

## WHAT IS SUBSTANCE USE?

- Substance use is the use of alcohol, drugs, prescription medications, or other substances to alter the state of a person's mind and body.
- It can be challenging to spot the signs of alcohol and drug use in youth, because mood swings and unpredictable behavior are common at that age.

## WARNING SIGNS

Warning signs may appear as changes in behavior, mood, personality, hygiene and appearance, physical health, school life, or work life, as well as changes within the home or car.

### BEHAVIORAL

- Changes in or withdraws from relationships with family members or friends.
- Uses chewing gum or mints to cover up breath.
- Uses over-the-counter solutions, such as eye drops, to reduce eye redness or nasal irritation.
- Frequently breaks curfew.
- Is often out of money.
- Drives recklessly, including car accidents or unexplained dents on the car.
- Avoids eye contact.
- Locks doors.
- Goes out every night.
- Makes secretive phone calls.
- Makes excuses for behavior or appearance.
- Has the “munchies” or a sudden increase in appetite.
- Exhibits uncharacteristically loud, obnoxious behavior.
- Laughs at nothing.
- Has become unusually clumsy (stumbling, lack of coordination, poor balance).
- Disappears for prolonged periods of time.
- Experiences periods of sleeplessness or high energy, followed by long stretches of “catch-up” sleep.

### MOOD

- Exhibits mood changes or emotional instability.
- Displays a loss of inhibition.
- Less motivated or unable to focus.
- Hyperactive or unusually elated.
- Sullen, withdrawn, or depressed.
- Silent or unwilling to communicate.
- Hostile, angry, or uncooperative.
- Deceitful or secretive.

### HYGIENE

- Unusual odors, including smoke, on breath or clothes.
- Messy appearance.
- Poor hygiene.
- Red, flushed cheeks or face.
- Puncture wounds or scars consistent with needle use on arms or legs; wears long sleeves in warm weather to hide marks.
- Soot or burns on fingers.

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## PHYSICAL HEALTH

- Unusually tired.
- Slow, lethargic movement.
- Speech is slurred, rapid-fire, or unintelligible.
- Nosebleeds.
- Runny nose that is not caused by allergies or a cold.
- Frequent illness.
- Sores or spots around mouth.
- Seizures.
- Vomiting.
- Wetting lips or excessive thirst.
- Sudden or dramatic weight gain or loss.
- Skin abrasions or bruises.
- Accidents or injuries.
- Depression.
- Headaches.
- Sweatiness.

## SCHOOL AND WORK

- Absent from or fails to fulfill responsibilities at school or work.
- Loses interest in school, work, or extracurricular activities like hobbies and sports.
- Receives complaints from teachers or supervisors.
- Reports of intoxication at school or work.

## HOME AND CAR

- Disappearance of money or valuables.
- Disappearance of alcohol or cigarettes.
- Disappearance of prescription or over-the-counter pills.
- Receives unusual packages in the mail.
- Unusual odors inside the car.
- Bottles, pipes, or bongs inside the car.
- Appearance of unusual containers or wrappers.
- Appearance of unusual drug paraphernalia, including pipes, rolling papers, small medicine bottles, eye drops, butane lighters, or makeshift smoking devices.
- Hidden stashes of alcohol.

## TAKE ACTION

If you have reason to believe your child is using alcohol or drugs, the sooner you address the issue, the better the outcome for your child.

- Reach out to your child's school counselor, pediatrician, primary care physician, or a mental health professional.
- Remember that early intervention is best for your loved one's health and well-being.

**Call 910-862-6900 today** to speak to someone who can help.

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Resources available upon request.

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