



Recovery of Adolescents with SUD Disorders

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Agenda

- I. Epidemiology of Adolescent SUD before/after COVID
- II. Status of prevention, recovery, and increasing access to treatment
- III. SAMHSA principles of adolescent recovery
- IV. Prevention and treatment
- V. Advanced programs and opportunities in addressing adolescent recovery





Introduction

While adolescent substance use in general is on a decline, the adolescent lethality from drug use is increasing. The US continues to experience an escalating trend of overdose deaths, with the number of deaths doubling in number between 2019 and 2022 and projected to continue to rise in 2024. Communities search for solutions to address adolescent substance use and recovery from SUDs in a sustainable way.

Adolescent SUD before/after COVID

The good news:

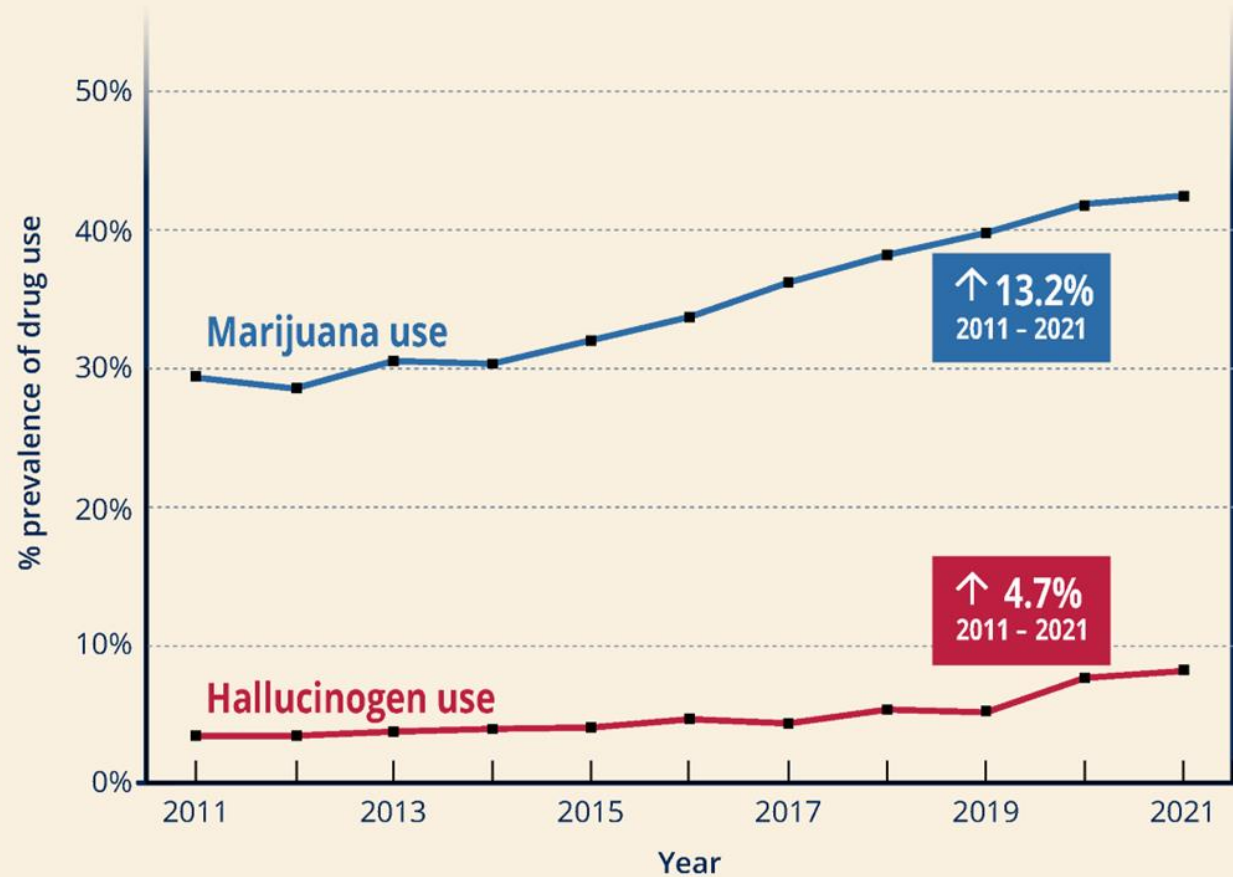
The percentage of adolescents reporting they used any illicit substances in 2023 continued to hold steady below the pre-pandemic levels reported in 2020, with 10.9% of eighth graders, 19.8% of 10th graders, and 31.2% of 12th graders reporting any illicit drug use in the past year, according to the latest results from the Monitoring the Future survey (1977-present, University of Michigan/NIDA).

