



## Churches & Substance Abuse

Imagine a young person, a good kid who has caring parents, sitting in church on Sunday morning. Last night, he was out with his friends, and the group started passing around marijuana. For a year he has turned it down, but last night he tried it for the first time. Sitting now in the worship service, he is afraid of his family finding out and even more afraid of what he might do the next time. His concern is real, and he is a member of your church.

On the other side of the sanctuary, a business executive is worried that his social drinking is getting out of hand. Last night, he got lost on the way home and was afraid that he would be arrested and charged with a DUI. He is afraid of what could have happened and what might happen the next time. His concern is real, and he is a member of your church.

In the same congregation, other concerns simmer below the surface. The youth minister is worried that a high school athlete in the youth group is using steroids. A wife struggles with prescription drug abuse. A dad prays for a son who is addicted to crack cocaine.

The reality of addiction in the United States is that on any given Sunday morning, there are significant numbers of people in church who are dealing with substance abuse issues, either their own or a family member's. In a recent survey, an estimated 15.9 million Americans twelve years or older are identified as current drug users. In addition, almost half of all Americans twelve years of age or older (109 million persons) are current drinkers. Behind every statistic is a person who is loved by God and who may be looking for answers.

What can a church do? Most importantly, don't pretend that substance abuse is not a real issue in your congregation. Move from denial to action. Create an atmosphere of loving acceptance which invites people in need to share their concerns and to seek help.

Consider sponsoring support groups for recovering persons and their families, offering a drug abuse prevention curriculum for young people and their parents, and/or supporting statewide drug abuse drug prevention emphases like Red Ribbon Week. Every congregation can do something to help, so above all else, **do something**.

For more information, referral, or additional help please contact:

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