



Adolescent Substance Use: America's #1 Public Health Problem



June 29, 2011

A Report by The National Center on Addiction and Substance Abuse
at Columbia University



Adolescent Substance Abuse: America's #1 Public Health Problem

9 in 10 People Who Are Addicted* Begin to Smoke, Drink and/or Use Other Drugs Before Age 18

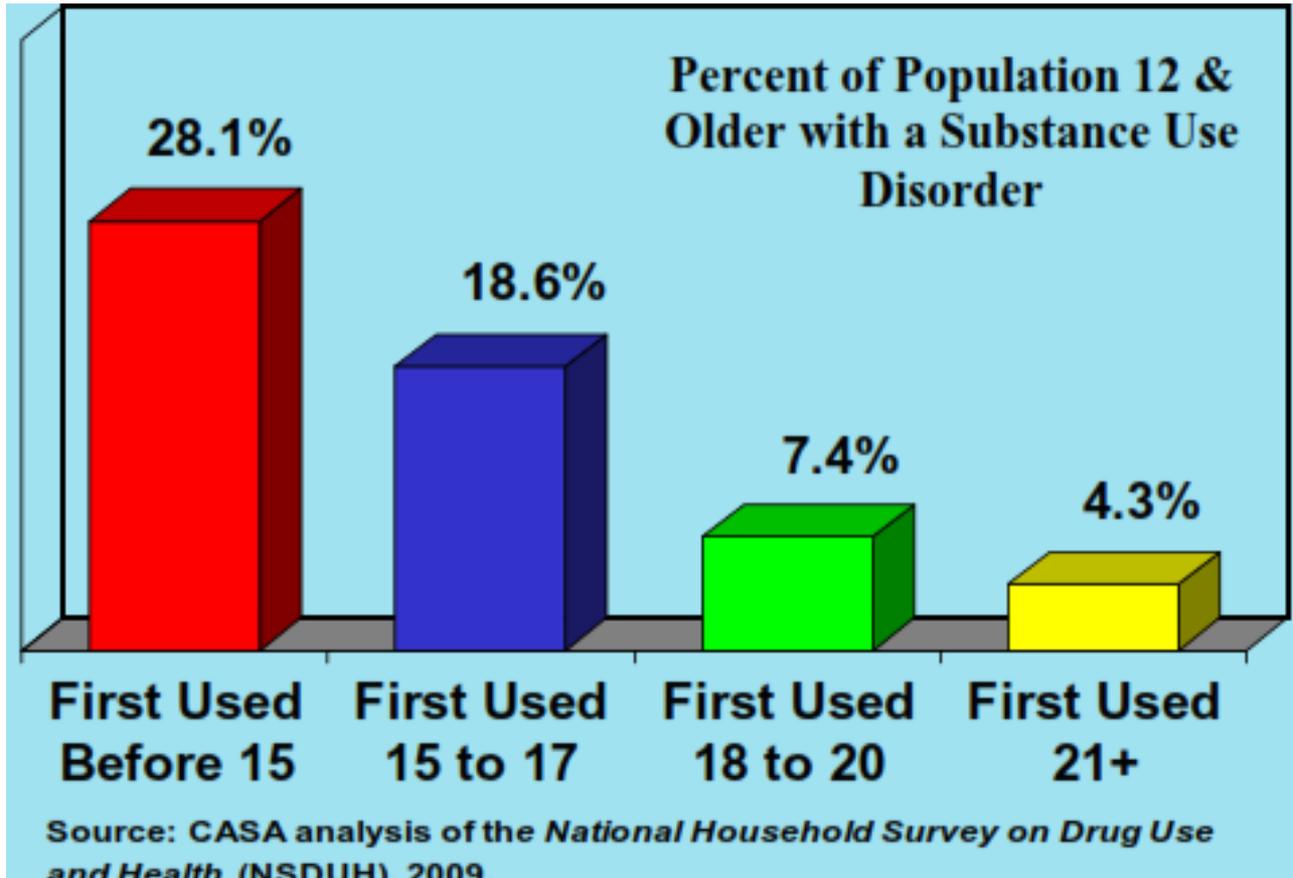
- 91.4% of those addicted to nicotine
- 91.6% of those addicted to alcohol
- 96.1% of those addicted to illicit or controlled prescription drugs

*Have a substance use disorder, defined as meeting clinical criteria for nicotine dependence or alcohol or other drug abuse or dependence.



