

# Alcohol and Drug Abuse



This document provides an update to information in the *Community Action Network Prescription For Wellness* released in April 2001.

## Highlights

### Alcohol and drug abuse imposes heavy social and economic costs to communities

It is estimated that annually, alcohol and drug abuse costs the Travis County community \$812,280,000 for related health care, education, law enforcement, crime, homelessness, lost productivity, human suffering and loss of lives (2001 CAN Prescription For Wellness). "Drug abuse remains the number one health problem in the U.S" (Robert Wood Johnson Foundation).

### Addiction is a treatable, chronic, progressive disorder

Treatment for alcohol, drug abuse and addiction reduces the need for social, medical and criminal justice systems while strengthening families and helping individuals become healthy and productive citizens. The earlier an alcohol or drug problem is impacted, the greater the benefits and savings (Texas Commission on Alcohol and Drug Abuse, TCADA). Effective treatment is less costly than incarceration and expensive hospitalization (National Institute on Drug Abuse, NIDA).

### Alcohol and drug abuse is preventable!

Alcohol and drug abuse is a preventable behavior (Alan Leshner, Director of the National Institute on Drug Abuse). **A child who reaches age 21 without smoking, abusing alcohol or using drugs is virtually certain never to do so** according to Joseph Califano, Jr., President and Chairman of Center on Addiction and Substance Abuse.

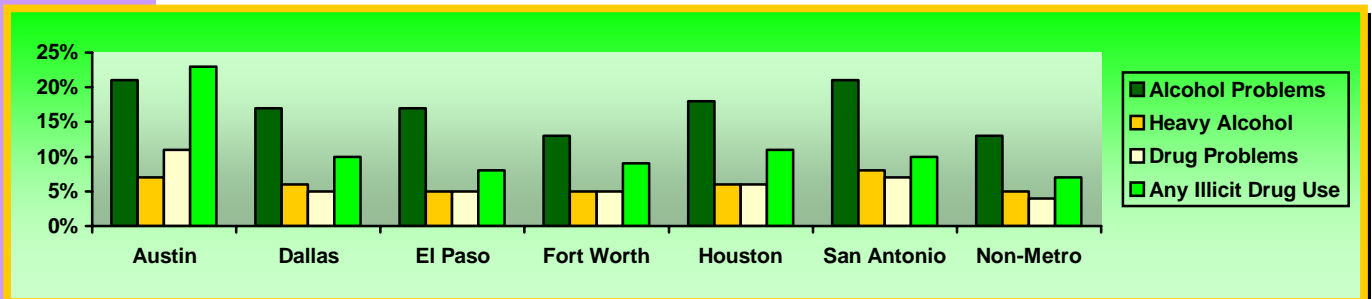
## Overview

### Alcohol and drug abuse in Travis County affects people from all walks of life

Substance abuse imposes high costs on individuals, families, employers, taxpayers and society, and continues to be a primary factor contributing to crime, reduced workforce productivity, human suffering and loss of lives. For example, the cost to Travis County for incarcerating people charged with/convicted of drug or alcohol offenses is roughly \$15 million a year (Travis County Justice and Public Safety, Research and Planning).

**Per Capita, the Austin area has the highest rates of alcohol and illicit drug use and problems in Texas.**

Past Year Prevalence of Alcohol & Drug Use and Problems, by Major Metropolitan Area: Texas: Adults



Source: TCADA 2000 Texas Survey of Substance Use Among Adults

**Positive elements do exist. Current prevention, intervention and treatment services do work and are reducing some of the overall human and economic impacts of substance abuse on Travis County.** Successful prevention, intervention and treatment are based on evidence-centered strategies that utilize best practices, and when incorporated into our service system, ensure accountability, efficiency and effectiveness of services.

**Q: How does alcohol and drug abuse affect us?**

**Health:**

- **Health risk factors related to alcohol and drug abuse disorders include heart disease, stroke, hypertension, some forms of cancer and unintentional injuries which result in death** (CAN Prescription for Wellness, 2001).
- Serious mental illness is highly correlated with substance dependence or abuse (Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration, SAMHSA: Office of Applied Studies)
- 3,888 persons are reported living with AIDS in Travis County. Of these, 29.6% or 1,151 reported substance abuse (Texas Health and Human Services Commission: Surveillance Report).
- During 1999 in Travis County, there were 677 motor vehicle alcohol or drug abuse injury crashes. These crashes resulted in 1,111 non-fatal injuries and 29 deaths (TCADA: Substance Related Motor Vehicle Accidents, Travis County).
- In the year 2000, 415 alcohol and drug related deaths were reported in Travis County (Texas Commission on Alcohol and Drug Abuse, TCADA).

