



# **ECHO IDAHO:** **K12 Substance Use Prevention & Treatment**

## **Understanding Youth Substance Use: Key indicators and warning signs**

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Please keep in mind that your School District policies and Health Services procedures, medication administration protocols, process guidelines, remain the guiding principles to your practice.

None of the planners or presenters for this educational activity have relevant financial relationship(s) to disclose with ineligible companies whose primary business is producing, marketing, selling, re-selling, or distributing healthcare products used by or on patients.

# Learning Objectives



- Importance of Youth Substance Use
- Diagnosis of Substance Use Disorders
- Prevalence of Youth Substance Use
- Risk Factors
- Key Indicators and Warning Signs

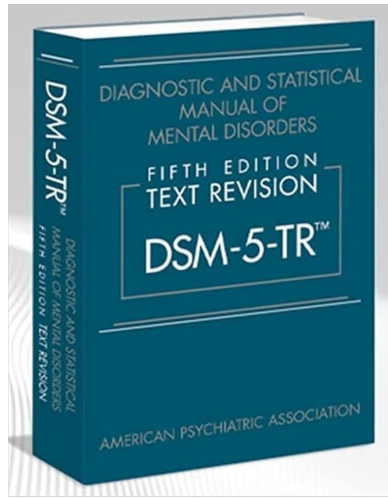
# Why does it matter so much??

- The consequences of youth substance use are immense:
  - Poor physical, mental, spiritual and emotional development
  - Lack of development of mature coping mechanisms
  - Development of substance use disorders into adulthood

The majority of adults who meet the criteria for having a substance use disorder, started using substances during their teen and young adult years.

# Negative Consequences of Substance Use

- Substance use increases vulnerability and places teens and adults in situations that increase risk:
  - Trauma and domestic violence
  - Physical, sexual, and emotional abuse
  - Criminal behavior and subsequent institutionalization
  - Poor academic performance
  - Precipitation of and exacerbation of mental health disorders
  - Increase adolescent pregnancies and related incidence of adverse outcomes
  - Infections, heart disease, cancer, stroke
  - Suicide
  - Lifelong Substance Use Disorder



# Diagnosing Substance Use Disorder

- Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders, 5<sup>th</sup> Ed.
- 11 symptoms for each substance class:

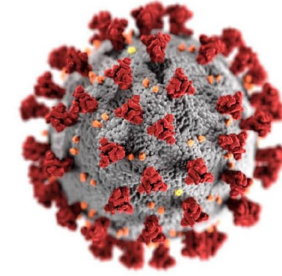
1. Substance is taken in larger amounts or over longer periods than was intended.
2. Persistent desire or unsuccessful effort to cut down or control substance use.
3. A great deal of time spent to obtain substance, use substance, or recover from its effects.
4. Craving, or a strong desire or urge to use.
5. Recurrent use resulting in a failure to fulfill major role obligations at work, home, or school.
6. Continued use despite persistent or recurrent problems caused or exacerbated by the effects of the substance.
7. Important social, occupational, or recreational activities are given up or reduced because of substance use.
8. Recurrent substance use in situations in which it is physically hazardous.
9. Substance use is continued despite persistent or recurrent physical or psychological problem
10. Tolerance.
11. Withdrawal.



## Data on Substance Use

- *Monitoring the Future*: national survey on prevalence of drug use with data dating back to the 70s
- Sponsored by The National Institute on Drug Abuse at The National Institutes of Health
- Given annually to students in 8th, 10th, and 12th grades
- Marijuana, inhalants, hallucinogens, cocaine, heroin, narcotics other than heroin (both natural and synthetic), amphetamines, sedatives, tranquilizers, alcohol, and tobacco.

