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# What Factors are Associated with Criminal Justice Professionals' Opinions of Effective Strategies that Prevent Substance Abuse in America's Youth?

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**What Factors are Associated with Criminal Justice Professionals' Opinions of  
Effective Strategies that Prevent Substance Abuse in America's Youth?**

by

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A Thesis

Submitted to the Graduate Faculty

of St. Cloud State University

in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements

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### **Abstract**

The purpose of this study is to discover the different perceptions of criminal justice practitioners regarding the prevention of youth substance abuse. In the collection of data, eighteen criminal justice professionals were interviewed who have experience working with youth with substance abuse and other issues. Interviews were recorded and transcribed by the researcher.

The data was collected by way of an interview schedule designed by the researcher. Questions include how the subjects are affiliated with the criminal justice system, how long they have worked with youth, whether they have children under the age of eighteen, and whether they are close to someone with a substance abuse problem. Also included are their views on the most effective strategies currently being used, what the ideal criminal justice response is, and what society can do to help reduce substance abuse among juveniles.

The results of this study are difficult to compile. The criminal justice practitioners interviewed had some difficulty in answering questions about what the most effective prevention strategies are in youth substance abuse prevention. They also had multiple views on the topic. Sometimes the interview questions may not have been completely understood. However, most did agree that family support and accountability play major roles in shaping youths' beliefs and behaviors. Most also felt that a more aggressive approach to dealing with these issues would be beneficial.

## Table of Contents

Chapter	Page
I: Introduction .....	5
The Problem.....	5
Research Problem & Questions .....	5
Purpose & Objectives .....	6
II: Literature Review.....	7
Comments .....	7
Historical Background .....	7
Parental Monitoring/Family Management.....	7
School-Based and Community-Based Programs .....	8
Public Health Agencies.....	9
Incarcerated Youth and Sanctions/Rewards Programs.....	11
Culturally-Specific Programs/Minority Groups .....	12
Mental Health and Developmental-Ecological Context .....	15
Summary .....	16
III: Research Design .....	18
Research Method Selection.....	18
Research Populations & Sampling.....	18
Conceptualization & Operationalization.....	18
Data Collections & Processing .....	19
Data Analysis & Reporting.....	20
IV: Findings & Conclusions .....	21

	4
Chapter	Page
Comments .....	21
Interviews.....	21
V: Recommendations & Implications.....	54
Study Summary.....	54
Proposed Recommendations .....	62
Social & Policy Implications .....	63
Closing Remarks .....	64
References.....	65
Appendices	
A: Informed Consent Letter .....	69
B: Interview Questions .....	71

## **Chapter I: Introduction**

### **The Problem**

Substance abuse among American youth is a prevalent problem, especially in poorer, densely-populated neighborhoods. This behavior is influenced by their physical and social environments, including peers, family, and schools. Parental monitoring is vital in preventing the problem, especially where other resources are limited. Parents should monitor activities, friends, whereabouts, television viewing and music listening (Fulkerson, Pasch, Perry, & Komro, 2008).

Parental monitoring, school and community support, and primary medical provider assistance are positively associated with lower instances of underage drinking, violence and delinquent behaviors among both male and female urban youth (Fulkerson et al., 2008). Policing projects, such as D.A.R.E., significantly reduced drug use instances in male, but not female, urban youth (Bosma, Komro, Perry, Veblen-Mortenson, & Farbaldish, 2005).

### **Research Problem & Questions**

This descriptive study sought to find the most effective strategies to prevent substance abuse among America's youth. I started with the premise that professional and personal experiences will influence the perceptions and opinions of professionals in the criminal justice system regarding juvenile substance abuse. I propose that these opinions would be affected most by professionally working with juveniles who have substance abuse issues, personally having children under the age of 18, personally knowing someone (a close friend or family member) who has a substance abuse problem, and lastly, having knowledge of a broad range of existing programs. In order to complete this study, I formed four research questions.

- 1) What programs currently exist to address juvenile substance abuse, and what does the literature say about their effectiveness?
- 2) How are the perceptions and opinions of professionals in the criminal justice system regarding juvenile substance abuse influenced by their professional and personal experiences?
- 3) In their opinions, what do the professionals believe are the best strategies that the Minnesota criminal justice system can employ to address juvenile substance abuse?
- 4) In their opinions, what do the professionals believe are the best strategies that Minnesota society can employ to address juvenile substance abuse?

These research questions were answered by constructing a qualitative research design that used nonrandom sampling. This problem statement is best addressed by interviewing criminal justice professionals and gathering their opinions based on their professional and personal experiences of working with youths.

### **Purpose & Objectives**

The purpose of this research study is to explore the perceptions of criminal justice professionals of substance abuse in America's youth. This is a major problem that American youth are confronting, and it is vital that we establish ways to mitigate it. Substance abuse is one of the leading influences on crime among youth in the country and worldwide. It is important to gather the views of criminal justice professionals who have worked with youths because they are knowledgeable of effective ways to prevent youth substance abuse.

## Chapter II: Literature Review

### Comments

The following literature review is divided into six sections. The first part reviews how effective parental monitoring and family support are in preventing youth substance abuse. The next topics discussed are community- and school-based prevention programs. Public health agency assistance is explored, as well as programs for incarcerated youth and a sanctions/rewards system. The effectiveness of culturally-specific programs is researched, and finally the vulnerable youth in the mental health and developmental-ecological context is reviewed.

### Historical Background

**Parental monitoring/family management.** Substance use among American youth is a prevalent problem, especially in poorer, densely-populated neighborhoods. This behavior is influenced by their physical and social environments, including peers, family, and schools. Parental monitoring is vital in preventing this problem, especially where other resources are limited. Parents should monitor activities, friends, whereabouts, television viewing and music listening (Fulkerson et al., 2008).

In their evaluation of a parent-targeted prevention program, Koutakis, Stattin, and Kerr (2008) found that working through parents proved to be an effective way to reduce drinking and delinquency among adolescents. Parents were targeted through school meetings and mailings, and then underwent a two-day training period. Strict parental attitudes against alcohol use and youth involvement in structured, adult-led activities are linked with lower levels of youth alcohol use. The more lenient parents were, the more children drank. Drinking can be delayed and



reduced if parents maintain strict attitudes against it, even more importantly than the influence of parents' own drinking habits (Koutakis et al., 2008).

According to Bruzzese, Gallagher, McCann-Doyle, Reiss and Wijetunga (2009), youth whose behaviors are not monitored by their parents use tobacco, alcohol, and drugs more than those who are monitored. A higher rate of youth using tobacco and other drugs is consistent with lower levels of parental support and inconsistent discipline. Parents should be included in youth substance use prevention efforts because their practices influence youths' decisions (Bruzzese et al., 2009).

**School-based and community-based programs.** School-based programs are important because they have the opportunity to reach a great number of youths at a time that they are beginning to use substances. Youths in alternative schools have a higher tendency to use alcohol and other substances than those in traditional schools. Therefore, there is a greater need for prevention efforts in these schools (Hopson & Holleran Steiker, 2010).

One program, keepin' it REAL (kiR), is geared primarily towards youth attending alternative schools. It focuses on four different strategies for resisting use: refuse, explain, avoid and leave. Students who were in the program experienced decreased substance use, improved attitudes and resistance strategies (Hopson & Holleran Steiker, 2010).

The Family Check-up (FCU) is a school-based program that serves at-risk children and families (Stormshak & Dishion, 2009). Twenty years of research shows that it is an effective program in enhancing family management skills and reducing high risk behavior and the long-term risk for substance use in adolescence. Random assignment to the program improved parenting and reduced childhood problem behavior (Stormshak & Dishion, 2009).

A study by Ringwalt, Ennett, Vincus, Rohrbach, and Simons-Rudolph (2004) investigates the roles of school district and school-level decision-makers in implementing effective substance use prevention curricula. They found that the school district-level prevention coordinator had the greatest influence concerning decisions about curricula use. The next greatest influences were classroom teachers and school principals. Community-based coalitions and groups also contributed by including adolescent drug prevention in their missions (Ringwalt et al., 2004).

Community organizing methods and processes are effective in preventing substance use among youth (Bosma et al., 2005). The D.A.R.E. Plus Project was implemented to reduce tobacco, alcohol and marijuana use and violent behaviors. It includes the use of the police, school, family and community organizing intervention strategies. Though the project had a significant positive affect on boys, there were no significant differences found among girls. Boys had lower rates of increase in cigarette and alcohol use and violent behaviors. This was attributed to the male role models in the classroom.

It is important for the community organizers to be well-trained and experienced in order to attract high participation rates. They must have high energy levels, a good understanding of community outreach, and ability to help groups think strategically in order to move towards positive change. They should encourage group leadership among youth and adult team members and strive for diversity among groups (Bosma et al., 2005).

**Public health agencies.** Annual statewide youth surveys, such as the Youth Risk Behavior Survey (YRBS), have been economical, reliable and valid measures of psychosocial factors and substance use behaviors (Paschall, Fleweling, & Grube, 2009). The YRBS is administered in high schools nationwide every two years and is designed to obtain estimates of the prevalence of risky health-related behaviors. The survey was designed by the Centers for

Disease Control and Prevention, which uses the data to identify and address public health problems in adolescents. Their goal is to monitor progress towards achieving the Healthy People 2010 objectives of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (Paschall et al., 2009).

Wu, Schlenger, and Galvin (2006) reported their findings of American youth drug use from the National Survey on Drug Use and Health (NSDUH). They found that approximately 20 percent of youths aged 16-23 reported having ever used one or more of the following drugs: methamphetamine, MDMA, LSD, ketamine, GHB, and flunitrazepam. Staying in school and getting married were associated with decreased use of these drugs. The presence of criminal behaviors and recent alcohol abuse or dependence was highly associated with drug use (Wu et al., 2006).

McBride, Terry-McElrath, VanderWaal, Chriqui, and Myllyluoma (2008) reviewed a study on public health involvement in drug policy, planning, and prevention. They found that prevention is a fundamental task of public health agencies. Most youths in America live where agencies provide effective resources for school and community drug abuse prevention. Drug treatment program diversion, as an alternative to incarceration, is widely accepted for marijuana violations, even by most prosecutors.

In the prevention of illicit drug use, local public health agencies participate strongly in their efforts. The overall rate of involvement of public health alternatives was only about a third, but the odds increased significantly where involvement was most needed. These areas included urban communities, mostly with a higher African American population. Western agencies had the most successful involvement, while Southern areas had the least. It was

suggested that local-level public health agencies could provide a base to build collaborative prevention programs and drug policy reform (McBride et al., 2008).

