



Press Release

Alcohol, Marijuana and Tobacco Use Among Some Groups of Alexandria Youth Exceeds National Rates

Alexandria's Substance Abuse Prevention Coalition Releases New Research Data

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Contact: Allen Lomax, SAPCA Chair
703-578-3054 aclomax@aol.com
Mary-Jane Atwater
703-683-4213 matwater@aol.com

Alexandria, Virginia -- The Substance Abuse Prevention Coalition of Alexandria (SAPCA) has released a report that paints a disturbing picture about youth substance abuse in Alexandria, with alcohol, marijuana and tobacco use by some groups of middle and high school youth **exceeding national rates**. The report is based on quantitative research data from the Alexandria Developmental Assets Report (March 2007) and the Alexandria Youth Risk Behavior Survey (February 2008), and qualitative findings from the recently completed Qualitative Assessment of Alexandria Youth Substance Use Report (Sept. 2008), which was conducted by Dr. Jerome Short and Dr. Christianna Esposito-Smythers of George Mason University under the auspices of SAPCA.

The report, entitled "Substance Abuse Prevention Plan for Alexandria" and authored by Dr. Short and Dr. Esposito-Smythers, summarized six risk factors that characterize youth substance abuse in Alexandria:

1. **High rates and early onset of substance abuse**
2. **Easy availability of alcohol, tobacco and marijuana**
3. **Lack of effective enforcement or consequences**
4. **Lack of effective parenting skills and parental communication with schools**
5. **Need for education about youth substance abuse**
6. **Need for more substance abuse prevention activities and practices**

The report outlined a **prevention plan** with 10 recommendations to reduce youth substance use and abuse in Alexandria, including more consistent enforcement of rules and consequences for youth substance use by parents and schools; increased police enforcement of alcohol and marijuana laws; developing skills-building workshops for parents to help them talk to their children about substance use and abuse; better monitoring of risk factors such as decline in school grades or attendance; increasing the number of community drug-free social events for families; SAPCA-sponsored workshops for various community sectors on factors related to youth substance abuse and prevention; and instituting effective substance abuse prevention practices supported by national and local research. **For the complete "Substance Abuse Prevention Plan for Alexandria" report as well as links to other research on youth substance abuse in the City, please visit www.alexhealth.org/partnership/sapca.html.** Support for the Qualitative Assessment of Alexandria Youth Substance Abuse came from a grant from the Office of Substance Abuse Services, Virginia Department of Mental Health, Mental Retardation and Substance Abuse Services.

SAPCA is an alliance of more than 80 members representing parents, youth, schools, City of Alexandria health and recreation agencies, nonprofits, businesses, the media, faith communities, policymakers and law enforcement whose mission is to engage the entire community in reducing youth substance use and abuse in Alexandria. SAPCA was created in 2007 as part of the Partnership for a Healthier Alexandria (<http://www.alexhealth.org/partnership>). Alexandria Mayor William D. Euille is SAPCA's honorary chair. SAPCA is a member of the Community Anti-Drug Coalitions of America (CADCA) and recently received a significant Drug Free Communities grant from the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services.

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