

Substance Abuse in Durham: The Present & Future

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At a recent court-ordered substance abuse treatment group in Durham, a 16-year old boy was asked about stopping his use of alcohol and drugs. His response was, "You don't know my neighborhood. This is what we do. I started drinking when I was 9 years old. Alcohol is not a drug. Everybody in my family drinks. Marijuana is no big deal."

Stories like these drove concerned Durham residents to create a Substance Abuse Committee within the Partnership for a Healthy Durham in 2005. We have heard from people like this teenager that our community has a serious substance abuse problem. However, we didn't know how wide and intense these problems were in Durham. How could we address the vast socio-economic, cultural, and health issues surrounding substance abuse if we didn't know more? How would we know if our interventions were making a difference?

To gather the information we needed to attack this problem, the Committee identified funding and commissioned the Duke Center for Child and Family Policy to compile all available indicators for substance abuse in Durham County. Released this past summer, the 67 page report contains data gathered from numerous sources including the local public health, juvenile justice, criminal justice, and social service systems. It illustrates the relationship between substance use and incarceration, illness and even death, showing that substance abuse exacerbates problems including domestic violence, child maltreatment, and homelessness.

Substance abuse is seen in all demographic slices of Durham. However, the report highlighted the fact that African American males are particularly vulnerable to problems related to substance abuse. In addition, research shows that the earlier in life a person starts using alcohol or drugs, the more likely he or she will become addicted, so working with children, youth and their families is very important. Alcohol is the most commonly used substance in Durham, followed by cocaine, heroin, and marijuana.

Among other findings in the report:

- In 2004, 30 Durham residents died and 1,822 were admitted to the emergency room as a direct or indirect result of substance use. Of those who died, 75% were male, 44% African American, and 60% due to alcohol.
- In 2005, 29% of the 1,858 domestic violence cases investigated by the Durham Police Department involved substance abuse; children were present in 31% of those cases.
- From 2000-2005, 60% of Durham inmates entered prison with a substance abuse problem, 41% admitted that they committed their crime under the influence of drugs and/or alcohol, and 37% had a drug conviction.
- Approximately 300 injuries in Durham are the result of drinking and driving each year. 25% of fatal car accidents in Durham involve substance use.
- From 2000-2005, 9% of new HIV cases were related to injection drug use, compared to 40% during 1983-1994.

- 19% of Durham adults are current smokers; 4.6% of pregnant women in Durham smoked during pregnancy (compared to 12% of pregnant women across NC).
- Approximately 50% of the homeless in Durham have a substance use problem.
- Over the last 3 years, there have been almost 300 arrests on Durham public school grounds for possession of alcohol or illicit substances.
- Arrests for possession and sales of illicit substances are highest between the ages of 15-30 and peak between the ages of 20-24.

According to Lloyd Schmeidler, outgoing chair of the Substance Abuse Committee, “This report provides very important baseline data about the human costs of substance abuse in Durham... We also hope to update the information regularly so that we can see if the strategies being employed to address substance abuse are having a positive impact in the community.”

“Having this information improves our ability to select the best evidence-based practices for the population most in need,” said Gayle Harris, Assistant Director of the Durham County Health Department. “Substance addiction is a community problem. Solving it requires involving all segments of the community – public and private. The information found in this report will help guide these efforts.”

Addressing the causes and sometimes tragic consequences of substance abuse in our society is not an easy task. Substance abuse is influenced by many different things – depression, traumatic experiences, peer and family acceptance and encouragement, and availability of substances in the neighborhood, to name a few. The good news is that individuals can change with support and treatment and many agencies, civic organizations, self-help groups like AA/NA, places of worship and other supporters in Durham are ready to help. Consider getting more involved to make Durham a better place for all of us to live and work. Contact the Partnership for a Healthy Durham. Contact the Partnership for a Healthy Durham – www.healthydurham.org, 560-7833.

Clip and save

Substance abuse report

The report is available online at

<http://www.healthydurham.org/committees/substanceabuse/FinalSubstanceAbuseReport0507.pdf>

Alcoholics Anonymous

Help line to provide information on area support group meetings.,

www.aanc32.org

(919) 286-9499

Al-Anon

Support programs for families of alcoholics. 24 hour answering service for questions about Al-Anon or to find a meeting:

www.alanonalateen6nc.org

(800) 243-4035 for English, (800) 251-5738 para español

Narcotics Anonymous

A fellowship of recovering addicts who meet regularly to help each other stay clean

www.crna.org

(919) 831-5321

Durham Center Access

For help with a mental health, developmental disability or substance abuse issue, call 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. Information or a referral to an appropriate provider. Walk-in crisis help is also available 24 hours a day at 2609 North Duke Street, Suite 900 in the Central Medical Park.
(919) 560-7100

Durham Center

The local management entity (LME) managing the mental health, developmental disabilities, and substance abuse services in the area. Most services are provided by contracted providers.

<http://durhamcenter.org>

(919) 560-7100

Durham Together for Resilient Youth (Durham TRY)

An alcohol and drug free community coalition formed for the purpose of reducing substance abuse among youth and, over time, among adults. The coalition focuses on evidence-based, culturally competent environmental strategies that address substance abuse at the community level.

www.durhamtry.org

(919) 491-0630.

Alcohol/Drug Council of North Carolina

Provides advocacy, information and referral services and public education about substance abuse for the state.

www.alcoholdrughelp.org

493-0003

Durham Council on Alcoholism and Drug Dependence

A local affiliate of the National Council on Alcoholism and Drug Dependence, Inc, that provides information about alcoholism, and other drug issues; aims to increase public understanding of drug addictions; and promotes the development of more treatment facilities and services.

www.dcadd.org

(919) 309-2600

Treatment Programs

The Substance Abuse Committee has collaborated with Duke University Health System's Office of Community Relations to create the **Durham County Substance Abuse Referral Directory**, which contains information about substance abuse treatment options in Durham.

Available online: http://dukehealth1.org/community_relations/DUMCSubAbuseDirectory06.pdf.

Oxford Houses

Self-run group homes for recovering substance abusers. A list of local Oxford Houses is located in the Substance Abuse Referral Directory above.

www.oxfordhouse.org/northcarolina.html.

The Partnership for a Healthy Durham is the Healthy Carolinians planning team for Durham and serves as the Health Committee for the City and County's Results-Based Accountability initiative. The Access to Care Committee is responsible for this series of articles. For more information on the Partnership, see www.healthydurham.org or call 560-7833.