# Impact of COVID



- COVID 19 pandemic
  - the most significant impact on substance use that we've seen in a long time
  - **largest one-year declines ever recorded** by the survey across a wide variety of drugs
- Trends in the use of illicit drugs among young people are stable/declining, *however*, other research has reported a dramatic ***rise in overdose deaths*** among teens between 2010 to 2021

# Alcohol, Nicotine, Cannabis Use:

- Alcohol:
  - Remained stable for eighth and 10th graders: 15.1% and 30.6% reporting use in the past year respectively
  - Declined for 12th graders: 45.7% reporting use in the past year (compared to 51.9% in the previous year)
- Nicotine Vaping:
  - Remained stable for eighth graders, with 11.4% reporting vaping nicotine in the past year.
  - Declined in the older grades, from 20.5% to 17.6% in 10th grade and from 27.3% to 23.2% in 12th grade.
- Cannabis:
  - Remained stable for all three grades surveyed, with 8.3% of eighth graders, 17.8% of 10th graders, and 29.0% of 12th graders reporting cannabis use in the past year.



# Other Illicit Substances and Narcotics:

- Any illicit drug use (other than marijuana) remained stable in past year for all three grades surveyed: 4.6% of eighth graders, 5.1% of 10th graders, and 7.4% of 12th graders.
- Use of narcotics other than heroin (including Vicodin, OxyContin, Percocet, etc.) decreased among 12th graders, with 1.0% reporting use within the past year (matching the all-time low reported in 2021 and down from a high of 9.5% in 2004).

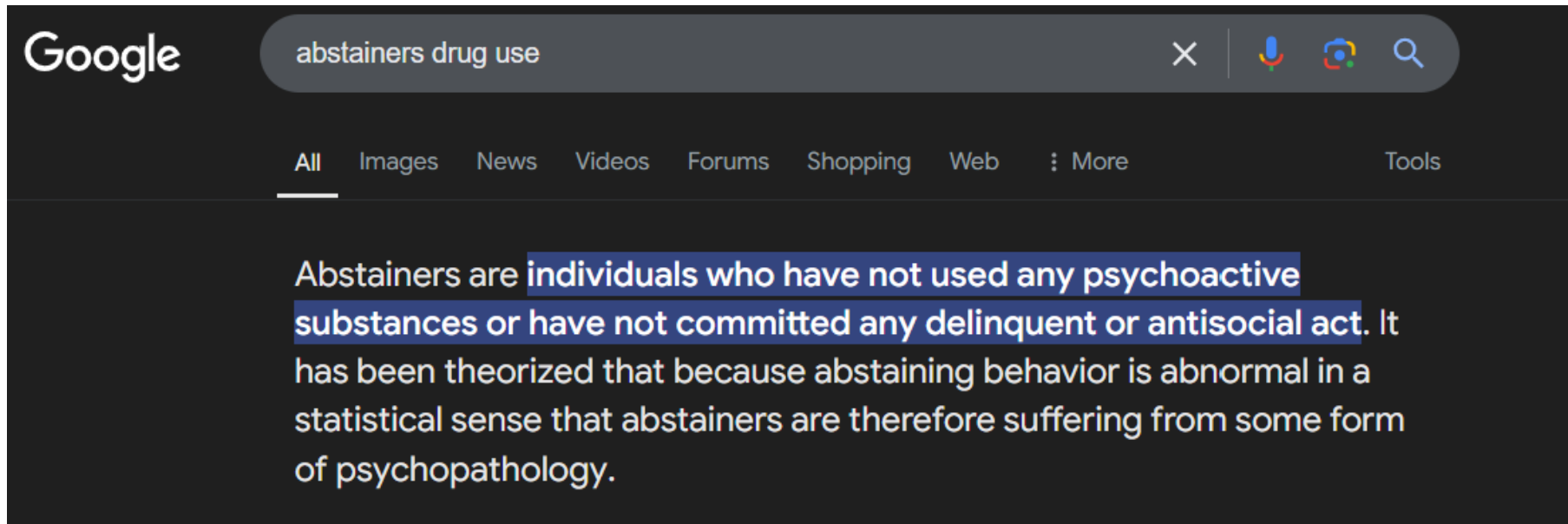
# Abstainers:

- Not using, marijuana, alcohol, and nicotine
  - Increased for 12th graders, with 62.6% reporting abstaining from any use of substances over the past month.
  - Remained stable for eighth and 10th graders, with 87.0% and 76.9% reporting abstaining from any use of marijuana, alcohol, and nicotine over the past month.