**Incarcerated youth and sanctions/rewards programs.** Mouttapa, Watson, McCuller, Reiber, and Tsai (2009) conducted a study on incarcerated youth involved in a program called Substance Use and HIV Prevention (SUHIP). This is a combination of two intervention programs, Reconnecting Youth (RY) and Street Smart (SS). Reconnecting Youth focuses on life skills and has been effective in reducing drug involvement. Street Smart was designed to reduce HIV high-risk behaviors, and increase social skills and self-efficacy. It has been effective in reducing drug use and high risk sexual behaviors among runaway youth. Both are skill-driven program based on social learning and cognitive behavioral therapy (Mouttapa et al., 2009).

The findings of this study are that social bonding and skill-building play important roles in reducing substance use, risky behaviors and other delinquent behaviors that relate to these outcomes. Mouttapa et al. (2009) strongly recommend that a one-size-fits-all approach should not be used in treating incarcerated adolescents. Interventions should be done based upon age, attitudes, beliefs, behaviors, characteristics and backgrounds.

Krebs, Lattimore, Cowell and Graham (2010) evaluated a program called Juvenile Breaking the Cycle (JBTC) Program, which was designed for substance-using youth who are at a high risk of recidivism. The program provides these youth with criminal justice system monitoring and individualized treatment and services. Its objectives are to: 1) identify substance abuse problems; 2) assess juveniles to establish the degrees of the problems and other psychological risk factors; 3) coordinate the delivery of individualized services; and 4) use sanctions, incentives and rewards to encourage compliance with treatment and deter substance use (Krebs et al., 2010).

A few of the effective multi-component approaches include Multi-Systematic Therapy (MST), Project Back-on-Track (BOT), and juvenile drug court. Youths who were evaluated after involvement in these programs were found to have lower rates of substance abuse and arrests than youth who refused to participate or who dropped out. MST was more costly than incarceration, hospitalization or residential treatment, but the additional costs were offset by lower recidivism rates. Juveniles involved in drug court programs demonstrated remarkable rehabilitation for those who were assessed to be at high risk for substance abuse and delinquency (Krebs et al., 2010).

**Culturally-specific programs/minority groups.** Drug use patterns vary with age, gender, ethnicity, social class, and ecological, cultural and historical conditions. The risk factors for initiating drug use exert different effects according to ethnicity and gender (Cooley-Strickland, Quille, Griffin, Stuart, Bradshaw & Furr-Holden, 2009). Studies show that African-American youth have a significantly lower rate of the use of most drugs than do Caucasians and Hispanics (Bruzzese et al., 2009). African-Americans are less likely than Caucasians to begin smoking cigarettes and drinking alcohol by age thirteen, but are more likely to use cocaine and marijuana at earlier ages (Cooley-Strickland et al., 2009).

Substance abuse among various minority populations continues to be a growing problem (Sharma, 2008). The National Household Survey of Drug Abuse showed that the rates for illicit drug and alcohol dependence were 7.8 percent among Latinos, 7.5 percent among Caucasians, and 6.2 percent among African Americans. Some of the risk factors found are poverty, unemployment, crowded living conditions and single-parent families. Preventative strategies such as school, family, and community-based interventions should also include culture-centric and culture-specific components (Sharma, 2008).

A study by Turner-Musa, Rhodes, Harper, and Quinton (2008) examined the efficacy of a hip-hop based substance use and HIV preventative intervention targeting African American middle school students. The students in the intervention group were significantly more likely to have increased knowledge of drug and HIV risks compared to students in the comparison group. Findings from this study suggest the need to develop and implement culturally-based interventions, as they improve knowledge about alcohol and substance use risk and HIV/AIDS (Turner-Musa et al., 2008).

Marsiglia, Pena, Nieri, and Nagoshi (2010) found that substance use rates among younger children are increasing. These trends are found in all cultures, but immigrant Latino children who migrate to American culture have been linked with pro-drug attitudes, leading to higher rates of substance use. Most prevention programs do not incorporate culture-specific interventions; however, one exception is a model program called *keepin' it REAL*, a culturally grounded school-based prevention program. The REAL strategies, which are to refuse, explain, avoid, and leave, are resistance strategies to prevent substance use by developing children's resistance skills. The premise is that children do not desire to use drugs, but lack the social skills necessary to resist drug offers. Though the study consisted of many limitations, positive findings were not significant in the different groups. Contrarily, there was an increase in self-reported marijuana use (Marsiglia et al., 2010).

Compared with Caucasian and Asian Pacific Islander youths in Hawaii, Native Hawaiian youth have demonstrated higher rates of substance use and abuse with significant adverse effects (Okamoto, Po'a-Kekuawela, Chin, Nebre, & Helm, 2010). It has been found from interviews that risk factors are low self-esteem, lack of self-identity and life plan, and limited communication and conflict resolution skills. Since Native Hawaiian youth reported the

highest need for drug and alcohol treatment, there is an apparent need for culturally-focused research to understand these differences and find effective drug prevention strategies for this group.

Okamoto et al. (2010) also found in their study of Native Hawaiian youth that aggressive acts of drug resistance were used to protect themselves and other family members from drug use. The preferred method used by youth to preserve family relationships was non-confrontational acts such as walking away from conflict. Youth with several drug abstinent family members found social support and were most successful in their resistance strategies. Therefore, youth with family members who use drugs may be at a higher risk for drug use than their peers with abstinent families. A combination of training in drug resistance skills and supportive social networks and family relationships are conducive to prevent drug use among indigenous youth (Okamoto et al., 2010).

Although few programs have been developed specifically for American Indian youth, the model program, Project Venture, has been adopted by 60 communities in 18 states (Carter, Straits, & Hall, 2007). Its philosophy incorporates indirect teaching through holistic, positive youth development and includes traditional stories, spirituality and leadership activities. Findings of this study show that Project Venture is most effective with respect to alcohol. The treatment participants' alcohol use leveled off in follow-up tests, but the comparison group's use increased significantly across that time. This program is a successful alternative prevention model for American Indian communities and is not based on mainstream models. Integrating values and tradition is an effective base for prevention efforts in these communities (Carter et al., 2007).

**Mental health and developmental-ecological context.** There is a high prevalence of adolescent substance abuse and many negative effects of drinking on youth development (Haegerich & Tolan, 2008). During the teenage years, youth are developing their identities and seeking autonomy, and there is a higher risk to experiment with substances. As a result of early and prolonged use, behavior problems and negative health outcomes can occur. Also associated with early use are lower education, higher unemployment, and less life satisfaction in adulthood (Haegerich & Tolan, 2008).

According to Pettingell, Bearinger, Skay, Resnick, Potthoff, and Eichhorn (2008), substance use is associated with the risk of suicidal tendencies. Suicide is one of our country's most urgent health problems in youth. Findings showed that there was a lower likelihood of suicidal attempts in girls with a good self-image and connectedness with family and school. For boys, the most significant factor for low-risk behavior was the belief that their parents would disapprove of antisocial behavior. It was found that substance abuse lowers inhibitions and increases impulsive behaviors. Early detection of substance abuse is important in the prevention of self-directed and interpersonal violence perpetration. Vulnerable youth displaying negative moods and emotional distress should not be ignored (Pettingell, Bearinger, Skay, Resnick, Potthoff, & Eichhorn, 2008).

Post-traumatic stress is a risk factor for depression and substance abuse. Behavioral problems are positively associated with drug use initiation. In a study of inner-city children, it was reported that 22.9 percent of 11- and 12-year old children have smoked tobacco and 17.1 percent drink alcohol sometimes to help them cope with problems. Experiencing violence also increases the likelihood of using substances (Cooley-Strickland et al., 2009).



Research shows that substance use disorder (SUD) is often linked with conduct disorder, attention deficit/hyperactivity disorder and mood disorders. Different patterns in youth substance use have implications for prevention and treatment. Youth who are entering mental health services need more targeted approaches for substance abuse prevention and treatment (Riehman, Stephens, & Schurig, 2009).

### **Summary**

In reviewing the literature on the factors associated with substance abuse in America's youth, there are several different types of prevention programs and strategies. Some strategies may be found to be effective, but the problems that youths encounter are very diverse. For example, youth who are in need of mental health services need more targeted approaches for substance abuse prevention and treatment (Riehman et al., 2009). Preventative strategies such as school, family, and community-based interventions should also include culture-centric and culture-specific components (Sharma, 2008).

Parental monitoring is vital in preventing substance use, especially where other resources are limited (Fulkerson et al., 2008). Drinking can be reduced if parents maintain strict attitudes against it (Koutakis et al., 2008). Parents should be included in youth substance use prevention efforts because their practices influence youths' decisions (Bruzzeese et al., 2009).

School and community-based programs are effective because they have the opportunity to reach a great number of youths at a time that are beginning to use substances (Hopson & Holleran Steiker, 2010). Local-level public health agencies can provide a base to build collaborative prevention programs and drug policy reform. Drug treatment program diversion, as an alternative to incarceration, is widely accepted for marijuana violations, even by most prosecutors (McBride et al., 2008). Juveniles involved in drug court programs demonstrated

remarkable rehabilitation among those who were assessed to be at high risk for substance abuse and delinquency (Krebs et al., 2010).

## **Chapter III: Research Design**

### **Research Method Selection**

This chapter discusses the subjects and interview procedures of the research project. It includes information about the subjects' positions in the criminal justice system and how they were selected as subjects. The role of the researcher and data collection procedures used will be discussed. Ethical considerations that have an impact on the research performed are addressed. The instrument used, an interview schedule, is included as Appendix B. Finally, the independent and dependent variables, as well as the hypotheses, are fully explained.

### **Research Populations & Sampling**

The target population for this study consisted of all criminal justice professionals who currently work with juveniles in the Twin Cities area of Minnesota. A sampling frame (a.k.a., survey population) for this study was identified as those employees of the Hennepin County Attorney's Office. In-person interviews were conducted with a sample population (n=18) that was selected using a nonrandom, purposive sampling technique. According to Maxfield and Babbie (2007), purposive sampling is based on a researcher's knowledge of the subject and research needs relative to information and data. In-person interviews were conducted with a sample population (n=18) consisting of criminal justice professionals, such as judges, social workers, police officers, prosecutors, youth counselors and probation officers.

### **Conceptualization & Operationalization**

An interview schedule was composed that contained five open-ended questions which were derived from the main premise of this study, that is, (a) that professional and personal experiences will naturally affect their opinions, and (b) that we can identify best practices for

addressing juvenile substance abuse by exploring those opinions. The interview schedule and its five questions were as follows (see Appendix B).

