



Upcoming Events

- Suicide Prevention Month
- National Recovery Month
- Childhood Cancer Awareness Month
- FASD: Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder Month
- National Hispanic Heritage Month 9/15-10/15
- National Family Day 9/22

Center for Humanistic Change

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Silent Surge: Tranq's rapid rise in Pa. overdose deaths and the lives it's taking

A 19-year-old, tragically passed away in June after taking part in a dangerous viral trend known as “dusting,” which involves inhaling aerosol products like computer dusting spray to get high. Her parents, Dana and Aaron O’Rourke, are now speaking out to warn others about the severe risks of this behavior, which led to Renna suffering from sudden sniffing death syndrome and ultimately being declared brain dead after spending a week in the ICU. They describe Renna as a vibrant, caring young woman with big dreams, and they are devastated by the loss. Medical professionals, stress that even a single instance of inhaling these chemicals can result in serious health consequences, including heart failure, lung disease, and even death. The O’Rourkes emphasize that the accessibility and undetectable nature of these products make them especially dangerous for teens.

What is Ketamine?

Ketamine is a dissociative anesthetic with hallucinogenic effects, distorting sight and sound and creating a sense of detachment from reality. Medically, it is used for short-term anesthesia and pain relief in humans and animals. Esketamine (Spravato®), a nasal spray, is approved for treatment-resistant depression. It is also misused recreationally and has been linked to sexual assault.



Origin and Use / Legally produced in several countries, including the U.S., most illegal ketamine comes from diverted medical/veterinary supplies or is smuggled from Mexico. Recreational use is common at clubs, concerts, and parties, especially among young adults.

Forms and Street Names / Available as a liquid or white/off-white powder, ketamine can be snorted, smoked, injected, or mixed into drinks—sometimes combined with MDMA or cocaine. Street names include *Special K*, *Kit Kat*, *Jet K*, *Super K*, and *Vitamin K*.

Effects on Mind and Body / Effects include hallucinations, confusion, memory loss, and “K-hole” out-of-body experiences, lasting 30–60 minutes. Physical symptoms may include rapid heart rate, muscle stiffness, nausea, and unresponsiveness. Long-term use can cause visual disturbances.

Risks and Legal Status / Overdose may cause unconsciousness and slowed breathing. In the U.S., ketamine is a Schedule III controlled substance—approved for medical use but with potential for abuse and psychological dependence.

Dear friends and colleagues—

During my 8 years as a principal, on the night before the first day of school, I got as excited and nervous as I did when I was a student. But I loved the opportunity to begin anew. The first day of school was always my favorite – well, except for maybe the last. It was always filled with possibilities, and began with the question I always posed to our teachers: How can we best serve our students? Because, as I often reminded them, it’s about the kids!

At CHC, I ask similar questions of our SAP liaisons, our mentors, and our prevention specialists: How can we better serve the schools in which we are present? Where, when, and how are we needed? The answer to these questions is always however and wherever we are needed! After 46 years of providing prevention education programming in the Lehigh Valley, we are ready and prepared to guide principals, teachers, students, and their families through another school year by providing the skills necessary to meet life’s many, and ever-increasingly complex challenges. We are here to be a resource, a guide, and a partner.

We wish all of our community partners a safe school year filled with many successes.

- Andrew D’Angelo / Executive Director, Center for Humanistic Change

Are Phones Rewiring Our Kids' Brains?

- Teen mental health began declining significantly around 2012, just as smartphone and social media use became widespread.
- In the book *The Anxious Generation* by Jonathan Haidt, he presents data showing sharp rises in anxiety, depression, and self-harm among teens, especially girls, since the rise of phone-based adolescence.
- The core problem: Gen Z spends less time in real-world social environments and far more time in virtual ones, particularly during critical developmental years.
- Haidt advocates for delaying smartphone ownership until high school and social media use until at least age 16.
- He also calls for phone-free schools and a return to unsupervised play and face-to-face friendships.

What Adults Can Do:

- Delay smartphone and social media access - Wait until high school for a smartphone and age 16 for social media use, when possible.
- Create tech-free spaces and times - Set up screen-free moments in your home—like meals, drives, and bed-times, to encourage real connection.
- Encourage offline play and friendships - Prioritize real-world social activities like playing outside, attending events, and hosting friends in person.
- Stay informed - Haidt's book offers a powerful lens for understanding today's youth. Consider reading it and sharing it with others in your circle.
- Speak up - Talk with your school leaders, local legislators, and other parents. Advocate for policies that protect kids' mental health in this digital age.

The beginning is the most important part of the work.

-Plato

This project is funded, and paid for with taxpayer dollars, under a contract with the Pennsylvania Department of Drug and Alcohol Programs with Lehigh and Northampton County Drug and Alcohol.

Back-to-School Anxiety

How to help kids manage worries and have a successful start to the school year

Going back to school is exciting for some kids, but others have trouble with anxiety heading into the new school year. This is especially true of kids who are starting at a new school or are already anxious about being away from parents. This anxiety fades for most kids as the school year goes on, but parents can help them get off to a good start.

First, check in with yourself. Kids can tell if you're nervous about school starting, so managing your own stress is a good way to help them feel calm too. Then, be sure to really listen to kids' worries. Often, kids just need a little validation ("I know how hard it is to get to know a new teacher") to feel better. You can also help them make plans for handling anything specific they're worried about.