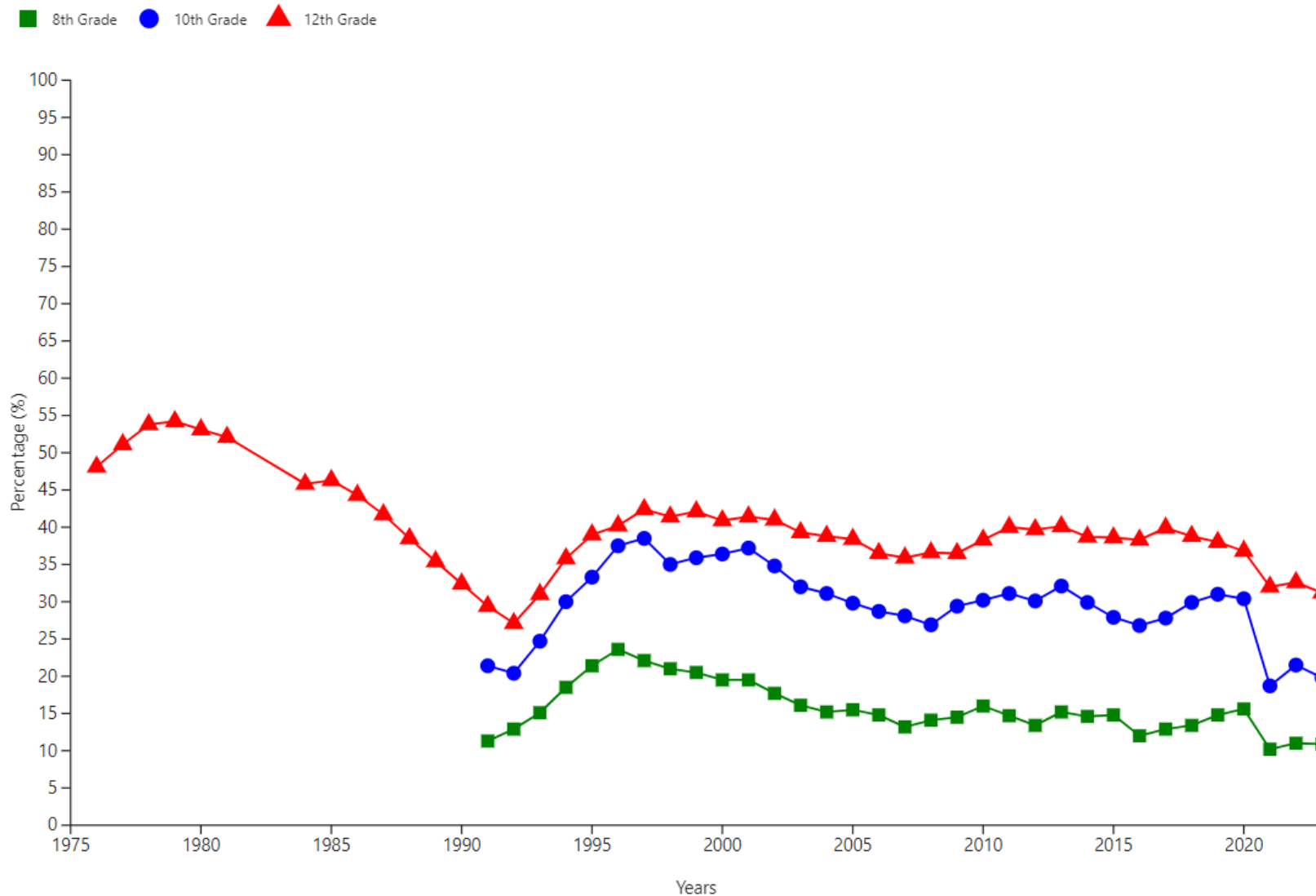
# Google doesn't always get it right...

