



20 Hightower Pl., P.O. Box 1331, Florence, AL 35630  
256.764.4661

*Serving Colbert and Lauderdale Counties in Northwest Alabama*

## **Jobs, ~~Drugs~~ & Reality**

### **Program Overview**

In response to a plea by employers to help them solve the adult drug use and abuse issues they are seeing, both in the applicant pool and their existing workforce, the Chamber is developing a new initiative - *Jobs, Drugs & Reality!* While we do not have means to directly reach the adult population in the applicant pool, we can still reach students who will soon be in the same pool, and potentially their parents, who may be those applicants.

This new program is a substance abuse awareness & prevention program designed for Middle School students. The program will focus on the consequences of substance abuse on students' future career opportunities.

Surprisingly, Middle School is now in many cases the entry point of substance use and abuse. But more importantly and especially if experimentation has not yet begun, it is the best time to reach these students just before the peer pressure to try illicit substances and alcohol gets even worse in high school *and* while they are still young enough to be more impressionable. The older, more "mature" and independent they get, the harder it is to reach them.

The program will begin with a high-energy, multimedia assembly at each school, led by Pete Key (<http://www.olepetekeyinc.com/>), a local motivational speaker who works nationally with youth on many issues. The schools may invite all age students, and will be encouraged to invite parents, some of whom might be those applicants who can't pass the drug test, but all of whom need to hear the message about adolescent and adult substance abuse that is plaguing our students, families, schools, employers and communities.

In the week or so following Pete Key's presentation, trained business-representative volunteers, who have seen how substance abuse ruins careers, will lead high-impact, interactive, informative discussions about the career consequences of substance abuse in all 8th grade classrooms in Colbert and Lauderdale counties. In their classroom environment, students are generally comfortable to interact, ask questions & have deeper discussions to drive home the importance of this issue.

Teens often drink or do drugs just to fit in with their peers. Schools generally teach that drugs affect health & wellness and that you can go to prison. We have heard from older students who say the "scare tactics" at that young age, when they feel they are invincible, do not usually work very well ... "that will never happen to me." *Jobs, Drugs & Reality!* will help them understand how staying clean directly affects their future livelihood ... and with kids, money talks! It gives them more tools to resist the peer pressure, continue their education, enter the workforce, and become productive employees and citizens.



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## Some Facts

According to the most recent [2015 National Survey on Drug Use & Health](https://www.samhsa.gov/data/sites/default/files/NSDUH-FFR1-2015/NSDUH-FFR1-2015/NSDUH-FFR1-2015.htm) (<https://www.samhsa.gov/data/sites/default/files/NSDUH-FFR1-2015/NSDUH-FFR1-2015/NSDUH-FFR1-2015.htm>):

9.6% (2.4 million) adolescents ages 12 – 17 currently use alcohol on a regular basis. The second most popular substance of choice is marijuana at 7.0% of youth ages 12 – 17 (1.8 million) who currently use.

While percentages for other illicit drug use goes down to 2.0% for misuse of prescriptions (pain relievers, tranquilizers, stimulants and sedatives), 0.5% for hallucinogens, 0.2% for cocaine, 0.1% for heroin and 0.1% for meth, the actual numbers of kids using is still staggering - 8.8% (2.2 million) youth ages 12 - 17 whose brains are still developing until age 25 are using substances other than alcohol, which will forever inhibit that development.

According to a report by researchers at the National Center on Addiction and Substance Abuse (CASA, a project of Columbia University) (<https://www.promises.com/articles/teens/teen-substance-abuse-biggest-health-problem-in-u-s-study-says/>), teen substance abuse is the #1 health problem in America.

Major findings from the study include:

- [Alcohol](#) is the substance most often chosen by high school students, followed closely behind by cigarettes and marijuana and prescription drugs.
- Approximately 75% of high school students have tried at least one substance.
- 66% of high school aged students have experimented with more than one substance.
- 25% of respondents believed marijuana to be harmless and one in six considered it to be medicine.

