

## Immediate Suggestions for Parents

- when you make “the call” -

### Youth Substance Misuse

#### **1. Love your child.**

Remember that substance misuse and substance use disorders can affect your child’s brain and behavior. You may not like what substances are doing to your child, but your love remains essential. Building and repairing relationships helps create the foundation for healing and recovery.

#### **2. Secure substances in the home.**

Safely store alcohol, medications, and all tobacco and cannabis products. Reducing access lowers the risk of misuse and accidental harm.

#### **3. Reflect on your own use and self-care.**

Modeling healthy behaviors and prioritizing your own well-being sends a powerful message. When caregivers seek support or practice safe habits, it reinforces the importance of care and safety for a struggling young person.

#### **4. Educate yourself about adolescent brain development and substance use.**

Learn how substances affect adolescent brains and behavior, and seek support in navigating care. The adolescent brain is especially vulnerable because the prefrontal cortex—the area responsible for judgment, impulse control, and decision-making—is still developing. Educational resources, such as short introductions to the Neurobiology of Addiction, can help explain why teens are at higher risk. Your treatment team can guide you to additional trusted resources.

#### **5. Discuss copy-cat pills and synthetic fentanyl with your child.**

Understand that one pill can kill. While fewer adolescents overall are using substances, overdose deaths continue to rise—largely due to fentanyl, synthetic opioids, and counterfeit pills. Talk with your child about the danger of hidden ingredients that can cause severe illness or death. Research shows that about 60% of adolescent overdose deaths occur at home.

#### **6. Purchase and learn how to use naloxone.**

Naloxone saves lives. Purchase/Get Naloxone.

#### **7. Secure firearms in the home.**

Individuals with substance use disorders have a higher risk of suicide, often alongside mental health challenges. Secure firearms safely and talk openly with your child about suicide. Asking about suicide does not increase risk—it can open the door to life-saving care. If you are concerned, call or text 988 for immediate support.