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Choose wisely!



Live well!





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Credits

Written by Jodi Pushkin, NIE manager

Designed by *Times* staff

Cover photo by Victoria Hanely, Ridgewood High School

Dear Newspaper in Education reader,

The youth of Pasco County face many challenges as they grow into adulthood, and the statistics related to underage drinking, prescription drug abuse, gangs, bullying and cyber bullying can be overwhelming. Alcohol contributes to the four leading causes of teen deaths: motor vehicle crashes, unintentional injuries, homicide and suicide. Pasco County drivers under the age of 21 accounted for the highest rates of DUI crashes and arrests in 2006-2007. Pasco County's high school students reported higher lifetime use (69.1 percent) of alcohol compared to Florida statewide (66.2 percent) (Source: *2008 Florida Youth Substance Abuse Survey*). The abuse of alcohol threatens the very well being of our children and their families. In this St. Petersburg Times Newspaper in Education publication, we hope you will learn what the community is doing to keep Pasco County a safe place for families and how you can help. Therefore it is with great pleasure that the Pasco County's Alliance for Substance Abuse Prevention (ASAP), Pasco Sheriff's Office and the District School Board of Pasco County support this publication.

Together, we are working tirelessly to assess Pasco County's needs and mobilize the community to collaborate, strategize and implement action plans to prevent underage drinking, substance abuse, gangs and bullying in our community. This publication highlights some of the initiatives and resources by SADD (Students Against Destructive Decisions), GREAT (Gang Reduction Education And Training), school resource officers, ASAP's Prescription Drug Abuse committee, youth summer camps and town hall meetings, as well as the many services and programs provided in schools and the community by the District School Board of Pasco County.

The impact underage drinking has on our community can be changed by active involvement of parents, youth and community members. We hope this publication is an educational tool used to start a discussion between parents, teachers, community members and youth. Everyone has a role to play, and we encourage you to find out more by checking out the resources listed.

Have a safe and healthy school year!

Sincerely,

Superintendent

Sheriff

ASAP Chair

Pasco County ASAP



Q: What is the mission of Pasco County Alliance for Substance Abuse Prevention (ASAP)?

A: Our mission is to develop, motivate and encourage strategic relationships that reduce county risk factors and decrease substance abuse rates among youth and adults.

Q: How is Pasco County ASAP sharing the message of prevention with youth?

A: ASAP works to implement evidence-based practices that effect environmental level change. ASAP's membership is composed of several sectors of the community representing youth-serving organizations, businesses, faith-based community, health care, law enforcement, parents, youth, civic clubs, the school board, media, government, attorneys and treatment providers. The membership brings their unique perspective to implementing strategies that will reach the community as a whole. These strategies include town hall meetings, school workshops, parenting workshops, social marketing and responsible beverage server training among others.

Q: What are some of the most dangerous drugs we've seen in this area?

A: All drugs have the potential to be dangerous. Alcohol contributes to the four leading causes of teen deaths: motor vehicle crashes, unintentional injuries, homicide and suicide. In addition, there has been an alarming increase in overdose deaths related to prescription drugs locally.

Q: We've seen people all across the country abusing prescription drugs, with those numbers steadily climbing. What is Pasco ASAP's involvement in trying to lower those numbers?

A: ASAP has a Prescription Drug Abuse committee that is collecting data and mobilizing communities to define the problem so we can look for effective and evidence-based strategies to educate youth and adults on the dangers of abusing prescription drugs. Everyone is welcome to get involved.

Q: Why does Pasco ASAP believe that underage drinking and drug use is an unrecognized epidemic?

A: Alcohol has traditionally been regarded as a legal drug and a "right of passage" for youth in our

society. Social acceptance of drinking for events such as tailgates, St. Patrick's Day and Spring Break tends to downplay the fact that alcohol is a drug and, as with any drug, alcohol can have effects on our physical and mental health, including addiction. Alcohol needs to be taken just as seriously as any of the other drugs mentioned.

Q: When it comes to underage drinking, adults over the age of 21 also can face legal trouble. Can you tell us more about ASAP's initiatives to inform the public about open house parties?

A: We support the "Parents Who Host Lose the Most – Don't Be a Party to Teenage Drinking" campaign. Providing alcohol to minors is a second-degree misdemeanor in the state of Florida. We also offer tips on how to host an alcohol-free teen party in your home.

Q: Traditional efforts to reduce underage drinking and drug use have focused on youth education, but research shows that these strategies have limited short-term success. What is Pasco ASAP doing to change that?

A: Community coalitions are community-based and community-led. We collect data and analyze trends to determine what Pasco County's issues are and where we can make a difference. We assess what resources are already in existence while identifying gaps. With knowledge of our community and our trends in the data, evidenced-based practices are located and implemented. We also continue to evaluate data and report on the effectiveness those strategies have had locally. It is similar to being a community scientist, and we welcome everyone to the table to work together.

Q: How can parents become more involved before teens and young adults experiment with drugs and alcohol?

A: Talk to your teen about alcohol and other drugs, and set clear and consistent expectations when it comes to the use of alcohol and other drugs. Parents need to be good role models, and if they choose to drink, they should do so responsibly. Parents also can get involved with ASAP and join one of our committees.

Q: If people wanted to become involved with the Pasco County Alliance for Substance Abuse Prevention or just wanted more information, where could they go?

A: A great way to start would be to attend a membership meeting. They take place every fourth Tuesday of the month at the Land O'Lakes Community Center, 5401 Land O'Lakes Blvd., Land O'Lakes, from 10 to 11:30 am. However, if work or school keeps you from attending the membership meetings, you can join one of our committees, which include Youth Initiative, Prescription Drug Abuse, Marketing, Membership and Assessment/Evaluation. Contact Chrissie Parris at 727-597-2284 or cparris@pascoasap.com. Our website is pascoasap.com, and we are also on Facebook.



Journaling to self discovery

Keeping a journal is a great way to learn more about yourself. Who are you? Why do you do what you do? Do you have strong convictions? Are you able to stand up to others when your ideas are questioned? While you are keeping your journal, read the *St. Petersburg Times* to test yourself. What are your thoughts about the things you read in the news? To begin your journal, write about something that you have read in the *Times* that directly affects your life. Share some of your journal entries and thoughts with your peers on the NIE Blogging Zone. Go to tampabay.com/nie and click on the NIE Blog link. Go to the 2010 Tough Decisions category to share your thoughts.



Gang communication hand signs

The “throwing” of hand signs in public is non-verbal communication between both allied and rival gangs. Gangs use unique hand signs to show allegiance to their own gang, as well as to disrespect an opposing faction.

