



What's SAPpening

Brought to you by your Center For Humanistic Change Student Assistance Program Liaisons

JANUARY 2017

UPCOMING EVENTS:

National Drug and Alcohol Facts week

(January 23-29, 2017)



January 29, 2017

*"National Day of
Remembrance"*



SAP EVENTS:

SAP Consortium

*Spring dates coming
soon*

SAP Trainings:

Need a new team member trained? Please reach out to CHC about upcoming SAP trainings.

HAPPY NEW YEAR!

New Legislation on Truancy

As many of you are aware, on November 3, 2016, Governor Wolf signed into law new legislation that will impact the school systems in the coming year. Under the new law, a child is considered truant after only three days of unexcused absences, and habitually truant after six unexcused absences. Previously, a child was considered truant if they had four or more unexcused absences. The law is designed to improve school attendance and to discourage truancy by identifying issues with attendance, and creating intervention as early as possible. This is expected to protect families from unintended consequences that may be created from a child being truant and to keep the family together as much as possible. Fining parents for children who are habitually truant is considered a last resort.

The new law has also changed regulations for Charter schools. They will now be required to report unexcused absences directly to the Pennsylvania Department of Education, instead of the school district in which the child resides. This requires them to create their own attendance policies if none were in place.

Parents must also be notified in writing within ten days of the child's third unexcused absence, identifying the consequences should the child become habitually truant and offering to conference with them to help improve the student's attendance. Should the student continue to accrue unexcused absences, the school must hold a conference to discuss ways to improve the child's attendance.

Some of the consequences for a student who is habitually truant will depend on whether or not the child is over or under the age of fifteen. Regardless of the child's age, the school must offer a community based program to help with their attendance. If the child is under the age of fifteen, they might additionally refer the child to the county children and youth services. Schools may choose to cite the parent or child with the district magistrate if the child is over fifteen or if the student exceeds their six days of unexcused absences. In any case, if a child is cited or referred to Children and Youth, it has to be verified that a conference was held to improve the student's attendance. Under the new law students cannot be punished for missing school in ways that would exclude them from their education, for example suspending them, transferring them to an alternative school, or even expelling them.

If the school does cite the parent or student, the judge, upon conviction has more discretion to assign appropriate consequences. If convicted, the judge may send the conviction to the Department of Transportation where the student's license will automatically be suspended. When their license is suspended, the student may apply for an occupational license, which would allow them to travel to and from work or school. They can then restore their privileges by showing proof that they have not been absent or tardy for at least two months after the first conviction, four months after the second conviction or if they have graduated. The new law also increased the fine to \$750 dollars for the third and subsequent offenses. With the increase in fines, jail time is determined on the ability to pay the fine. If the parent has the ability to pay the fine, and they don't pay it, the parent will be jailed. The number of days the parent would have to serve was reduced to three days from the original five days. This will prevent parents of lower economic status from being jailed simply because they do not have the money to pay the fine. If the student continues to be habitually truant, and the parent or student is convicted twice in a span of three years, then the child must be referred to the county's Children and Youth services. A child may have his or her convictions expunged if they have graduated and received a diploma, and satisfied any sentence that the court may have given to them.

Medical Marijuana: It's not Street Weed

In November, 2016 it was released that medical marijuana is now able to be administered by parents to students on school campuses. With the release of this information, many questions have come up about the topic of medical marijuana, and the differences between the medical form and the recreational form. There is no doubt this has been a hot topic for quite some time, and there is little published research for educators to read.

According to the National Institute on Drug Abuse, medical marijuana is a term used while speaking of the whole unprocessed plant, and using the extracts from the plant to help treat a disease, or symptom. To date, medical marijuana has not been recognized by the U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA), as an approved form of medicine, but they have approved two medications that contain cannabinoid chemicals: Dronabinol, and Nabilone. Cannabinoids are chemicals much like tetrahydrocannabinol (THC) found in marijuana. Studies have shown that the THC chemical is the main psychoactive ingredient found in marijuana, which gives the user a mind high. Along with THC the other main cannabinoid in question is cannabidiol (CBD), which is thought to be helpful in treating certain serious medical conditions. According to the National Institute on Drug Abuse scientists have been breeding this specific form of the plant to create a CBD oil, which will be used to treat serious medical conditions. Some of the serious medical conditions that would affect your students are, but not limited to Autism, Cancer, Crohn's Disease, Epilepsy, HIV, Multiple Sclerosis, and forms of PostTraumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD). Many students are struggling with forms of PTSD as a result of traumatic events that have happened in their lives.

When looking at the positive medical advantages of THC and CBD, each form has different qualities. THC increases your appetite and helps to reduce nausea. CBD is believed to help with pain and inflammation, and possibly a treatment for mental illness and addiction. It does not affect the way you behave, or the way your mind processes. Those who are looking to marijuana to get high would not be interested in the medical form, which contains CBD, because it doesn't give you an intoxicating high.

Some may question why medical marijuana hasn't been approved by the FDA as an acceptable form of medicine if it contains therapeutic chemicals. The reason it has not been accepted by the FDA is because there is not enough useful information. The National Institute on Drug Abuse, along with many other scientists are setting up clinical trials to gather information that will help us have a better understanding of what the marijuana extracts can do, and what kind of affect they will have for the future of medicine.

The New Department of Drug and Alcohol Program Hotline

The Department of Drug and Alcohol Program have announced their new toll-free hotline that will be available 24/7, throughout the commonwealth of Pennsylvania, to get immediate help for those suffering from addiction. The goal of the hotline is to allow an individual in a crisis to have to make only one phone call, instead of multiple phone calls. When a call is made to the hotline they will speak to a person who can help provide them with a screening of emergent care, and transfer them to a treatment provider. First Choice Health System staffs the hotline 24/7, so there is always someone available to answer. The hotline will also be expanded to include online chat capabilities, as well as teletypewriter features. The new DDAP hotline, is another tool Governor Wolf is creating to help the fight against opioid use. The toll-free hotline can be reached at **1-800-662-HELP (4357). If you know someone who is in need of help, please do not hesitate to call.**

National Drug and Alcohol Facts Week

Don't forget that National Drug and Alcohol facts week is approaching quickly. This year NIDA scientists will again host their drug and alcohol chat day, where students can chat directly with scientists to help shatter the myths about drugs and alcohol and have their questions answered live. The chat day will be held on January 26, 2017. If you are interested in participating in National Drug and Alcohol facts week visit their website and all the different type of activities that are out there to get your school involved.

<https://teens.drugabuse.gov/national-drug-alcohol-facts-week>

Shout-out to Lehigh Valley Charter High School for the Arts SADD Club, and Whitehall High School SADD club, who have already registered their events. There is still time to plan and register your events!

Center For Humanistic Change

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