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The Earlier Teens Use Any Substance, the Greater the Risk of Addiction



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**Adolescence is *the* critical period
for the onset of substance use
and its consequences:**

- Teen brain is more prone to risk taking, including substance use
- Teen brain is more vulnerable to damage from substances, including addiction



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Crippling Consequences of Teen Substance Use

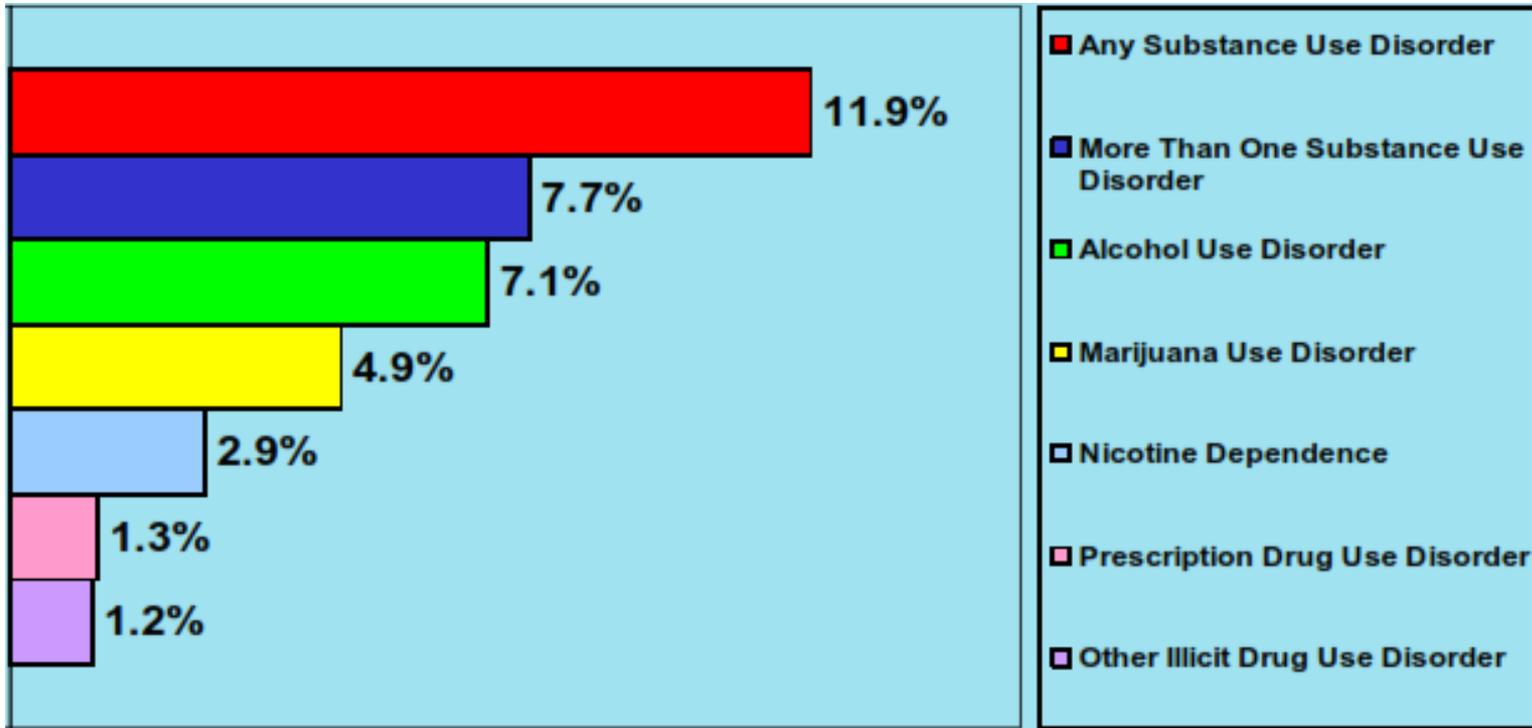
- **Academic:** lower grades & academic attainment, higher unemployment
- **Health:** traffic accidents, risky sex, chronic health problems, brain damage, addiction, fatal health conditions, unintentional injuries, homicides, suicides
- **Crime:** juvenile & adult property, violent & substance-related offenses