Getting inked

New gang members may write on their hands or arms in pen or marker, getting comfortable with the idea of being a member. Typically, no one is allowed to wear a specific gang’s tattoos unless that person is an actual member.

Word on the street

Graffiti is the newspaper of the street. Each gang has its own unique symbols and cryptic writing. Gang graffiti is not artwork. It is communication that the gang uses to publicize and send messages. Tag graffiti is considered an art form by taggers. There is usually no gang affiliation.

Gangs: Different and the same

It’s all in a name.
Did you know there is a law in the state of Florida that defines what a gang member is? It is Florida Statute Chapter 874, also known as the Criminal Gang Prevention Act. This law includes a list of criteria used to determine whether someone is a gang member or associate.
A criminal gang is a formal or informal organization, association or group that has as one of its primary activities the commission of criminal or delinquent acts and which consists of three or more persons who have a common name or common identifying signs, colors or symbols, including, but not limited to, terrorist organizations and hate groups.
If you are labeled as a gang member and commit a crime, then the penalties for the crime are increased.

It’s the law

Felony vs. Misdemeanor
A felony is a crime that is punishable by more than one year in prison or death.
A misdemeanor is a crime that is punishable by imprisonment for less than one year.

Felonies and misdemeanors are broken down into degrees with different levels of fines and imprisonment:

Felonies		
Capital Felony:	Death or life imprisonment with no parole	
Life Felony:	up to 40 years to life	up to \$15,000 fine
1st-Degree Felony:	up to 30 years	up to \$10,000 fine
2nd-Degree Felony:	up to 15 years	up to \$10,000 fine
3rd-Degree Felony:	up to 5 years	up to \$5,000 fine
Minors can face adult prison sentences.		
Misdemeanors:		
1st-Degree Misdemeanor:	up to 1 year	up to \$1,000 fine
2nd-Degree Misdemeanor:	up to 60 days	up to \$500 fine

Gangs 101

A gang is a group of people who want to be seen as different from others and want others to see the members as a distinct group. A gang is organized, may or may not have leadership and commits criminal and/or delinquent acts in the community. In Florida (including Pasco County), hundreds of local gangs have been identified from Pensacola to the Florida Keys and can be found in small rural towns, upper-middle-class neighborhoods, schools and other areas.

Young people often will join a gang for

a sense of power, excitement, recognition or status. They believe that belonging to a particular gang will allow them to achieve a level of status that was impossible to attain outside of the gang.

Kids join gangs to:

- Have prestige or power
- Find friendship or brotherhood/sisterhood
- Get protection/security from gang violence
- Make a lot of money fast
- Feel a sense of belonging
- Be considered “cool” by other kids

How do gangs recruit their members?

Kids often are confronted by gang members in their neighborhoods or in school. Gang members will use peer pressure or fear and intimidation tactics to get others to join their gang. Kids are told lies about all of the good things that happen when they join. They are told they will earn a lot of money, make friends, go to parties and belong to a close “family” that will care for and “love” them. Most members are boys, but 10 percent of all gang members are girls.

Typical pre-gang behaviors

Gang involvement does not happen overnight. It is a gradual process. Here are the warning signs:

- Poor progress or achievement in school
- Truancy from school
- Lack of hobbies or too much leisure time
- Frequent contact with authority figures or police
- Drawing gang insignias/symbols/signs
- Friends are gang members or “dressing down” or “sagging and bagging” in gang attire
- Dressing in traditional gang clothes or colors

Sources: United States Department of Justice and Florida Department of Law Enforcement



Myth vs. fact



Myth: Gangs are most exclusively composed of Latinos or African-Americans.

Fact: Many gangs are now hybrid with many ethnicities, and white gang members were the fastest growing segment of gangs in new gang-problem localities in the mid-1990s. Gang members reflect the ethnic composition of their communities.

Myth: Gangs are mostly made of boys and young men, and girls are only part of the gang as hangers-on or to service the young men.

Fact: Many gangs have females with key roles. In some localities, girls represent between one-fourth and one-third of the current gang members.

Myth: You can recognize gang members by the colors they wear or their tattoos.

Fact: Many gang members today are much more subtle about displaying their membership to outsiders, in part because many states have passed laws increasing the severity of penalties for offenses committed by gang members. It is not in their interest to advertise their gang affiliation.

Myth: All gangs are violent and deal drugs.

Fact: Some are, but others commit more low-level crimes or crimes that hurt primarily themselves, such as using illegal drugs.

Myth: Gangs are highly organized.

Fact: Some are, but they are the exception. Many are about as organized as most teenagers and young adults are.

Myth: Once in a gang, always in a gang.

Fact: Most youth who join gangs stay in for about a year. About 20 percent stay in for three years.

Myth: Young people are pressured by their peers into joining gangs.

Fact: In reality, it is not as hard for adolescents to resist joining a gang as many people believe.

Myth: It is life-threatening for a gang member to leave a gang.

Fact: In most cases, a gang member can leave without being harmed.

Myth: Most gangs are exports from big cities such as Los Angeles and Chicago and are part of a national spread from groups such as the Bloods and the Crips.

Fact: Gangs are local and spring out of conditions in their communities.

Source: U.S. Department of Education

Adult call to action

Parents and teachers can help children learn to build healthy relationships. Teach children to define friends as peers who help them realize their dreams, accept them for who they are and help them stay out of trouble. Parents, you have more influence in this area than you think. It starts by knowing who your children's friends are and where they live. Finding other children who share your child's productive interests increases the likelihood your child will stay focused and on the right path. Your child is likely to be happier and more successful when involved in structured and supervised activities such as organized sports, park or after-school programs, or civic or youth groups.



Fact vs. opinion

Knowing the difference between fact and fiction is very important, especially when it comes to gangs in your community. Oftentimes, gangs influence young people by providing propaganda or false information to persuade them to join the gang. Look through the news sections of the electronic edition of the *St. Petersburg Times*. Select a few articles of interest and evaluate those articles for facts and opinions. Draw a line down the center of a piece of paper. Label one side Fact and the other Opinion. List statements in each category and discuss with your family and class why these statements fall into that category.



Bullying: A crime of intimidation

Bullying 101

Bullying is a problem that we all should be concerned about because it can seriously affect the emotional, physical and academic well being of students. Nationwide, 30 percent of 6th through 10th grade students have been involved in bullying incidents. A similar rate is found across the state of Florida.