*Question One:* How does experience in working with youth in the criminal justice system affect one's opinions on effective methods of substance abuse prevention?

*Question Two:* Does having children under the age of eighteen, or a close personal friend or family member with a substance abuse problem, affect one's viewpoints?

*Question Three:* What are the most effective strategies that are currently being done to respond to substance use and abuse among today's youth?

*Question Four:* If there were no restrictions in terms of cost and other resources, what would be the ideal criminal justice response to juvenile substance abuse?

*Question Five:* Taking the justice system out of the equation, what should society do to help reduce substance abuse among juveniles?

### **Data Collection & Processing**

The in-person interviews lasted approximately fifteen minutes to one hour in length. Appointments with the subjects were scheduled and conducted in their places of business. After obtaining consent from the research subjects, the interviews were recorded and transcribed. Each subject was willing to sign the consent form and answer all of the questions presented to them by me. The informed consent letter guarantees confidentiality and the voluntary nature of the research. The letter provides contact information of the researcher and faculty advisor. It also explains the interview procedures and why the subjects were chosen to participate. Copies of the letters were provided to the subjects prior to the interviews and each subject willingly signed the consent letter.

### **Data Analysis & Reporting**

The interview process consisted of selecting eighteen criminal justice practitioners, gaining informed consent and proceeding with the interviews. Each interviewee was asked a set of five questions related to the study. The interviews were recorded and transcribed in order to effectively interpret and qualitatively analyze the results of data collected. Interviews of three each of the following six professions (n=18): judges, social workers, police officers, prosecutors, youth counselors, and probation officers in the Twin Cities (Minneapolis/St. Paul) area were used to determine their perceptions of the most effective strategies to prevent youth substance abuse.

## Chapter IV: Findings & Conclusions

### Comments

Interviews were conducted with eighteen criminal justice practitioners who work with juveniles with substance use issues in the Twin Cities area. The practitioners included three judges, three police officers, three social workers, three prosecutors, three youth counselors and three juvenile probation officers. In all interviews conducted, each predetermined question earned a 100 percent response rate.

### Interviews

**Interview 1:** The first interview was with a female Hennepin County Court judge in her chambers. It lasted approximately thirty minutes, and the researcher received a signed informed consent from her. Her inclusion in this project was valuable, as she has many years of experience working with juveniles in the system.

*Question One:* How does experience in working with youth in the criminal justice system affect one's opinions on effective methods of substance abuse prevention?

*Response:* Through my job with the court, and also through my past job at the county attorney's office, I have seventeen years of working with children and families in the child protection system. I believe that this experience has allowed me to offer the most appropriate services for the families I've worked with.

*Question Two:* Does having children under the age of eighteen, or a close personal friend or family member with a substance abuse problem, affect one's viewpoints?

*Response:* I have three children under the age of eighteen, and I've personally known some people with substance issues. I think these factors do make people more empathetic to others' situations.

*Question Three:* What are the most effective strategies that are currently being done to respond to substance use and abuse among today's youth?

*Response:* Well, there certainly is a lot more education about it, and I think that there is some, probably wave change amongst, I would say 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> graders, of trying to be supportive of each other in the efforts to stay sober, but once a child is in the system and who has a substance abuse problem, depending upon the significance of it, unfortunately I think there isn't a lot available to them because programs are very short-term, and if we're dealing with a problem that is longer-term and history-based, it doesn't successfully assist in long-term sobriety. It might assist them in short-term sobriety, but I'm not sure that the justice system overall does a very good job of actually getting to what the core of the problem is. It's just more of a Band-Aid solution.

*Question Four:* If there were no restrictions in terms of cost and other resources, what would be the ideal criminal justice response to juvenile substance abuse?

*Response:* It would certainly be much more in-depth and it would be much longer term, so instead of just putting someone into — I think almost every program starts with out-patient, regardless of the level or degree of the substance use problem. Very rarely will you ever see someone go directly into an in-patient program, even if by all professionals' opinions, it would be required. So if you were to have no money issues, it would be that we would be much more aggressive in dealing with the substance abuse problem early on, and it would be staying involved in a much longer term so that you can ensure long term success, and I'm talking about

staying involved and monitoring for up to a year, so that you would have, I think, a much longer term of success rather than the twenty-eight days of outpatient treatment followed by minimal after-care, closure of the case, and then no one really dealing with probably any underlying social issues which resulted in the chemical problems in the first place.

*Question Five:* Taking the justice system out of the equation, what should society do to help reduce substance abuse among juveniles?

*Response:* It starts with parents, and holding parents accountable for their kids and the kids' behavior, and that involves probably aggressive community awareness in people, instead of saying well, it's not my kid, it's not my problem. Being much more involved in attempting to give kids good role models because of course not everybody has the same parents. And as we all know, especially when we go to school — I just had conferences last night. And you see the kids who have parents who are not there, and that lack of involvement in their educational process or knowing where they are, it's pretty easy to identify who those kids are. And unless a responsible adult takes some interest in that kid's life, they are much more likely going to head down the path of a problem, which includes substance abuse, without some sort of intervention, so unless we're going to be willing to look outside of our own families and start looking at our communities as a whole, I don't think the problem's going to change.

**Interview 2:** The second interview was with a male social worker in the school system at his office. It lasted approximately twenty minutes, and the researcher received a signed informed consent from him.

*Question One:* How does experience in working with youth in the criminal justice system affect one's opinions on effective methods of substance abuse prevention?



*Response:* It's partly experience, education, and common sense that steer me into different directions.

*Question Two:* Does having children under the age of eighteen, or a close personal friend or family member with a substance abuse problem, affect one's viewpoints?

*Response:* I don't have kids, but I have people in my personal life with substance abuse problems. It just adds to the experience factor.

*Question Three:* What are the most effective strategies that are currently being done to respond to substance use and abuse among today's youth?

*Response:* Substance abuse is a very widespread term, because the influx of prescribed drugs is very influential. With the children that I work with, they're not quite there. It's their parents that have more of a grip on that stuff. I get the tail end of it. I get the product of their... Nancy Regan in the Regan era said, "Just say No." That's a good way to look at it, is just say no, but with the way that the influence has come across, the way that people, not just people but the way that the youth at that age look at it, it's a very hard thing to do. Marijuana is a factor, it's a gate drug, cigarettes — gate drug, you know it's just a hard thing to sit there and... if I were to dissect it, it'd be more than this ten minute interview.

*Question Four:* If there were no restrictions in terms of cost and other resources, what would be the ideal criminal justice response to juvenile substance abuse?

*Response:* There's no way that we can sit and stop juveniles from substance abuse. That is just ... I'm a firm believer that it starts at home. It starts at home.

*Question Five:* Taking the justice system out of the equation, what should society do to help reduce substance abuse among juveniles?

*Response:* There are no more cigarette commercials on TV anymore, there's no more, well they do beer ads. Tell you what — take out the beer ads. Take out that — the media is a big influence on that, you see “Are you ready for some football?” and Hank Jr., the guy fell off a cliff and smashed his face because he was on dope. That's why he wears sunglasses these days... for a while now... that's why. But if we were to talk about it, we would outlaw everything. Everything from O'Doul's, a non-alcoholic beverage, you just don't put any of that out there, make nothing available.

**Interview 3:** The next interview performed was with a male Minneapolis Police Officer at his department. It lasted approximately fifteen minutes, and the researcher received a signed informed consent from him.

*Question One:* How does experience in working with youth in the criminal justice system affect one's opinions on effective methods of substance abuse prevention?

*Response:* I've dealt with kids who use substances to be “cool” for their peers. They don't care whether they get arrested; that just gives them more to brag about how bad they are. For some, it's the only way they know to fit in.

*Question Two:* Does having children under the age of eighteen, or a close personal friend or family member with a substance abuse problem, affect one's viewpoints?

*Response:* Yes. I've seen these problems up close and personal, and it's shown me that it can affect anyone from any age, class, neighborhood, educational background, occupation, et cetera.

*Question Three:* What are the most effective strategies that are currently being done to respond to substance use and abuse among today's youth?

*Response:* A lot of it is going to be education through schooling or even counseling with various health care professionals is probably the best thing I've seen so far in the system to take care of those problems.

*Question Four:* If there were no restrictions in terms of cost and other resources, what would be the ideal criminal justice response to juvenile substance abuse?

*Response:* Obviously cost is going to be pretty significant for a lot of these things, but if there is no cost, I would guess the best thing to do is educate. Obviously, I deal with kids on the other side by arresting them or taking them to jail and kind of the punitive aspect, but education I think is probably the best route for all these kids that may be involved in drug or alcohol abuse.

*Question Five:* Taking the justice system out of the equation, what should society do to help reduce substance abuse among juveniles?

*Response:* I've heard about different countries and their basic kind of stance on alcohol and drug use, and they don't really have all these laws that are involved. And you take away the criminal justice system and you get that kind of bad boy attitude of breaking the law is fun. In Europe there is no drinking age; anyone can drink, it's really more relaxed and it's not a big deal. So that's kind of my standpoint on that is that, you deal with all these laws and those who want to be bad and break the law and have fun and that's the road they want to go.

**Interview 4:** The fourth interview conducted was with an Assistant Hennepin County Attorney at his office. It lasted approximately ten minutes, and the researcher received a signed informed consent from him.

*Question One:* How does experience in working with youth in the criminal justice system affect one's opinions on effective methods of substance abuse prevention?

*Response:* I have eight years of experience in this division. Some of the juveniles that we've had in child protection matters were also before the court on delinquency matters. The more experience someone has, the better equipped they are to make the best decisions to help these families.

*Question Two:* Does having children under the age of eighteen, or a close personal friend or family member with a substance abuse problem, affect one's viewpoints?

*Response:* I can't speak from experience, but I'd imagine that it would.

*Question Three:* What are the most effective strategies that are currently being done to respond to substance use and abuse among today's youth?

*Response:* Programs such as MADD or SADD.

*Question Four:* If there were no restrictions in terms of cost and other resources, what would be the ideal criminal justice response to juvenile substance abuse?

*Response:* None, I don't think it's a criminal issue by itself.

*Question Five:* Taking the justice system out of the equation, what should society do to help reduce substance abuse among juveniles?

*Response:* I wish I knew. Reduce the taboo about substances and increase the realistic prevention programs.

**Interview 5:** The fifth interview conducted was with a youth counselor at the Sheriff's Ranch, where kids from nine to seventeen work off their community service hours. The interview was conducted at her office and lasted approximately twenty minutes, and the researcher received a signed informed consent from her.

