

# FAMILY CONNECTIONS

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## ADOLESCENT TREATMENT IMPROVING IN ILLINOIS

The Illinois Federation of Families (IFF) in collaboration with the Division of Alcoholism and Substance Abuse (DASA) is committed to improving Illinois' adolescent treatment system. IFF'S role in the IL-SAC initiative is to help provide alcohol and other drug information to families, ensure family voice is considered in policy level decision-making, improve family participation with local agencies and on statewide committees and workgroups, and help families establish Family Advocacy Groups in their communities.

To date, IFF and DASA, with assistance from the Division of Mental Health (DMH), hosted Listening Sessions across Illinois - meetings where parents gathered together to share ideas about what has worked for their family, what hasn't worked, and what changes they would recommend for adolescent substance abuse treatment. IFF has also promoted the participation of family members at the IL-SAC Youth Subcommittee meetings, as well as their attendance at substance-abuse conferences.



### Quote of the Month

Even though your kids will consistently do the exact opposite of what you are telling them to do, you have to keep loving them just as much.

-Bill Cosby

## WHAT ILLINOIS PARENTS ARE SAYING!

During Listening Sessions held at various locations across Illinois, through a collaboration between the Illinois Federation of Families, the Division of Alcoholism and Substance Abuse, and the Division of Mental

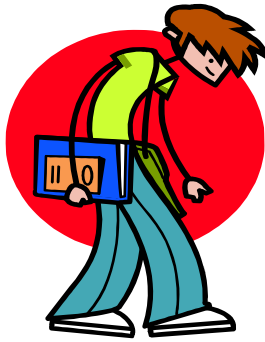
Health, parents were open and candid about their feelings when it came to their families' experiences with substance abuse treatment. They shared what they feel is crucial to the success of recovery and sobriety

for their children, as well as obstacles that hinder positive outcomes for their families.

A summary of the findings shows that the majority of youth are connected to sub-

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## WHAT FAMILIES ARE SAYING....CONTINUED

stance abuse and/or mental health services through the courts, while the second most common way youth find their way into treatment is through self-referral (usually through parents) or through recommendation of their school.

Families strongly feel that more information should be made available to them about how to access services, and what help is available to actually get their child into treatment. Schools were identified as a natural place to turn for advice and resource information but many families stated their school could have been much more helpful than they proved to be. While some families reported they felt support and understanding from their child's school, others stated their schools were less well-versed or knowledgeable about substance use/abuse and unaware of resources available in the community, and the behaviors their child exhibited were treated in punitive ways without addressing their child's needs.

Waiting lists, insurance limitations, and high costs were cited as obstacles that either delay

treatment, or keep families from getting the treatment so badly needed for their child. Families shared and discussed the emotional and financial strains the entire family is put under when their child is dealing with substance abuse or a co-occurring disorder. Many children must leave treatment before they are ready- and most parents reported aftercare and community resources for their child are limited, or non-existent. The cost of treatment and the lack of insurers that adequately cover many of these costs was reported by families as "outrageous", "horrific", and "insulting". In addition, not every agency offers sliding fee scales, and not everyone qualifies for free services (Medicaid or no insurance.) Those who have insurance that does not adequately cover substance abuse and/or mental health treatment feel they are caught in the middle, and their children aren't able to get the treatment they need.

Stigma played a factor in several ways: kids refusing substance abuse counseling because it is located at a mental health facility,

families embarrassed to ask for help because of what others will think, judgmental attitudes from school and agency staff toward parents when their child is using or experiencing a co-occurring disorder, and insurance coverage treating substance abuse and mental health issues as "less important" or "less deserving" of treatment than a physical illness.

Reported as key to positive outcomes was extended treatment (both in-patient and out-patient was referred to), graduated step-down treatment programs (especially after a residential stay), family involvement, and community resources for family support and aftercare. Frequently stated as being most instrumental in the success of treatment was the connections their child made with their counselor and/or agency staff.

"We need a list of resources within the school system and school staff skilled enough to provide that information."

-A Parent

### You need to know:

Marijuana is also known as: blunt, dope, ganja, grass, herb, joints, Mary Jane, pot, reefer, sinsemilla, skunk, weed.

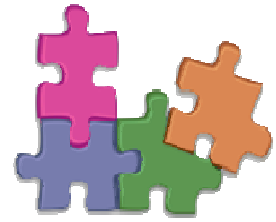
## PARENTS SPEAKING OUT AFFECTS CHANGE

Are you wondering if your voice makes a difference? It does make a difference! Your feedback at listening sessions and through the Illinois Treatment Works website goes directly to the people in the position to make change. For example, parents expressed concern the schools did not have information about substance abuse services.

Parents also felt they did not have information. As a result, three handbooks are being written for parents, schools and providers. If you have thoughts about what should be included in the handbooks go to Illinois Treatment Works website (see below) and **express your opinion through the Family Survey.**

Another change is new training sessions for providers encouraging them to include parents in the treatment process.

Get involved through listening sessions, express your opinions through Illinois Treatment Works, or contact IFF through [sfrankIFF@yahoo.com](mailto:sfrankIFF@yahoo.com). **Your opinion matters!**



## WEBSITES OF INTEREST

- [www.illinoistreatmentworks.org](http://www.illinoistreatmentworks.org)—provides parents and families, providers and state partners with information regarding Illinois' progress towards infrastructure change for adolescent substance abuse treatment. Also a place to express your opinion through the anonymous Family Survey!
- [www.freevibe.org](http://www.freevibe.org)—provides teens with information, fact sheets, games and posters with information on early intervention
- [www.checkyourself.org](http://www.checkyourself.org)— provides information and quizzes regarding drug use by your self or people you care about
- [www.drugfreeamerica.org/Parents\\_Caregivers](http://www.drugfreeamerica.org/Parents_Caregivers)— offers tips and information for parents and caregivers

RESEARCH  
SHOWS THAT 40  
PERCENT OF  
TEENS TRY  
MARIJUANA  
BEFORE THEY  
GRADUATE FROM  
HIGH SCHOOL.  
-NIDA

## UPCOMING CONFERENCES AND WORKSHOPS

June 3&4 2008 Transformation Conference, Springfield, IL (more information at [www.prevention.org](http://www.prevention.org))

Scholarships for parents to attend conferences are available through IFF. Call (847) 265-0500 for more information.



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EXPRESS YOUR OPINION  
[WWW.ILLINOISTREATMENTWORKS.ORG](http://WWW.ILLINOISTREATMENTWORKS.ORG)  
TAKE THE FAMILY SURVEY!

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SUPPORTING FAMILIES ACROSS  
ILLINOIS

The Illinois Federation of Families is an advocacy organization that helps families and children with mental health needs seek a better quality of life.