Bullying is defined as conscious, repeated, willful and deliberate hostile behavior, intended to harm others. Bullies choose people whom they perceive as vulnerable to become their targets. They take advantage of this perceived vulnerability to create an imbalance of power over those they target.

Sometimes bullying is easy to notice, but, at other times, it may be more difficult to detect. Bullying occurs in many different forms, with varying levels of severity. When repeated, deliberate and willful, bullying behaviors may include:

Direct Bullying:

- Hitting, tripping, shoving, beating up
- Verbal threats, persistent taunting, insults
- Demanding money, property or some service to be performed

Indirect Bullying:

- Rejecting, excluding, isolating a target
- Humiliating a target in front of friends
- Manipulating friends and relationships
- Sending hurtful or threatening notes, e-mail, text messages or other types of communication
- Blackmailing, terrorizing, posing dangerous dares
- Developing or contributing to a website devoted to taunting, ranking or degrading a target

Dealing with bullying

Are you or a friend being bullied at school?

Here are some tips for dealing with bullying:

- If you are bullied at school, tell your parents, teacher, school counselor or principal. Telling is not tattling.
- Don't fight back. Don't try to bully those who bully you.
- Try not to show anger or fear.
- Calmly tell the student to stop ... or say nothing and then walk away.
- Use humor, if this is easy for you to do.
- Try to avoid situations in which bullying is likely to happen.
 - o Avoid areas of the school where there are not many students or teachers around.

Think about it

Too often, people just don't take bullying seriously – or not until the sad and sometimes scary stories are revealed.

- Young people who bully are more likely than those who don't bully to skip school and drop out of school. They are also more likely to smoke, drink alcohol and get into fights.
- Students who are the victims of bullying often skip school because of fear.
- Children who bully are more likely to vandalize property.

Source: U.S. Department of Health and Human Services

- o Make sure you aren't alone in the bathroom or locker room.
- o Sit near the front of the bus.
- o Don't bring expensive things or a lot of money to school.
- o Sit with a group of friends at lunch.
- o Take a different route through hallways or walk with friends or a teacher to your classes.

Source: U.S. Department of Health and Human Services

Take a stand

What do *you* do when you see someone being bullied at school? Is it your job to help? Think about how *you* might feel if the bullying were happening to *you*. You and other kids can lend a hand, even when you aren't close friends with the kids who are bullied. Your school will be a better place if you help stop bullying. And making your school a better place is everyone's job!

- Speak out. Don't just stand there and watch bullying take place; say something.
- Say kind words to the child who is being bullied. Help that person understand that it's not his or her fault. Be a friend.
- Tell the student who is being bullied to talk to someone about what happened.

Adult call to action

Problems in life are inevitable. Solving them is a learnable skill. When conflicts occur, parents can teach their children a lot by setting up "family meetings" where problems are outlined, possible solutions discussed and decisions made. A calm discussion often can help people realize their needs and how they may get more of what they want by participating in the listening as well as the talking portion of the discussion. Trust, commitment to solutions and teamwork are often the byproduct of family meetings.

- Pay attention to the other kids who see the bullying. These people are called “bystanders.”
- Adults at school can help. Ask them to help keep you safe after telling. Tell an adult – at school:
 - o Teacher
 - o School counselor
 - o Cafeteria aide
 - o School nurse
 - o Principal
 - o Bus driver
 - o School resource officer

Source: U.S. Department of Health and Human Services

Bullying Resources

Bullying.org
bullying.org

Take a Stand. Lend A Hand. Stop Bullying Now
stopbullyingnow.hrsa.gov

National Crime Prevention Council
ncpc.org

National Education Association Bullying Awareness Campaign
nea.org/tools/30437.htm

National Violence Prevention Resource Center
safeyouth.gov

Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention
ncjrs.org

California Department of Education
cde.ca.gov/lr/ss/se/bullyres.asp

Cyber bullying resources:
cyberbully.org
wiredsafety.org



Speaking out
Think about bullying and the ideas presented on these pages. Does bullying go on in your school, home or neighborhood? Can it be avoided? Have you observed an unjust action or behavior? What did you do? If you could go back in time and revisit that moment, would you handle it differently? Why is it sometimes difficult for people to speak out or act against wrongdoing? Share your thoughts on the NIE Blogging Zone. Go to tampabay.com/nie. Click on NIE Blog and then go to the 2010 Tough Decisions category. Look for an article in the *St. Petersburg Times* where bullying, in some form, is an issue. Make a chart listing the issues presented in the article, what actions were taken and what actions could have been taken for a more positive result.

Pasco County Schools: Standing up for students!

The District School Board of Pasco County does not tolerate bullying in schools or school campuses, school-sponsored transportation, school-related or school-sponsored events, or through the use of data or computer software that is accessed through a computer, computer system or computer network of the District.

Student Services recognizes the consequences of bullying and encourages schools to utilize one or more of the numerous strategies to prevent bullying in our schools. Here’s how the District School Board of Pasco County is addressing bullying.

- Implement research-based bullying prevention programs
- Offer regular trainings to raise awareness concerning bullying issues
- Provide clear rules and regulations about bullying
- Allow students to collaborate with teachers in the development of classroom rules and guidelines against bullying behavior
- Establish a clear plan of action should bullying take place to ensure that students know how to respond safely
- Encourage students to seek help and to report bullying to a trusted adult such the principal, guidance counselor, other faculty or staff member, parent or relative, etc.

Source: District School Board of Pasco County, Student Services; “U.S. DOE: Preventing bullying: A manual for schools and communities” (1998).

For further information, contact:
District School Board of Pasco County – Student Services



Making positive choices

Taking ownership

Personal responsibility means taking ownership of your life, your actions and your future. Sounds simple, right? Sometimes making decisions and taking ownership of those decisions can be challenging, but, in the end, it is worth the challenge. It has always been difficult being a teenager, but it seems like today's teens face many more challenges than ever before: drug and alcohol use, peer pressure, bullying, gangs, eating disorders, mental health problems – the list seems endless. It is important to know you are not alone. It also is important to remember that decisions you make today can affect your future, especially when it comes to illegal or negative behaviors.

