

The Relationship Between Alcohol, Drug Use and Violence Among Students

Research substantiates the link between violence and alcohol/drug use among adolescents. This link exists not only for the perpetrators of violence, but also for those who are victims of violence. Reducing funding for the State Grants portion of the Safe and Drug Free Schools and Communities (SDFSC) program to \$100 million, a cut of \$194.8 million, will undoubtedly lead to increases in violence, alcohol and drug use among school-aged youth.

Student Alcohol Use and Violence

- Alcohol use is an independent risk factor for delinquent and violent behaviors among young people.¹
- Adolescents who abuse alcohol are three times more likely to commit violent offenses than those who do not drink to excess.²
- Youth aged 12-17 who reported violent behaviors in the past year also reported higher rates of past year alcohol use compared with youths who did not report violent behavior.³
- 65.9% of those youth reporting heavy alcohol use, 56.8% of those reporting binge drinking, and 43.7% of those reporting past 30-day use of alcohol had also engaged in one or more of the following delinquent behaviors: participating in a serious fight at school or at work; participating in a group-against-group fight; attacking someone with the intent to seriously hurt them; stealing or attempting to steal something worth \$50 or more; selling illegal drugs; and/or carrying a hand gun within the last year.⁴
- Alcohol use among adolescents co-occurs with a range of other risky behaviors including violence, tobacco use, sexual activity, drinking and driving and suicide.⁵

Student Alcohol Use and Victimization

- Those who drink, including adolescents, may experience an increased risk of violence because of reduced physical coordination, poor decision-making in threatening situations and isolation while out late at night.⁶
- Alcohol increases vulnerability to victimization above levels of vulnerability brought about by other factors.⁷

Student Drug Use and Violence

- Youths who had engaged in fighting or other delinquent behaviors were more likely than other youths to have used illicit drugs.⁸
- Of those students who reported carrying a gun to school during the 2005-2006 school year, 63.9% report also using marijuana, 39.9% report using cocaine, and 36.8% report using crystal meth in the past year.⁹
- Of those students who reported hurting others with a weapon at school, 68.4% had used marijuana, 48.3% had used cocaine, and 44.1% had used crystal meth in the past year.¹⁰
- Of those students who reported being hurt by a weapon at school, 60.3% reported using marijuana, 41.1% reported using cocaine and 38.3% reported using crystal meth in the past year.¹¹
- Past month illicit drug use was reported by 17.3% of youths who had gotten into serious fights at school or work in the past year compared with 7.6% of those who had not.¹²
- The incidences of youth physically attacking others, stealing, and destroying property increased in proportion to the number of days marijuana was smoked in the past year.¹³
- Marijuana users were twice as likely as non-users to report they disobeyed school rules.¹⁴
- Of those students who reported threatening someone with a gun, knife or club or threatening to hit, slap or kick someone during the 2005-2006 school year, 27% also reported using marijuana, 7.8% reported using cocaine and 6.2% reported using crystal meth in the past year.¹⁵
- During the 2005-2006 school year, of those students who reported any trouble with the police, 39.6% also reported using marijuana, 12.2% reported using cocaine, and 9% reported using crystal meth in the past year.¹⁶

Footnotes

¹ Komro, K.A., Williams, C.L., Foster, J.L., et al. (1999). The relationship between adolescent alcohol use and delinquent and violent behaviors. *Journal of Child Adolescent Substance Abuse*, 9(2):13-28.

² Fergusson, D.M., Lynskey, M.T., Horwood, L.J. (1996). Alcohol misuse and juvenile offending in adolescence. *Addiction*, 91(4): 495-510.

³ Office of Applied Studies, Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration. (2005). *The NSDUH report: Alcohol use and delinquent behaviors among youths*. Available: <http://www.oas.samhsa.gov/2k5/alcDelinquent/alcDelinquent.pdf>

⁴ Ibid.

⁵ Windle, M. *Alcohol Use Among Adolescents*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage, 1999.

⁶ Shepherd, J.P.(1998). Emergency room research on links between alcohol and violent injury. *Addiction*, 93(8): 1261-1262.

⁷ Shepherd, J.P.; Sutherland, I.; Newcombe, R.G. (2006) Relations between alcohol, violence and victimization in adolescence. *Journal of Adolescence*, 29(4): 539-553.

⁸ Office of Applied Studies, Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration. National Survey on Drug Use and Health: National Findings. (2005). *Youth Prevention-Related Measures: Fighting and Delinquent Behavior*. 64. Available: <http://oas.samhsa.gov/nsduh/2k5nsduh/2k5results.pdf>.

⁹ Pride Surveys. (2006). *Questionnaire report for grades 6-12: 2006 national summary*. 184. Available: <http://www.pridesurveys.com/customercenter/us05ns.pdf>.

¹⁰ Pride Surveys. (2006). *Questionnaire report for grades 6-12: 2006 national summary*. 197. Available: <http://www.pridesurveys.com/customercenter/us05ns.pdf>.

¹¹ Pride Surveys. (2006). *Questionnaire report for grades 6-12: 2006 national summary*. 199. Available: <http://www.pridesurveys.com/customercenter/us05ns.pdf>.

¹² Office of Applied Studies, Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration. National Survey on Drug Use and Health: National Findings. (2005). *Youth Prevention-Related Measures: Fighting and Delinquent Behavior*. 64. Available: <http://oas.samhsa.gov/nsduh/2k5nsduh/2k5results.pdf>.

¹³ Office of National Drug Control Policy. (2006). *Marijuana Myths and Facts: The Truth Behind 10 Popular Misperceptions*. 10. Available: http://www.whitehousedrugpolicy.gov/publications/marijuana_myths_facts/marijuana_myths_facts.pdf

¹⁴ Ibid.

¹⁵ Pride Surveys. (2006). *Questionnaire report for grades 6-12: 2006 national summary*. 194. Available: <http://www.pridesurveys.com/customercenter/us05ns.pdf>.

¹⁶ Pride Surveys. (2006). *Questionnaire report for grades 6-12: 2006 national summary*. 195. Available: <http://www.pridesurveys.com/customercenter/us05ns.pdf>.