

A Weekly FAX from the Center for Substance Abuse Research

University of Maryland at College Park

Substance Use More Likely Among Teens Not Living with Both Parents

According to an analysis of data from SAMHSA's National Household Survey on Drug Abuse, adolescents (aged 12-17) living with two biological/adoptive parents were at lower risk of substance use than adolescents living in other family structures. For example, adolescents living with only their mother were 1.9 times more likely to report marijuana use than adolescents living with both parents (see table). While these associations are independent of the effects of age, race/ethnicity, and family income, it was not possible to control for the quality of the familial relationship. According to the authors, "it is possible that the quality of relationships within the family has a stronger effect on adolescent behavior than the number of parents living within the family" (p. 66). Future research on this topic should examine this possibility.

Likelihood of Using Alcohol or Other Drugs Based on Family Structure

Likelihood of Substance Use Compared to Adolescents Living with Two Parents				
Family Structure	Alcohol Use	Cigarette Use	Marijuana Use	Any Illicit Drug Use
Mother + Stepfather	1.5	1.8	1.5	1.6
Mother Only	1.7	1.7	1.9	1.6
Mother + Other Relative	1.5	1.6	2.0	1.7
Other Parental	2.1	2.5	2.9	2.4
Other	1.8	2.0	2.4	2.4

NOTE: "Other Parental" includes Father + Stepmother, Mother + Nonrelative, and Father Only arrangements. "Other" includes Other Relative Only and Spouse Present arrangements. All data are from 1991-1993 NHSDA data, are adjusted for age, race/ethnicity, and family income, and are statistically significant at the .05 level. N=22,237.

SOURCE: Adapted by CESAR from Robert A. Johnson, John P. Hoffman, and Dean R. Gerstein, "The Relationship Between Family Structure and Adolescent Substance Use," July 1996. Prepared by the National Opinion Research Center for the Office of Applied Studies, Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration. Copies of the report may be ordered from the National Clearinghouse for Alcohol and Drug Information at 301-468-2600 or 800-729-6686.

REMINDER: THIS IS NATIONAL INHALANTS AND POISONS AWARENESS WEEK

This week, March 16-22, is the fourth National Inhalants and Poisons Awareness Week, sponsored by the National Inhalant Prevention Coalition (NIPC). For information on inhalant abuse, contact the NIPC at 800-2269-4237.

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