Accepting personal responsibility includes:

- Acknowledging that you are solely responsible for the choices in your life
- Accepting that you are responsible for what you choose to feel or think
- Accepting that you choose the direction for your life
- Accepting that you cannot blame others for the choices you have made
- Tearing down the mask of defense or rationale for why others are responsible for who you are, what has happened to you and what you are bound to become
- Pointing the finger of responsibility back to yourself and away from others when you are discussing the consequences of your actions
- Realizing that you determine your feelings about any events or actions addressed to you, no matter how negative they seem
- Recognizing that you are your best cheerleader; it is not reasonable or healthy for you to depend on others to make you feel good about yourself
- Not feeling sorry for the “bum deal” you have been handed, but taking hold of your life and giving it direction and reason
- Taking an honest inventory of your strengths, abilities, talents, virtues and positive points
- Developing positive, self-affirming, self-talk scripts to enhance your personal development and growth
- Letting go of blame and anger toward those in your past who did the best they could, given the limitations of their knowledge, background and awareness
- Working out anger, hostility, pessimism and depression over past hurts, pains, abuse, mistreatment and misdirection

Source: James J. Messina, Ph.D., director of psychological services at St. Joseph's Children's Hospital in Tampa



SADD: Students Against Destructive Decisions

Positive peer pressure, role modeling and environmental strategies can prevent students from making destructive decisions and set a healthier, safer course for their lives. This is the mission of Students Against Destructive Decisions (SADD) clubs in Pasco County schools. SADD was founded on the simple philosophy that young people, empowered to help each other, are the most effective force in prevention.

SADD clubs across Pasco County are students helping students make positive decisions about challenges in their



everyday lives.

Gulf High School's SADD club participated in the Homecoming Parade and in the Christmas Parade with McGruff the Crime Dog.

Wiregrass Ranch High School's SADD chapter hosted a flag football tournament fundraiser that was incorporated into Suicide Awareness/ Anti-Drug Use week.

A motivational speaker from Pinellas County, Bobby Petrocelli, spoke of personal triumph and hope following a devastating tragedy in his life. One night he went to bed in



Responsibility and respect in action

When people become famous, many kids look up to those people. Becoming a role model for another person is a great way to influence good behavior. Look in the electronic edition of the *St. Petersburg Times* and find a person who is a good role model. You might even find good examples on the comics pages. Make a list of reasons this individual is a good role model. Next, pretend you are going to interview this person for your school newspaper. Write out six questions that you would ask this person about being a role model. Trade questions with a friend and answer them as you think the role model would. Share your thoughts about the characteristics of a good role model on the NIE Blogging Zone. Go to tampabay.com/nie and click on the NIE Blog link. Go to the 2010 Tough Decisions category to share your thoughts.



suburban America, a happy man with a loving wife. But when he woke up dazed in his kitchen, his wife was dead and his life forever changed. The pickup truck that crashed through his bedroom wall was driven by a man whose blood alcohol level was twice the legal limit.

Centennial Middle School hosted the First Annual Cyclone Rally Against Underage Drinking. Panelists included Judge Pat Siracusa, Sergeant Larry Kraus of the Florida Highway Patrol, Dr. Lillian Smith, attorney Dennis Alfonso, members of the SADD club, Saint Leo University SAID (Students Against Irresponsible Decisions) and ASAP.

Doing the right thing

Kids, here are some fun things you can do to stay healthy and out of harm's way:

Join an after-school extracurricular activity, such as a sport or club.

Find an enjoyable hobby that you can do safely in a fun and friendly environment, such as riding a bike, playing a sport with some friends or jogging in your neighborhood or at your school track.

Do your homework, study, stay in school and keep your grades up. By maintaining good academic performance, you can set better goals for yourself for the future.

Adult
call to action

Parents, you can make a difference in the life of your child. By encouraging your child to dare to dream, you can encourage him or her to have a better future. Children need boundaries. Whether they say they like it or not, most children want to know where the limits are. Parents must be aware of the behavior and activities of their children. Remember to keep the lines of communication open and be a positive role model. Get involved in your children's education and encourage them to stay in school. Teach your children to set positive goals, to hold high standards and to prepare for a positive future.

After School Activities

Are you looking for some fun activities to do?
Check out these ideas:

- Decorate a clay pot and plant a flower, herb or tomato plant. Nurture it and watch it grow.
- Set up an obstacle course in your back yard.
- Go on a nature walk and study birds, leaves and wildflowers. Try to identify them. Make a notebook of everything you learned.
- Tie dye your bed sheets or T-shirts.
- Dig up your family's history and make a family tree, research online, talk to your grandparents, look through old photo albums, etc.
- Make a scrapbook of everything you do after school.
- Get up early and watch the sunrise.
- Get a part-time job or internship (with parent permission).
- Become a photographer.
- Go to a summer camp.
- Start a band.
- Make new sandwiches and put the recipes in a book for your friends.
- Volunteer for a community organization.
- Learn another language.
- Build a tree house.
- Attend a concert.
- Have a family-and-friends game night.
- Go kayaking or learn to surf.
- Discover a favorite new author.
- Visit local museums.
- Learn a new sport.
- Make a bird feeder by rolling a pinecone in peanut butter, then in bird seed. Hang it from a tree with string.
- Learn how to paint or sculpt.
- Start a collection of something you like (baseball cards, coins, books, etc.).
- Redecorate your room.
- Learn to play chess or guitar.
- Check out programs at your local library.
- Go on a picnic with your friends.
- Start a journal and write in it every day.
- Go to a sports event.

ALCOHOL: a dangerous drug

Alcohol and your developing body

Did you know that alcohol is a drug? It is a depressant that is created from fermented organic sources, such as grapes, grains and berries. Alcohol affects every part of the body. It is carried through the bloodstream to the brain, stomach, liver, kidneys and muscles. Although alcohol is absorbed very quickly (as short as five to 10 minutes), it can stay in the body for several hours.

Alcohol affects the central nervous system and brain. As a result, it can make users relax and feel more comfortable, or it can make people more aggressive. Unfortunately, it also lowers a person's inhibitions, which can set the drinker up for embarrassing or dangerous behavior. In fact, according to the National Institute on Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism, each year approximately 5,000 young people under the age of 21 die as a result of underage drinking.

Source: Parents. The Anti-Drug.



health problems and fatal accidents. Binge drinkers are 14 times more likely to report alcohol-impaired driving than non-binge drinkers. About 90 percent of the alcohol consumed by young people under the age of 21 in the United States is in the form of binge drinks.

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention reports that young people who drink alcohol are more likely to experience social, school and legal problems.

Source: Florida Department of Children and Families and U.S. Department of Health and Human Services and Substance Abuse and Mental Health

Binge drinking

Binge drinking is a common pattern of alcohol abuse. The National Institute of Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism defines binge drinking as a pattern of drinking that brings a person's blood alcohol concentration (BAC) to 0.08 percent or above. This typically happens when men consume five or more drinks and when women consume four or more drinks in about two hours.

