



## DRUG SURVEY REPORT

Every two years The Coalition collects information on local youth drug and alcohol use through a drug survey administered in the Angelina County schools. The last survey was administered in 2009 to 6<sup>th</sup>, 8<sup>th</sup>, 10<sup>th</sup> and 12<sup>th</sup> grade students. The information is a valuable tool in understanding what the biggest problems are among our youth. With this understanding we can focus our prevention efforts in specific areas. What are the issues? Alcohol, tobacco and marijuana have consistently been the biggest problems locally, as well as nationally, among the youth population age 18 and below. The Angelina County school data for illicit drugs such as meth and cocaine are “statistically insignificant”, meaning they are so low they barely register.

Among many questions asked on the survey, The Coalition looks at a few areas of particular interest which are: prevalence of use, perception of risk, students’ perception of parental approval, where students use and age of first use.

Prevalence of use questions ask the student how many times in the past 30 days they used each substance. Overall in the past 15 years, the surveys show a steadily decreasing trend in alcohol use from a reported 36.8% in 1994, 25% in 2007 and 18.9% in 2009.

The numbers on tobacco show a downward trend but have fluctuated over the years due to changes in the wording of questions. In 2007 and 2009, students were asked about “tobacco” use which would include smokeless tobacco products, as opposed to past questions only asking about “cigarette” use. In 2007, when the question on tobacco was first introduced, the numbers jumped up to 26.7% from 14% in 2005. The numbers in 2009 have dropped dramatically to 12.2% of students using tobacco products.

In 1996 marijuana use in Angelina County was 9.2% but spiked in 1998 to 15.8%. It began decreasing after 1998 and in 2007 was down to 7.14%, but in 2009 increased to 8.1%. Much like in 1998, talk of legalizing marijuana is prominent and could account for students heightened interest in the drug. The surveys consistently show that there is a connection between whether or not a student uses a drug and whether they perceive that drug as dangerous.

There is also a connection between whether or not a student uses a drug and their perception of parental approval. So, if a student thinks his/her parents disapprove of alcohol, for instance, they are more likely to perceive alcohol negatively and less likely to drink alcohol. **In other words, parents are a powerful deterrent to their child’s drug, alcohol and tobacco use.**

Another important factor is where students are using. The survey shows that the most common place is at a party, followed closely by a friend's home or at their own home. Schools were one of the least likely places students used any substance according to the survey.

Age of first use is also a critical factor. Studies show that kids who wait until 21 to drink alcohol virtually never become addicted. The longer a child can wait to use substances such as alcohol, tobacco and marijuana, the better chance they have of never using the substance or not becoming addicted. In Angelina County, the average age at which kids are reporting first using any substances has gone up from age 12 to age 14. The Coalition is pleased with the delay of first use.

Overall, the surveys show steady progress in Angelina County. In the past 15 years, the numbers are decreasing for youth substance use; and the age at which kids are starting to use has gone up. Alcohol is still the number one substance used by our youth so we still have work to do, but we are encouraged by the progress.