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***National Research: 20<sup>th</sup> Annual Teen Study Shows 25 Percent Drop in Meth Use Over Three Years; Marijuana Down 30 Percent Over Ten Years***

***Data Reveal First Major Increase in Number of Teens Reporting “Learning a Lot” About Risks of Drug Use From Parents***

***Teen Abuse of Prescription and Over-The-Counter Medicines Remains a Serious Concern***

NEW YORK, NY – February 26, 2009 – The Partnership for a Drug-Free America today announced the findings from the 2008 Partnership Attitude Tracking Study, (PATS) which revealed the first major increase in the number of teens who reported “learning a lot” about the risks of drugs from their parents. The study shows that 37 percent of teens reported learning a lot about the risks of drugs from their parents, a significant 16 percent increase from the previous year and the first major increase since the inception of the study. Research consistently shows that teens who learn a lot about the risks of drugs at home are up to 50 percent less likely to use, yet many parents have difficulty [talking with their kids about drugs and alcohol](#).

This progress coincides with data showing remarkable, sustained declines in several drugs of abuse – notably [methamphetamine \(meth\)](#) and [marijuana](#) – over the past several years.

“Parent-child communication about the risks of drugs and alcohol is critically important, and research has shown a lack of parental awareness of adolescent substance use,” said Dr. Amelia Arria, a senior scientist at the Treatment Research Institute and a nationally recognized researcher on the identification of risk factors for adolescent and young adult drug involvement. “

This study may indicate that parents and teens are finding some common language and that these important messages are getting through. We hope to see this trend continue to increase, as there’s still much work to be done.”

According to the study, teen meth use has experienced a steep three-year drop, with past-month use down to 3 percent of teens – a significant 25 percent decline versus 2005. Teen attitudes about meth use corroborate this drop – 83 percent of teens see great risk in using meth regularly, about 85 percent see great risk in “getting hooked on meth” and more than half of teens, (54 percent) see trying meth once or twice as very risky.

While marijuana remains the most widely used drug among teens, PATS indicates marijuana use has been declining for a decade, with past-year use down 24 percent since 1998, and past-month use down a full 30 percent (from 23 percent of teens down to 16 percent) over the same time period. Teen attitudes also reflect growing social disapproval of the drug, with 35 percent of teens agreeing strongly they “don’t want to hang around with anyone who uses marijuana,” up from 28 percent a decade ago.

The study also indicates a strong correlation between increased teen exposure to anti-drug messages on television and a decreased likelihood of trying drugs over the past ten years. Four out of ten teens (41 percent) agreed that anti-drug messages made them more aware of the risks of using drugs and less likely to try drugs (42 percent).

### ***Red Flag: Parents Still Not Discussing Abuse of Prescription and Over-The-Counter Medicines***

Despite the increase in parent-teen discussions, only 24 percent of teens report that their parents talked with them about the dangers of [prescription \(Rx\) drug abuse](#) or use of medications outside of a doctor’s supervision; just 18 percent of teens say their parents discuss the risks of abusing over-the-counter (OTC) cough medicine.

“The strong declines in illegal use combined with the news that teens are learning a lot about drugs and alcohol at home underscores the power and influence of parents,” said Beth Wilson, regional manager of the Partnership, who works closely with staff from the Ohio Department of Alcohol and Drug Addiction Services (ODADAS) to coordinate Partnership activities in Ohio. “Yet too many parents are missing opportunities to talk about the intentional abuse of prescription and OTC medications, which is the most pressing—and least understood— threat to our kids. This risky behavior is still not on parents’ radar, many of whom don’t realize that when abused or used without a prescription, these medications can be every bit as dangerous as illegal drugs.”

According to the survey, about 1 in 5 teens (19 percent) or 4.7 million reports abusing a prescription medication at least once in their lives, and 1 in 10 teens (10 percent) or 2.5 million teens reports having abused a prescription pain reliever in the past year. About 7 percent or 1.7 million teens have reported OTC [cough medicine abuse](#) in the past year. The prevalence of and attitudes behind this behavior are cause for ongoing concern. PATS shows 41 percent of teens mistakenly believe that abuse of medicines is less

dangerous than abuse of illegal street drugs and 61 percent of teens report prescription drugs are easier to get than illegal drugs, up significantly from 56 percent in 2005.

One positive note is teen attitudes toward the abuse of OTC cough medicine have improved with the number of teens who agree that “taking cough medicine to get high is risky” significantly increased from 45 percent in 2007 to 48 percent last year.

### *Warning Signs: Teens See Slightly Less Risk in Steroid and Inhalant Use*

Steroid use remains low at 4 percent for lifetime use among teens. While there has been little overall change in the number of teens who see “great risk” in abusing steroids, fewer teens this year (65 percent) agreed strongly that teens who use steroids for athletic performance or physical appearance are putting their health at risk, down from 69 percent last year.

Pre-teen and teen inhalant use remains steady at 11 percent for past year use, yet only 66 percent of teens report that “sniffing or huffing things to get high can kill you.” Both categories of abuse merit careful monitoring— as attitudes towards inhalant and steroid abuse weaken, use is more likely to increase.

“We must be vigilant when attitudes show signs of weakening because this may portend future increases in substance use,” said Wilson.

### *Insight: Today's Teens More Open About Discussing Substance Abuse, Seeking Help for Friends*

The 20<sup>th</sup> annual study offers new insights into the way the current generation of teens view substance abuse. PATS 2008 showed a statistically significant increase in the number of teens who reported trying to talk a friend out of using drugs at 41 percent and 40 percent of teens report being aware that they have a family member with a drug or alcohol problem.

“With over 6,500 teens from across the nation in the study, these data indicate this generation has greater sensitivity to the health risks and downsides of substance abuse,” Wilson said. “Teens live in a world of social networking and connectedness – they’re more open, constantly sharing their thoughts and experiences. Teens recognize the impact of use, know others with a problem and seem to attach less stigma to getting help for themselves or a friend who is in trouble.”

Given that kids who learn a lot about the dangers of drugs from their parents are up to 50 percent less likely to ever use, parents are encouraged to have frequent ongoing conversations with their children about the dangers of drugs and alcohol and the abuse of Rx and OTC drugs. Parent visitors to [www.drugfree.org](http://www.drugfree.org) can learn to [talk with their kids about drugs and alcohol](#) and take charge of the conversation with their kids.

The 20<sup>th</sup> annual national study of 6,518 teens in grades 7-12 is nationally projectable with a +/- 1.3 percent margin of error. PATS Teens 2008 was conducted in private, public and parochial schools for the Partnership by the Roper Public Affairs Division of GfK Custom Research. For more information and the full PATS Teens Report visit [www.drugfree.org](http://www.drugfree.org).

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*About the Partnership*

*The Partnership for a Drug-Free America is a national non-government, nonprofit organization that unites parents, renowned scientists and communications professionals to help families raise healthy children. Best known for its research-based national public education programs, the Partnership motivates and equips parents to prevent their children from [alcohol and drug abuse](#), intervene when drug and alcohol use is present and to find help and treatment for family and friends in trouble. Visit [drugfree.org](http://drugfree.org) for more information.*