The dangers of binge drinking are extensive. In addition to killing brain cells and damaging the liver, binge drinking is associated with many

Adult call to action

It is important that teens know that every behavior has a consequence. Some consequences are positive and some are negative. Some occur naturally, such as failing a test for which you have not studied or not being able to afford the admission price to somewhere fun because you didn't save any money for later. Consequences that relate to misbehavior need to be applied, so a child learns from his or her mistakes, such as increasing or decreasing privileges when children handle or mishandle responsibility. Consistency is often more important than severity.



70% OF US

KNOW THAT ALCOHOL DOESN'T MAKE YOU A BETTER DANCER

In a recent survey, 70% of Pasco County students didn't use alcohol in the past month

Myths vs. facts about drinking

Myth: Coffee can sober up someone who has had too much to drink.

Fact: Only time sobers. It takes about one hour to oxidize each drink.

Myth: Hard liquor is more intoxicating than beer or wine.

Fact: A 12-ounce can of beer, a five-ounce glass of wine and a 12-ounce wine cooler contain the same amount of alcohol and the same intoxication potential as 1½ ounces of liquor.

Myth: Someone who has had too much to drink will look intoxicated.

Fact: Someone's physical appearance can be misleading. One drink can impair someone's ability to drive. Judgment is the first thing affected when someone has been drinking and important motor skills are next.

Parents who host lose the most!



The rule for parents is simple: Do not provide alcohol to minors. The Pasco County Alliance for Substance Abuse Prevention (ASAP) is sending out the message this year not to host parties for teens. Providing alcohol to minors is a second-degree misdemeanor in the state of Florida.

Fortunately, most parents do not provide alcohol to youth. In 2008, 86.2 percent of Pasco students reported their parents felt it would be wrong or very wrong for students to drink alcohol regularly (2008, Florida Youth Substance Abuse Survey).

This is good news. Most parents are aware of the risks associated with teen drinking. For teens, alcohol contributes to the four leading causes of deaths: motor vehicle crashes, unintentional injuries, homicide and suicide (Surgeons General's Call to Action).

Allowing youth to drink in your home sends the wrong message. There is the belief by some parents that they would rather have their kids drink in their own home, where they can be supervised. However, teens' brains are still developing until their mid-20s. If teens are allowed to consume alcohol at home, even if told this is the only place they are allowed to drink, the reality is they will most likely not get this message.

In 2007, 27.2 percent of Florida youth under the age of 18 reported riding in a car in the past 30 days with someone who had been drinking and 10.2

percent reported driving in the past 30 days after drinking (2007, Youth Risk Behavior Surveillance System).

According to the Florida Department of Highway Safety and Motor Vehicles, in 2008 there were 544 alcohol-related motor vehicle crashes in Pasco County, including 422 injuries. There were 36 alcohol-related motor vehicle fatalities.

So this year, when a teen asks you to provide him or her alcohol, remember the risks. Nobody wins when you host an open house party or provide alcohol to minors. Remember, the adult who hosts stands to lose the most. Your party. Your house. Your guests. Your responsibility.

Cost of underage drinking in Pasco County

\$20,005,000	Motor Vehicle Crashes
\$2,994,000	Drowning
\$41,000	Burns
\$1,667,000	Fetal Alcohol Syndrome
\$6,722,000	Risky Sexual Behavior
\$4,000,000	Poisoning
\$1,442,000	Suicides and Suicide Attempts
\$6,712,000	Property Crimes
\$23,119,000	Violent Crimes

TOTAL COST: \$65.6 MILLION

"Economic Costs of Underage Drinking in Florida" report, 2007



Think about it

- It's no secret that society provides mixed messages about alcohol. You should know that drinking, especially underage drinking, can have serious consequences. The teenage brain is still developing. Alcohol can impair the parts of the brain that control the following:
- Motor coordination – This includes the ability to walk or drive.
 - Impulse control – Drinking lowers inhibitions and increases the chances that a person will do something that he or she will regret when sober.
 - Memory – Impaired recollection and even blackouts can occur when too much alcohol has been consumed.
 - Judgment and decision-making capacity – Drinking may lead young people to engage in risky behaviors that can result in illness, injury and even death.

Source: Substance Abuse and Mental Health Administration



Did you know?

Alcohol is the most common drug of abuse in Pasco County, the state of Florida and the nation. The good news is the majority of young people choose not to drink. Sixty percent of Pasco youth say that they did not drink alcohol in the past 30 days, according to the 2008 Florida Youth Substance Abuse Survey.

Know the facts

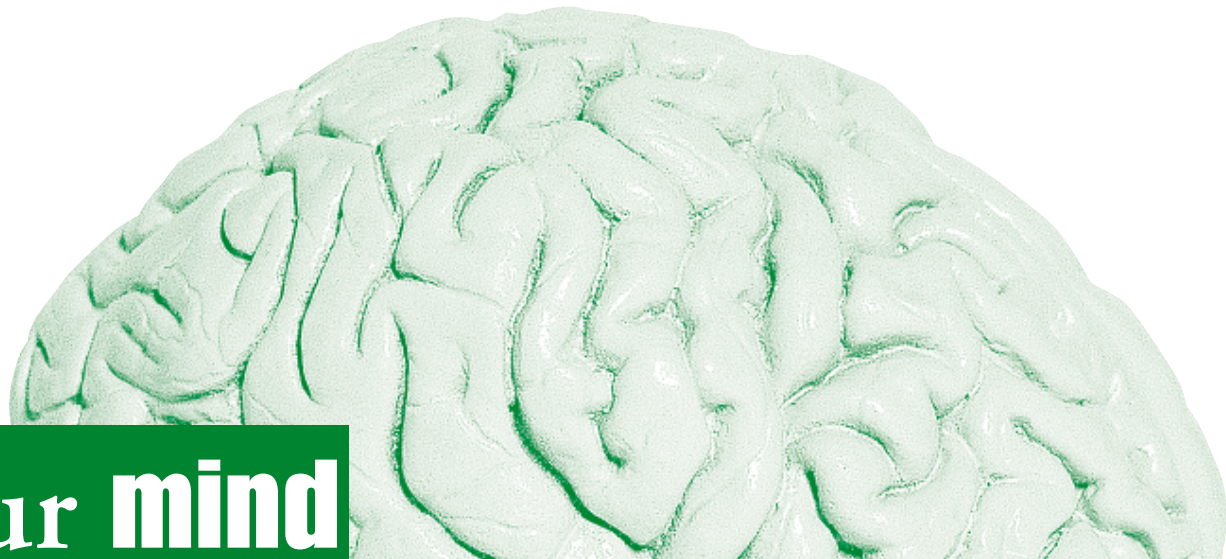
In Florida, it is illegal for anyone under age 21 to drive with any alcohol in his or her system; a blood alcohol level (BAL) of 0.02 percent or higher can lead to a six-month driver's license suspension. Driving with a BAL of 0.08, or under the influence of any amount of alcohol and/or drugs, may result in a Driving Under the Influence (DUI) arrest. It is illegal for a person under the age of 21 to purchase or possess alcoholic beverages and for anyone to purchase or provide alcohol for persons under the age of 21. Sale of alcoholic beverages to underage individuals is a second-degree misdemeanor.



