

Use of Marijuana, Inhalants Higher in Teens in Child Welfare System



Use of marijuana and inhalants is more common in teens in the child welfare system compared with other teens, a new study finds. Researchers found 18 percent of teens in the welfare system admitted to ever smoking marijuana, compared with 14 percent of other teens.

The researchers found 12 percent of teens in the welfare system said they had abused inhalants, compared with 6 percent of other teens, MedicalXpress reports. Six percent of teens in child welfare admitted to ever using cocaine or heroin, compared with 4 percent of other teens.

Teens who admitted to shoplifting, theft, running away or using a weapon were more likely to use drugs and alcohol. Teens who lived in two-parent homes, and those who said they felt close to their parents or guardian, were less likely to report drug use.

"When youth perceive that their parents or caregivers are actively engaged in their lives, this may steer them away from drugs," lead researcher Danielle L. Fettes, Ph.D., of the University of California, San Diego, said in a news release. "Youth who feel supported by parents tend to have a better sense of self and better mental health and, in this case, are less likely to engage in high-risk behaviors—which is important for this already high-risk population."

Fettes said the findings are not surprising, since children who enter the welfare system often have risk factors for drug use, such as a history of domestic abuse or mental health issues. This study quantifies the actual rates of substance abuse in this population, she noted.

The study appears in the November issue of the *Journal of Studies on Alcohol and Drugs*.

Image courtesy of Narconon International.