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Substance Use Disorders Among High School Students



Source: CASA analysis of the *National Household Survey on Drug Use and Health (NSDUH)*, 2009.

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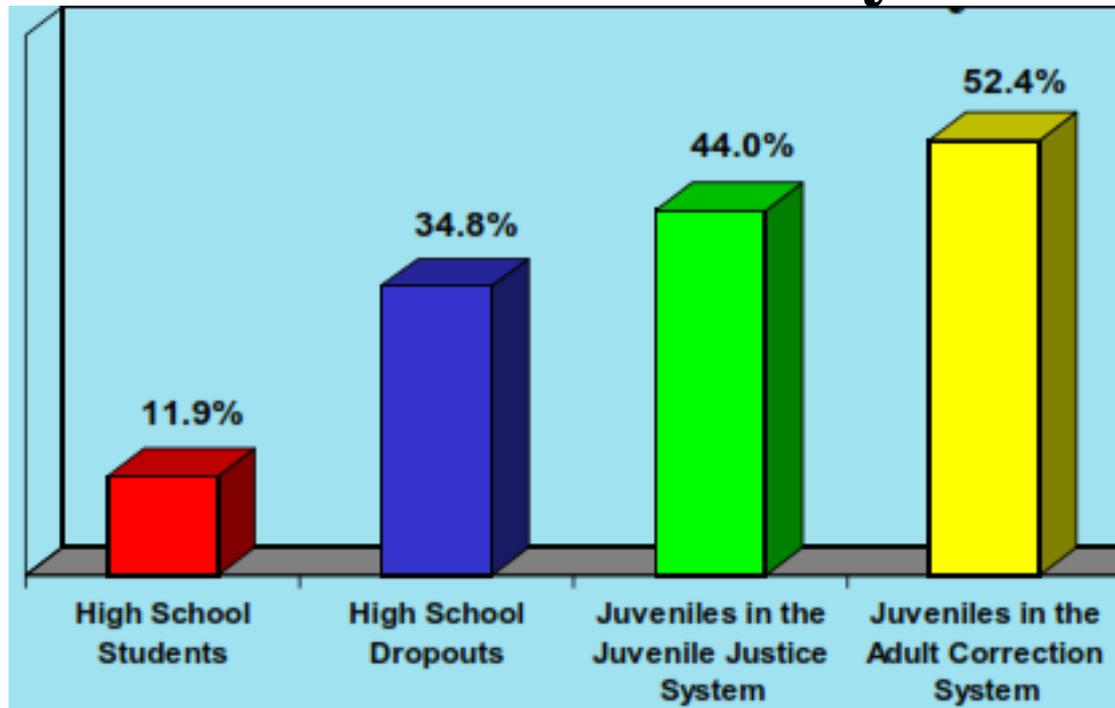
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Substance Use Disorders Among High School Students, Dropouts & Juveniles in the Justice System



Source: CASA analysis of the *National Household Survey on Drug Use and Health (NSDUH)*, 2009. *CASA Criminal Neglect: Substance Use, Juvenile Justice and The Children Left Behind*, 2004.