*Question One:* How does experience in working with youth in the criminal justice system affect one's opinions on effective methods of substance abuse prevention?

*Response:* I have worked with youth in the corrections system for two years, and have six years in social services. I have worked with hundreds of youth with issues from sexual abuse to substance abuse and involvement in corrections. The more experience that I get with kids, the more I can see what their needs are.

*Question Two:* Does having children under the age of eighteen, or a close personal friend or family member with a substance abuse problem, affect one's viewpoints?

*Response:* Well, I do have both, and I think it has changed my viewpoints.

*Question Three:* What are the most effective strategies that are currently being done to respond to substance use and abuse among today's youth?

*Response:* I don't think there is really such a thing as an effective strategy, it's always been there but because of the risk of kids experimenting with drugs and not knowing what the drugs do, people try to find ways to deal with it.

*Question Four:* If there were no restrictions in terms of cost and other resources, what would be the ideal criminal justice response to juvenile substance abuse?

*Response:* With both teens and adults, I think a hard-core program would be most effective, leave them out in the wilderness, a very strict approach, taken up a couple notches higher. I think people are too passive-aggressive in dealing with the issues.

*Question Five:* Taking the justice system out of the equation, what do you think society should do to help reduce substance abuse among juveniles?

*Response:* It starts within the home. Children see, repeat and do. It starts with the family unit, the home unit.

**Interview 6:** The sixth interview is with a female juvenile probation officer at her office. It lasted approximately fifteen minutes, and the researcher received a signed informed consent

from her. Her input was valuable in this study because she has years of experience working with youth on the corrections side of the system.

*Question One:* How does experience in working with youth in the criminal justice system affect one's opinions on effective methods of substance abuse prevention?

*Response:* My experience has helped me see that they need to take responsibility for their own actions and not place blame onto others. They should be learning to better themselves and their futures; especially those without solid role models in their lives.

*Question Two:* Does having children under the age of eighteen, or a close personal friend or family member with a substance abuse problem, affect one's viewpoints?

*Response:* Yes, I think so. Parents of young children are – or at least should be – concerned about their children's futures. Being close to someone with alcohol or drug problems makes you more aware of other problems that arise from it.

*Question Three:* What are the most effective strategies that are currently being done to respond to substance use and abuse among today's youth?

*Response:* Education and prevention. There are many successful programs that address these issues. Of course, we don't always see success stories, but we try to involve youth in programs that address their specific needs.

*Question Four:* If there were no restrictions in terms of cost and other resources, what would be the ideal criminal justice response to juvenile substance abuse?

*Response:* To hold them accountable for their first offense. Try to help them the first time, not letting them think they can continue to commit offenses with no repercussions.

*Question Five:* Taking the justice system out of the equation, what should society do to help reduce substance abuse among juveniles?

*Response:* Communities should band together and not tolerate drug dealers in their neighborhoods.

**Interview 7:** The seventh interview was with a male prosecutor at his office. It lasted approximately ten minutes, and the researcher received a signed informed consent from him.

*Question One:* How does experience in working with youth in the criminal justice system affect one's opinions on effective methods of substance abuse prevention?

*Response:* The more experience gained, the more knowledgeable you can become about prevention.

*Question Two:* Does having children under the age of eighteen, or a close personal friend or family member with a substance abuse problem, affect one's viewpoints?

*Response:* Yes.

*Question Three:* What are the most effective strategies that are currently being done to respond to substance use and abuse among today's youth?

*Response:* Involved and concerned parents, early education and prevention prior to use and abuse, and quick and meaningful treatment and aftercare.

*Question Four:* If there were no restrictions in terms of cost and other resources, what would be the ideal criminal justice response to juvenile substance abuse?

*Response:* It would depend if the juvenile is in detention or in the community or at home. If there is no involved or concerned parent, then find an appropriate relative or mentor; active education and prevention programs in school and in community; and then quick and meaningful treatment with active aftercare and follow-up. Plus, the juvenile needs a purpose: school/education or legitimate employment. Also, any mental health issues need to be addressed concurrently with chemical dependency treatment.

*Question Five:* Taking the justice system out of the equation, what should society do to help reduce substance abuse among juveniles?

*Response:* Provide the funding in additional foster involved and concerned parents and mentors, active education and prevention programs, and meaningful treatment and aftercare.

**Interview 8:** The eighth interview was with a female juvenile prosecutor at her office. It lasted approximately fifteen minutes, and the researcher received a signed informed consent from her.

*Question One:* How does experience in working with youth in the criminal justice system affect one's opinions on effective methods of substance abuse prevention?

*Response:* I've worked in the system for twelve years, so I've seen different strategies that work and that don't work. It's also different for each individual.

*Question Two:* Does having children under the age of eighteen, or a close personal friend or family member with a substance abuse problem, affect one's viewpoints?

*Response:* Yes. It has helped me to better understand how families are affected by the issues of their loved ones.

*Question Three:* What are the most effective strategies that are currently being done to respond to substance use and abuse among today's youth?

*Response:* The most effective strategies are inpatient treatment and family therapy. However, I must admit that I don't think there are many effective strategies at this time due to lack of resources. I see many youths not getting the help they need until they are very ill.

*Question Four:* If there were no restrictions in terms of cost and other resources, what would be the ideal criminal justice response to juvenile substance abuse?



*Response:* The ideal response would be a good longer-term inpatient treatment followed by a strong aftercare program. And a family component that encompasses the whole family and its dynamics. Too many times youth go through treatment only to return to the same situation with no support systems in place, which is just a set up for failure.

*Question Five:* Taking the justice system out of the equation, what should society do to help reduce substance abuse among juveniles?

*Response:* I think that society should not normalize the use of drugs and alcohol. So many times, you hear people talking about the good time they had and it includes partying with drugs or alcohol and the advertisements make it look sexy to use especially alcohol. This just makes youth curious and before they know it they are addicted. I think we need to educate more on the dangers of alcohol as well as the other drugs. We should show how there can be fun and good times without any substances.

**Interview 9:** The ninth interview was with a youth/family counselor at her office. It lasted approximately twenty minutes, and the researcher received a signed informed consent from her. She has many years of experience counseling kids, adolescents and families, several of which have had chemical dependency problems.

*Question One:* How does experience in working with youth in the criminal justice system affect one's opinions on effective methods of substance abuse prevention?

*Response:* I think working with youth in the criminal justice system can at times create a jaded approach to substance abuse. Working with offenders, one can see substance abuse consequences but not what came before that. Prevention is not just about prevention, but about prevention of future and more substance abuse, it is also about harm reduction. I think effective

methods in prevention a difficult thing to have happen, when working in the criminal justice system it can make prevention look unrealistic.

*Question Two:* Does having children under the age of eighteen, or a close personal friend or family member with a substance abuse problem, affect one's viewpoints?

*Response:* Yes. Although all of our lives are in many ways touched by addiction, I believe having a child or a partner with an addiction changes the thoughts and approaches considerably. I think addiction is such a unique thing that it affects people's lives in a very complicated way. If someone has someone close to them that has struggled with addiction, they "get" what is so complicated about this picture. Everyone in some way is touched by addiction, but some more than others.

*Question Three:* What are the most effective strategies that are currently being done to respond to substance use and abuse among today's youth?

*Response:* There are a lot of evidence-based practices used in the schools and communities that are very helpful. Finding funding or someone to run these programs is a huge challenge. I believe a harm reduction approach can be the most effective for youth. Using a good set of curricula and a non-judgmental and open approach are key.

*Question Four:* If there were no restrictions in terms of cost and other resources, what would be the ideal criminal justice response to juvenile substance abuse?

*Response:* Making it a part of their treatment, dealing with the substance abuse along with the criminal part, mental health, family, and all the other pieces at the same time instead of separating them. If we use some of the good work done with drug court, we find out people do not stop offending if they are still using chemicals. Family involvement and team treatment for all cases would be wonderful.

*Question Five:* Taking the justice system out of the equation, what do you think society should do to help reduce substance abuse among juveniles?

*Response:* Early education and intervention, making it a part of all educational standards, broader training, more supportive professionals in the school, early interventions that provide options.

**Interview 10:** The tenth interview was with a female juvenile probation officer at her office. It lasted approximately twenty minutes, and the researcher received a signed informed consent.

*Question One:* How does experience in working with youth in the criminal justice system affect one's opinions on effective methods of substance abuse prevention?

*Response:* It can be difficult to measure the effect, because there is a constant number of juveniles experiencing substance abuse issues along with other external factors which impact them. By this, I mean it is hard to separate if the issue is whether the treatment program was effective or if the failures of others (i.e., the community, families) caused the successes or failures. My opinions of what works are mostly based on what the research says, which I have gained from school; however, I am suspect to think many in the field look at programs they have worked with and judge based on their experiences with them.

*Question Two:* Does having children under the age of eighteen, or a close personal friend or family member with a substance abuse problem, affect one's viewpoints?

*Response:* I believe it can. I do not have children, so I don't have that; however, knowing what full-blown addiction looks like can provide an empathetic viewpoint. When a family member or loved one goes through treatment, there is a concept introduced to you which

indicates it is not just a “that kid is being bad” or “naughty” issue, but may have a medical issue of addiction. Perhaps it can provide a more empathetic light to addiction.

*Question Three:* What are the most effective strategies that are currently being done to respond to substance use and abuse among today’s youth?

*Response:* Clearly the use of methadone and suboxone clinics have research indications of being effective in adults; however, I am not aware of this option being offered to juveniles. Services which integrate family and community into their treatment and provide treatment plans which address responsivity needs of the youth are more effective. For example, treating a youth with a low cognitive functioning ability the same way you would an average cognitive functioning person is not going to yield the same result. Or treating someone for substance use while depression is the underlying issue is also fruitless. A collective, holistic approach which incorporates all of these areas and allows for value and healing of the addict to take place creates a more promising chance for them in the future.

*Question Four:* If there were no restrictions in terms of cost and other resources, what would be the ideal criminal justice response to juvenile substance abuse?

*Response:* Treatment. Then more treatment. Then more treatment. People would not stop giving treatment because they have spent a ton of money on a kid. Further, if money REALLY were not an issue, I would have parents with juveniles in treatment participate in a curriculum which helps them understand and process the addiction of their child. A lot of times the parent is handling their own traumas, history, or challenges at home, and for treatment to make sense in a way which is relative to that child eventually returning home, a familial and community build-up needs to occur. So, I guess I would allow the opportunity for parents to get paid to attend or be compensated for this attending, and work toward quality services for the kids.

