Parental Report of Substance Abuse Risk in The Children of Bureau and Surrounding Counties

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Abstract

- Substance abuse has been a problem in Spring Valley, IL and the surrounding counties.
- Parents completed surveys regarding substance abuse and family dynamics.
- Survey results were revealing of beliefs and attitudes held by parents giving a better understanding of substance abuse in the area.
- Many factors should be considered to help decrease one’s substance abuse risk including:
  - Risk factor- #, type, age of incidence, exposure time
  - Protective factors
Background/Purpose

- Drug use of youths in the United States is the highest among all industrialized nations according to the Summary of 1987 drug study results.
- Illinois Youth Survey of Bureau, LaSalle, and Putnam Counties showed substance abuse of 6th-12th graders to be higher than the national average.
- Why is substance abuse so prevalent and what could be done to help decrease it?
- Parental knowledge and attitudes regarding substance abuse and other measures frequently used to assess substance abuse risk were assessed.
- Relationships associated with an increased risk of substance abuse were identified.
- This information will be used to direct future substance abuse prevention programs.
Methods

- Study site- Spring Valley
  - Rural town in northern IL
  - Population- 5,375

- Recruitment (via flyers, newspaper ads)
  - Parents of any age within the following Counties:
    - Bureau
    - LaSalle
    - Putnam
Data were collected from participants of the ‘Raising Healthy and Safe Teens’ Program and from employees of St. Margaret’s Hospital (nurses, clerical staff, etc.)

Parents completed surveys regarding substance abuse and family dynamics (see attached)

Analysis of data performed using Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS)

Presented are:
- Participant demographics
- Family dynamics
- Parent vs. perceived community attitudes
- Substance abuse topics
- Responses to open-ended questions
Results

- 46 surveys were completed
- Demographics
  - Most respondents were female (95.6%)
  - Age distribution was relatively equal with those <45y/o (54.3%) and those ≥45y/o (45.7%)
  - Relatively equal # of <college (48.9%) and ≥college (51.1%)
  - Most respondents were married (80%)
Family Dynamics (*Table 1*)

- Majority of parents had talked about tobacco (100%), alcohol (95.7%), and drugs (91.3%) with their children and felt comfortable (97.8%) doing so.
- Most families eat together 3-5x/wk (59.5%) and do not have the TV on during dinner (69.1%).
- During a month, most families attended religious services together ≥4x (42.2%), followed by none (32.6%), then 1-3x (24.5%).
- Most parents believe their children confide in both parents/guardians (65.2%), followed by mother only (32.6%), then father only (2.2%).
- All parents believe their children know that their parents are somewhat (26.1%) or very proud (73.9%) of them.
- More parents report no/little stress or tension among family members (60.9%) than a fair/great deal (39.1%).
Results, cont.

- **Parent vs. Perceived Community Attitudes** *(Table 2)*
  - Most all parents reported they strongly/somewhat disapprove of teenage tobacco (95.7%) and alcohol (95.7%) use.
  - Parents report the community to view teenage tobacco use as: 45.7% disapprove, 37% tolerate, 17.4% accept.
  - Parents report the community to view teenage alcohol use as: 56.5% disapprove, 21.7% tolerate, 21.7% accept.
  - Overall, parents believe that the community is more tolerant or more accepting of both tobacco and alcohol use by teenagers.
  - Parents report the community to disapprove of alcohol (56.5%) more than tobacco (45.7%).
  - Of those who accept either use of a substance, more are accepting of alcohol use (21.7%) than tobacco use (17.4%).
Results, cont.

- **Substance Abuse Topics (Table 3)**
  - Most all parents agreed strongly/somewhat (93.3%) that they made a conscientious effort to be a good role model regarding substance use.
  - Majority of parents agree ST/SW (58.7%) that alcohol is available at most social events.
  - 43.5% of parents were neutral as to whether cigarettes use was higher locally than nationally.
  - Most all parents agreed ST/SW (93.5%) about knowing their child’s friends.
  - My child is good, thus not at risk for substance abuse: 41.3% agreed ST/SW, 37% disagreed ST/SW, and 21.7% neutral.
Most parents disagree ST/SW (86.7%) that children who used drugs come from bad families.