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Teen Substance Use Results in Staggering Costs to Society

Costs of Teen Use:

- \$68 billion/year for underage drinking (\$2,280/year for every adolescent in the U.S.)
- \$14.4 billion/year for juvenile justice

Teen Use Drives Lifetime Costs:

- \$467.7 billion/year in government spending on substance use/addiction (**\$1,500/year for every person in the U.S.**)
- 96 cents of every \$1 goes to cope with the consequences; **only 2 cents for prevention & treatment**



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Families Present Mixed Messages to Teens About Risks of Substance Use

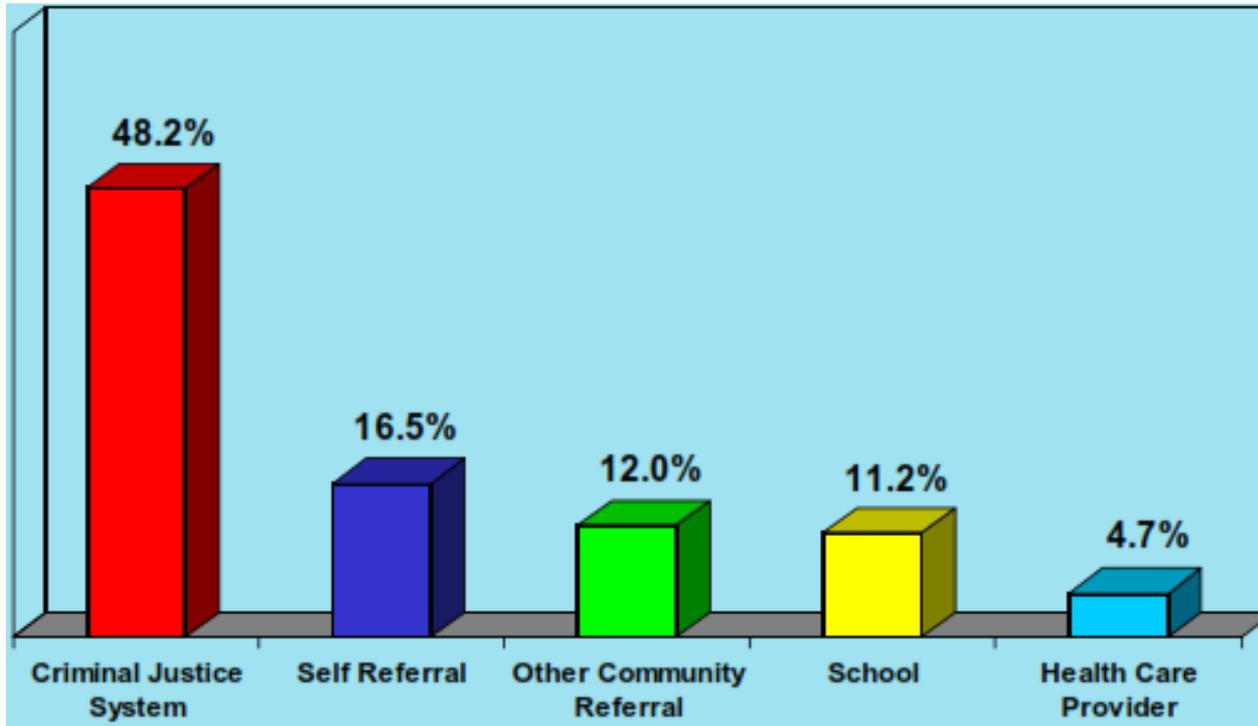
- 46.1% of children under 18 (34.4 million) live with risky substance user
- 42.6% of parents of high school students say that their teens' refraining from substance use is one of their top 3 concerns
- 20.8% of parents of high school students think marijuana is a harmless drug
- Home/family is most common source of addictive substances, after friends





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Referrals to Treatment Typically Occur When Teens Are Deeply in Trouble