(why we don't use the internet to diagnose people)

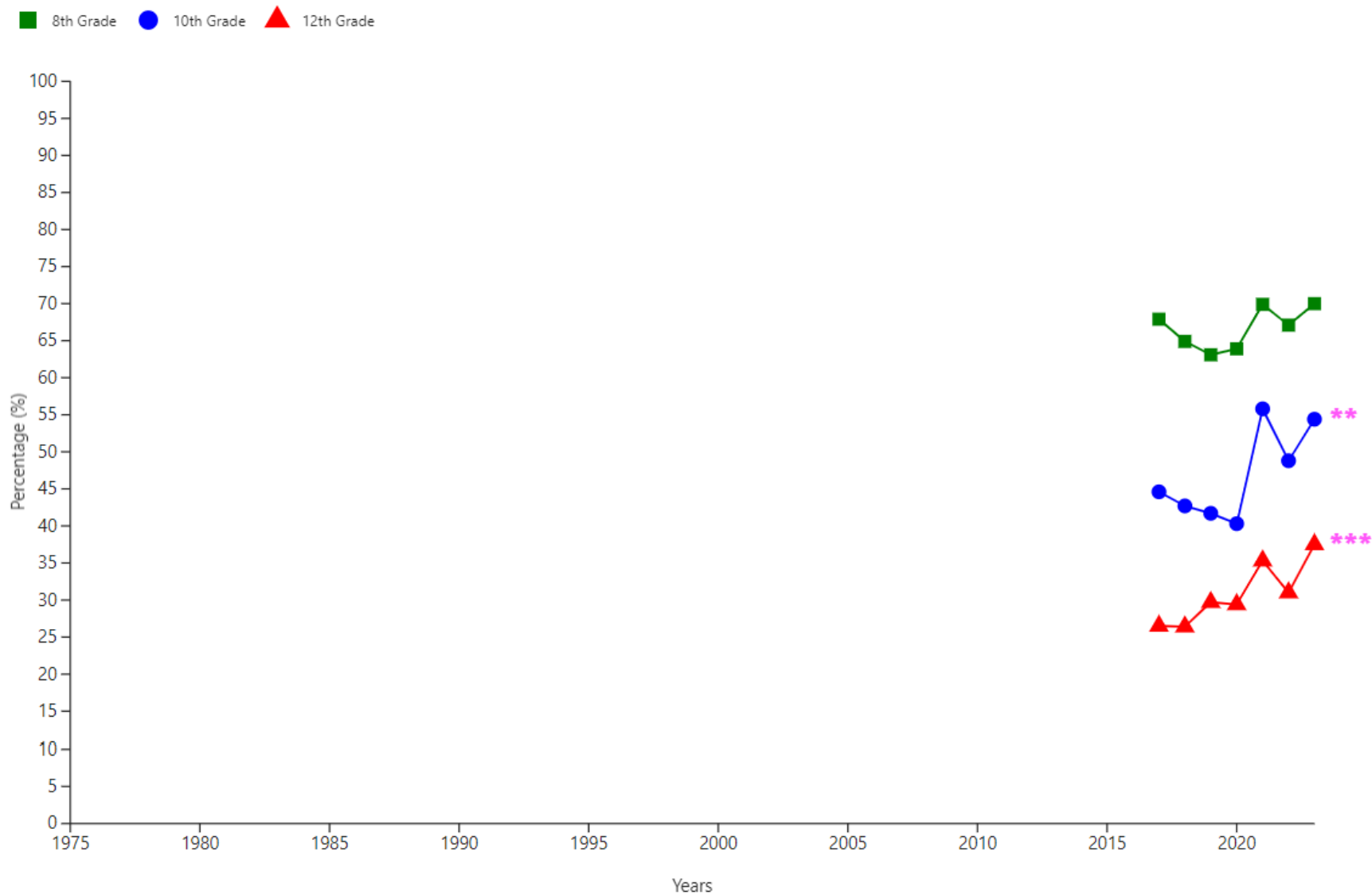


The image shows a screenshot of a Google search interface. The search bar contains the text "abstainers drug use". Below the search bar, the "All" tab is selected. The search results display a paragraph of text: "Abstainers are individuals who have not used any psychoactive substances or have not committed any delinquent or antisocial act. It has been theorized that because abstaining behavior is abnormal in a statistical sense that abstainers are therefore suffering from some form of psychopathology." The first two sentences of this paragraph are highlighted in blue.

