

# STONINGTON PUBLIC SCHOOLS

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BOARD OF EDUCATION Gail MacDonald, Chairperson; Douglas Rea, Secretary



Leanne Masterjoseph, *Superintendent*

January 5, 2010

Dear Stonington Parents & Guardians,


While a new year brings cause for celebration and renewal, it also provides the chance to take stock of our current reality and to ask, "How can we do more to support Stonington's children?" If you've read the papers recently, you know that our school and local community has been reminded of the reality of student drug use and the relative ease of availability within our towns.

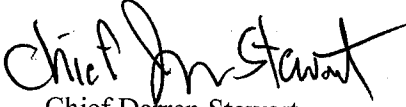
While cooperation between Stonington Public Schools and the Stonington Police Department ultimately resulted in the removal of a significant source of distribution in our community, we believe students are equally well-served by proactive steps taken to prevent use and by quick, decisive intervention when use is suspected.

In 2009, Stonington Human Services, in partnership with the Stonington Prevention Council, facilitated a survey of Stonington youth in grades 7-10. The survey was approved for administration by the Stonington Board of Education and looked at lifetime use rates for a host of substances including alcohol, tobacco and other drugs. While the results have yet to be officially released, we are told that Stonington's youth reported a higher incidence of alcohol and marijuana use than both their peers in the Southeastern CT region and in the nation. This is clearly cause for concern.

What can be done? Stonington Public Schools will continue to stress healthy habits through our science and health curricula and through programs aimed at helping young people make good choices at all levels. Stonington's Police Department will continue its commitment to enforcement of local, State and Federal laws. Both our organizations will remain committed to the health and well-being of our youth. We will also re-commit our organizations' support of the Stonington Prevention Council and will invite members within our community to lend their support as well.

On the back of this letter, you will find a list of signs and symptoms related to the use of alcohol and drugs by teens from the Academy of Child & Adolescent Psychiatry. If you suspect your child needs help, reach out to your pediatrician, school counselor or social worker, the youth officer, faith-based leaders, or to either of us directly. In addition, the Human Services Department, 535-5015, provides free counseling to all residents, as well as programming and resources for youth and parents. There is help available. Together we can make a difference in our children's lives.

  
Mrs. Leanne Masterjoseph  
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Chief Darren Stewart  
Stonington Police Department  
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**Signs of Drug & Alcohol Use in Teens**  
**from The Academy of Child & Adolescent Psychiatry**

**Physical:** Fatigue, repeated health complaints, red and glazed eyes, and a lasting cough.

**Emotional:** personality change, sudden mood changes, irritability, irresponsible behavior, low self-esteem, poor judgment, depression, and a general lack of interest.

**Family:** starting arguments, breaking rules, or withdrawing from the family.

**School:** decreased interest, negative attitude, drop in grades, many absences, truancy, and discipline problems.

**Social problems:** new friends who are less interested in standard home and school activities, problems with the law, and changes to less conventional styles in dress and music.

Some of the warning signs listed above can also be signs of other problems. Parents may recognize signs of trouble and possible abuse of alcohol and other drugs with their teenager. If you have concerns you may want to consult a physician to rule out physical causes of the warning signs.

Additional Resources Available:

[www.TheAntiDrug.com](http://www.TheAntiDrug.com)

[www.ctclearinghouse.org](http://www.ctclearinghouse.org)

[www.211infoline.org](http://www.211infoline.org)

[www.drugabuse.gov](http://www.drugabuse.gov)