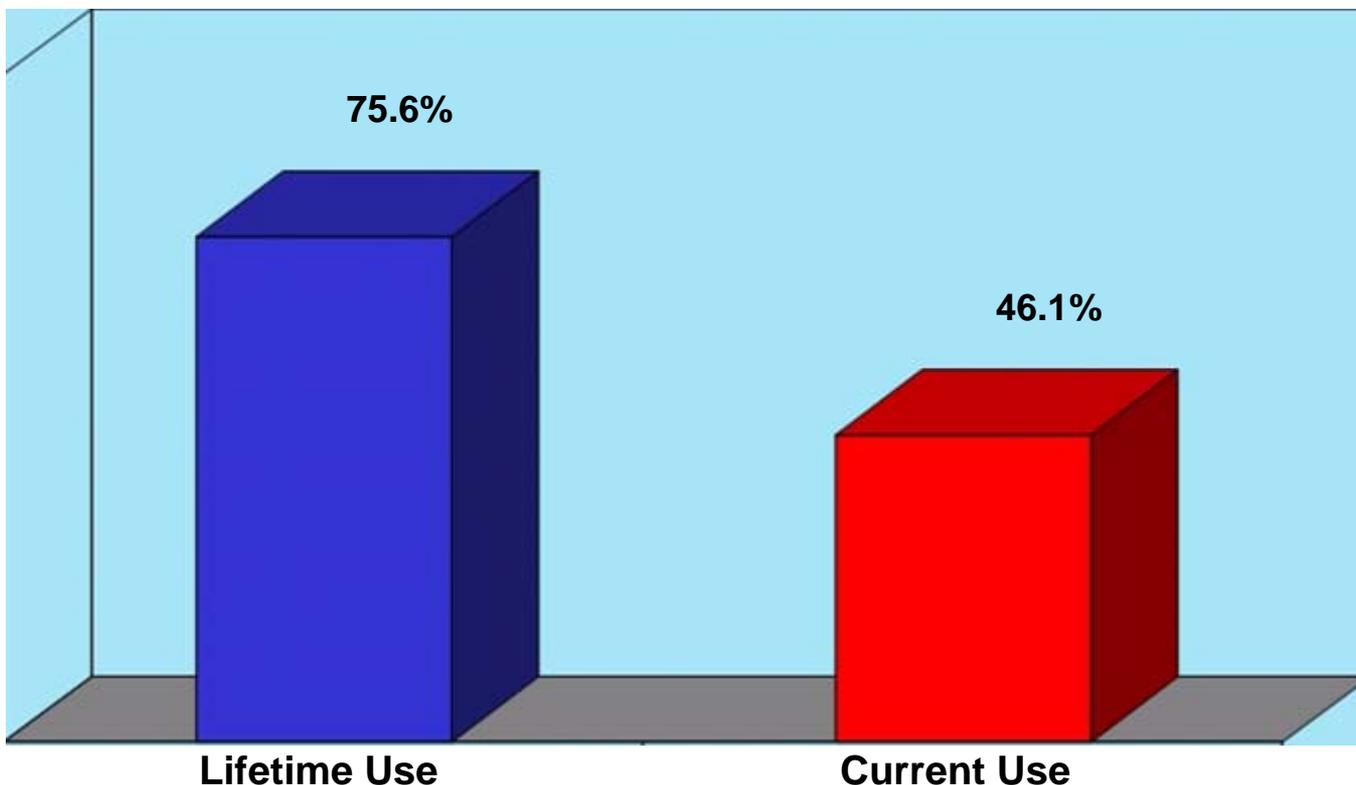


Source: CASA analysis of the *Treatment Episode Data Set (TEDS)*, 2008.



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Percent of High School Students Using Addictive Substances, 2009



Source: CASA analysis of the *Youth Risk Behavior Survey (YRBS)*, 2009.