HUUUUUGE side note on this: Before anything can be addressed meaningfully, the health care system needs to be fixed...kids' insurances do not cover adequate time in treatment, and often do not provide adequate dual services they need when they are in a given program. That needs to stop and the treatment of chemical health issues needs to be treated as a legitimate medical need which merits appropriate coverage.

*Question Five:* Taking the justice system out of the equation, what should society do to help reduce substance abuse among juveniles?

*Response:* Provide safe, welcoming communities where children feel valued and empowered to be a part of something positive. Further, communities should have accessible resources to address the needs of its youth which have experienced trauma, have little to no support or structure at home, or are dealing with other challenging issues. If the community would wrap around that child, there may be more effective outcomes upon completing treatment, and possibly prevention on the front end.

**Interview 11:** This interview was with a female judge in her chambers. It lasted approximately 30 minutes, and the researcher received a signed informed consent. She has several years of experience working with both adults and youth in the criminal justice system.

*Question One:* How does experience in working with youth in the criminal justice system affect one's opinions on effective methods of substance abuse prevention?

*Response:* So, the first thing I want to say is that, by the time we see people in adult court, even if they're just eighteen years old, their problems have existed long before they ever got to us as adults. And then seeing children under eighteen in the criminal justice system, even when you see thirteen or fourteen year-olds, there were issues that could have been dealt with even way before then. And so being in the criminal justice system and working with youth, some

of my opinions are that some of the best methods of substance abuse prevention are positive investment in other ways with children. And so it begins with, are we doing enough to engage children in positive ways so they have positive outlets for their energy? Children have so much energy and they need a lot of direction. If they're not finding something fulfilling in a positive direction, they're going to find the negative direction. So not having enough engagement with them is part of the problem. The other piece is that sometimes parents are a little bit naïve about how much young children know, especially about drugs and substance abuse. Somehow, we think, well if we don't talk about it, then they won't know about it and then they won't do it. I've been just surprised at the number of even middle-class white moms and their conversation about, well we had the big conversation today about drugs or whatever, and I was like, they're twelve! I mean this conversation probably should have happened incrementally a lot earlier and to talk about observations of, you know when someone's acting funny and so there's easy ways to talk about it when they're younger and sort of add on top of it. So, working in the criminal justice system is sometimes frustrating because you can see that, well of course they were going to end up here, on that path. They were in fourth grade being a bully on the playground and they're having issues at home. Nobody intervened because it wasn't really that bad, and then we wonder at sixteen why they're using heroin. It's a way to cope with stress and a lot of issues in life. So, they build upon each other, and then we wonder how people get here. Also, the whole marijuana issue for young kids, particularly we're seeing middle-class suburban kids [thinking] it's no big deal because it's weed, like somehow it's herbal. And it becomes this huge gateway issue for kids into other things. And then we see them here in drug court and things didn't go well in juvenile court. So the way it's shaped is that the more we can do early on, the better. I'm in adult court, I'm moving to juvenile court in July. One reason I'm really excited about moving to

juvenile court is because it sort of fulfills my passion about we need to get these children earlier. What are we doing for them earlier in the process. What are we doing for parents earlier. If we can do more here [juvenile court], we know we won't see as many people here [adult court]. Not only is it better for kids and families, but for the people who are conservatives, it's so much better for tax dollars too because it costs a lot of money by the time you're at the other end. Invest early, invest wisely, and you won't see them down here.

*Question Two:* Does having children under the age of eighteen, or a close personal friend or family member with a substance abuse problem, affect one's viewpoints?

*Response:* Without a doubt. I think sometimes the most effective people at addressing substance abuse issues – a judge, a probation officer, an attorney, a social worker – is to first understand what that experience is, knowing what it is for someone to struggle with an addiction. But also to understand recovery, and I frequently talk to people who have been struggling with a substance abuse issue about twelve steps, about recovery. I have my own personal experiences which has been helpful. It gives me an opportunity to be empathetic, not sympathetic. It's just a whole other level of education and understanding.

*Question Three:* What are the most effective strategies that are currently being done to respond to substance use and abuse among today's youth?

*Response:* In juvenile court, getting children chemical health assessments. If you come in and have contact with the criminal justice system as a juvenile, and there's any indication of any kind of substance, we have early assessments and try to get that child into treatment as soon as possible. Some people say that we are assessment-heavy, but it's hard to know what problem you want to address until you know what the problems are. And I think smart strategies and helping kids in recovery is the assessment piece in the beginning, the recognition of it being a problem.

*Question Four:* If there were no restrictions in terms of cost and other resources, what would be the ideal criminal justice response to juvenile substance abuse?

*Response:* Absolutely education. How much attention can we possibly give children in public schools when we have such an enormous children-to-teacher ratio? If you have a class of thirty children and you have one teacher, how well are you going to be able to address their needs, try to engage them and help them find their potential? First of all, fixing the teacher-child ration would help things dramatically if resources were of no issue, but that needs to extend beyond the school day. The reality is a lot of children are in care, and if parents had affordable ways to have their children cared for so they can either go to school or they could work, that those children, if they were engaged in positive activities. We know that things like 4-H, Girl Scouts, Boy Scouts, we know that all those types of youth programs have a phenomenal effect on how children do later on in life. Same thing with investment in head start. We know statistically that those programs do well. You look at after-school programs and the ration to supervision to child is ridiculously high, and we're not meeting children's needs by just trying to corral them, herd them. If money were no object, we just need a lot more resources in terms of adult-child time. We need to look at what their potential is. What is their passion, what is their interest, what are they good at? Everyone has gifts and talents. And sometimes it just takes adults to recognize, here's where this child's interest is, here are some talents. If we give them an opportunity to become an expert and to grow in that area, that's very self-esteem building. Self-esteem is tied to drug use; it's also tied into peer pressure, tied into fitting in. I have a friend who's involved in public policy and works on homeless issues. She said we know how to fix homelessness, but there isn't the public will to do it. I think sometimes we don't have the public will to fix a lot of substance abuse stuff that we have because we don't really want to pay for it.



*Question Five:* Taking the justice system out of the equation, what do you think society should do to help reduce substance abuse among juveniles?

*Response:* Absolute money investment. Also, there's a whole generation of baby boomers who are retiring. If there was a more effective mechanism to connect people who are retiring with children who need resources, how great would that be to fulfill both needs? One of the hardest parts of people in retirement is finding purpose, and children need attention. But to some extent, the reason that those pairings don't happen is we don't have the facilities for those outlets, we don't have transportation, we don't have coordinators. But if we could more effectively bring together this group who has a need of their own, which is to find meaning – they're retired, they have extra time – with the children who need extra resources. And that's the whole gamut, we're talking about preschoolers to high-schoolers. I think we sometimes think when kids get into high school, they don't need us as much. And sometimes the reverse is true. Sometimes that's when they need mentorship, and having positive adult interaction beyond their parents is so critical to children's success.

**Interview 12:** This interview was with a female judge in her chambers. It lasted approximately thirty minutes, and the researcher received a signed informed consent. She has several years of experience working in adult and youth DUI and drug courts.

*Question One:* How does experience in working with youth in the criminal justice system affect one's opinions on effective methods of substance abuse prevention?

*Response:* Actually seeing individuals who are struggling with substance use and addiction always makes your opinion, it forms your opinion, and so actually working with young people who have addictions helps you understand how different things work for them and how certain things don't work for them.

*Question Two:* Does having children under the age of eighteen, or a close personal friend or family member with a substance abuse problem, affect one's viewpoints?

*Response:* Of course. Every individual experience affects your viewpoint, but I don't think it's a requirement in order to understand substance use or addiction, to have lived with it. In fact, it can really narrow your view because this is your experience as an individual, your experience, and you're not open to what can work for other people, if you actually had to live with that type of thing. I think having children, if the first clause is a stand-alone, having children, I think that helps you to have watched child development first-hand, especially if there's multiples, to see how they do develop differently, helps you in general in working with juveniles, but I don't know that you have to have lived with a person who's addicted.

*Question Three:* What are the most effective strategies that are currently being done to respond to substance use and abuse among today's youth?

*Response:* What is most effective is individual families, modeling, and setting limits and enforcing rules, right? That's where, ultimately, if a kid doesn't pick up a bottle of beer or a marijuana joint, you know, never pick up an illegal drug, and if you wait until much later in life to start drinking, the chances of addiction are so much lower. And so, the most effective thing is in the individual homes for them to parent. But that's not a system thing, that's an individual thing.

*Question Four:* If there were no restrictions in terms of cost and other resources, what would be the ideal criminal justice response to juvenile substance abuse?

*Response:* So, my job right now is I have an addiction court, a DWI court, for adults. But I would use that model, and I did when I was in juvenile, continuous court reviews. Come in, show me what you're doing. When you have someone who's already at a point where they're

actually suffering from an addiction, then you've got to give them a dose of treatment, you've got to continue with aftercare. With juveniles you've got to educate the whole family cause when you send them back to the same place, there's your nightmare. It just starts again, what are they supposed to do? And it happens with adults too; it's easy to be sober in treatment, it's hard to be sober in the area where you used to use. And then continuing sober support, have them come back and see the judge and the probation officer and report how they're doing regarding their sobriety. And the other pieces of their life. So that's what I would do pretty much with everybody if I could, if there were no cost issues.

*Question Five:* Taking the justice system out of the equation, what should society do to help reduce substance abuse among juveniles?

*Response:* This is kind of the negative of that question, but what we should not do is legalize drugs, because legalizing legitimizes, and that to kids means, if they're legal than I can use it, right? That's why with underage drinking and why kids smoke, even though there's an age limit and all the research shows the younger you start, the more likely your body is to become addicted. So, we all know they're starting to legalize marijuana and people are like, 'Oh, it's just not that big of a deal; it's not that bad,' and that's not what medical studies show, but whatever is legal, it's going to creep down into the age even if there's a legal limit. So, I would continue to make it illegal, non-legitimized by society, educate parents about the younger your child starts using, the more likely they are to use throughout their life. Educate kids – but kids are kids, so – they don't listen. And then the other piece is the justice system does have a role in that we need to take kids' substance use more seriously. We need to stop having payable tickets for what we consider minor, first-time offenses because it all builds on themselves. And we know if we – whether we're a parent, or we're a judge, or we're a police officer – don't take something

seriously, if we say it's okay for everybody to smoke marijuana, then kids are going to do it. And then there will be more addiction issues. So, we just need to respond more seriously about substance use and kids.

**Interview 13:** This interview was with a female social worker in her office. It lasted approximately fifteen minutes, and the researcher received a signed informed consent.