If your child is very nervous about the first day, see if you can bring your child to the school ahead of time to walk around together and figure out where everything is. Meeting the teacher early can also help. Another idea is to plan a hand-off on the first morning, where a friend or school staff member is ready to meet your child and give them something to do right away. And when your child does get through the tough moment of separation, be sure to praise them later: "Great job heading straight to class this morning!"

If your child's anxiety doesn't go away and interferes with school, it may be time to get support from a mental health professional. Some kids develop anxious headaches or stomachaches about school or even refuse to go altogether. A mental health professional can help you figure out why your child is struggling and provide the support they need.



CHILD MIND INSTITUTE

Fall SAP Consortium

Support for Students - CASSP Can Help!

October 20, 2024

Monday / 1-2 pm / Virtual

One common concern for schools and their SAP Teams is attendance. How do we handle this? CASSP can help! Before issues with students get out of control. CASSP can help.

Join us! Register at: https://www.thechc.org/event_calendar/2025-fall-sap-consortium.html

What's Behind the Behavior ?

Understanding the Unmet Needs

Behavior isn't random — it's a clue. Let's look deeper.

Behavior Observed	Possible Unmet Need	What the Student May Be Communicating	Supportive Response
Yelling, hitting, throwing	Emotional overload, lack of coping tools, sensory distress	"I'm overwhelmed and don't know what to do with these feelings."	Offer a break, use calm visuals, provide safe sensory tools
Walking out or hiding	Escaping anxiety, fear of failure, overstimulation	"I feel unsafe, out of control, or I need space."	Gently ensure safety, allow quiet re-entry, reconnect without shame
Refusing tasks or instructions	Task is too hard, not meaningful, or fear of being wrong	"I don't think I can do this." / "What's the point?"	Break task down, offer choices, celebrate effort over perfection
Constant interruptions or blurting	Impulsivity, need for connection, difficulty self-regulating	"I'm trying to connect or stay involved."	Offer movement breaks, preview turn-taking, validate engagement
Shutting down or zoning out	Cognitive overload, trauma response, fatigue	"This is too much. I can't keep up right now."	Use low-demand visuals, check in quietly, reduce sensory input
Aggression toward peers	Struggles with social cues, fear of rejection, emotional dysregulation	"I don't know how to connect safely." / "I feel threatened."	Teach social scripts, co-regulate, model and label emotions
Over-compliance or perfectionism	Fear of judgment, masking, past trauma, needing to please	"I'm afraid to mess up or show my true self."	Encourage mistakes, praise progress, build self-worth with gentle feedback

Special Education Community

Effective Communication Strategies for Defiant Students

Strategy	Description	Why It Works	Implementation Tips
Use Neutral and Calm Tone	Speak in a composed, non-threatening manner to avoid power struggles.	Prevents escalation and helps students stay receptive.	Practice deep breathing before responding to defiance. Keep voice steady and avoid sarcasm.
Validate Their Feelings	Acknowledge the student's emotions before addressing their behavior.	Helps students feel understood and reduces defensive reactions.	Use phrases like, "I see that you're frustrated. Let's figure out a solution together."
Give Clear and Direct Instructions	Use short, specific sentences to communicate expectations.	Reduces confusion and prevents students from feeling overwhelmed.	Say, "Please put your book away and join us," instead of "You need to be responsible and stop messing around."
Avoid Power Struggles	Don't engage in back-and-forth arguments or threats.	Prevents escalation and keeps authority intact.	If a student refuses, calmly restate the expectation and walk away to give processing time.
Use "I" Statements	Express your concerns without placing blame on the student.	Encourages cooperative problem-solving rather than defensiveness.	Say, "I feel concerned when the instructions are ignored because it disrupts learning."
Offer Choices Instead of Demands	Give controlled choices to help the student feel a sense of autonomy.	Encourages cooperation without defiance.	Example: "Would you like to start with writing or reading first?"
Use Nonverbal Cues	Communicate expectations through gestures or visuals instead of words.	Reduces the chance of triggering defiant verbal reactions.	Point to the classroom rules or use a visual cue card for transitions.
Give Processing Time	Allow a pause after giving an instruction instead of expecting immediate compliance.	Helps students self-regulate and make better choices.	Count silently to five after giving a direction before repeating it.
Redirect with a Positive Focus	Shift attention away from defiant behavior and toward positive actions.	Reduces resistance and encourages engagement.	Instead of "Stop arguing," try "Let's focus on how we can fix this together."
Reinforce Positive Behavior	Acknowledge when students communicate appropriately and follow directions.	Encourages continued use of effective communication strategies.	Say, "Great job expressing your frustration calmly—I appreciate that!"

Live. Be. WELL

A Community Empowerment Event



SEPTEMBER 20TH, 2025
11:00-3:00PM

PAXINOSA ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

1221 NORTHAMPTON ST, EASTON, PA 18042

**JOIN US FOR A DAY
FULL OF FUN AND
LOCAL RESOURCES!**

FREE ALL DAY EVENTS:

COMMUNITY RESOURCES
LOCAL SPEAKERS
IMPAIRMENT SIMULATIONS
FOOD TRUCKS
HENNA TATTOOS
CHAIR MASSAGES
PHOTO BOOTH
LIVE DJ
CARICATURES
FREE RAFFLE