Monitoring advertisements

A drug is any non-food substance, including tobacco, that, when put into the body, changes the way the body or mind works. Newspapers, the Internet and television frequently contain advertising for smoking or smoking substitutes. Monitor the *St. Petersburg Times* and your favorite television station for a week. In your journal, write down each time you see an advertisement for tobacco or a tobacco alternative. Do you think you are being bombarded with these images? What is the message that is being conveyed in these advertisements? Share your thoughts and what you have learned on the NIE Blogging

Zone. Go to tampabay.com/nie. Click on the NIE Blog link and then go to the 2010 Tough Decisions category.



Wasting your mind is a terrible thing

Although you may think it is funny to be wasted, wasting your brain is no laughing matter. No matter how you look at it, drugs are dangerous and can have long-term effects on your body and future. Experimentation with alcohol and drugs during adolescence may be common, but it is risky. Teenagers often don't see the link between their actions today and the consequences tomorrow. They also have a tendency to feel indestructible and immune to the problems that others experience. Using any drug at a young age, including alcohol and nicotine, has negative health effects. While some teens will experiment and stop, others will develop a dependency or addiction.

Source: American Academy of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry

Your brain on drugs

Drugs are chemicals. They work in the brain by tapping into its communication system and interfering with the way nerve cells normally send, receive and process information. In fact, some drugs can change the brain in ways that last long after the person has stopped taking drugs, maybe even permanently.

All drugs of abuse – nicotine, cocaine, marijuana – affect the brain's "reward" circuit. Normally, the reward



circuit responds to pleasurable experiences by releasing the neurotransmitter dopamine, which creates feelings of pleasure and tells the brain that this is something important – pay attention and remember it. Drugs hijack this system, causing unusually large amounts of dopamine to flood the system. Sometimes, this lasts for a long time compared to what happens when a natural reward stimulates dopamine.

Source: The National Institute on Drug Abuse

Teen violence and drugs

Did you know teens who use drugs are almost twice as likely to engage in violent behavior, steal, abuse other drugs and join gangs as compared to teens who do not use drugs?

While most young people seek acceptance or belonging through positive family and peer relationships and extra-curricular activities, other teens are vulnerable to falling in with a dangerous crowd, which can lead to drug use, other risky behaviors or even joining a gang.

Source: Parents. The Anti-Drug.

Drugs 101: Know the facts

Anabolic-androgenic steroids are usually synthetic substances similar to the male sex hormone testosterone. Health consequences from abusing anabolic steroids can include prematurely stunted growth, jaundice (yellowish coloring of skin, tissues and body fluids), fluid retention, high blood pressure, increases in LDL (bad cholesterol), decreases in HDL (good cholesterol), severe acne, trembling, and liver and kidney tumors. Steroid abuse can have an effect on behavior, including mood swings and manic-like symptoms leading to violence.

Inhalants are chemical vapors that people inhale on purpose to get high. The vapors produce mind-altering and sometimes disastrous, effects. Inhalants affect your brain,

Pasco stats

Of the young people surveyed in Pasco County in 2008, 24 percent claimed to have used marijuana or hashish on at least one occasion in their lifetime. However, past 30-day use is substantially lower. Overall, 13 percent of surveyed Pasco County youth reported the use of marijuana or hashish in the past 30 days.

Source: Florida Youth Substance Abuse Survey 2008

Think about it



According to the American Academy of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry, teenagers abuse a variety of drugs, both legal and illegal. Legally available drugs include alcohol, prescribed medications, inhalants (fumes from glues, aerosols and solvents) and over-the-counter cough, cold, sleep and diet medications. The most commonly used illegal drugs are marijuana (pot), stimulants (cocaine, crack and speed), LSD, PCP, opiates, heroin and designer drugs (ecstasy).

heart, liver, lungs and kidneys. Chronic use can lead to muscle wasting and reduced muscle tone and strength. Inhalants can cause sudden death. After alcohol, tobacco and marijuana, the most commonly used drug among Florida students is inhalants.

Stimulants are a class of drugs that elevate mood, increase feelings of well-being and increase energy and alertness. Cocaine, methamphetamine, amphetamines, nicotine, MDMA, Ritalin and Adderall are examples of stimulants. Short-term effects of stimulants can include increased body temperature, heart rate and blood pressure; dilated pupils; nausea; blurred vision; muscle spasms and confusion. Long-term stimulant abuse can lead to paranoia, aggressiveness, extreme anorexia, thinking problems, visual and auditory hallucinations, delusions and severe dental problems.

Depressants are substances that can slow normal brain function. While different depressants work in unique ways, they produce a drowsy or calming effect that can help those suffering from anxiety or sleep disorders. Alcohol, Valium and Xanax are examples of depressants. Physical side effects include dilated pupils, slurred speech, relaxed muscles, intoxication, loss of motor coordination, fatigue, respiratory depression and lowered blood pressure. Prolonged abuse of depressants can result in addiction, chronic sleep problems, respiratory depression, respiratory arrest and death.

Hallucinogens change the way the brain interprets time, reality and the environment around you. They also affect the way you move, react to situations, think, hear and see. Examples of hallucinogens are LSD, Psilocybin, Phencyclidine and ecstasy. The use of hallucinogens leads to an increase in heart rate and blood pressure. Hallucinogens can put you in a coma. They also can cause heart and lung failure. Hallucinogens affect your well-being and your self control. Hallucinogens can cause flashbacks. Effects of the drugs, including hallucinations, can occur weeks, months and even years after use.

Sources: *Parents. The Anti-Drug.*, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration and the National Institute on Drug Abuse

The truth about marijuana

Myth: Marijuana is harmless.

Fact: Marijuana is the most widely used illicit drug among young people today and is more potent than ever. Marijuana use can lead to a host of significant health, social, learning and behavioral problems at a crucial time in a young person's development. Getting high also impairs judgment, which can lead to risky decision-making on issues such as sex, criminal activity or riding with someone who is under the influence of drugs or alcohol.