*Question One:* How does experience in working with youth in the criminal justice system affect one's opinions on effective methods of substance abuse prevention?

*Response:* I have never had any involvement with youth substance abuse in the criminal justice system. However, they could say that the juvenile may need assistance such as services for planning on what they can do so they don't start or continue abusing substances while they are incarcerated. They may need assistance from social services, may it be monetary or housing, because of homelessness. They may need counseling from a substance abuse professional.

*Question Two:* Does having children under the age of eighteen, or a close personal friend or family member with a substance abuse problem, affect one's viewpoints?

*Response:* Yes. A person's viewpoint of an individual with substance abuse problems will be viewed as being untrustworthy, being less than a "normal" person. Their self-worth could be viewed as substandard (drunkard, crackhead, lowlife, a bum, laziness, etc.) to a person who is not using or abusing drugs and/or alcohol.

*Question Three:* What are the most effective strategies that are currently being done to respond to substance use and abuse among today's youth?

*Response:* Television commercials, billboards, and classes at school that offer substance abuse prevention. There are also special schools for students that abuse substances.

*Question Four:* If there were no restrictions in terms of cost and other resources, what would be the ideal criminal justice response to juvenile substance abuse?

*Response:* Education and an inpatient rehabilitation facility for juveniles to get the assistance whenever they need it with no time restrictions attached; for example, being able to see that they are not failures, and they are not alone in dealing with substance abuse issues. They have peers of the same age that are going through the same things, and they can help each other out by telling their stories and learning from one another's mistakes. Mentors and aftercare are effective for helping juveniles after they are discharged from facilities. Cell phones for juveniles to use to contact a sponsor when they think they are going to use, or just to keep in contact with an individual so they do not have to feel like they are alone, are also helpful.

*Question Five:* Taking the justice system out of the equation, what do you think society should do to help reduce substance abuse among juveniles?

*Response:* Adults should not purchase alcohol for minors or let them drink at parties at their homes just because the parents feel that it's okay if they are not out in public drinking. Hollywood should not make comedies or glamorize alcohol or drug use in movies; especially at college fraternity and sorority parties. We should have less television and billboards advertising alcohol and portraying beautiful women and handsome men drinking alcohol.

**Interview 14:** This interview was with a female probation officer at her office. It lasted approximately twenty minutes, and the researcher received a signed informed consent. She has many years of experience as a probation officer.

*Question One:* How does experience in working with youth in the criminal justice system affect one's opinions on effective methods of substance abuse prevention?

*Response:* During my college days and early career, I did volunteer work with youth. I don't believe working with youth more would have had any effect on my opinion of effective methods of substance abuse prevention.

*Question Two:* Does having children under the age of eighteen, or a close personal friend or family member with a substance abuse problem, affect one's viewpoints?

*Response:* I've never had children and had no close personal friends with a substance abuse problem so I have nothing to compare this question to.

*Question Three:* What are the most effective strategies that are currently being done to respond to substance use and abuse among today's youth?

*Response:* In my opinion, parental oversight, awareness and involvement in the child's life are the most effective strategies.

*Question Four:* If there were no restrictions in terms of cost and other resources, what would be the ideal criminal justice response to juvenile substance abuse?

*Response:* I have always believed "shock treatment" is an effective method with youth. While volunteering with youth at the runaway shelter and other sites, in my early career, I remember them saying that had they known what was ahead of them as a result of their involvement, whether with drugs or crime, they wouldn't have taken that path. By shock treatment, I mean, take the youth to a county jail facility, a detox center, an inpatient drug treatment center, and let them see what being involved with drugs does to someone personally.

*Question Five:* Taking the justice system out of the equation, what do you think society should do to help reduce substance abuse among juveniles?

*Response:* I don't think you can take the justice system out of the equation - the only way to help reduce substance abuse use is to remove the substances, and the only way to do that is to continue to arrest those manufacturing and selling.

**Interview 15:** This interview was with a male police officer in his office. It lasted approximately fifty minutes, and the researcher received a signed informed consent.

*Question One:* How does experience in working with youth in the criminal justice system affect one's opinions on effective methods of substance abuse prevention?

*Response:* So, I think you've got a couple of different things in there. I would say first that working with youth is something that we do a lot. So, we invest quite a bit in our relationships with youth, and I think that our attitude really goes back to prevention overall. Once you get kids to the point they're involved in the criminal justice system, it seems like, for many of them, it kind of ends up being kind of a downward spiral. And so whether we're talking to kids about bullying, whether we're talking to kids about substance abuse, whether we're talking to kids about at-risk behaviors or violence prevention, I think that it's important to make sure you're having that open dialog, and make sure that when you have kids that are manifesting at-risk behaviors that you're trying to intervene. As an example, in our police department, we have about twenty-five people that are signed up for a school-based Big Brothers, Big Sisters program. We're trying to identify kids in like 4<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> grade that really are kind of going down that path where they're not making very good decisions, or they don't have that good, strong, stable role model in their lives, and we're trying to partner our staff with some of these kids who have been identified by the school district as needing that one good, steady coach and mentor. So, I think that the reason I'm such a strong advocate for mentoring, the reason that I'm such a strong advocate for early intervention is, certainly we've seen a lot of kids that get involved at an early age with marijuana or drinking and that can transition to prescription pill abuse, which then kind of ends up being, it seems, a pathway to heroin. And so the more that we're interacting with kids, the more that we're trying to

exchange information, the more that we're identifying those kids that would be at-risk and/or that are starting to experiment, and we can get to them prior to them becoming addicted to some sort of a substance, I think certainly works much better than kids that are either psychologically or physically or physiologically addicted to a drug, and then trying to get them to change their peer group and change their behaviors and have to deal with those addiction issues.

*Question Two:* Does having children under the age of eighteen, or a close personal friend or family member with a substance abuse problem, affect one's viewpoints?

*Response:* Yeah, I think that it absolutely does. I think that whether you're talking about mental health, and you know a kid under the age of eighteen that's got some issues with mental health, or whether you're talking about a substance abuse issue, or whether you're talking about almost any particular issue, certainly knowing people, whether it's your own children or friend's children, or people close to you, I think that that personalizes it, and it gives you perspective you might not have had otherwise, and it shows you that substance abuse happens frequently and it isn't just something that happens in another city, it's something that happens in your city, something that happens probably with kids that you know, and I think it gives you a better perspective and makes it somehow more personal. It kind of demonstrates that it can happen to anybody. I think without that, you end up with some of these false perceptions about, who are these kids that would get addicted to some sort of substance. Someone think they're a bad kid, or their parents were somehow deficient in their parenting style, or they hadn't been accountable enough at a young age, or substitute that bias that people so often seem to have. And that's really what it is, it's just an uninformed bias, and when you have that more up-close and personal experience, I think it shows you that it can happen to anybody; it does happen to every social demographic level in society. It's not necessarily a reflection of anything to do with parenting. It can be a factor or not, it just isn't necessarily tied to that.

*Question Three:* What are the most effective strategies that are currently being done to respond to substance use and abuse among today's youth?



*Response:* Again, I'm going to continue to probably talk about the same two things. I think you've got prevention and early intervention. Prevention, obviously, is working with kids, talking to them about the dangers of it, and not just talking to them about trying to do the scared straight thing, but really just giving them information on what drugs can do. So, whether it's, well 15-20 years ago, it was methamphetamine, whether it's – today heroin has seen a resurgence, and now unfortunately in the last year, methamphetamine again – really talking about, what are the effects that a person would find on their body, what are the effects psychologically, and really how does it just destroy people's lives. Because you see the pictures of people, but what you don't see necessarily in a ten or twenty second commercial is, you know the people whose lives and futures are ruined because they've stolen from people to support a habit, or they've gotten involved in all of these different behaviors. And then like I've kind of referenced with the Big Brothers, Big Sisters program, or after school basketball program, or we've got these other programs where we're really trying to find those kids that could really benefit from that mentoring and that early intervention. So, I think that a lot of teachers and school staff would tell you that by the time the kids are in 3<sup>rd</sup>, 4<sup>th</sup>, 5<sup>th</sup> grade, they're starting to see some behaviors from some kids that are giving rise to concerns that they could be at risk for kind of going down a path that would be counter-productive to them and they're own development. So, making sure that, not just the police or the criminal justice system, but that we're coming together with our partners in the schools and social services and non-profits, to make sure that we're focusing on those kids that seem to need that extra attention and to make sure that they're getting the tools they need to be successful.

*Question Four:* If there were no restrictions in terms of cost and other resources, what would be the ideal criminal justice response to juvenile substance abuse?

*Response:* Well, I'll preface that by saying that I don't love the question, and the question really seems to imply that there would be an ideal criminal justice response. And I would rather that a kid were diverted from the criminal justice system before they're into it. Certainly they've got drug courts, they've got a number of programs that seem to be focused on treating juvenile substance abuse

as a medical condition, and I think that's probably more helpful to a kid than treating it like a crime and then, if you look at Labeling Theory or something like that where you're calling them a criminal and putting them in contact with people that are maybe violent offenders and some other things where really, their issue might just be more closely tied to substance abuse. So, my first answer would be that I would rather keep those kids out of the criminal justice system anyway. Secondly, I'll just fall back to my fall-back position which is early intervention. Third, I would say that if you have a kid that's now in the criminal justice system because of a substance abuse issue, that they seek a program that kind of looks at the entire being of that kid, or the wellness that that child manifests and looks at what is behind the substance abuse issue. What are the contributing factors? Is there an underlying mental issue that the kid's trying to self-medicate? Is there an abuse issue? What's driving the behavior here? So that we don't just look at this as a kid that abuses drugs, but we look at this as a kid that needs help, and then how can we come around this kid that helps this kid to move forward, treating not just the addiction piece of it, but the behaviors that seem to drive the want of that substance in the first place.

*Question Five:* Taking the justice system out of the equation, what do you think society should do to help reduce substance abuse among juveniles?

*Response:* Well, I think that when we invest in programs that have shown that they can get youth involved in positive activities, when we invest in helping kids to – whether it's basketball leagues, whether it's the different types of things that youth can be involved in that are positive, I think that those things are helpful. Again, when we talk about what the criminal justice system's response would be, I guess I would say that my experience has been that prevention – a couple dollars spend on prevention – are far superior to hundreds of thousands of dollars spent on criminal justice solutions or treatment, so I think that as a society, one of the things that I would advocate for, and one of the things that I think we strongly push in our community policing, is stakeholders do it together. Whether we're working with a faith-based community, whether we're working with a non-profit that serves youth, whether we're talking about county social services that might have a role in this, whether we're talking

about the schools, or just people coming together to make sure that there's not a redundancy, but people are working together to try to help these kids in a more proactive and child-focused way, I think that we'll continue to have better outcomes for them.

