



## Tipsheet: Drugs & Alcohol—Does a Friend Have a Problem?

Sometimes it is tough to tell if a loved one has a problem. Most people won't ask for help. In fact, they will probably do everything possible to deny or hide the problem. If your friend or loved one has one or more of the following warning signs, he or she may have a problem with drugs or alcohol.

### Addiction/Drug Abuse Warning Signs

- Getting high on drugs or getting drunk on a regular basis.
- Lying about things, or the amount of drugs or alcohol they are using.
- Avoiding you and others in order to get high or drunk.
- Giving up activities they used to do such as sports, homework, or hanging out with friends who don't use drugs or drinks.
- Having to use more marijuana or other illicit drugs to get the same effects.
- Constantly talking about using drugs or drinking.
- Believing that in order to have fun they need to drink or use marijuana or other drugs.
- Pressuring others to use drugs or drink.
- Getting into trouble with the law.
- Taking risks, including sexual risks and driving under the influence of alcohol and/or drugs.
- Feeling run-down, hopeless, depressed, or even suicidal.
- Suspension from school for an alcohol- or drug-related incident.
- Missing work or poor work performance because of drinking or drug use.

Many of the signs such as sudden changes in mood, difficulty in getting along with others, poor job or school performance, irritability, and depression, might be explained by other causes. Unless you observe drug use or excessive drinking, it can be hard to determine the cause of these problems. Your first step is to contact a qualified alcohol and drug professional in your area who can give you further advice.

You can get help for yourself or for a friend or loved one from numerous national, state and local organizations, treatment centers, referral centers, and hotlines throughout the country. There are various kinds of treatment services and centers. For example, some may involve outpatient counseling, while others may be 3- to 5-week-long inpatient programs.

While you or your friend or loved one may be hesitant to seek help, know that treatment programs offer organized and structured services with individual, group, and family therapy for people with alcohol and drug abuse problems. Research shows that when appropriate treatment is given, and when clients follow their prescribed program, treatment can work. By reducing alcohol and/or drug abuse, treatment reduces costs to society in terms of medical care, law enforcement, and crime. More importantly, treatment can help keep you and your loved ones together. Remember, some people may go through treatment a number of times before they are in full recovery. Do not give up hope.

### Resources

Each community has its own resources. Some common referral sources that are often listed in the phone book are:

- Community Drug Hotlines
- Local Emergency Health Clinics, or Community Treatment Services
- City/Local Health Departments
- Alcoholics Anonymous, Narcotics Anonymous, or Al-Anon/Alateen
- Hospitals
- United Way 2-1-1™, a free and confidential 24/7 helpline that can connect you to over 40,000 community resources. Just dial 2-1-1 or 651-291-0211.

**Source:** U.S. Department of Health and Human Services; SAMHSA's National Clearinghouse for Alcohol and Drug Information