## Results of use and abuse:

(<http://www.centeronaddiction.org/addiction-prevention/teenage-addiction>)

Teen substance use of addictive substances—tobacco/nicotine, alcohol and other drugs—during adolescence interferes with brain development, reduces academic performance and increases the risk of accidents, homicides, suicides and serious health conditions, including addiction. Teens and young adults are more inclined than adults to take risks, including smoking, drinking or using other drugs. Use of any addictive substance while the brain is still developing increases the chances of future use of that and other addictive substances. The earlier an individual starts smoking, drinking or using other drugs, the greater the likelihood of developing addiction:

- 9 out of 10 people who abuse or are addicted to nicotine, alcohol or other drugs began using these substances before they were 18



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- People who began using addictive substances before age 15 are nearly 7 times more likely to develop a substance problem than those who delay first use until age 21 or older
- Every year that substance use is delayed during the period of adolescent brain development, the risk of addiction and substance abuse decreases

## Substance Use & Abuse vs. Employment

Even when qualified individuals apply for jobs, employers are having difficulty hiring them due to failure to pass the drug test.

In the 2015 Study referenced above, 24.9 million people of the work age population (18 & older) report having used illicit drugs in the past month.

Combined source data reported by the National Drug-Free Workplace Alliance (<http://www.ndwa.org/statistics.php>), represents findings from the 2008 to 2012 surveys to present estimates of substance use behaviors (past month illicit drug use and past month heavy alcohol use) and past year substance use disorder among persons aged 18 to 64 who are employed full time by industry category.

### Highlights

- Combined data from 2008 to 2012 indicate that an annual average of 8.7% of full-time workers aged 18 to 64 used alcohol heavily in the past month, 8.6% used illicit drugs in the past month, and 9.5% were dependent on or abused alcohol or illicit drugs in the past year.
- The highest rates of past month heavy alcohol use among full-time workers aged 18 to 64 were found in the mining (17.5%) and construction industries (16.5%).
- The highest rates of past month illicit drug use were found in the accommodations and food services industry (19.1%).
- The workers in the accommodations and food services industry (16.9%) had the highest rates of past year substance use disorder.

The article *Exploring the Link between Drug Use and Job Status in the U.S.* reports from 2005 – 2011 (<https://www.stlouisfed.org/Publications/Regional-Economist/July-2013/Exploring-the-Link-between-Drug-Use-and-Job-Status-in-the-US>): Illegal drug use was 18% for the unemployed, followed by 10% for part-time workers, 8% for full-time workers and less than 6% for those in the "other" category, which includes retirees.

According to the [National Council on Alcoholism and Drug Dependence Inc. \(NCADD\)](#), drug abuse costs employers \$81 billion annually. Some 70 percent of the estimated 14.8 million Americans who use illegal drugs are employed, and workers who report having three or more jobs in the previous five years are about twice as likely to be current or past year users of illegal drugs as those who have had two or fewer jobs. (<http://ehstoday.com/health/drug-abuse-costs-employers-81-billion-year>)

In addition, according to NCADD, drug abuse can cause problems at work including:

- After-effects of substance use (withdrawal) affecting job performance.



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- Preoccupation with obtaining and using substances while at work, interfering with attention and concentration.
- Illegal activities at work including selling illegal drugs to other employees.
- Psychological or stress-related effects due to drug use by a family member, friend or co-worker that affects another person's job performance.

### An interesting trend

Note in the table below that since 2008, as marijuana laws were relaxed and in some states it was legalized, marijuana use, which had been trending down for the previous six years, started a steady upward trend.

Many students believe, and employers report that many applicants believe, that marijuana is now legal in all states, because a few have legalized it. But even in states where it is legal, marijuana, nor its after-effect, is rarely if ever allowed in the workplace. Figure 3 Table. Past Month Marijuana Use among People Aged 12 or Older, by Age Group: Percentages, 2002-2015

Age	02	03	04	05	06	07	08	09	10	11	12	13	14	15
+ Difference between this estimate and the 2015 estimate is statistically significant at the .05 level.														
≥12	6.2+	6.2+	6.1+	6.0+	6.0+	5.8+	6.1+	6.7+	6.9+	7.0+	7.3+	7.5+	8.4	8.3
12-17	8.2+	7.9+	7.6	6.8	6.7	6.7	6.7	7.4	7.4	7.9+	7.2	7.1	7.4	7.0
18-25	17.3	17.0	16.1	16.6	16.3	16.5	16.6	18.2	18.5	19.0	18.7	19.1	19.6	19.8
≥26	4.0+	4.0+	4.1+	4.1+	4.2+	3.9+	4.2+	4.6+	4.8+	4.8+	5.3+	5.6+	6.6	6.5