Myth: You can't get addicted to marijuana.

Fact: Don't be fooled by popular beliefs. Kids can get hooked on pot. Research shows that marijuana use can lead to addiction and dependence.

Myth: There's not much parents can do to stop their kids from experimenting with marijuana.

Fact: Most parents are surprised to learn that they are the most powerful influence on their children when it comes to drugs. But, it's true, so this message needs to start with parents. Kids need to hear how risky marijuana use can be. By staying involved, knowing what their kids are doing and setting limits with clear rules and consequences, parents can keep their kids drug free.



Myth: There are no long-term consequences to marijuana use.

Fact: Research shows that a kid who smokes marijuana is more likely to engage in risky behavior that can jeopardize his or her future, such as getting in trouble with the law or losing scholarship money.

Myth: Marijuana isn't as popular as other drugs, such as ecstasy, among teens today.

Fact: Kids use marijuana far more than any other illicit drug. Among kids who use drugs, 60 percent use only marijuana.

Myth: Young kids won't be exposed to marijuana.

Fact: Not only are they exposed to marijuana, they are using it. Between 1991 and 2001, the number of eighth-graders who used marijuana doubled, from one in 10 to one in five.

Drug news

News stories about drug busts, features about how people are trying to rebuild their lives after involvement with illegal drugs, and editorials and editorial cartoons that deal with the current illegal drug crisis are prominent in the news. Look for articles about drugs and drug abuse in the electronic edition of the *St. Petersburg Times*. You can use the e-mail notification feature to monitor this subject over the course of a few weeks. What is the main information being conveyed in these articles? Keep a journal of the main ideas of the articles. Be sure to jot down the who, what, where, when, why and how information in these articles. Share your

thoughts about what you have learned with your class and on the NIE Blogging Zone. Go to tampabay.com/nie. Click on the NIE Blog link and then go to the 2010 Tough Decisions category.



Adult call to action

Be a good role model for your children. Telling them "Do as I say, not as I do" doesn't work. You can help your child avoid negative behaviors such as smoking, drinking, drugs and sexual activity and adopt positive behaviors such as tolerance, patience, hard work and respect. When children learn these fundamentals, they are more likely to make better choices because nobody listens to a hypocrite.

Rx and OTC dangers



A growing and dangerous trend

Prescription drug abuse by teens and young adults is a serious problem in the United States. The Partnership for a Drug Free America reports:

- 1 in 5 teens has abused a prescription (Rx) pain medication
- 1 in 5 teens reports abusing prescription stimulants and tranquilizers
- 1 in 10 teens has abused cough medication

Many teens think these drugs are safe because they have lawful uses, but taking them without a prescription to get high or self-medicate is dangerous and addictive.

Prescription drug abuse: Dangerous and illegal

Some young people experiment with prescription drugs because they think they will help them have more fun, lose weight, fit in or even be more focused at school. It is a myth that prescription drugs are safer and less addictive than street drugs. Just because you find the drugs in a medicine cabinet, it does not mean you can safely try them.

Prescription drugs are prescribed for a specific person from a medical doctor. The doctor has examined the patient and discussed other drug interaction and proper dosage amounts. Like all drug abuse, using prescription drugs for the wrong reasons has serious risks for a person's health.

The dangers of prescription drug abuse can be amplified if people take drugs in a way those drugs weren't intended to be used. For example, Ritalin may seem harmless on the surface, but it can be toxic if taken in excessive amounts. The most common result of prescription drug abuse is addiction. Many drugs have to be prescribed by a doctor because some of them are fairly addictive. That is the reason most doctors usually will not renew a prescription unless they see the patient.

Taking drugs without a prescription, sharing a prescription drug with friends or purchasing a prescription from a friend is illegal.

Source: TeensHealth



A fatal development

Since 2004, poisoning has overtaken firearms as a leading cause of injury death in the United States. Close to 70 percent of all poisoning deaths are due to unintentional drug overdoses. In 2007 and 2008, 55.9 percent of people 12 or older who used prescription pain relievers "nonmedically" reported they got the pain reliever they most recently used from a friend or family member.

Abuse of prescription drugs to get high has become increasingly prevalent among teens and young adults. Abuse of prescription painkillers now ranks second – only behind marijuana – as the nation's most prevalent illegal drug problem.

According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, the highest increase in deaths by drug overdose

Did you know?



Every day, 2,500 young people ages 12 to 17 abuse a pain reliever for the very first time. More teens abuse prescription drugs than any other illicit drug except marijuana. In 2008, more than 2.1 million teens ages 12 to 17 reported abusing prescription drugs. Among 12- and 13-year-olds, prescription drugs are the drug of choice. Because these drugs are so readily available and many teens believe they are a safe way to get high, teens who wouldn't otherwise touch illicit drugs might abuse prescription drugs.

Source: Parents. The Anti-Drug

Adult call to action

Listening is the stronger part of a conversation, especially with a child. Making sure you understand how the child reacts to what is being said is just as important as getting the information right. Make sure you get all the information, because children follow directions better when adults include them in the discussion and decision. They might just have some good ideas on how to get things done. Children who can carry on a good conversation, especially with adults, generally are more self-assured and successful in life.

Think about it



President Obama said, "Don't be afraid to ask questions. Don't be afraid to ask for help when you need it. . . . Asking for help isn't a sign of weakness, it's a sign of strength because it shows you have the courage to admit when you don't know something and that then allows you to learn something new. So find an adult that you trust – a parent, a grandparent or teacher, a coach or a counselor – and ask them to help you stay on track to meet your goals. . . ." What are your goals? What do you want to do with your life? Do you want to be successful, have a family, help others? Write down your thoughts about the future in your journal and share them with others on the NIE Blogging Zone. Go to tampabay.com/nie. Click on the NIE Blog link and then go to the 2010 Tough Decisions category.

Pasco County Schools: Standing up for students!

People learn best when their body and mind are healthy. The District School Board of Pasco County recognizes that success in school and life begins with wellness and healthy living. Nutrition, exercise and making smart decisions about what goes into the body involve taking a stand against the use of alcohol, tobacco and other drugs.