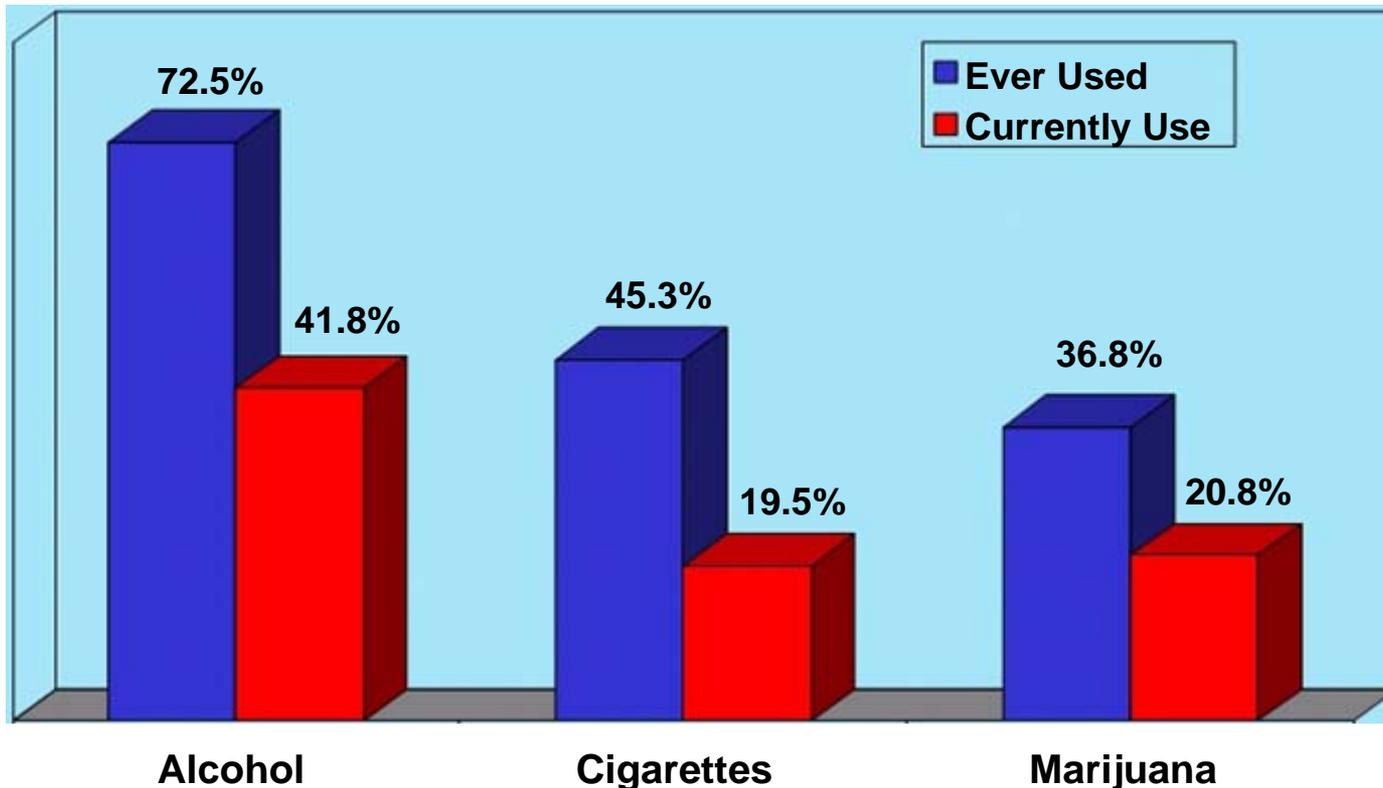
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Percent of High School Students Using Top 3 Addictive Substances, 2009



Source: CASA analysis of the *Youth Risk Behavior Survey (YRBS)*, 2009.

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Prevalence of Substance Use Disorders Among High School Students

- 11.9% (1.6 million) of all high school students
- 19.4% of those who have ever tried any substance
- 33.3% of current substance users



