What's SAPpening

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CENTER FOR HUMANISTIC CHANGE
STUDENT ASSISTANCE PROGRAM LIAISONS

November 2026

Upcoming Events

- Native American Month
- Family Literacy Month
- International Stress Awareness Week / 2-6
- Veterans Day / 11
- World Kindness Day / 13
- Great American Smokeout / 19
- International Survivors of Suicide Loss Day / 21

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FALL SAP CONSORTIUM

Speaker: Joshua Siegel, Lehigh County Executive; **Our panelists:** David Hauser, Principal, Saucon Valley Middle School, Thespina Godshalk, School-Based Behavioral Health Administrator, Nikolas Tsamoutalidis, Supervisor for Student Support and Health Services, Molly Stanton, Assistant Administrator, Drug and Alcohol Services at LC, Gretchen Hill, Assistant Administrator, Drug and Alcohol Services at NC, Kristen Wenrich, Health Director, Bethlehem Health Bureau, Kimberly Makoul, Chief Public Defender, Lehigh County Office of the Public Defender, Gavin P. Holihan, District Attorney LC, **Moderator (not shown):** Lisa Wolff, Manager of Community Engagement, CHC



The message from our October SAP Consortium is clear: **supporting our youth requires action, connection, and collaboration.** We must move beyond recognizing the challenges and ensure that every young person has access to trusted adults, meaningful relationships, and the resources they need to succeed.

Schools, families, and community partners can make a difference by strengthening SAP Teams, identifying students who may be struggling, teaching healthy coping skills, and connecting youth with appropriate support before challenges become crises. We must also be intentional about creating environments where young people feel safe, valued, and have a sense of belonging.

What can you do today? Reach out to a student, strengthen a connection with a community partner, review your school's available supports, or make sure every young person knows at least one trusted adult they can turn to for help.

At the Center for Humanistic Change, we believe that no young person should have to navigate life's challenges alone. By working together, we can turn awareness into action and help build a stronger, healthier future for our youth.

What Parents Should Know About Teens, Drinking and Drugs

How to help your teen make healthy choices

Teens face pressure from academics, social media, relationships, and the desire to fit in. Some turn to alcohol or drugs to manage stress, feel more confident, or socialize. Parents can help by recognizing risky behaviors and having open, honest conversations.

Common Risks and How Parents Can Help

Pre-gaming: Some teens drink or use drugs before events to get intoxicated quickly. Know your teen's plans, set clear expectations, and stay involved before social gatherings.
"Work Hard, Play Hard": Teens may view drinking or drug use as a reward for academic stress. Acknowledge their hard work and encourage healthy ways to relax, such as spending time with friends, exercising, or enjoying family activities.
Social Pressure: Some teens use substances to ease anxiety or feel more comfortable around peers. Reassure them that social awkwardness is normal and encourage them to build confidence without relying on alcohol or drugs.
Substances and Sexual Behavior: Alcohol and drugs can impair judgment and increase the risk of unsafe situations, unwanted sexual experiences, and assault. Talk openly about consent, boundaries, readiness, and personal safety.
Prescription Drug Misuse: Some teens misuse or share prescription medications, including ADHD medications, believing they improve academic performance. Explain the dangers, secure medications at home, and monitor prescriptions carefully.
Drinking Games: Games that encourage rapid alcohol consumption can lead to alcohol poisoning, blackouts, and increased risk of addiction. Discuss these dangers and clearly communicate your expectations.

The Takeaway for Parents

Stay involved, set clear boundaries, and create an environment where your teen feels comfortable talking openly about difficult situations. Recognize their accomplishments, model healthy coping skills, and help them understand that they can manage stress and social pressures without alcohol or drugs.
Source: Child Mind Institute — What Parents Should Know About Teens, Drinking and Drugs



Are Kids Using Nicotine in the Classroom?

Federal data show that 1.44 million middle and high school students currently vape nicotine. While disposable e-cigarettes remain the most popular nicotine product among youth, oral nicotine pouches and cannabis products are also concerns.

Products to Watch For

Nicotine pouches: Small, flavored pouches placed between the lip and gum. Brands such as Zyn, On!, and Rogue are discreet and difficult to detect.

"Smart" vapes: Some disposable vapes now resemble gaming devices, featuring screens, video games, Bluetooth, and speakers that may appeal to young people.

Respond with Support, Not Punishment

When a student is caught using nicotine, focus on helping them quit rather than punishing them. Supportive conversations and access to quitting resources can help students make healthier choices. Suspensions may negatively affect academic performance and graduation outcomes.

Parents and educators can make a difference by recognizing these products, starting open conversations, and connecting students with resources to quit nicotine.

What Are the Signs of Anxiety in Kids?

Anxiety is common among children and teens, but the signs aren't always easy to recognize. Watch for these common symptoms:

Excessive worry: Persistent fears that interfere with daily life.
Physical symptoms: Headaches, stomachaches, sweating, or a racing heart.
Avoidance: Avoiding school, social activities, or situations that cause fear.
Difficulty concentrating: Worrying that interferes with schoolwork or daily tasks.
Sleep problems: Trouble falling or staying asleep due to worry.
Behavior changes: Irritability, outbursts, or aggression when overwhelmed.
Clinginess: Difficulty separating from parents or needing frequent reassurance.
Negative self-talk: Fear of failure, low self-esteem, or being overly critical of themselves.
How can parents help? Notice changes in your child's behavior, listen without judgment, and offer reassurance and support. If anxiety persists or interferes with daily activities, consider reaching out to a healthcare or mental health professional.

10 Tips for Parenting Anxious Kids

Helping children manage anxiety without reinforcing their fears

Parents naturally want to protect their children from anxiety, but avoiding fears can make anxiety worse over time. Instead, help children build confidence, develop coping skills, and learn that they can handle challenging situations.

Help children manage anxiety, not eliminate it. Teach them that anxiety is a normal emotion and that they can learn to cope with it.
Avoid encouraging avoidance. Support children in gradually facing their fears rather than avoiding situations that make them uncomfortable.
Set realistic expectations. Instead of promising everything will go perfectly, reassure children that they can handle whatever happens.
Validate feelings while building confidence. Acknowledge their fears while reminding them they are capable of facing challenges.
Ask open-ended questions. Try "How are you feeling about the test?" rather than assuming what makes them anxious.
Model confidence. Your calm words, tone, and body language can help children feel more secure.
Encourage their efforts. Praise children for trying, facing fears, and practicing healthy coping skills.
Limit excessive worrying ahead of time. Give children enough preparation for stressful events without allowing too much time for worry to build.
Make a plan together. Help children think through their concerns and identify practical ways to handle challenging situations.
Model healthy coping skills. Let children see you manage stress through deep breathing, problem-solving, and staying calm.
Remember: Children don't need parents to remove every source of anxiety. They need support, encouragement, and the confidence to learn that they can handle life's challenges.



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