Majority agreed ST/SW (68.9%) that kids drink because there is nothing else to do.

Most disagreed ST/SW (84.4%) that parents have little influence on substance use decisions of teens.

57.8% agreed ST/SW they were concerned their child would try an illegal drug.

A majority agreed ST/SW they would be confident about knowing if their child used tobacco (71.1%), alcohol (64.5%), or drugs (57.8%). Confidence decreased according to perceived severity of substance.

75% agreed ST/SW they’d know what to do if their child used an illegal drug, as opposed to 15.9% who reported they would not be confident they’d know what to do.
Responses To Open-ended Questions

- Top factors parents report as having the biggest impact on development of children’s substance abuse habits:
  1) Peers (n=23)
  2) Parents (n=21)
  3) Other role models (n=8)
  4) Communication (n=7)

- Top 2 substance abuse topics parents reported to be most beneficial to them were:
  1) Education for self and children (eg. risk factors, decision making, discipline, etc.) (n=8)
  2) How to communicate with children about substance abuse (n=3)
Results, cont.

- **Significant Relationships between Demographics and Substance Abuse Factors**
  - **Age**
    - Older parents disapproved of tobacco use more than younger parents. \( p=0.031 \)
    - Younger parents were more likely to believe that if their child is ‘good’, they are not at risk of substance abuse. \( p=0.039 \)
    - Both age groups of parents in general did not believe that children who use substances are from bad families, but older parents believe this more so than younger parents. \( p=0.049 \)
  - **Marital Status**
    - Both groups of parents agreed they were concerned their child may try an illegal drug, but unmarried parents agreed more strongly than married parents. \( p=0.003 \)
    - Both groups of parents agreed that children try alcohol because there is nothing else to do, but unmarried parents agreed more strongly than married parents. \( p=0.006 \)
    - Married parents attended religious services more often with their children during a month than unmarried parents. \( p=0.047 \)
  - **Gender and Education**
    - no significant associations
Discussion

- One’s substance abuse risk is determined by the presence of risk factors as well as protective factors. The following were identified.
- Risk factors present:
  - 32.6% of parents do not attend religious services at all during the average month decreasing parental monitoring and communication of expectations.
  - 38.1% have the TV on during dinner, effectively decreasing communication as the dinner table is where a great portion of a family’s conversation occurs.
  - 39.1% report a fair/great deal of stress which increases one’s desire to find a release/outlet, whether it be a healthy or non-healthy avenue.
  - Perceived community acceptance of tobacco and alcohol were higher than individual parent responses, suggesting use of these substances are more acceptable in social settings.
  - Also, 58.7% agree alcohol is available at most social events, reflecting the high perceived community acceptance of alcohol.
Protective factors present:

- 64.3% of parents report eating dinner together with their children more nights during the week than not, which studies show help to increase communication.
- 93.3% agreed they made a conscientious to be a good role model regarding substances, which is important as parental influence is among one of the greatest factors influencing a child’s choice to use a substance or not.
- Having a strong neighborhood attachment is demonstrated by 42.2% of parents attending religious services with their children >4x/mo.
- 93.5% of parents agreed they knew their child’s friends, which would supports the protective factor of parental monitoring.
- High percentages of parents report talking to their children about tobacco (100%), alcohol (95.7%), and drugs (91.3%) supporting the protective factor of communication and establishing an anti-drug use policy.
To decrease one’s risk, risk factors need to be reduced and protective factors enhanced.

In addition to the presence of risk factors and protective factors other influences upon one’s substance abuse risk include:

- # of risk factors
- Type of risk factor
- Age when risk factor occurs
- Timing of intervention after risk factor is present (exposure time)
Conclusions

- To truly say substance abuse is higher on the local area due to certain risk factors, results should be compared with similar measures on a national level.
- It would be interesting to study how children would respond to the survey and compare them to the parents’ responses.
- It would also be interesting to observe how responses of rural parents compare to responses from urban counterparts, in particular:
  - How well parent’s know their child’s friends.
  - Children use the excuse that they use substances because there is nothing else to do.
  - Parental influence over children’s decisions.
- Parents identified substance abuse topics which they have voiced would benefit them. These topics could be addressed at future prevention programs.
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References