**Interview 16:** This interview was with a male police officer at his office. It lasted approximately ten minutes, and the researcher received a signed informed consent.

*Question One:* How does experience in working with youth in the criminal justice system affect one's opinions on effective methods of substance abuse prevention?

*Response:* I can only say that when juveniles get caught up in the wrong crowd, it's pretty difficult to get them back on track. I saw many juveniles throughout my career and the socio-economic background really didn't make much difference. The ones that went down the drug route really didn't care what anyone thought, and seemed to be self-centered about themselves and when they were going to get their next connection. I really didn't see that the criminal justice system "helped" them at all. Not sure what the recidivism rate was, but you would see the same kids over and over. Eventually dealing with them as adults. When you are caught up in that "world," only the person themselves can make the decision to get on course and right the ship, so to speak.

*Question Two:* Does having children under the age of eighteen, or a close personal friend or family member with a substance abuse problem, affect one's viewpoints?

*Response:* I don't think so. The kids still need to be pushed in the right direction. You can only offer advice so long and only they can help themselves. It's a slippery slope to get caught up in trying to help them. I have seen that "hard love" can somewhat make a difference, but again only they can make the decision to help themselves. I guess what I'm saying is the kids have to make the decision to choose the correct path. All the talking in the world won't fix that.

*Question Three:* What are the most effective strategies that are currently being done to respond to substance use and abuse among today's youth?

*Response:* Not real sure on this one. Didn't really see any "effective" strategies used. Once on the track to destruction, the kids usually needed a life changing incident to get squared away.

*Question Four:* If there were no restrictions in terms of cost and other resources, what would be the ideal criminal justice response to juvenile substance abuse?

*Response:* Money or cost doesn't matter. There are no programs that really deal with this issue. Again, the kid needs to want to "fix" their life. Nothing or no one can do that for them.

*Question Five:* Taking the justice system out of the equation, what do you think society should do to help reduce substance abuse among juveniles?

*Response:*

I believe it's a parenting issue. Kids turn to drugs for various reasons. I don't really believe that society can change that. I'm not a believer in it takes a village to raise a child. It's not the community's responsibility.

**Interview 17:** This interview was with a male youth counselor at his office. It lasted approximately ten minutes, and the researcher received a signed informed consent from him.

*Question One:* How does experience in working with youth in the criminal justice system affect one's opinions on effective methods of substance abuse prevention?

*Response:* Often youth tend to enter treatment centers, and fall right back into using when they return home.

*Question Two:* Does having children under the age of eighteen, or a close personal friend or family member with a substance abuse problem, affect one's viewpoints?

*Response:* Yes. When the problems hit close to home, one's opinions are tainted.

*Question Three:* What are the most effective strategies that are currently being done to respond to substance use and abuse among today's youth?

*Response:* Involvement, whether from a counselor in school, a treatment center, or a court services center.

*Question Four:* If there were no restrictions in terms of cost and other resources, what would be the ideal criminal justice response to juvenile substance abuse?

*Response:* Work on fixing the families' issues.

*Question Five:* Taking the justice system out of the equation, what do you think society should do to help reduce substance abuse among juveniles?

*Response:* Legalize marijuana, and pass laws like Wisconsin has where juveniles can be brought into bars with their parents and taught about drinking within limits.

**Interview 18:** This interview was with a youth and family social worker at his office. It lasted approximately fifteen minutes, and the researcher received a signed informed consent from him. He has many years of experience working with families in the child protection system.

*Question One:* How does experience in working with youth in the criminal justice system affect one's opinions on effective methods of substance abuse prevention?

*Response:* I think that it works to a certain extent. They can get more extensive therapy and support. But once you're out on the street and unless it's part of your release plan and a consequence that goes with non-compliance it will fail, but you must also look at the individual.

*Question Two:* Does having children under the age of eighteen, or a close personal friend or family member with a substance abuse problem, affect one's viewpoints?

*Response:* Yes. You will see what works or fails first hand.

*Question Three:* What are the most effective strategies that are currently being done to respond to substance use and abuse among today's youth?

*Response:* They are being more aggressive about early intervention and prevention programs. Trying to get to kids early on and trying to detect if there is a need for intervention.

*Question Four:* If there were no restrictions in terms of cost and other resources, what would be the ideal criminal justice response to juvenile substance abuse?

*Response:* Intensive day treatment, life skills classes, and anything that can help them cope.

*Question Five:* Taking the justice system out of the equation, what do you think society should do to help reduce substance abuse among juveniles?

*Response:* Talk to your children and lead them by example. Education starts at home. Communicate with your children as soon as they have that understanding.

## **Chapter V: Recommendations & Implications**

### **Study Summary**

The first interview was with a female Hennepin County Court judge. She has friends and family members who have suffered with substance abuse. She believes that when you are close to someone with substance abuse issues, you're more empathetic to others' problems. She feels the most effective strategies currently being used are education and peer support. She believes the substance abuse programs currently available are not effective, in that they are short-term and do not get to the core of the problem. She stated that there should be longer-term programs to ensure long-term success, and people should be monitored for up to a year. She also believes that parents should be more involved in the education process and hold their children accountable for their behaviors and be good role models for them. She said we need to look outside our own families and look at the community as a whole.

The second interview was with a social worker who has friends and family members who have abused substances. He feels that being close to people with these problems adds to the experience factor. He relies on experience, education and common sense when working with children. He feels that the "just say no" era was hard to do, because kids are easily influenced, and marijuana and cigarettes are gateway drugs. He believes that the media plays a major role in the influence of youth's views on substance abuse. He feels that positive child-rearing and home life are most significant in the prevention of substance abuse.

The third interview performed was with a male Minneapolis Police Officer. He knows of family and friends with chemical dependency problems. He said that some kids use drugs and alcohol to be cool in front of their peers and don't care whether they get arrested; that just gives them more to brag about (how bad they are). This is the only way that some kids can feel

like they fit in. He has seen these problems up close and personal, and says they can affect any age, class, neighborhood, educational background or occupation. He feels that the most effective prevention strategies are education through schools and counseling by various health care professionals. An interesting perspective he has is that if there weren't all of the laws against youth drinking alcohol as in other countries, the United States may not have the problems to the extent that we do. There are youth that like the thrill of breaking laws.

The fourth interview conducted was with an Assistant Hennepin County Attorney who feels that the more experience people have, the better equipped they are to make the right decisions that will help families. He thinks programs like MADD and SADD are the most effective strategies currently being used. He believes that youth substance abuse is not a criminal issue in itself. He believes that preventative programs are effective, and that society should reduce taboo and increase realistic prevention programs.

The fifth interview conducted was with a youth counselor who feels that the more experience you have, the more you can see what people's needs are. She has children and friends and family members with substance abuse histories, and she feels this has changed her views. She said there are no good current effective strategies being done; that kids experiment with drugs not knowing what they can do, and people try to find ways to deal with it. She believes that a hard-core program is necessary to address substance abuse problems in youth and that people are too passive-aggressive. She also feels that prevention starts within the home; that family influence is very important because children see, repeat and do.

The sixth interview is with a juvenile probation officer who has friends and family members with substance use problems. She said parents of young children are concerned about their futures, and being close to someone with alcohol or drug problems makes you aware of



the other issues that arise from that. Her experience has helped her realize that kids need to take responsibility for their own actions and not place blame on others. They will learn to better themselves; especially the children without good role models in their lives. She feels the most effective strategies currently being done are education and prevention programs that address the youths' specific needs. She believes that youth should be held accountable immediately for any offenses and they should be taught the repercussions of their actions. She feels communities should band together and not tolerate drug dealers in their neighborhoods.

The seventh interview was with a male prosecutor who has friends and family members who have abused substances. He feels that the more experience gained, the more knowledgeable you become about prevention. He believes having young kids affects your viewpoints on the topic. He said the most effective current strategies are the involvement and concern of parents, and early education and prevention prior to use. He feels there needs to be quick and meaningful treatment and aftercare when there is a problem. If there is no concerned parent, an appropriate family member or mentor should be found. Also, any mental health issues need to be addressed. He said education and prevention programs in schools and communities are important, and that kids need to have a purpose which can be obtained through school and/or employment.

The eighth interview was with a female juvenile prosecutor who has known friends and family members with substance abuse problems. Her experience has allowed her to see different strategies that work and don't work, and she says it's different for each individual. Having kids has helped her to better understand how families are affected by the issues of their loved ones. She feels the most effective strategies currently are inpatient treatment and family therapy, but these are limited due to a lack of resources. Many youths are not getting the help

they need until they are very ill. She feels that more long-term inpatient and aftercare programs are needed, and a family component that encompasses the whole family and its dynamics. Kids need to have support systems in place. She stated that society should not normalize the use of drugs and alcohol. Some advertisements make it look sexy to use alcohol and this makes kids curious. We should educate more on the dangers of alcohol and drugs and show kids how there can be fun without using substances.

The ninth interview was with a youth/family counselor who has had friends and family members with substance abuse issues. She said that working with youth in the criminal justice system can create a jaded approach to substance abuse, because you only see the consequences and not what came before that. She said the criminal justice system makes prevention look unrealistic. She feels that having children has changed her thoughts and approaches considerably because it's made her understand the complications first-hand. She said the most effective current strategies being used are the harm reduction approach and evidence-based practices in schools and communities. A good set of curricula and a non-judgmental approach are key. Finding funds and people to run programs is a huge challenge. She believes that all of children's issues need to be dealt with and not separated – substance use, criminal behavior and family issues. Early education and intervention should be made a part of all educational standards, and we need teachers in schools who are supportive and have broader training.

The tenth interview was with a female juvenile probation officer who has friends and family members who have abused substances. She stated that her opinions of what works are mostly based on what research has shown, which she learned in college. But she suspects that many in this field base their opinions on programs they have worked with. She knows what full-blown addiction looks like and therefore feels empathetic. Problems are not always caused

by kids behaving badly; it can be issues of addiction. She believes that the current effective strategies include services which integrate families and communities into treatment and provide plans that address all issues. She feels it is important for parents to be involved to understand the process of addiction. Communities should be safe and welcoming so the kids feel valued and empowered to be a part of positive things. They need accessible resources; especially for kids without support or structure at home.

