

AGAWAM PUBLIC SCHOOLS

PARENTAL GUIDELINES REGARDING SUBSTANCE ABUSE

Dear Parents/Guardians:

Drug use probably won't start at home, but it will end up there sooner than later. It is NOT illegal for parents to check their child's room or vehicle. Children do not have a right to privacy when living under their parent's roof. Children are not tenants, and their parents are not their landlords. Parents have a legal and moral obligation to ensure their child's safety and well being, as well as the safety of everyone living under their roof. Parents know their children better than the schools, police, coaches, etc. Schools only have students for 6 hours a day, Monday through Friday.

The following are guidelines if you suspect that your child may be abusing drugs or alcohol:

Warning Signs to Look For:

- Is money missing from your house, your child's bank account, from siblings, relatives, or close friends? (Make sure the parent's/guardian's name is on accounts and know your child's PIN number to debit card.)
- Is money missing from the parent's/guardian's or sibling's accounts? Are checks missing from your checkbook? (Check several numbers down in the check book.)
- Have there been any recent house or car break-ins in your neighborhood? (Don't be afraid to check with the police department.)
- Ask local police if your child's name appears on any pawn shop ledgers.
- Is your child's property missing or property from your house, your neighbors, or relative's houses?

Child's Physical Appearance:

- Weight loss
- Skin pallor
- Dark circles under eyes
- Change in speech
- Change in hygiene (not concerned with their appearance)
- Quick and drastic change in appearance

Mental Demeanor:

- Agitation, apathy, withdrawn, anxious
- Change in sleep patterns (awake late or up early "dope sick")
- Strange smell on clothes, burnt clothing, and burn marks on face/hands
- New circle of friends or new friends not coming into the house
- Change in activities, grades, sports
- Loosing interest in normal hobbies/activities
- Loosing a job
- Phone calls late at night or early in the morning
- Coming home late or not coming home at all
- Sneaking out after curfew

- Evasive, unusual, or defensive answers to questions about new friends, grades, job, or comings and goings

What to Look for in Room or Vehicle:

- Small plastic bags or pieces of plastic bags, plastic caps (syringes)
- Burn marks in carpet or flooring
- Unusual disarray in room
- Smells (burnt rope)
- Windows open in winter
- Loose tobacco, cigar tubes (blunts)
- Cough syrup bottles
- Whippets
- Aerosol cans (check waste baskets in room & check trash receptacles in other rooms)

What to Look for in House:

- Are prescription drugs missing? (Count the number of pills/capsules in bottle)
- Look for cough syrup or gel caps containing DXM
- Any paint cans missing or have been opened in the basement or garage?
- Rags with paint thinner, gasoline, or brake fluid
- Glue missing in house?
- Computer keyboard cleaner missing?

What to Do If You Are Suspicious:

- Check room, car, house, computer, and cell phone regularly
- Have your physician drug test your child
- Purchase drug test kits from pharmacy
- Call or bring to the police, fire station, pharmacy, or hospital any suspicious or strange substances found
- Check websites for drug identifiers