

Oregon youth smoking down, eighth grade drinking up

by Bend_Weekly_News_Sources

Cigarette and marijuana smoking are down among Oregon middle and high school students, and alcohol use remains the same for 11th graders but has increased 28 percent for eighth graders, according to the Oregon Department of Human Services Addictions and Mental Health Division. The information was contained in the agency's recently released reports for each of Oregon's 36 counties covering 2000-2006 consumption of alcohol, illicit drugs and tobacco. The epidemiological profiles are used by local planners to develop customized prevention programs.

According to DHS researchers, one in five young adults age 18-25, 9 percent of youth age 12-17 and 7 percent of adults 26 or older abuse or are dependent on alcohol or other drugs, and many require treatment to kick the habit. More than 40 percent of children taken into protective custody each year come from families with alcohol or drug abuse problems. "These epidemiological profiles show some disturbing patterns of substance abuse in Oregon, and we know that the consequences of continued use mean years of poor health or early death," said Bob Nikkel, DHS assistant director for addictions and mental health. "As Oregonians we cannot allow ourselves to become complacent about substance abuse and addictions." Alcohol More Oregonians consume alcohol each month than any other addictive substance, according to DHS officials. Although 66 percent of men and 54 percent of women drink alcohol, far fewer report problem drinking. Surveys of adults indicate that 22 percent of men and 8 percent of women are binge drinkers, and approximately 6 percent of both sexes are heavy drinkers. Each year there are more than 1,000 alcohol-related deaths in Oregon. One-third of all motor vehicle fatalities involve alcohol. Alcohol use starts young. In survey results 32 percent of Oregon's eighth graders and 44 percent of 11th graders drank alcohol within the past month. Young people who drink heavily, even occasionally, risk damaging their still-developing brains, according to the American Medical Association. Oregon has a goal of reducing eighth grade alcohol use to less than 17 percent by 2010, but no county has yet to reach this mark. Tobacco Despite the dramatic decline in cigarette use during the past 10 years, smoking continues to be the leading cause of preventable death in Oregon. Adult cigarette smoking rates vary by county, from a low of approximately 10 percent to a high of 30 percent. Males are more likely to use tobacco, which results in higher tobacco-linked death rates for men. Approximately 9 percent of Oregon's eighth graders and 16 percent of 11th graders smoked tobacco in the past month. Illicit drugs Nine percent of eighth graders and 16 percent of 11th graders used marijuana during the past month. Other drug use included inhalants by 6 percent of eighth graders and 3 percent of 11th graders; illegal prescription drugs by 5 percent of eighth graders and 8 percent of 11th graders; and stimulants by 2 percent of eighth graders and 2 percent of 11th graders.

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