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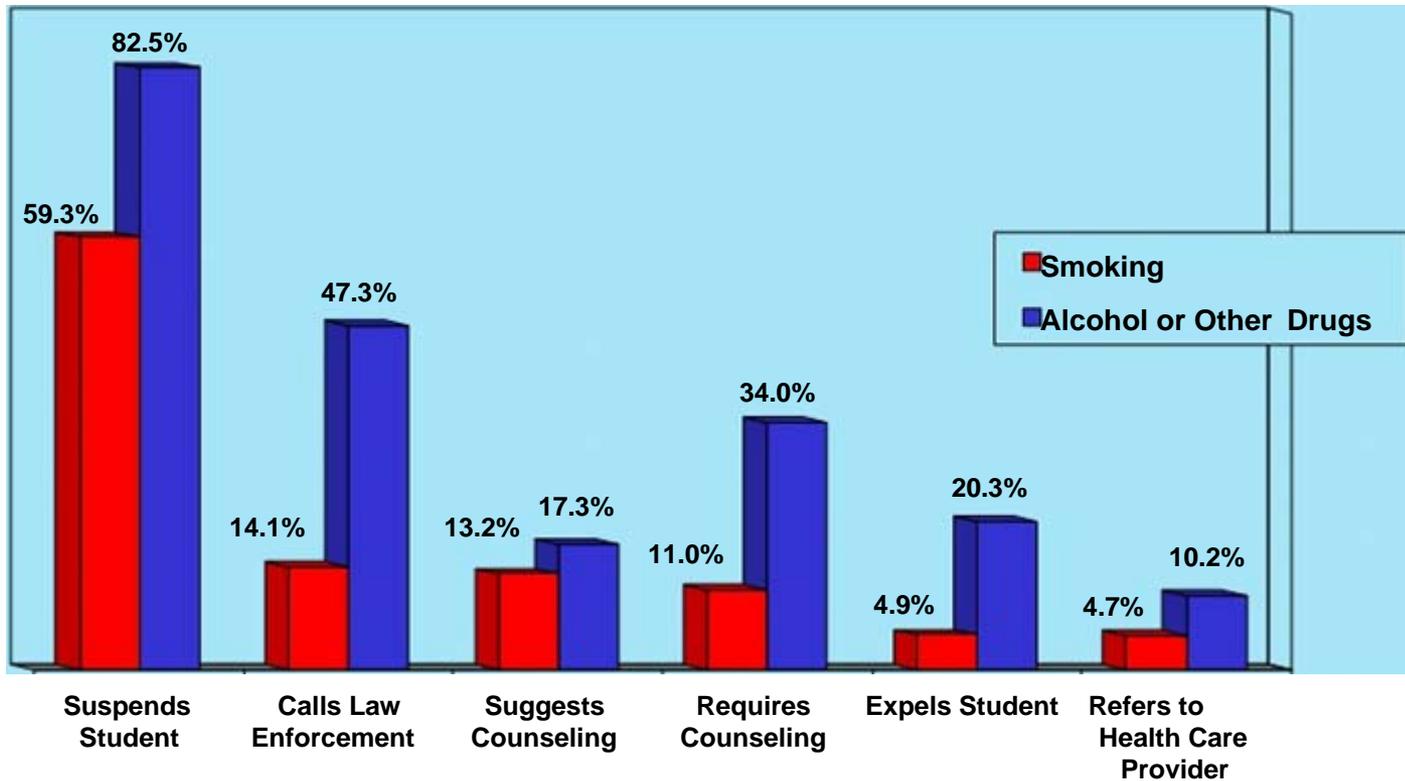
Schools Miss the Mark

- Only 27% of high school teachers say their schools train staff to identify & respond to student substance use
- Less than 40% of high school teachers think their school's prevention efforts are effective
- Three-quarters of high school teachers were unable to name a professional who is available to help students with substance use problems



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School Responses to Evidence of Student Substance Use Often Punitive



Source: *CASA National Survey of High School Students, Parents of High School Students, and High School Personnel, 2010.*

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Advertising & Media Messages Glamorize Substance Use

- Odds of becoming a tobacco user increase with exposure to tobacco marketing
- Exposure to TV & movie portrayals of drinking linked to teen drinking
 - 77% of the most popular TV shows among teens & adults mention or depict drinking



