

# TIPS

## What your kids want you to know!

“In recent focus groups conducted by the Harford County Department of Community Services, high school students said that their number one wish was for parents and teachers to have a better understanding of mental health. Students also said they wanted adults to recognize the signs of addiction, depression, and suicide, and they wanted to feel more comfortable talking to adults about mental illness.” - Harford County press release.

### SIGNS OF DRUG/ALCOHOL USE AND ADDICTION:

There are many signs that parents can look for when they suspect their child is using drugs or alcohol. Some signs of drug or alcohol use are more minor than others and can mimic normal changes teens go through as they get older; however, a combination of multiple changes can signal that your teen may be using drugs or alcohol.

#### BEHAVIORS

- A change in friends or your child hanging out with new people you are not familiar with
- Withdrawing from friends and family
- A change in interests or their desire to stop participating in activities or sports they used to enjoy
- A drop in grades and slacking off from school work
- A change in how much they talk about their day or their friends
- Starting to keep their bedroom door closed
- Spraying an overwhelming amount of perfume or cologne

#### MOOD/PERSONALITY

- A change in mood may occur with your child becoming more irritable and argumentative
- They may talk about frequent issues or arguments with friends
- They may begin to start arguments with you or siblings in the home

#### PHYSICAL

- A change in sleep patterns- a lot of sleep or hardly sleeping at all
- Blood shot eyes
- Dilated pupils
- Coughing or other respiratory issues that do not seem to correspond to an illness

Many teens struggle with intense emotions and high levels of stress or are facing symptoms of mental health issues. If teens are unable to use positive ways to relieve these uncomfortable feelings- exercise, talking to friends, therapy- they may turn to drugs and alcohol to make them feel better. If a teen continues to use a drug to alleviate these feelings, they may think that they cannot handle them without the drug, creating a **dependency**. A **substance use disorder** can arise when a teen cannot stop using a drug even though it is causing major issues in their life.

Visit the sites provided below for more information about the signs of drug and alcohol use or how to talk to your teen if you think they are using. If you suspect your child may be facing problems with addiction, visit the sites provided below or visit the resource page for local assistance.

<https://drugabuse.com/teen-drug-abuse-signs/>

<https://www.addictioncenter.com/teenage-drug-abuse/>

[https://drugfree.org/article/prepare-to-take-action/?gclid=CjwKCAjw3azoBRAXEiwA-64OgLTpT-KOBmZ7vIif7PLtf8nbtAsLSc0BsUBDjUn\\_uV15aO5A2AdaBoCB1wQAvD\\_BwE](https://drugfree.org/article/prepare-to-take-action/?gclid=CjwKCAjw3azoBRAXEiwA-64OgLTpT-KOBmZ7vIif7PLtf8nbtAsLSc0BsUBDjUn_uV15aO5A2AdaBoCB1wQAvD_BwE)