



STAR-Center LINK

On the web at: www.wpic.pitt.edu/research/star

Happy New Year!

January, 2005

We wish all of our STARLink readers a healthy and joyful 2005.

STAR-Center's Spring Conference information is now available! Our website is updated with the latest information regarding all of your 2005 conference needs. We are incorporating new topics and formats into each conference so please pay special attention to all of the details. Visit <http://www.pitt.edu/research/star> to read descriptions of all four programs and to download any forms.

If you were previously on our print mailing list, you will be receiving **one** mailing with additional conference details and registration materials. You will notice that there is a separate brochure and registration form for *each* conference. Please read the information carefully and feel free to contact us with any additional questions.

For a preview of what STAR-Center has planned for you, see **Conference Highlights** on page 2.

Thank you again for all of your continued support. We Look forward to working with you in 2005!

-Ranisa Rubin,
STAR-Center LINK Editor

INSIDE THIS ISSUE

2005 STAR-Center Conference Highlights	2
How to Know if an Adolescent is Using Drugs or Alcohol Nancie Tormey, Ph.D	2
Useful Links	3

Mark Your Calendar!

2005 STAR-Center Spring Conferences

King of Prussia Institute - Wednesday, March 16th, 2005
King of Prussia Conference - Thursday, March 17th, 2005
Easton Institute - Friday, April, 15th, 2005
Pittsburgh Conference - Wednesday, May 4th, 2005



S ervices for T eens A t R isk

2005 STAR-Center Conference Highlights



In the Spotlight...

How to Know if an Adolescent is Using Drugs or Alcohol

Nancie Tormey, Ph.D.

Back by popular demand: STAR-Center will once again be hosting a special, all day Institute entitled "Helping Teens and Families Manage Self-Cutting Behaviors" in **King of Prussia** on **Wednesday, March 16, 2005**.

On Thursday, March 17th, STAR-Center is offering our annual conference in **King of Prussia**. This year's program will help answer the question, "Can We Stop Depression Before It Starts?" Dr. David Brent will deliver his keynote on "The Risk of Doing Nothing: A Current Review Of The Risks and Benefits Of Treatment Options For Depressed Adolescents" while Mary Margaret Kerr, Ed.D. will discuss "Suicide Prevention In Schools: Best Practices, Questionable Practices".

There will be a brand-new format in **Easton** on **Friday, April 15th**. We are now offering a full-day Institute comprised of two sessions. The program will focus on the topics of "Students Who Threaten Others" and "Interventions For Students Who Engage In Self-Cutting And Self-Harm". All participants who register for this special conference will attend both sessions.

In **Pittsburgh**, on **Wednesday, May 4th** STAR-Center is pleased to host our 19th annual conference. The format is identical to our King of Prussia program and will help participants understand the benefits and risks associated with the latest medications currently being used to treat adolescents with psychiatric disorders and treatment resistant depression. In addition, presenters will summarize the most up-to-date research on the prevention implications of adolescent suicide and other self-injurious behavior both in schools and in the clinical setting. Participants will learn specific intervention strategies for adolescents who are suicidal, self-injuring, or who lost someone to suicide.

Adolescence is a period of accelerated growth and exploration, second only to infancy.¹ For some teens, this period of new personal and social choices leads to substance experimentation, drug abuse, or addiction. Among 48,500 teenagers polled in 2003, 9.7 percent of 8th graders reported using an illicit drug in the past month, as well as 19.5 percent of 10th graders, and 24.1 percent of 12th graders.² Adolescents' choices during this developmental period have a profound impact on their evolving beliefs, values, and role transitions.³ Adults who strive to foster adolescent development must be able to identify warning signs of substance use among teens.

This article aims to help parents, mental health providers, educators, and other professionals working with youth to recognize warning signs of substance use among adolescents, and to offer further educational resources to facilitate this goal. Parents and professionals may improve their ability to detect substance use among adolescents by honing their observational skills, and familiarizing themselves with warning signs across the following domains: changes in appearance, changes in behavior, family indicators, changes in friends, and school changes.

Changes in appearance include:

- Physical signs such as dilated pupils, glassy eyes, frequent red/runny nose or cough
- Frequent illness: flu, colds, gastric problems or "just doesn't look well"
- Poor hygiene
- Weight change
- Clothing, jewelry, tattoos, drawings or magazines that support drug use

Behavioral indicators include:

- Occasional lack of coordination; stumbles, appears confused or disoriented

- Increases in impulsivity, energy level, or aggression
- Nervous, agitated, unable to sit still
- Lethargic, drop in motivation
- Cynical life attitude
- Decreased energy, fatigue
- Change of interests and goals
- Legal problems (e.g. stealing, shoplifting, fighting)
- Unexplained money or possessions
- Increased use of profanity and/or drug language
- Presence of drug paraphernalia

Family indicators include:

- Withdrawal from family activities
- Highly defensive and argumentative communication style
- Absence from home for long periods
- Items or money missing from the home
- Withdrawal from religious activities
- Secret keeping and lying, particularly about friends and activities
- Failure to fulfill responsibilities at home (e.g. refusal to complete chores or follow curfew)