**Alcohol and Drug Related Deaths in Travis County - 2000**

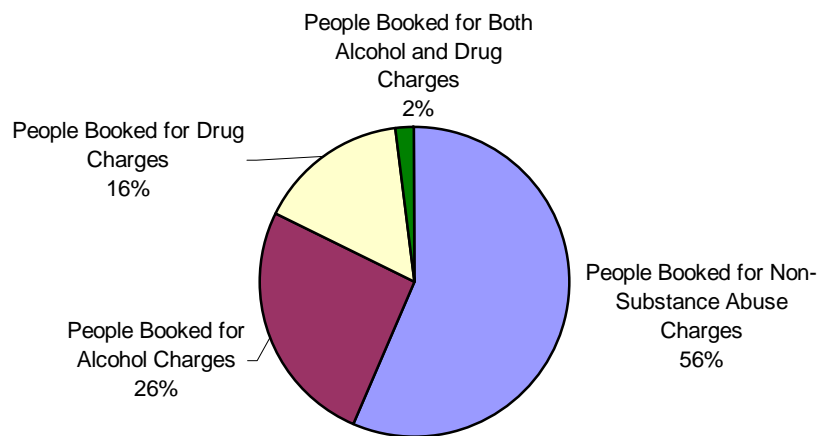
	Alcohol Related Deaths In Travis County			Drug Related Deaths In Travis County		
	Total Alcohol Related Deaths	Direct Alcohol Related Deaths	Indirect Alcohol Related Deaths	Total Drug Related Deaths	Direct Drug Related Deaths	Indirect Drug Related Deaths
Adult/Youth	321	75*	246	Adult only 94	74	20

\*Adult only

Source: Raw Data from 2000 Texas Department of Health Vital Statistics, analyzed by TCADA

**Public Safety**

- **U.S. Department of Justice reports 55% of people convicted and jailed for violent crimes had used alcohol or drugs at the time of the offense.**
- From January through June 2002, there were 27,081 people with 44,895 charges booked into the Travis County Central Booking Facility. **Of these, almost 44% (11,812) people had a substance abuse related charge**, such as public intoxication, driving while intoxicated, possession of marijuana, and manufacture/delivery/sale/possession of controlled substances (Travis County Justice & Public Safety, Research & Planning).



Source: Corrections Management System (the Sheriff's database)

**Domestic and Family Violence**

- In 3 out of 4 cases of domestic violence, the victim reported that alcohol or drugs had been a factor (TCADA).
- **Parental alcohol and drug abuse causes or contributes to 7 out of 10 child abuse or neglect incidents and 3/4 of all foster care placements** (TCADA).

**FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS ABOUT ALCOHOL AND DRUG ABUSE**

### Q: How many people are affected?

- Nationally between 2000 and 2001, youths using drugs between the ages of 12-17 increased from 9.7% to 10.8%, and the percentage of adults age 18-25 increased from 15.9% to 18.8% (2001 National Household Survey on Drug Abuse, NHSDA).
- In 2000, about 16% of all Texas adults had a problem with alcohol and 5 percent had a problem with drugs (TCADA: 2000 Texas Survey of Substance Abuse Use Among Adults).
- In 2001, 20.5% of adults living in the Austin metro area reported alcohol problems and 10.7% reported drug problems (TCADA: 2000 Texas Survey of Substance Abuse Use Among Adults).

### Q: What substances are people using in our community?

- **Texas Commission on Alcohol and Drug Abuse reports that Central Texas has the highest rate of marijuana use in the state.**
- Alcohol is the most widely used substance among Texas students in grades 7-12. However, students at all grade levels have been showing a sharp increase in the use of ecstasy, the club drug. Ecstasy use has increased 63% since 2000 (TCADA: 2002 Texas School Survey).
- Of the Travis County residents admitted to TCADA-funded treatment, 39% had a primary problem with alcohol, 19% with marijuana, 14% with either heroin or crack cocaine, and 5% with powder cocaine. Other problem drugs included amphetamines or methamphetamines, other opiates, hallucinogens, sedatives, tranquilizers, barbiturates, ecstasy and PCP (TCADA).

