

ADA Funded Regional Support Center Substance Abuse Prevention Program

The No Network & Community 2000

Family Counseling Center



Drugged Driving

“Have one drink for the road” was once a commonly used phrase in American culture. It has only been within the past 25 years that as a Nation, we have begun to recognize the dangers associated with drunk driving. And through a multipronged and concerted effort involving many stakeholders—including educators, media, legislators, law enforcement, and community organizations such as Mothers Against Drunk Driving—the Nation has seen a decline in the numbers of people killed or injured as a result of drunk driving. But it is now time that we recognize and address the similar dangers that can occur with drugged driving. Drugged driving is driving under the influence of any drug that acts on the brain could impair one’s motor skills, reaction time, and judgment. Drugged driving is a public health concern because it puts not only the driver at risk but also passengers and others who share the road.

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According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, vehicle accidents are the leading cause of death among young people aged 16 to 19. It is generally accepted that because teens are the least experienced drivers as a group, they have a higher risk of being involved in an accident compared with more experienced drivers. When this lack of experience is combined with the use of marijuana or other substances that impact cognitive and motor abilities, the results can be tragic.

A Few Facts According to the 2009 National Survey on Drug Use and Health (NSDUH)

- In 2009, an estimated 12 percent of persons aged 12 or older (30.2 million persons) drove under the influence of alcohol at least once in the past year. This percentage has dropped since 2002, when it was 14.2 percent.
- Driving under the influence of an illicit drug or alcohol was associated with age. In 2009, an estimated 6.3 percent of youth aged 16 or 17 drove under the influence. This percentage steadily increased with age to reach a peak of 24.8 percent among young adults aged 21 to 25. Beyond the age of 25, these rates showed a general decline with increasing age.
- Also in 2009, among persons aged 12 or older, males were more likely than females (16.9 percent versus 9.2 percent, respectively) to drive under the influence of an illicit drug or alcohol in the past year.