Changes in friends include:

- Many new friends, and no interest in old ones
- Change in attitude toward non-using peers
- Friends are not known to the family, or will not come to the home
- New friends are older, out of school, and/or non-productive

School changes include:

- Gradual or sudden decline in grades
- Skipping school
- Frequent detentions and/or suspensions
- Withdrawal from extracurricular activities (e.g., sports, cheerleading)
- Disrespectful of teachers and school rules
- Inattentive or falling asleep in class
- Wanders in hall or on school grounds

What to Do When There are Indicators of Substance Use

Indicators of substance use do not, in themselves, confirm that an adolescent has a substance use disorder. Nevertheless, any substance use tends to interfere with the adolescent's developmental tasks, and all adolescents who exhibit signs of substance use should receive an appropriate, valid, and sensitive screening. The purpose of the drug/alcohol screening is to briefly assess the severity (frequency and quantity) and consequences of substance use, and to determine the need for a more comprehensive assessment. When needed, the comprehensive assessment serves multiple purposes: it can confirm the presence, nature, and complexity of a substance use disorder; identify other psychiatric conditions, environmental factors, or stressors which may be related to substance use; determine the specific treatment needs of the adolescent; and examine the extent to which the adolescent's family can facilitate subsequent interventions (Winters, 1999).⁴ When screening or assessment is needed, families may contact their own insurance provider for in network referrals or refer to the Blue Pages of their local telephone directory under "alcohol-drug problems."

Links of Interest

More information on risk factors and prevention of drug abuse among adolescents is available from:

**National Institute on Drug Abuse (NIDA) –
National Institutes of Health (NIH)**
www.drugabuse.gov

"NIDA's Web site provides information on all aspects of drug abuse, particularly the effects of drugs on the brain and body, prevention of drug use among children and adolescents, the latest research on treatment for addiction, and statistics on the extent of drug abuse in the United States. The Web site allows visitors to print or order publications, public service announcements, posters, science education materials, research reports and fact sheets on specific drugs or classes of drugs, and the NIDA NOTES newsletter. The site also links to

Links, *continued*

related Web sites in the public and private sector.
(www.drugabuse.gov)

**Center for Substance Abuse Prevention (CSAP)
Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA)**

www.prevention.samhsa.gov

Phone: 301-443-9110

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC)

www.cdc.gov

Phone: 800-311-3435 (toll-free)

Safe and Drug-Free School Program

U.S. Department of Education

www.ed.gov

Phone: 800-872-5327 (toll-free)

Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA)

U.S. Department of Justice

www.dea.gov

Phone: 202-307-1000

National Clearinghouse for Alcohol and Drug Information (NCADI)

www.ncadi.samhsa.gov

Phone: 800-729-6686

National Institute on Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism (NIAAA)

www.niaaa.nih.gov

Phone: 301-443-3860

National Institute on Mental Health (NIMH)

www.nimh.nih.gov

Phone: 301-443-4513

National Institutes of Health (NIH)

www.nih.gov

Phone: 301-496-4000

References

1. Carnegie Council on Adolescent Development (1995). Great transitions: Preparing adolescents for a new century. New York: Author.
2. University of Michigan Institute for Social Research (2004). Monitoring the Future Study: Trends in Prevalance of Various Drugs for 8th Graders, 10th Graders, and 12th Graders. U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Public Health Service, National Institute of Mental Health. www.drugabuse.gov (Public domain access)
3. Santrock, J.W. (1992). Life-span development. Dubuque, IA: Wm. C. Brown Publishers.
4. Winters, K.C. (1999). Screening and assessing adolescents for substance use disorders: Treatment improvement protocol (TIP) Series 31. DHHS Publication No. (SMA) 99-3282. Rockville, MD: Center for Substance Abuse Treatment.

In The News

The Pittsburgh Post-Gazette presented its annual Dozen



Making A Difference on Tuesday, December 28, 2004. STAR-Center's Dr. David Brent was featured as one of the 12 people in our community who are working to improve our health, our well-being, and our futures. To read the entire article go to:

<http://www.post-gazette.com/pg/04363/433199.stm>

Have you signed up to receive electronic notification each time a new STAR-Center Outreach STARLINK is available?

If not, go to:

http://www.wpic.pitt.edu/research/star/Newslettersignup_rev.asp



We look forward to hearing from you!

Services for Teens At Risk

Thomas Detre Hall of Western Psychiatric Institute and
Clinic

3811 O'Hara Street

Phone: 412-246-5598 (Outreach Services)

Fax: 412-246-5620

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This material is made available for educational purposes only and as part of an effort to raise general awareness of children's mental health issues. This information is not intended to be, and is not, a substitute for direct medical or psychological care based on your individual condition and circumstances or those of your child. While this site may contain descriptions of pharmacological, psychiatric and psychological treatments, such descriptions and any related materials should not be used to diagnose or treat a mental health problem without consulting a qualified mental health care provider. You are advised to consult your mental health provider about your personal questions or concerns.

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We're on the Web!

www.wpic.pitt.edu/research/star

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