

## PROGRAM OVERVIEW

### COURAGE TO SPEAK- COURAGEOUS PARENTING 101<sup>®</sup>

#### PROGRAM OVERVIEW

By the time American teens graduate high school, more than two thirds of them will have been offered an illicit drug.<sup>1</sup> Courageous Parenting 101<sup>®</sup> is a multi-session drug prevention program designed specifically for the *parents* of middle and high school youth. Why target parents? Because teen alcohol, tobacco and other drug use is not just a teen problem – it’s a parent problem as well.<sup>2</sup> Research consistently identifies parents as the greatest influence on their child’s substance use behaviors and as those with the greatest opportunity to positively impact their child’s substance use decisions. While teens consistently report drugs to be their number one concern, most parents are unaware of the influence American drug culture has on teens and what they can do to counter these pro-drug messages.

Today, the middle school aged child is at greatest risk for first time drug experimentation. By the first day of high school, most students have already tried their first cigarette, sip of alcohol or experimented with other drugs. Alcohol is the leading factor in the top three causes of teen death: car crashes, homicide and suicide. More American adolescents are in treatment for marijuana dependence than for all other illicit drugs combined. Prescription drugs are the second most commonly used illicit drug today, behind marijuana, and for the first time in history, substance use among girls is equal to (and exceeding) the substance use of boys. Teen drug culture today has a different face than when today’s parents were teenagers.

Despite these new trends, fewer parents are communicating with their teens about the risks and consequences of substance use. Lack of information, lack of involvement, denial, and self-delusion are all contributing factors to a phenomenon which has been coined as “hands off” parenting.<sup>3</sup> Hands off parents consistently fail to set rules and monitor their teen’s behavior. Hands off parents fail to monitor their teens media exposure (TV viewing, Internet, music), do not know where their teen is or what they do after school, do not impose a curfew, do not regularly eat dinner with their teen, do not closely monitor their academic performance and do not strongly disapprove of marijuana use. Hands-off parenting increases a teen’s risk of substance use.

Parents who utilize their power have an enormously positive impact on their child’s substance use decisions. “Hands-on” parents role model for their children by not using illicit drugs, expect their child not to use substances, openly communicate the dangers of substance use, and properly monitor their child’s whereabouts. These are just a few of the parent practices that can dramatically reduce a child’s risk of substance use. Research shows that parents who sit down

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<sup>1</sup> CASA National Survey of American Attitudes on Substance Abuse XI: Teens and Parents (August 2006)

<sup>2</sup> CASA National Survey of American Attitudes on Substance Abuse XI: Teens and Parents (August 2006)

<sup>3</sup> CASA, National Survey on American Attitudes on Substance Abuse VI: Teens (Feb 2001)

and eat dinner with their teen five or more times a week reduce their teen's risk of trying alcohol by 50% <sup>4</sup> The more researchers examine the risks of teen substance use, the more it becomes clear that parents have an enormously powerful influence on their kids. In light of these extensive findings, Courageous Parenting 101<sup>®</sup> provides parents the opportunity to increase awareness in order to utilize and maximize their prevention power.

## **PROGRAM GOALS**

The goals of Courageous Parenting 101<sup>®</sup> are to increase the awareness and knowledge of participants in the following areas:

- Substance Use Effects and Consequences
- Teen Drug Trends and Teen Party Culture
- Media Influence on Teen Substance Use
- Differences Between the Adolescent Brain and the Adult Brain
- Why Teens Use Drugs
- Helping Adolescents Manage Emotional Pain
- Establishing and Enforcing Healthy Expectations and Limits for Teens
- Parenting Styles and Enabling
- Age Appropriate Prevention Messages and Effective Communication Strategies
- Protective factors (Characteristics that Lower a Teen's Risk of Substance Use)
- Developmental Assets (Assets that Lower a Teen's Risk of Substance Use)
- Warning Signs of Substance Use
- Action Steps When Parent Suspects Teen Use
- Local Community Resources for Future Support

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<sup>4</sup> CASA, Family Matters: Substance Abuse and the American Family (March 2005)

## **PROGRAM FORMAT**

Courageous Parenting 101<sup>®</sup> utilizes both PowerPoint media and small group discussion to educate and empower parents. An educational PowerPoint presentation is delivered to all program participants during the first portion of each session. In the second portion, participants interact in smaller, age appropriate discussion groups.