## Any Illicit Drug: Trends in Last 12 Months Prevalence of Use in 8th, 10th, and 12th Grade



## Abstainers: Trends in Lifetime Prevalence of Use in 8th, 10th, and 12th Grade





## **RISK FACTORS**

- Chaotic home environment
- Ineffective parenting
- Little mutual attachment and nurturing
- Inappropriate or aggressive classroom behavior
- Academic failure
- Low academic aspirations
- Poor social coping skills
- Affiliations with deviant peers
- Perceived external approval of drug use
- Parental substance use or mental illness



## **PROTECTIVE FACTORS**

- Strong family bonds
- Parental engagement in child's life
- Clear parental expectations and consequences
- Academic success
- Strong bonds with school, community, or church
- Conventional norms about drugs and alcohol
- Decreasing substance accessibility
- Economic stability and safe housing
- Access to healthcare and education
- Positive peer groups

# Detecting Substance Use in our Youth:

- Difficult to tease out abnormal changes at a time when they are already subject to significant physiological and social changes in their lives
- It is not uncommon for teenagers to be involved in illicit drug use before exhibiting signs and symptoms of drug use
- Rates have declined, though adolescent use is usually more widespread than parents and guardians recognize
- Key Indicator and Warning Signs:
  - Shifts in Mood & Personality
  - Behavioral Changes
  - Change in Hygiene & Appearance
  - Physical health

# Key Indicators and Warning Signs:

Shifts in mood & personality

- Sullen, withdrawn or depressed
- Less motivated
- Silent, uncommunicative
- Hostile, angry, uncooperative
- Deceitful or secretive
- Unable to focus
- A sudden loss of inhibitions
- Hyperactive or unusually elated





# Key Indicators and Warning Signs:

## Behavioral changes

- Changed relationships with family members or friends
- Makes lots of excuses
- Avoids eye contact
- Locks doors
- Disappears for long periods of time
- Secretive with the use of their phone
- Uses chewing gum or mints to cover up breath
- Absenteeism or a loss of interest in school, work or other activities
- Often uses over-the-counter preparations to reduce eye reddening or nasal irritation
- Problems with money
- Has become unusually clumsy: stumbling, lacking coordination, poor balance



# Key Indicators and Warning Signs:

## Hygiene & appearance

- Messier than usual appearance
- Poor hygiene
- Frequently red or flushed cheeks or face
- Burns or soot on fingers or lips
- Smell of smoke or other unusual smells on breath or on clothes
- Track marks on arms or legs (or long sleeves in warm weather to hide marks)



