

DIXIE YOUTH BASEBALL, INC.

SUBSTANCE ABUSE INFORMATION FOR PARENTS

Dixie Youth Baseball, Inc. has been providing a baseball program for children for over 50 years. We feel the need to be proactive with the problems facing our players and today's society. We understand that substance abuse is a problem in society. We hope that in children ages 12 and under this problem isn't as big. We cannot ignore the fact that substance abuse in this age group does occur. It may be from inhalants, drugs, alcohol, or tobacco to name a few. We are trying to give the parents information that may help them determine whether their child may have a problem, signs to look for, how to handle them, facts you may not know, and some websites you may visit for more information or help.

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Substance Abuse:

Drugs, Warning Signs and Indicators

Warning signs and indicators of substance abuse vary by substance. Some are subtle, with gradual onset; others are readily apparent. Some appear soon after abusive behavior begins; other may take considerable time. And some, can easily be mistaken for other conditions entirely. Even so, considered collectively, indicators may well present a very apparent profile of probable substance abuse.

Some general indicators of substance abuse are:

Becoming secretive about whereabouts, activities, staying out late, breaking curfew, associating with new friends, unwillingness to bring new friends home. Possible demand for more money, unexplained disappearance of cash, other values. Change in clothing, loss of interest in personal appearance, hygiene, grooming. Loss of appetite, unexplained loss of weight. Becoming defiant, combative, disrespectful. More irritable, often angry for no reason. Withdrawn, loss of interest in activities (school, sports, church). Failure to complete school assignments, truancy, drop in grades, disciplinary problems at school. Loss of self-esteem; paranoia. Involvement in, or arrest for possession, use, sale of illegal substances; shoplifting, theft, moral turpitude, gangs, or other offenses related to activities and offenses committed in order to obtain money for the purchase of illegal substances. Other physical indicators include confused thinking or speaking, poor muscle coordination, blood-shot eyes, dilated pupils, memory lapse, difficulty in concentration, and short attention span.

Tips for Parents and Guardians

Few parents want (or are even willing) to think that their children might be capable of abusing substances. And all too often, well meaning parents are quick to accept denials, excuses, and out right lies (Not my kid!!!) rather than consider accepting the alternative possibility. Unfortunately, substance abuse is a reality in today's youth culture, and it is much more wide spread among youth than most parents realize. Here are some helpful tips for parents to better address the question of effective parenting for prevention, and recognition of possible warning signs.

1. Set clear, firm standards and expect high expectations for appropriate behavior. Be consistent. Set realistic limits and enforce them with love, not anger.
2. Set a good example. Be a good role model. Every child needs to know exactly where their parents stands on drug and alcohol use or experimentation. This pertains as well to other forms of high risk behavior, e.g., involvement in gangs, sexual activity, etc.
3. Children typically express five major reasons why they use tobacco, alcohol, and other substances.
 1. To feel grown up;
 2. To take risk and rebel;
 3. To fit in and belong;
 4. to ease stress, and escape emotional pain;
 5. To satisfy curiosity.
4. Communication is key. Begin talking with your child about drugs and alcohol, age 5 or 6 is not too soon. Never assume they already know about the dangers of drugs, or that they've already heard it all before.