Advertisements like this one for Jose Cuervo tequila glamorize substance use



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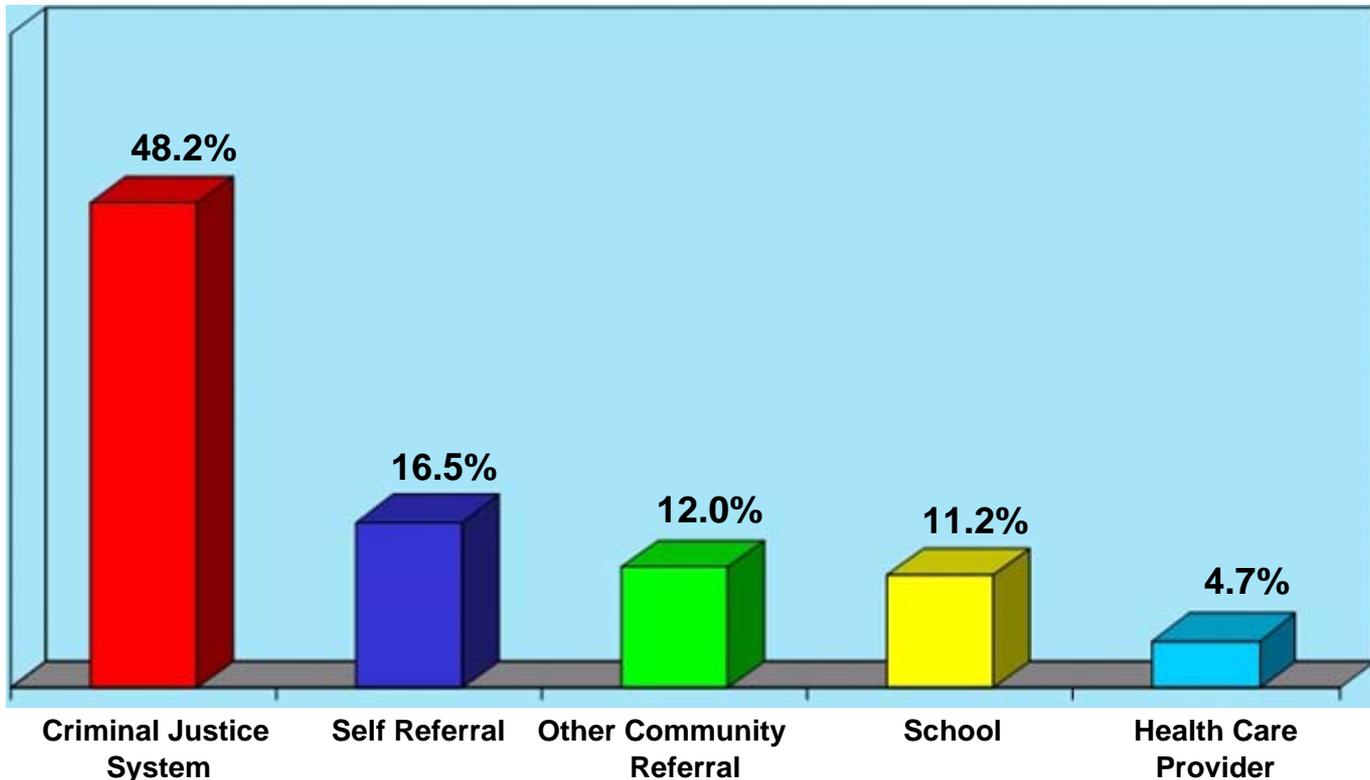
Compounding the Risk

- Genetic predisposition or family history of substance use disorders
- Adverse childhood events (e.g., abuse or neglect)
- Co-occurring mental health or behavioral problems
- Peer victimization or bullying
- Other risky behaviors
- Subgroups at risk: child welfare, juvenile offenders, dropouts, minority sexual identity



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Referrals to Treatment Typically Occur When Teens Are Deeply in Trouble



Source: CASA analysis of the *Treatment Episode Data Set (TEDS)*, 2008.



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Few Teens Receive Quality Treatment

- 1.6 million high school students meet medical criteria for a substance use disorder involving alcohol or other drugs
- Only 6.4% of them (99,913) received treatment in past year
- Only 28% of treatment facilities offer specialized care for adolescents; most offer substandard care



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The Solution

- 1. Help the public understand** the risks of teen substance use, the nature of addiction & its origins in adolescence.
- 2. Prevent or delay the onset** of substance use for as long as possible through the implementation of effective public health measures.
- 3. Identify teens at risk** for substance use through routine screenings, as we do for other public health problems.
- 4. Intervene early** with teens who are using to prevent further use & its consequences.
- 5. Provide appropriate treatment** to teens identified as having a substance use or co-occurring disorder.





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