All members of the Pasco County school community are committed to maintaining a safe and healthy environment for learning and living. Here's how the District School Board of Pasco County is working to prevent young people from getting involved with unhealthy substances:

- Establish strict guidelines and policies for addressing possession, use, sale or distribution of alcohol, tobacco and other drugs
- Offer support services such as interventions, mentorships, referrals and counseling
- Implement practices for monitoring the security of the school, school grounds and school transportation
- Work closely with community agencies to provide supervised after-school activities
- Provide opportunities for participation in school-sponsored extracurricular activities such as service organizations, clubs, music and athletics
- Encourage participation in community-based athletic clubs and teams
- Employ trained and certified Student Services personnel such as guidance counselors, school social workers, school psychologists and school nurses
- Deliver character education and classroom lessons
- Offer an after-hours education and intervention program to provide tools and strategies for alcohol- and drug-free living
- Partner with the Pasco Sheriff's Office to contract for School Resource Officers in secondary schools
- Encourage students to seek help from a trusted adult such the principal, guidance counselor, other faculty or staff member, parent or relative, etc.



between 1999 and 2004 was among persons age 15-24, – an increase of 113.3 percent.

Sources: National Center for Health Statistics and Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention

Rx dangers

- Teens are turning away from street drugs and using prescription drugs to get high.
- Next to marijuana, the most common illegal drugs teens are using to get high are prescription medications.
- Teens are abusing prescription drugs because they believe the myth that these drugs provide a medically safe high.
- The majority of teens get prescription drugs easily and for free, often from friends or relatives.
- Girls are more likely than boys to intentionally abuse prescription drugs to get high.
- Pain relievers such as OxyContin and Vicodin are the most commonly abused prescription drugs by teens.
- Adolescents are more likely than young adults to become dependent on prescription medication.

Source: Office of National Drug Control Policy

OTC dangers

There is no doubt that abusing prescription drugs is dangerous. Sometimes people don't think about drugs that you can buy over the counter (OTC) as dangerous, but they can be, especially cough and cold remedies and sleeping pills.

A single large dose of over-the-counter painkillers or depressants can cause breathing difficulty that can lead to

death. Stimulant abuse can lead to hostility, paranoia or the potential for heart system failure or fatal seizures. Even in small doses, depressants and painkillers have subtle effects on motor skills, judgment and the ability to learn.

The abuse of OTC cough and cold remedies can cause blurred vision, nausea, vomiting, dizziness, coma and even death. Many teens report mixing prescription drugs, OTC drugs and alcohol, which is an especially dangerous combination. Using these drugs in combination can cause respiratory failure and death.

Prescription and OTC drug abuse is addictive. Between 1995 and 2005, treatment admissions for prescription painkillers increased more than 300 percent.

Source: Parents. The Anti-Drug.



Resisting peer pressure

Teenagers may encounter situations where they feel pressured to do things that may be harmful to them, such as use illicit drugs, drink or join a gang. Using the cartoons in the *St. Petersburg Times* as models, create a cartoon showing a scenario in which a character uses resistance skills when he or she is pressured to use drugs, drink or join a gang. As a journal writing activity, discuss why it is important for young people to be prepared for situations where they may feel pressured to do something that may have negative effects on their life. Share your thoughts on the NIE Blogging Zone. Go to tampabay.com/nie. Click on the NIE Blog link and then go to the 2010 Tough Decisions category.

You can submit your cartoon to XPI, the NIE online student gallery. Go to tampabay.com/nie and click on the XPI logo for details.

Pasco County Resources

Pasco Alliance for Substance Abuse Prevention (ASAP)

pascoasap.com
727-597-2284

SADD (Students Against Destructive Decisions) Chapter

Contact any neighborhood middle or high school
pasco.k12.fl.us/index.php/school

Pride Integrated Services, Pasco DUI School

Annalisa Baez, program director
7619 Little Road
New Port Richey, Florida 34654
727-847-3411
Services include: Licensed DUI program for Pasco County
D.A.T.E. – First-time drivers 4-hour education course
FREE – Drug/Alcohol awareness education for teens and parents
Basic Driver Improvement – Remove points off your license
Theft Education Course
Basic Substance Abuse Education

BayCare Behavioral Health

Administrative Offices
P.O. Box 428
New Port Richey, FL 34656
Client Registration: 866-762-1743
24-hour Crisis Support
727-849-9988
Services include: mental health, substance abuse and crisis services for adults, children and families. Services include residential, individual and family outpatient and in-home counseling, intensive outpatient and case management.

Crime Stoppers

800-873-TIPS
crimestopperstb.com

Pasco County Health Department

The Pasco County Health Department provides data, information and education in many health-related areas. Call 727-861-5250, ext. 162 for more information.
Teen issues, such as tobacco prevention, summer safety, drug use and abuse, pregnancy prevention, self-esteem, sexual coercion, body piercings and tattoos, can be addressed in any of the following teen clinic locations. Call ahead for an appointment.
New Port Richey – 5640 Main Street 727-841-4425, ext. 1000 (Teen clinics held Wednesdays 1:00 p.m. - 5:00 p.m.)
Hudson – 11611 Denton Avenue 727-861-5661, ext. 1000 (Teen clinics held Tuesdays 1:00 p.m. - 5:00 p.m.)
New Port Richey – 10841 Little Road 727 861-5250, ext. 202
Zephyrhills – 4717 Airport Road 813-780-0740, ext. 4
Land O’Lakes – 4135 Land O’Lakes Blvd. 813- 558-5173, ext. 114
Dade City – 13941 15th Street 352-521-1450, ext. 300

Pasco Sheriff’s Office

pascosheriff.com

Pasco County Schools

District School Board of Pasco County
7227 Land O’Lakes Blvd.
Land O’Lakes, FL 34638
Student Services
813-794-2362
727-774-2362
352-524-2362
pasco.k12.fl.us

Florida Tobacco Quitline:

1-877-U-CAN-NOW
The Quitline is a toll-free telephone-based tobacco-use cessation service.

Florida Council on Compulsive Gambling:

1-888-ADMIT-IT
gamblinghelp.org

Youth and Family Alternatives, Inc.

7524 Plathe Road
New Port Richey, FL 34653
On-site services include prevention and intervention individual and family counseling: CASA (Child and Adolescent Substance Abuse), Project YES (Youth Enrichment Services) and CINS/FINS (Child in Need of Services, Families in Need of Services). See our website for more details: yfainc.org

Premier Community HealthCare Group, Inc. Behavioral Health Center

14027 5th Street
Dade City, FL 33525
352-518-2000
• Psychiatric evaluation
• Medication management & therapy
• Crisis intervention
• Case management
• Pain management
• Individual sessions
• Group sessions
• Smoking cessation
• Most private insurances accepted
• Medicaid accepted
• Medicare accepted
• KidCare accepted

Night and Saturday appointments are available.
Needs assessments with Medicaid and KidCare application assistance are available.