

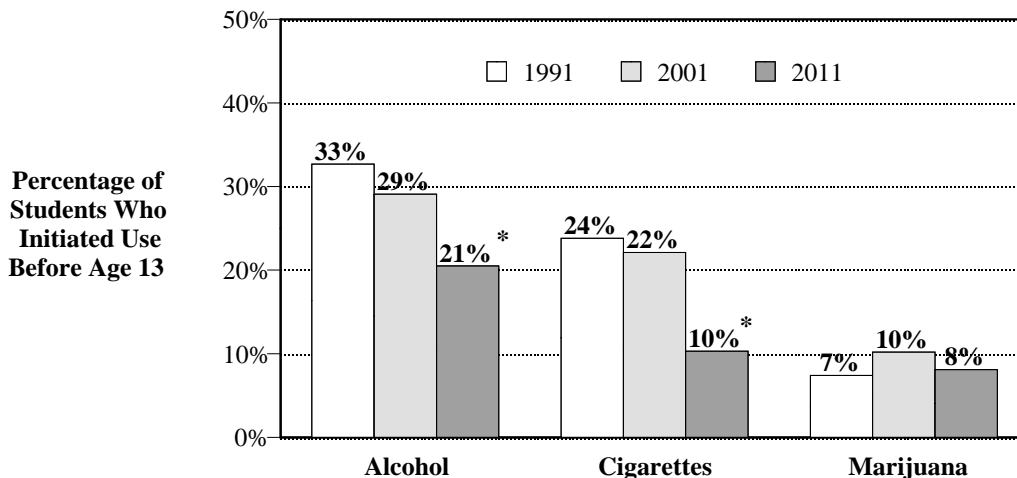
## A Weekly FAX from the Center for Substance Abuse Research

University of Maryland, College Park

### *Youth Less Likely to Try Alcohol and Cigarettes Before Age 13 Now Than 20 Years Ago; Prevalence of Early Marijuana Initiation Has Not Changed*

The percentage of high school students who first tried alcohol or cigarettes before the age of 13 has declined considerably since 1991, with much of the decline occurring in the past decade, according to recently released data from the national Youth Risk Behavior Survey (YRBS). In 1991, 33% of high school students reported drinking more than a few sips of alcohol before age 13, compared to 29% in 2001 and 21% in 2011. The percentage reporting smoking a whole cigarette for the first time before age 13 also declined, from 24% in 1991 to 10% in 2011. Marijuana initiation before age 13, however, did not change significantly over the same period (see figure below). While the decreases in early alcohol and cigarette use are encouraging, one in five students still try alcohol and one in ten try cigarettes before age 13.

**Percentage of High School Students Who Tried<sup>†</sup>  
Alcohol, Cigarettes, or Marijuana for the First Time Before Age 13, 1991, 2001, and 2011**



<sup>†</sup>Tried a cigarette is defined as smoking a whole cigarette. Tried alcohol is defined as drinking more than a few sips of alcohol.

\*Difference between 1991 and 2011 is statistically significant at  $p < 0.01$ .

NOTE: The Youth Risk Behavior Surveillance (YRBS) survey uses a three-stage cluster sample design to produce a nationally representative sample of public and private school students in grades 9 to 12.

SOURCE: Adapted by CESAR from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, *1991-2011 High School Youth Risk Behavior Survey Data*, accessed 8/9/12 (available online at <http://apps.nccd.cdc.gov/youthonline>).