Substance abuse is the use of illicit drugs or the abuse of prescription or over-the-counter drugs for purposes other than those for which they are indicated or in a manner or in quantities other than directed. This also includes any use of alcohol or tobacco products among underage individuals.

Did you know...

- Nearly 90% of current adult smokers started smoking before the age of 18 (*Growing Up Tobacco Free*).
- "Between the ages of two and eighteen, the period in which social learning is most intense, American Children see over 70,000 television commercials for beer" (*Myths, Men and Beer, AAA Foundation For Traffic Safety*).
- 92% of youth substance users have parents who regularly get drunk or high (*1999 WA Kids Count*).

What is the impact of substance use on the community?

- The economic cost of drug, alcohol and tobacco abuse in the United States is more than \$500 billion. (National Institute on Drug Abuse, 2006. *NIDA InfoFacts: Treatment Approaches for Drug Addiction*)
- According to Wendy Jones, Chief of Whatcom County Corrections, "Chemical dependency is a significant issue for the Whatcom County Jail. Between 85% and 90% of the offenders we see were under the influence of alcohol or other drugs at the time they committed their offense. It affects their decision making ability, often leading them to make choices that results in arrest and jail time."
- Substance abuse is a known contributing factor to poor diet and physical activity.

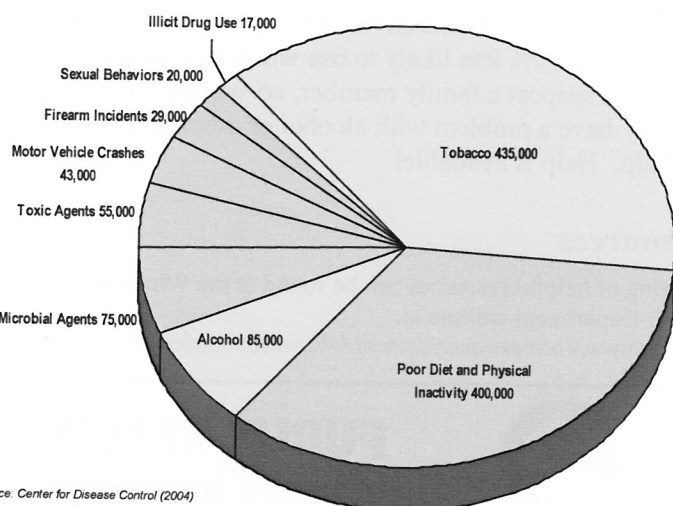


Do we have substance use in Whatcom County?

Whatcom County is fairly similar to the rest of Washington State in youth substance use. While ongoing efforts are working to reduce use rates, results from Healthy Youth Survey 2006 in Whatcom County show:

- Nearly one out of five 12th graders reported smoking cigarettes in the past 30 days.
- Nearly one out of five 10th graders reported heavy drinking (6+ days drinking in past 30 days and/or 2+ binge drinking in past two weeks).
- Nearly one in four 10th graders reported having drunk 5 or more drinks in a row in the past 2 weeks.
- Four out of ten 12th graders reported drinking alcohol in the past 30-days.
- Four out of ten 12th graders reported having used marijuana in their lifetime.
- Nearly one out of every five 12th graders reported smoking marijuana or hashish in the past 30 days.

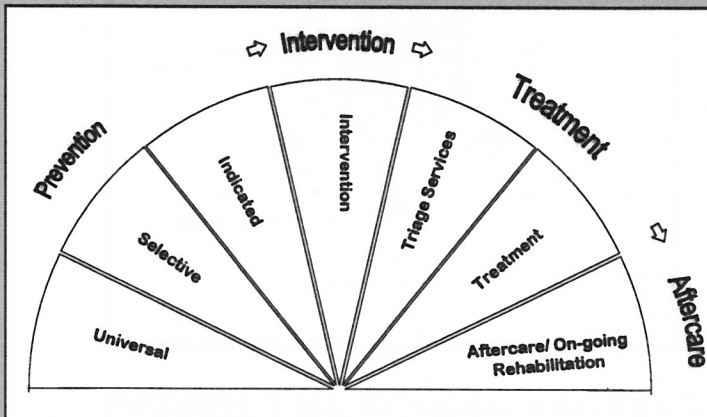
Annual Causes of Death in the United States (2000)



What is the goal of prevention?

Prevention works to foster a climate in which alcohol use is acceptable only for those of legal age and only when the risk of adverse consequences is minimal; prescription and over-the-counter drugs are used only for the purposes for which they were intended; other abusable substances (e.g., gasoline or aerosols) are used only for their intended purposes; and illegal drugs and tobacco are not used at all.

Substance Abuse Continuum of Care



What are the types of prevention services?

Prevention strategies can vary greatly. Efforts can target individuals, families, schools, or communities. Services can also focus on the public at large, or populations that exhibit high levels of risk. The Institute of Medicine defines the following levels of prevention as:

Universal prevention strategies address the entire population with messages and programs aimed at preventing or delaying the abuse of alcohol, tobacco and other drugs.

Selective prevention strategies focus on subsets of the total population that are deemed to be exposed to greater levels of risk for substance abuse by virtue of their membership in a particular population segment.

Indicated prevention strategies are designed to prevent the onset of substance abuse in individuals who are showing early danger signs, such as falling grades and consumption of alcohol and other gateway drugs.

Does Prevention Work?

Prevention does work! There are many programs that have already been extensively researched and proven to be effective in reducing substance use. Although not all programs are effective for every population, there is a growing body of research demonstrating positive changes.

The savings per dollar spent on substance abuse prevention can be substantial and range from \$2.00 to \$20.00.

Research has also revealed that effective substance abuse prevention can yield major economic dividends. The savings per dollar spent on substance abuse prevention can be substantial and range from \$2.00 to \$20.00 (2004 *The Journal of Primary Prevention*).

In Washington State, substance use among youth is going down! Consider this:

- **In 2004, Washington State 8th, 10th, and 12th graders were less likely to have smoked a cigarette in the past 30 days than in previous years.**
- **The percentage of students, both in Washington and nationally, who have tried alcohol is declining.**
- **Marijuana use in the past 30 days among Washington State 8th, 10th, and 12th graders is declining.**

For more information on substance use and abuse trends in Washington State, check out the DSHS, Division of Alcohol and Substance Abuse website at www1.dshs.wa.gov/dasa/.

What can I do?

There are many things that you can do. Participate in the community. Solutions begin with:

Families

INDIVIDUALS/PEERS

Community

Schools

- Advocate for prevention funding and services. Tell your legislators about the importance of prevention.
- Educate yourself and others about substance abuse issues.
- Mentor a young person.
- Volunteer in your community.
- Parents should communicate non-use expectations to their children. Research has demonstrated that youth are up to 50% less likely to use when this occurs.
- If you suspect a family member, co-worker, or friend may have a problem with alcohol or other drugs, seek help. Help is available!

Resources

A listing of helpful resources can be found at the Whatcom County Health Department website at:

http://www.whatcomcounty.us/health/human/substance_abuse/index.jsp



PUBLIC HEALTH
ALWAYS WORKING FOR A SAFER AND
HEALTHIER WASHINGTON