The eleventh interview was with a female judge with friends and family members who she's known have abused substances. Her experience has shown her that kids' issues need to be dealt with while they are young. She said the best methods are positive investment in other ways; they need positive outlets for their energy. Parents need to get educated on substance abuse and talk to kids who probably know more than they think they do. She believes with no doubt that having children affects your viewpoints. She has had personal experiences that help her through her work with youth. These experiences have made her empathetic rather than sympathetic. She believes the most effective current strategies are getting kids chemical health assessments and starting treatment as soon as possible. She feels that the teacher/student ratio needs to change so kids get more attention and their needs are better addressed. They need to be engaged and helped to find their potential, passions, interests, and get involved in positive activities like 4-H Club and Girl/Boy Scouts. Self-esteem building and the opportunity to grow are important for children. She thinks there needs to be more funding invested in mentoring programs. An idea she had is to connect retirees with kids who need resources; this would fulfill both needs by giving retirees a purpose and kids some needed attention. Positive adult interactions beyond their parent is critical to children's success.

The twelfth interview was with a female judge who has friends and family members with substance use problems. Her experience of actually seeing individuals struggle with substance use and addictions has formed her opinions. Working with kids who have addiction issues helps her understand what works and doesn't work for them. She said of course having children affects your viewpoints but it's not a requirement to understand substance use or addiction. Views can even be narrowed because your experiences might cause you not to be open to what can work for other people. It helps to have watched child development first hand to see how they develop differently. She feels the effective strategies used currently are family modeling, setting limits and enforcing rules. The chances of addiction are much lower when a child never picks up a drink, joint, or other drugs. She believes that once in the system, continuous court reviews, aftercare, education, and family/sober support are important. She thinks society should not legalize drugs. The younger you start, the more likely your body is to become addicted. Parents need to be educated because kids don't listen. We need to respond more seriously about substance use and kids.

The thirteenth interview was with a female social worker who has friends and family members who have abused substances. Her experience has shown her that juveniles need services for planning on what they can do so they don't start or continue abusing substances. Some may need social services for money, housing, or counseling from professionals. She feels that having children does affect a person's viewpoint of someone with substance abuse problems. They may view them as untrustworthy or lesser than a 'normal' person; substandard to a person not using drugs or alcohol. She feels the effective strategies are television commercials, billboards and school classes that portray and offer substance abuse prevention efforts. She believes the most important efforts are education, impatient treatment with no time

restrictions, peer support, mentors, sponsors and aftercare. She also feels that parents shouldn't allow their children to drink, and the media shouldn't glamorize or joke about alcohol or drugs, especially the movies about college fraternities and sorority parties.

The fourteenth interview was with a female probation officer who does not have any friends or family members with substance abuse issues. She doesn't know whether her views would be affected if she had children, or family or friends with substance issues because she has nothing to compare it to. She believes the most effective strategies are parental oversight, awareness and involvement in their children's lives. She believes that shock treatment is an effective deterrent; that is, taking kids to a county jail facility, detoxification center or drug treatment center so they can see what being involved with drugs does to someone first hand. She suggests that the criminal justice system cannot be taken out of the equation. The only way to remove substances is to continue arresting those manufacturing and selling drugs.

The fifteenth interview was with a male police officer in his office. He has known people personally with substance use problems. He feels that having kids personalizes your views and gives you a different perspective; showing that it's a common problem. It happens to every social demographic of society and isn't always a reflection of parenting. He has worked with youth a lot and invested a lot in their relationships. He believes that prevention is most important, because once they're in the system, it can take a downward spiral. He feels it's important to talk and intervene as soon as high-risk behaviors are seen. This can start as early as the third grade for some kids. He is a strong advocate for mentoring and early intervention. He feels the most effective strategies being used are prevention and early intervention. This gives kids information on what drugs can do – the effects on the body and how they destroy

people's lives. He also suggests it's important to invest in programs that have shown that they can get youth involved in positive activities such as sports and other activities.

The sixteenth interview was with a male police officer who has had friends and family members with substance issues. His experience has taught him that kids are influenced by their peers. When they get caught up in the wrong crowd, it's hard to get them back on track. Their socio-economic background doesn't make much of a difference. The kids that chose drugs didn't care what anyone thought; they're self-centered and just looking for their next connection. He feels the criminal justice system doesn't help them; they see the same kids over and over, and then deal with them as adults. He stated that only the person himself can make the decision to get back on course. He doesn't think having kid affects his viewpoints. They just need to be pushed in the right direction and you can only offer advice for so long, but only they can help themselves. He has seen that hard love can make a difference but they have to make the decision to choose the correct path. He's not sure what effective strategies are currently being used and hasn't really seen any that work well. He said kids usually need to go through a life-changing incident to get squared away. He doesn't feel there are any real effective programs to help them. He thinks kids turn to drugs for various reasons and doesn't believe society can change that. He's not a believer in 'it takes a village to raise a child.' It's not communities' responsibility; it's a parenting issue.

The seventeenth interview was with a male youth counselor who does personally have friends and family members with substance abuse problems. He said that often youth enter treatment and fall right back into using when they return. Although he has no children, he does feel that it affects one's viewpoints. When problems hit close to home, one's opinions are tainted. He feels the effective current strategy is involvement, whether from counselors at

school, treatment centers or court services. He feels that family issues need to be looked at and worked on. He believes that marijuana should be legalized, and that other states should have a law like Wisconsin's that allows juveniles to drink responsibly in bars with their parents; that this would teach them about drinking within limits.

The eighteenth interview was with a youth and family social worker. His experience working with youth has shown him that kids need more extensive therapy, support, and consequences for non-compliance. He feels that having kids does affect your viewpoints. He feels the most effective strategies currently being used are more aggressive early intervention and prevention programs. He tries to catch problems early on to detect whether there is a need for intervention. He believes in administering intensive treatment and teaching life skills and coping mechanisms to kids. He feels that parents need to talk to their children and lead by example. Education starts at home and parents should communicate with children as soon as they have the understanding.

### **Proposed Recommendations**

The research and findings of this study have many similarities. People have different perspectives on the most effective preventative strategies for youth substance abuse. Most interviewees hold views similar to Bruzzese et al. (2009), that youth whose behaviors are not monitored by their parents use substances more than those who are monitored, and discipline and family support are the most important prevention strategies.

As Fulkerson et al. (2008) reported, parents should monitor their children's activities, friends, whereabouts, television viewing and music listening. This view is held consistently among seventeen practitioners, ten of which have the most experience of the interviewees in working with juveniles. Ten of those seventeen have children under eighteen years of age.

Only one practitioner, a police officer, mentioned public health agencies during the interview. He feels that the most effective prevention strategies today are educational programs and counseling through various health care professionals. McBride et al. (2008) found that prevention is a fundamental task of public health agencies, and that most American youths live where agencies provide effective resources for drug abuse prevention. They also found that these agencies can provide a base to build prevention programs and drug policy reform (McBride et al., 2008).

Most subject practitioners believe that youth educational preventative programs are vital in the prevention of substance abuse, as Hopson and Holleran Steiker (2010) also found in their study. Some of the interviewees agreed with Bosma et al. (2005), that community organizing methods and processes are effective in preventing substance use among youth.

### **Social & Policy Implications**

Overall, the eighteen practitioners interviewed felt that family and preventative education programs are the most effective in reducing youth substance abuse. It was also commonly believed that youth are highly influenced by their peers and the media. Most importantly, however, prevention efforts begin in the home, and parents should take an active effort in preventing and combating the problem. Communication is also important. It is helpful to confront the subject and not allow it to remain a taboo topic.

School programs seem to be effective because they are a good way to reach many youths at one time. It is important for youth to have peers who are helping them stay sober and choose healthy activities in which to participate. Kids need to be held accountable for their actions and deterred from repeating mistakes.



**Closing Remarks**

The results of this study are difficult to compile. The criminal justice practitioners interviewed had some difficulty in answering questions about what the most effective prevention strategies are in youth substance abuse prevention. They also had multiple views on the topic. Sometimes the interview questions may not have been completely understood. However, most did agree that family support and accountability play major roles in shaping youths' beliefs and behaviors. Most also felt that a more aggressive approach to dealing with these issues would be beneficial.

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## **Appendix A: Informed Consent Letter**

You are invited to participate in a research study of the factors associated with substance abuse prevention strategies in American youth. Please read this form and ask any questions you may have before agreeing to participate in this study.

This study is being conducted by Patricia Walton, a graduate student of St. Cloud State University. The faculty advisor for this project is Dr. Douglas Lee Gilbertson.

### **Purpose of Study:**

I am conducting a study of the factors associated with substance abuse prevention strategies in American youth. You have been selected as a possible participant because you have worked with juveniles with substance abuse issues. I hope to determine the most effective strategies to prevent youth substance abuse.

### **Procedures:**

If you agree to be in this study, I will ask you to do the following things: I would like to meet with you one-on-one. The interview will be tape-recorded and will take approximately 15 to 30 minutes to complete. Our interview will be transcribed and appear in full text within my completed research paper. The information you provide will be used in the research paper to compare the responses of other professionals and their views on the topic.

### **Voluntary Nature of the Study:**

Participation in this study is voluntary. Your decision whether or not to participate will not affect your current or future relationship with St. Cloud State University. If you decide to participate, you are free to not answer any question and/or withdraw at any time without harming any relationships with me or St. Cloud State University.

**Confidentiality:**

All records of this study will be kept private. I will not include any information that will make it possible to identify you in any paper or presentation I make based on this research. Research records will be stored securely and only Dr. Lee Gilbertson and the records custodian will have access to the records.

**Contacts and Questions:**

You may ask any questions you have now. If you have questions later, you are encouraged to contact me at wapa1001@stcloudstate.edu or my faculty advisor at [dlgilbertson@stcloudstate.edu](mailto:dlgilbertson@stcloudstate.edu). If you have questions or concerns regarding this study and would like to talk to someone other than the researcher, you are encouraged to contact Dr. Gilbertson.

*You will be given a copy of this information to keep for your records.*

**Statement of Consent:**

By signing this agreement, you indicate that you have read the above information and/or have had it explained to you. You have been given the opportunity to ask questions and have had them answered to your satisfaction. You agree to participate in the described research.

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Signature of Investigator: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

### **Appendix B: Interview Questions**

1. How does experience in working with youth in the criminal justice system affect one's opinions on effective methods of substance abuse prevention?
2. Does having children under the age of eighteen, or a close personal friend or family member with a substance abuse problem, affect one's viewpoints?
3. What are the most effective strategies that are currently being done to respond to substance use and abuse among today's youth?
4. If there were no restrictions in terms of cost and other resources, what would be the ideal criminal justice response to juvenile substance abuse?
5. Taking the justice system out of the equation, what do you think society should do to help reduce substance abuse among juveniles?