

The Purpose of this Awareness Action Guide:

Teachers, administrators, student support professionals, and other school staff members dedicate their work each day to prepare students for future success. The use of alcohol and other drugs can seriously undermine school performance and achievement. Drug use may also significantly impact physical and mental health, and the ability to sustain relationships. When given accurate information and guidance, school staff and educators may be better equipped to identify overt changes in behavior and detect early drug use. Educators and non-clinical school staff are encouraged to work with other school support staff who are trained in these areas, such as school counselors, to identify and intervene when significant behavior changes are observed. The Awareness to Action Guide is designed to provide a quick reference to assist in the identification of behavioral and health changes, general information on current drug trends, and moving forward with a plan to assist your student.

Awareness: What does this look like in the classroom?

Be aware of changes in your student such as*:

Shifts in mood and personality:

- Unusually depressed and withdrawn, extreme personality swings, defensiveness
- Hostility, anger, aggression

Behavioral Changes:

- Loss of interest in school, activities, future
- Changes in friends, peers
- Disregard for class/school rules, defiance, excessive and sporadic absenteeism

Hygiene & Appearance:

- Unusual smells, including smoke, or perfumes/colognes, body spray or mouthwash, excessive use of mints and gum
- Flushed cheeks or face, bloodshot eyes
- Unidentifiable marks, bruising, or “track marks” typically found at the crook of the elbow

Physical Health:

- Frequent sickness, excessive sleepiness
- Sudden weight changes
- Nosebleeds, runny nose, sores, spots around mouth
- Frequent perspiration, lack of coordination, slurred speech

* Excerpted from *Partnership to End Addiction Drugfree.org/article/spotting-drug-use/*

Substance Abuse Dynamics

In addition to understanding the signs and symptoms of substance abuse, it's also helpful to understand that the substance abuse landscape can change rapidly. Change in the access, availability, or popularity of substances can impact which substances are commonly abused. This makes it important to stay aware of current trends. For more information, refer to the [National Institute on Drug Abuse-Trends and Statistics](#).

Action: Sharing Concerns and Setting the Stage for Support

- **Demonstrate authentic concern and caring**
Start the conversation! Establish trust by clarifying that the student's health, wellness, and success is a concern. Have a conversation with your student and discuss concerns.
- **Approach the student with an open mind and without judgement**
There may be other physical or behavioral health concerns that cause these conditions, other than substance use. Regardless of their origin, however, they are cause for concern and a strong reason to intervene. Approach students with an open-mind and tell them what you have noticed. You can express concern about the symptoms without attaching a cause to your observations. If you're unsure, discuss your concerns with a school mental health professional.
- **Be prepared with facts and information on drug use**
 - Be open and honest about the dangers of drug use, present accurate and current data, and give relevant information to facilitate student's understanding of the dangers of drug use.
 - **Offer Resources**
 - **Crisis Supports- National**
 - [National Suicide Prevention Lifeline](#): 24/7, immediate, and confidential over-the-phone suicide prevention services to anyone who is in crisis or experiencing suicidal thoughts, facing mental health conditions and/or substance use disorders
 - TeenLine: 800-852-8336 - text TEEN to 839863
 - Trevor Line (LGBTQ Youth) : 866-488-7386
 - Crisis Text Line: Text HELP 741-741
 - **Substance Abuse Resources- National**
 - SAMHSA's National Helpline is a free, confidential, 24/7, 365-day-a-year treatment referral and information service (in English and [Spanish](#)) for individuals and families facing mental and/or substance use disorders. 1-800-662-4357
 - Parent Helpline -Partnership to End Addiction- Text CONNECT to 55753 or call 1-855-378-4373
 - **Resource Navigation & Support- Local**
 - [OC WarmLine](#): 24/7 Free and confidential telephone service providing emotional support and resources to Orange County residents
 - [OC Navigator](#): An extensive and inclusive directory of OC resources available to support the health and wellness of all county residents
 - [OC Links](#) 24/7 Behavioral Health Services Line: An entry point for OC Health Care Agency's Mental Health and Recovery Services System of Care which provides information, referral and linkage, screening, crisis response and homeless outreach

- Offer relatable stories and scenarios that highlight consequences of engaging in drug use without blaming and inciting defensiveness. Provide positive and hopeful scenarios that demonstrate strategies for overcoming drug use.
- **Building a plan with your student**
 - Assist with developing a plan to redirect behaviors and drug use by:
 - Listening and supporting the student when concerns arise.
 - Talk to your school mental health professional about resources such as hotlines, local resources, and those listed in this fact sheet that can be offered to the student.
 - Educate the student on how to access school mental health services. You can offer to walk them to the school counselor, school psychologist, or school social worker.
 - Offer a warm hand-off to the school mental health professional on campus.
- **Getting on the same page**
 - Check-in with school social worker or school counselor and other educators who are also involved with the student to share concerns, compare observations, check attendance and trends in academic performance.

References

[Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Agency: Talk They Hear You School and Educator Resources](#)

[Partnership for Drug Education: How to Spot the Signs of Teen or Young Adult Substance Abuse](#)

[Society for Adolescent Health and Medicine: Substance Abuse Resources](#)

[Drug Trends](#)

[Too Good for Drugs](#)

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