# Key Indicators and Warning Signs:

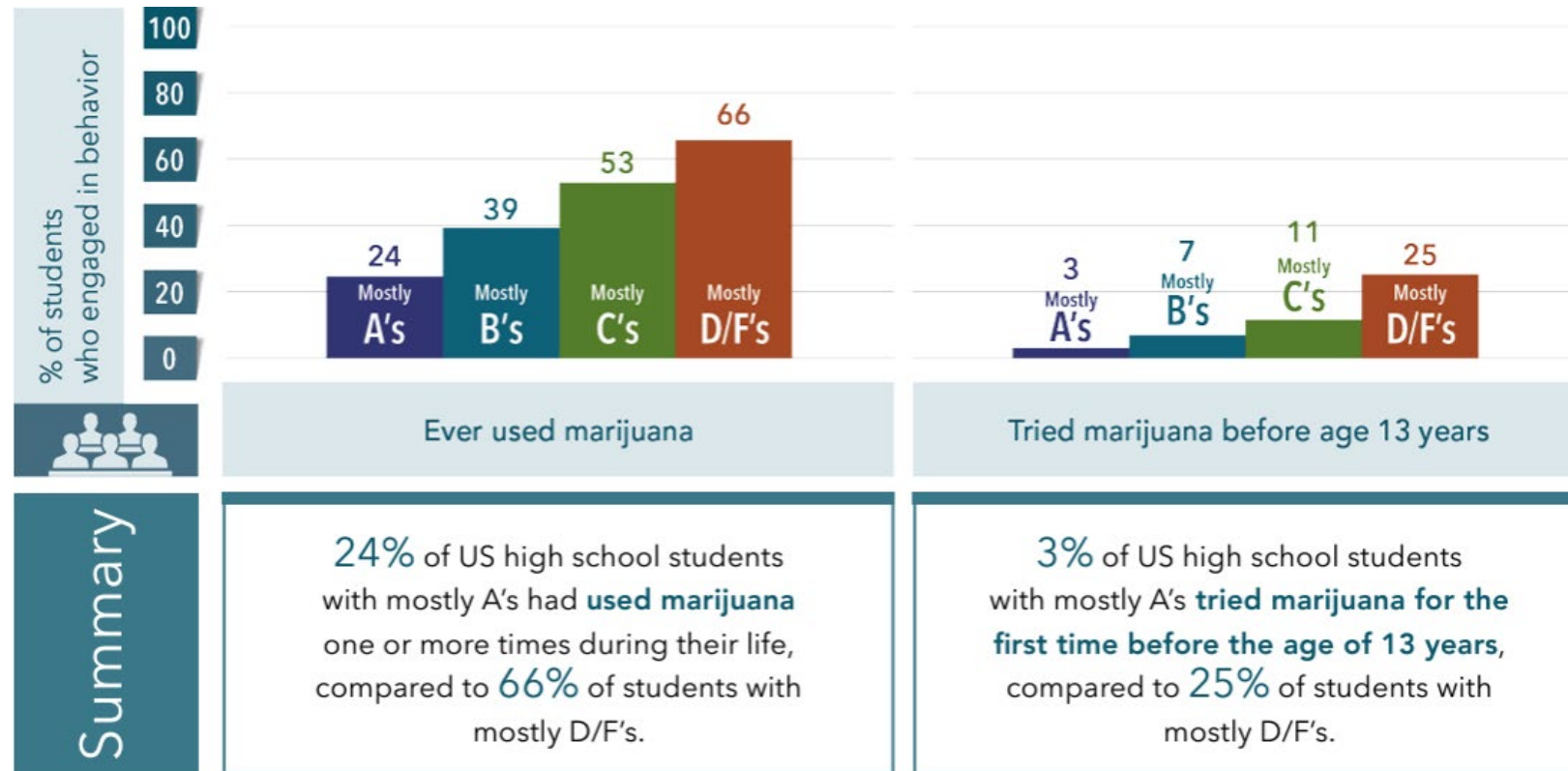
## Physical health

- Frequent sickness
- Unusually tired and/or lethargic
- Sores, spots around mouth
- Sudden or dramatic weight loss or gain
- Skin abrasions/bruises
- Frequent perspiration
- Seizures and/or vomiting
- Unable to speak intelligibly, slurred speech or rapid-fire speech
- Nosebleeds and/or runny nose, not caused by allergies or a cold