5. Make the topic of substance abuse an open subject. Kids need to know that they can ask parents and talk to their parents about anything. If there is a question about drugs or high risk behavior you can't answer, simply say so, but let them know you will make an effort to find out and then respond to them.
6. We live in a society filled with stress and conflict and one that often glamorizes violence. Encourage your children to express feelings in ways not harmful to them or others. Teach them positive, constructive ways to deal with frustration and anger. Kids need to learn early on that inappropriate behavior and violence are never acceptable or appropriate forms of behavior for any reason.
7. It is your right as well as your responsibility as a parent to know where your children are and what they are doing. Don't hesitate to ask, and check periodically to insure you are getting truthful answers. (This also provides the perfect excuse when pressed by peers for not indulging in dangerous or inappropriate activities: "My parents are really crazy! You just never know when they might show up to check on me!")
8. Contemporary society is saturated with icons that promote drug abuse and other aspects of the counter-culture. Know what is in your home. Be aware of possible indicators of substance abuse, e.g., rolling papers, fake IDs, empty alcohol containers, "roach clips", sandwich baggies containing suspicious seeds and leaf debris, pipes, pills, as well as drug-oriented clothing, jewelry, posters, music, magazines, incense, scales, etc.
9. Computer web sites are more threatening for children today than ever before. Know and monitor the web sites your children access; review the information they download/store, and know who they communicate with. Do they access chat pages? Do they blog? Do they make on-line purchases; if so, what are they buying? Know their on-line "handle(s)" and e-mail address(es). Avoid their unsupervised access to the internet. Make sure they understand the risk of internet access, and encourage them to alert you to any suspicious or undesirable communications or web sites they encounter. Understand that, as a parent, this is not a matter of trust or of violating your child's confidence; it is a matter parental supervisory responsibility. Should a child object, simply ask, "Why? Is there something going on you are ashamed of, or that you are afraid for me to see?" Also, what games do children use on the computer? Are they age appropriate? Do they contain inappropriate sexual content; do they promote drugs, do they promote violence or other high risk behavior? Finally, consider seriously installing and using software designed to restrict access to undesirable sites, and to monitor and track activities and sites they do access.
10. Children need to accept the consequences of their actions. Covering for them in a crisis conditions them to believe there will always be someone who can rescue them, regardless of the circumstance.
11. When correcting your children, don't attack character, ridicule them, or make sarcastic remarks. Try not to lecture. Say what you mean and mean what you say. Separate the deed from the child – while you may not approve of the behavior, make sure your child knows you still love them.
12. If your child is on a regimen of a prescribed medication insure that it is properly taken and that your child does not give the drug to others.

So What's A Parent To Do?

Awareness is your first key ally. Knowing what the various forms of substance abuse are, the indicators, the risks, the consequences, especially as concerns youth in the area in which you live. Open dialog with your kids is essential.

The Problem	Many parents fall in the trap of thinking or believing that their children already know about substance abuse, the risks, etc. After all, isn't that what the DARE Program is for? Don't they teach that at school? How about church? Boy Scouts and Girl Scouts? And programs on television, at community centers, special events, etc. And besides, how much does a parent really know about it anyway? How can a parent answer their questions?
The Facts	In fact, most kids don't really know a great deal about substance abuse, and much of what they hear is half-wrong, if not a total myth. "Pot is harmless, It should be legalized. It's used for medicine." Etc., etc., etc.
Parental Role and Responsibility	In fact, parents are the single strongest and best source of influence for convincing kids to stay away from drugs. Parents are the best and single most effective source for prevention. The message can be really simple: "We love you and we don't want to see you make a mistake. We don't want to see you hurt, and there are lots of ways to get hurt without realizing it. We are a family and you are part of that family. You represent us- our name, our reputation, and that stands for something."

What to do: Pick an appropriate time to discuss the topic- without distraction of the television, computer, stereo, or phone. Perhaps an established weekly “family hour”, to discuss issues, concerns and basically reinforce family intercommunication and dialog. Look for something to use as a “conversation starter”, perhaps a recent newspaper article, a news item on TV, or a report of a drug-related incident involving local youth. Have a good idea before hand what you want to cover in your discussion. You may even want to obtain some literature (pamphlets, articles, etc.)

What not to do: Don’t “preach,” harp or scold. Do encourage questions and feed back. Don’t beat the topic to death.

