

THE SUBSTANCE ABUSING STUDENT

Uncontrolled drinking and illegal substance use or dependence may be convincing indicators of problems for students. High levels of stress experienced by students may lead to attempts to cope or escape through the use of alcohol and other drugs.

Current CORE Survey results indicate that:

39.9% of ASU students reported binge drinking in the previous two weeks. A binge is defined as consuming 5 or more drinks in one sitting.

14.3% of the students are current marijuana users ("30-day prevalence").

7.1 % of the students are current users of illegal drugs other than marijuana ("30-day prevalence ").

17.8% reported experiencing some kind of serious personal problems (such as suicidality, being hurt or injured, trying unsuccessfully to stop using, sexual assault) at least once during the past year as a result of drinking or drug use.

Students abusing substances are usually identified by faculty when impairments associated with alcohol abuse undermines the student's performance or when irresponsible, unpredictable behavior influences the learning environment (e.g., intoxicated and disorderly in class).

Helpful:

- Be aware of common signs of substance abuse:
 - ✓ Inability to engage in class activities
 - ✓ Deteriorating class performance
 - ✓ Irregular class attendance
 - ✓ Periods of memory loss (blackouts)
 - ✓ Preoccupation with drugs
- Demonstrate your genuine concern for the student.
- Communicate with the student only when he/she is sober.
- Communicate your concern about the student with respect to alcohol and other drugs in terms of specific performance or behavioral changes.
- Confront unsatisfactory performance or behavioral changes by pointing out deteriorating class performance or irregular class attendance.
- Communicate support and concern when related to the student's willingness to address the problem.
- Suggest and encourage seeking assistance.
- Refer the student to the Counseling Center.
- Refer the student to Alcoholics Anonymous (A.A.), Narcotics Anonymous (N.A.), etc.
- Contact the necessary resources in cases of intoxication (e.g., University Police).
- Maintain contact with the student after the referral.

Not Helpful:

- Don't negate or ignore the problem.
- Don't criticize or denigrate
- Don't communicate your concern in judgmental or suspicious terms.
- Don't encourage the inappropriate behavior.
- Don't accept or tolerate the student's irresponsible behavior in the classroom.
- Don't deny the existence of the problem.
- Don't argue or try to convince them of their substance abuse; they will deny this until they are ready to work on the problem.

* Adapted from: Helping the Emotionally Distressed Student. Organization of Counseling Center Directors in Higher Education; 1999