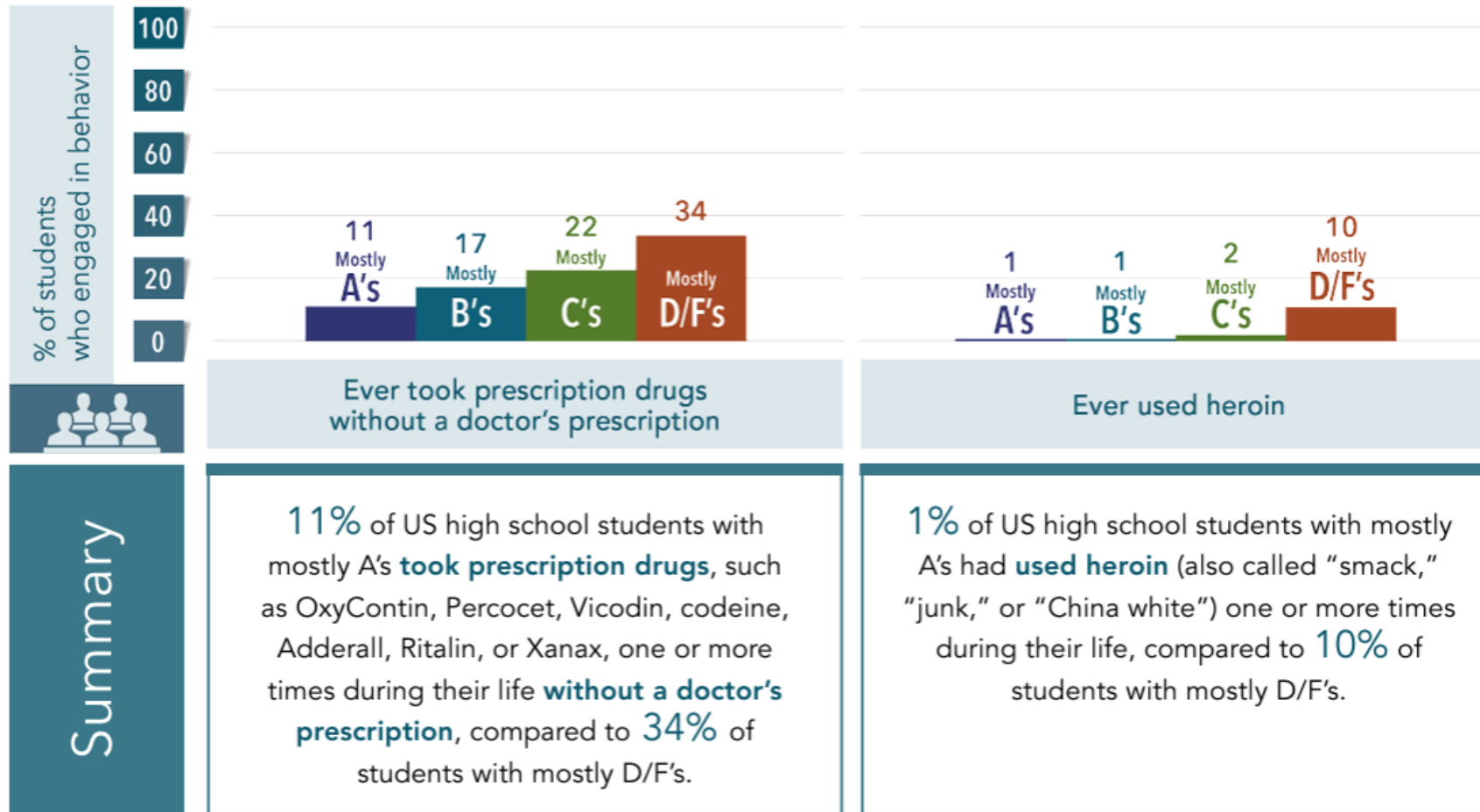


# Substance Use and Academic Performance:

Data shows a significant relationship between substance use and academic performance:



# Substance Use and Academic Performance:



# What to do?

- Know your kids, talk to them, communicate, ask questions!
- Learn about any number of prevention and treatment programs in your communities such as:



## "Talk. They Hear You."® Campaign

SAMHSA's national youth substance use prevention campaign helps parents and caregivers, educators, and community members get informed, be prepared, and take action to prevent underage drinking and other substance use.

# References

- CDC. “High Risk Substance Use Among Youth.” URL: <https://www.cdc.gov/healthyouth/substance-use/index.htm#:~:text=Although%20most%20youth%20are%20in,teen%20and%20young%20adult%20years.>
- “Substance Use, Suicidal Ideation and Attempts in Children and Adolescents.” National Library of Medicine, URL: <https://pmc.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/articles/PMC3086736/>
- DSM, 5<sup>th</sup> edition. Online Access 10/29/24.
- <https://sharefactssavelives.org/risk/>
- <https://drugfree.org/article/signs-of-drug-use-in-teens/?25519>
- Making the Connection: Drug Use and Academic Grades: [https://www.cdc.gov/healthyouth/health\\_and\\_academics/pdf/DASHFactSheetDrugUse.pdf](https://www.cdc.gov/healthyouth/health_and_academics/pdf/DASHFactSheetDrugUse.pdf)
- <https://www.samhsa.gov/talk-they-hear-you>



- **FindSupport.gov**
- **FindTreatment.gov**

- **988 Suicide & Crisis Lifeline**

Call or text 988

Chat 988Lifeline.org

LGBTQ+ Youth press 3

- **Alcohol, Tobacco, & Other Drugs:**  
[samhsa.gov/find-help/atod](https://www.samhsa.gov/find-help/atod)

- **SAMHSA's National Helpline**  
**1-800-662-HELP (4357)**

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**SUBSTANCE USE**  
**PREVENTION**  
**MONTH**

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**SAMHSA**  
Substance Abuse and Mental Health  
Services Administration