



White House Office of National Drug Control Policy National Youth Anti-Drug Media Campaign

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Contact: Jennifer de Vallance, ONDCP, (202) 395-6648
Maria Gallagher, Fleishman-Hillard, (202) 828-9756

DRUGGED DRIVING AS COMMON AS DRUNK DRIVING AMONG TEENS

White House Drug Policy Office Urges Teen Driving Safety During National Drunk and Drugged Driving Prevention Month (3D Month)

(Washington, D.C.) – A recent study has revealed that teens are just as likely to drive under the influence of marijuana as alcohol. With as many as 9,000 16- and 17-year-old drivers getting behind the wheel of a car each day the Office of National Drug Control Policy (ONDCP) is working with Students Against Destructive Decisions (SADD) to warn parents of the prevalence and dangers of drugged and drunk driving.

Driving-age teenagers have the highest overall crash rates of any age group, and traffic crashes are the leading cause of death for 15- to 20-year-olds. Drug and alcohol use compound teens' crash risks. Research shows that 13 percent of high school seniors reported driving while high on marijuana. That's nearly equivalent to those who reported driving drunk (14 percent), even though far more teens report using alcohol (17 percent) than marijuana (7 percent) in the last 30 days. Additionally, one-third of high school seniors said that in the last two weeks, they drove after drinking heavily or using drugs, or rode in a car whose driver had been drinking heavily or using drugs.

“Parents need to realize that drugged driving is nearly as common today among teens as drunk driving,” said Scott Burns, Deputy Director, National Drug Control Policy. “Marijuana impairs many of the skills required for safe driving, such as concentration, coordination, perception, and reaction time, and these effects can last up to 24 hours after using. It is critical that parents know the dangers associated with drugged driving and are vigilant in monitoring their teen drivers.”

Many teens underestimate the risks associated with driving. For example, more than one in four teens believes that speeding, talking on a cell phone while driving, and not wearing a safety belt are safe, according to a SADD/Liberty Mutual survey.

“Research from SADD and Liberty Mutual Group reveals that, while teens say that text messaging is their biggest distraction while driving, more than one in five engages in this dangerous behavior,” said Stephen Wallace, chairman and chief executive officer of SADD. “For teens, knowing about the risk is only the first step. Parents need to set clear rules about driving behaviors—and enforce them.”

SADD's study confirms that parents can make a difference. Nearly 60 percent of teens who drive say their parents have the most influence on their driving, and teens whose parents enforce penalties for driving law infractions are less likely to practice risky driving behaviors than teens whose parents do not enforce penalties.

During “National Drunk and Drugged Driving Prevention Month” this December and throughout the year, the National Youth Anti-Drug Media Campaign is providing parents with information about the risks of impaired driving. The Campaign encourages parents to discuss the harmful effects of drug use and drugged driving with their teens. Parents can visit www.TheAntiDrug.com, for resources, advice, and free materials on this topic.

Parents are the most important influence on their teen when it comes to risky behaviors, including dangerous driving. Parents can take action to keep their teens safe with these simple steps:

- Set clear rules and enforce consequences against any drug or alcohol use at any time;
- Know where their teen is going and what route they are using to get there; and,
- Reinforce safe driving practices by driving together, and being a good role model.

Since its inception in 1998, the National Youth Anti-Drug Media Campaign has conducted outreach to millions of parents, teens, and communities to reduce and prevent teen drug use. Counting on an unprecedented blend of public and private partnerships, non-profit community service organizations, volunteerism, and youth-to-youth communications, the Campaign is designed to reach Americans of diverse backgrounds with effective anti-drug messages.

For more information on the ONDCP National Youth Anti-Drug Media Campaign, visit
www.MediaCampaign.org

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