Trends:

- Abstainers are at all time high
- Use of illicit drugs other than Marijuana in 2023 were 8% for 8th graders, 9% for 10th graders, and 12% for 12th graders.
- In 2023 lifetime prevalence of prescription drugs was 9%, compared to 14% in 2020. Past 12-month use was 4% in 2023, compared to 8% in 2020. Past 30-day use was 2% in 2023, compared to 3% in 2020.
- Nicotine from cigarettes returned to pre-pandemic levels.



Historic Highs in Past-Year Marijuana and Hallucinogen Use Among Young Adults (Ages 19-30) in 2021



Source: 2021 Monitoring the Future Panel Survey

Concerns

FROM LATEST DATA

- The pre-pandemic data from 2020 was from January to March only.
- Marijuana use did not return to pre-pandemic levels (consider also potency).
- Alcohol (been drunk) and nicotine from vaping did not return to pre-pandemic levels.
- Added new substances – Delta-8

GENERAL

- High general prevalence compared to other countries – a 2016 study of the Univ. of Michigan indicates that 35% of the US teens have used an illicit drug compared to 18% of their European counterparts.
- Nearly half of young adults aged 18 to 25 in 2021 (45.8 percent or 15.3 million people) had either an SUD or AMI in the past year.
- 12% of the adolescents with severe SUD become adults with multiple severe SUDs.

Prevention principles and types

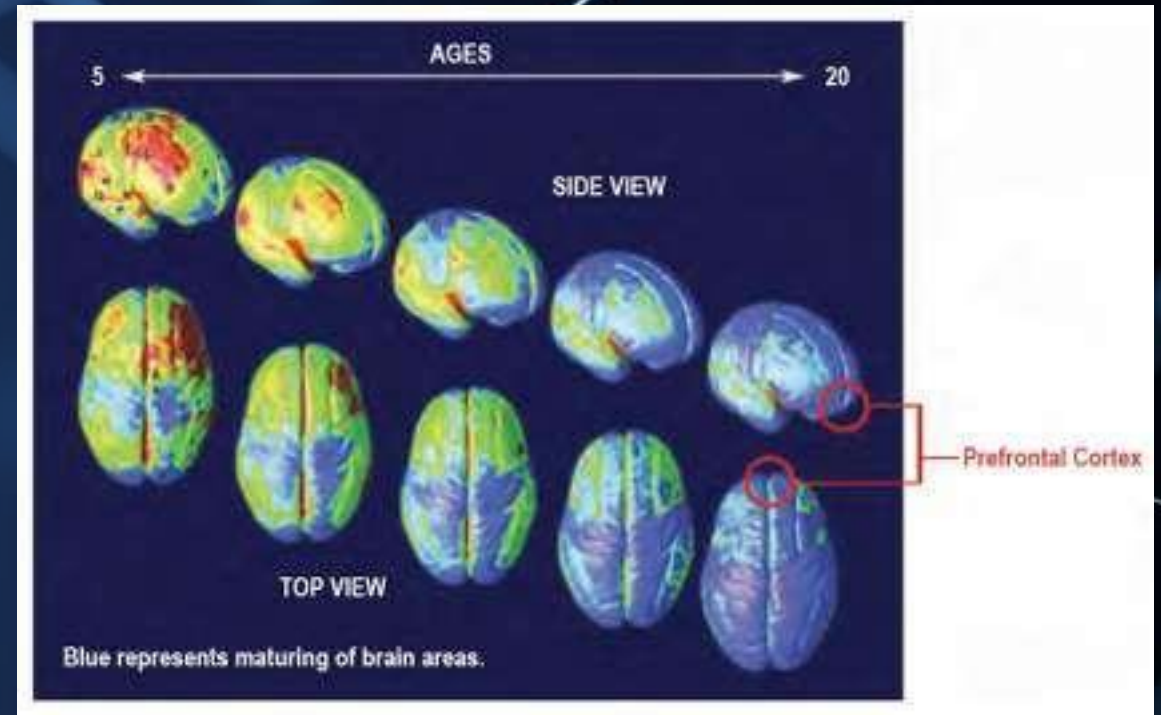
- Prevention activities work to educate and support individuals and communities to prevent the use and misuse of drugs and the development of substance use disorders. (SAMHSA.gov)
- SAMHSA establishes principles of SUD and Mental Health Prevention and develops strategies, campaigns, and instruments for adolescent SUD prevention, for example Tips for Teens.
- There are primary (avoiding disease), secondary (screening) and tertiary (preventing the progression) prevention programs addressing potential health risks, including SUD.
- Tertiary prevention is evolving as early interventions in licensed treatment programs for the person and/or family members.

