

APA Official Actions

Position Statement on Youth Substance Use

Approved by the Board of Trustees, July
2022

Approved by the Assembly, November
2022

“Policy documents are approved by the APA Assembly and Board of Trustees. . . These are . . . position statements that define APA official policy on specific subjects. . .” – *APA Operations Manual*

Issue:

Youth substance use is a significant problem for children, adolescents, their families and our communities. Because youth are at high-risk for the initiation of lifelong substance use disorders, prevention and treatment in this population are essential. Furthermore, substance use can often worsen and complicate other mental disorders to which youth are also vulnerable. Psychiatrists have an important role in the prevention, clinical care, research, teaching, and public advocacy of issues related to youth substance use.

APA Position:

APA is opposed to substance use by youth, and early intervention and prevention are essential to deter early initiation and regular substance use. To assist in addressing the rise in youth substance use:

- **Schools and health care settings should practice primary prevention by using evidence-based programs to target risk factors associated with substance use disorders;**
- **Increased funding should be provided for research into the basic science, epidemiology, prevention, optimal clinical services and treatments related to youth substance use;**
- **Media and advertisers should reduce positive depictions of alcohol, nicotine, cannabis and other substance use, and should inform the public of the risks and consequences of alcohol, nicotine, cannabis and other substance use;**
- **Medical schools and residency training programs should include comprehensive didactic education and clinical training about youth substance use to prepare them for future practice;**
- **Treatment facilities should be alcohol, drug, and nicotine free;**
- **Screening for substance use is essential;**
- **Confidentiality between youths and providers should be maximized, taking into account respect for state law, safety, and openness with parents/ guardians; and,**
- **Families should be included in treatment where possible.**

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