Bottom Line: **Parents Are the Single Most Effective Deterrent!**

Don’t think once is going to do it. (How many times do you have to remind them to pick up their clothes, get off the phone, clean their room, etc?) While a constant “diet” of messages may soon seem to the kids that you’re fixated and “stuck on first,” occasional reminders and short discussions serve the purpose of reminding and reinforcing the importance of this issue. Remember, too, that kids- however resistant, argumentative, and seemingly defiant/ disinterested- really are looking for you to establish limits, enforce controls, and provide reassurance that they do desperately need that you love them, care about them, and want them to do well and succeed in life.

Depending on the circumstances, e.g., finding something suspicious or noting odd behavior, suspicious odors, etc., you may simply want to confront the child with your suspicions and ask the child for an explanation. This isn’t always successful, as the child may not be totally honest and forthright, especially if a problem is present and pronounced. You may want to consider obtaining a do-it-yourself home drug test kit at a local drug store and administer it to your child. Such test are relative inexpensive and substance-specific (i.e. you have to have some idea of which substance you suspect/ wish to test for) test kits. The child renders a urine specimen which you then test by immersing a specially treated paper strip. If it changes color (see instructions for details) it may indicate a positive. Test are generally very accurate, but in very rare circumstances can render a false positive.

Should you have such a situation, confront the child again and ask for a truthful reply. Again, the child may not be forthcoming, or may try to minimize his usage. In such cases, depending on the sum of your experience, suspicions, and observations generally, you may want to seek professional assistance.

If the problem is more serious, e.g., an overdose requiring emergency medical intervention, or involvement with local authorities, you will likely be referred to the Family Court for assistance.

Know your options and have alternatives in mind. Remember that it is important to act quickly. Focus on solutions not blame.

Is my child addicted? Abuse of substances can range from one time curiosity experimentation of a mood altering substance, to regular recreational use, to habituation, and finally, addiction. How long this process takes vary by substance, frequency of use(initially) and the individual.

Risks and effects vary by substance. Addition- physical or psychological- is present when the user succumbs to overpowering craving. Continued use can and often does lead to use of stronger substances, as well as risk of overdose. Once addicted, if left untreated, abuse will become progressively more serious, including risk of death. Addiction is a disease, and requires professional in-patient treatment.

Facts Parents May Not Know:

1. The top drug killers in the world are **alcohol and tobacco**.
2. **Nicotine** is extremely poisonous and is the most addictive drug in the world.
3. **Snuff and chewing tobacco** are just as harmful as smoking.
4. **Alcohol** is a depressant.
5. **Alcohol** is the most abused drug by minors.
6. After alcohol, **marijuana** is the drug most abused by young people.
7. The average age for the first use of **marijuana** is 13.5 years old.

8. Almost 40% of teens try **marijuana** before they graduate high school.
9. **Anabolic steroids** are related to the male hormone testosterone. Steroid use is growing in our high schools.
10. An **inhalant** is a poisonous gas that may be sniffed to get “high” but they may also kill.
11. Spray paint, hair spray, nail polish remover, gasoline and glue are some of the more common examples of **inhalants**.

Where May A Parent Get Help or Information:

There are many places a parent may get help or information. County and city governments have programs that may help. Your family physician may also be of assistance to you. Listed below are state websites , as well as, some national websites that offer help and information.

National Websites:

National Institute of Drug Abuse: www.drugabuse.gov

National Clearinghouse for Alcohol and Drug Information: www.ncadi.samhsa.gov

National Institute of Health: www.nih.gov

State Websites:

Alabama: www.mh.alabama.gov

Arkansas: www.healthyarkansas.com

Georgia: www.mhddad.dhr.georgia.gov

Florida: www.dcf.state.fl.us/mentalhealth

Louisiana: www.dhh.state.la.us/office/?id=23

Mississippi: www.dmh.state.ms.us

North Carolina: www.ncdhhs.gov/mhddsas

South Carolina: www.daodas.state.sc.us

Tennessee: www.tennessee.gov/mental

Texas: www.tcada.state.tx.us

Virginia: www.csh.dmhmsas.virginia.gov/drugawareness.html