Prevention (cont.)

- Adolescent prevention: addressing individual, family and community risk and protective factors.
- Universal, selective and indicated prevention/interventions provide education and target biological, psychological and/or social risk factors.
- Promoting resilience and emotional health of children, youth and families, is one of SAMHSA's priorities.
- Adolescents' prevention is implemented with the four SAMHSA' pillars in mind: health, home, purpose, and community.

Treatment/Recovery Principles

- The adolescent brain is often likened to a car with fully functional gas pedal, (the reward system), but weak breaks (the pre-frontal cortex) (SAMHSA, 2014).
- Even experimenting with drugs is a problem (unsafe sex, DWI, potential to develop a pattern of use).
- Drug use compromises the part of the brain used to stop it – “just say no” does not work.
- Drug use complicates physical and psychological development.



Treatment and Treatment Access

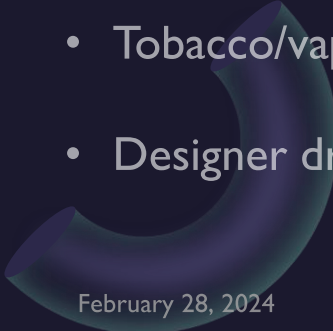
- Many evidence-based practices, especially **behavioral** therapies, are adolescence – specific and when mild/moderate SUD is identified and treated early (key approach) , abstinence is achieved and sustained without relapses (www.blueprintsprograms.org)
- Adolescents can benefit from SUD intervention even if they are not addicted to drugs.
- Relapse is not a sign of treatment failed.
- Medical screens and for drug use and legal interventions are opportunities to intervene.
- Treatment should address the needs of the **whole person**.

Treatment and Recovery (cont.)



ADOLESCENT-SPECIFIC DRUGS OF CONCERN



- Marijuana
 - Inhalants
 - Prescription medications
 - Anabolic Steroids
 - Tobacco/vaping
 - Designer drugs
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TREATMENT SETTINGS

- Outpatient treatment (OP)
- Enhanced outpatient treatment (EOP)
- Intensive outpatient treatment (IOP)
- Partial hospitalization
- Residential/inpatient

EVIDENCE-BASED APPROACHES

- Adolescent Community Reinforcement approach (A-CRA)
- Trauma-informed Cognitive-behavioral Therapies (CBT).
- Contingency Management. (CM)
- Motivational Enhancement (ME)
- Family-based approaches, 12-step programs
- Medication Assisted Therapies

Treatment and Access to it – Challenges

- Many states are going through reorganization of SUD treatment systems.
- Decriminalization of substances, such as Marijuana and Psilocybin pose new challenges.
- Workforce development is not an easy task.
- Culturally responsive recovery is still an aspirational goal.
- While it inspires hope, the use of peer coaches pose new challenges.

Co-occurring Disorders



- Integrated treatment.
- The neurobiology of trauma and SUD.
- Trauma-informed treatment - opportunities.
- Cultural issues
- Regional and rural areas issues

Green Thumb Initiative (GTI):

Since 2018, GTI is addressing the health needs of adolescents and their families in Southern Colorado through behavioral prevention: therapeutic horticulture, life skills, fitness, cooking and nutritional education. The organization's staff has background in education, biology, horticulture and mental health. This allows us to custom-design collaborative projects with high flexibility and consideration of our partners' needs.

GTI's independent research shows a reduction in substance abuse and misuse and in patterns of unhealthy coping mechanisms of anxiety, depression, and suicidal ideation.





Summary

While the road to recovery is always open, prevention remains the most effective weapon against adolescent substance abuse. By understanding the root causes, risk factors, and developing effective prevention strategies, we can empower young individuals in our communities to build resilience and make healthy choices.

Q&A



Resources

<https://www.samhsa.gov/sites/default/files/20190620-samhsa-strategic-prevention-framework>

<https://archives.nida.nih.gov/sites/default/files/podat-guide-adolescents-508.pdf>

<https://www.blueprintsprograms.org>

www.greenthumb-initiative.com