### Q: Does treatment work?

- Treatment reduces drug use by 40-60%; reduces crime by 40-60%; and increases employment prospects by 40% (NIDA).
- The goal of treatment is to return to productive functioning (NIDA).
- Drug treatment is as successful as treatment of diabetes, asthma and hypertension (NIDA).

### Q: Are there programs in Travis County that treat people for alcohol and drug abuse rather than incarcerate them?

- Currently, there are several community-based drug treatment programs in Travis County that serve as effective alternatives to incarceration.
- There are two drug diversion courts offering innovative, effective treatment for alcohol and drug offenders (Office of National Drug Control Policy, Drug Policy Information Clearinghouse, June 2002).
- The Travis County Adult Drug Court has approximately 350 participants and has been in operation since 1993. The Travis County Juvenile Drug Court has 15 participants.

### Q: Is treatment available to those who need it?

- 287,765 people in Texas aged 12 and older need, but are not receiving, treatment for an illicit drug problem (SAMHSA, Office of Applied Studies).
- TCADA estimates that 195,881 adults in Texas want substance abuse treatment.
- During the year 2001, 2,170 adults and 272 juveniles were admitted to substance abuse treatment facilities in Travis County (TCADA, 2002)
- According to the NHSDA, nationally the number of persons needing but not receiving treatment increased from 3.9 million to 5.0 million.

**The current capacity to treat individuals who need and desire treatment is inadequate to meet the demand for services. Lengthy waiting time for treatment slots results in increased harm, reduced motivation for treatment and greater likelihood for increased crime.**

TRAVIS COUNTY ESTIMATED NEED/GAP ANALYSIS FOR 2001

POPULATION	TOTAL	NEEDING TREATMENT	SEEKING TREATMENT	RECEIVING TREATMENT	GAP
<b>TRAVIS COUNTY</b>	833,797	23,346	8,338	2,724	<b>5,607</b>
YOUTH (0-17)	198,444	5,556	1,984	280	<b>1,704</b>
ADULT (18+)	635,353	17,790	6,353	2314	<b>4,039</b>
<b>HOMELESS PERSONS</b>	6,000	2,258	1,513	558	<b>955</b>

Source: Texas Commission on Alcohol and Drug Abuse, U.S. Census Population 2001 Estimate

## FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS ABOUT ALCOHOL AND DRUG ABUSE

**Q: Is prevention working in our community?**

- Effective prevention programs are cost effective. For every \$1 spent on drug use prevention, communities can save \$4 to \$5 in costs for drug abuse treatment and counseling (Pentz, M.A. "Costs, Benefits and Cost Effectiveness of Comprehensive Drug Abuse Prevention" NIDA Research Monogram).
- The Travis County Underage Drinking Prevention Program conducted over 500 alcohol awareness/anti-DWI presentations to students in seven school districts as well as youth groups and private schools in FY 2002, a 25% increase over FY 2001. Among the other local agencies collaborating in this effort are local police departments, non-profit agencies, colleges and universities.
- In 2002, 15.9% of Texas students reported they had used alcohol in the past year, a 21.3% decrease from 1998. Alcohol use among this age group has shown a steady decline throughout the past decade (TCADA: 2002 Texas School Survey).

**Q: How do people get help?**

- In Travis County, contact United Way of Capital Area's 211 or Austin Travis County MHMR Center's Hotline at 512-472-4357 for local resources.
- Statewide hotline for alcohol and drug abuse resources in your area: 1-877-9-NO DRUG (1-877-966-3784) or [www.drugfreetexas.com](http://www.drugfreetexas.com).
- National hotline for alcohol and drug information and/or treatment resources in our local community:  
1-800-662-HELP M-F 9-3 and Sat and Sun 12-3

**Q: What can I do to help?**

- Volunteer or make a donation to agencies providing prevention and treatment services for alcohol and drug abuse.
- Contact your elected officials to advocate for increased treatment funding/capacity.
- Request that Health Fairs include alcohol and drug awareness issues.

Please see the CAN Urgent Issues Action Plan at [www.caction.org](http://www.caction.org) for additional information about specific and Community-wide approaches to addressing alcohol and drug abuse in our community.

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**Additional Information**

To access the 2001 CAN Prescription For Wellness refer to: [www.caction.org](http://www.caction.org). To obtain a copy of this or any other CAN report, please visit the CAN offices, email Brenda Ahrens at [bahrns@austin.isd.tenet.edu](mailto:bahrns@austin.isd.tenet.edu), call 512-414-8203, or write to The Community Action Network, 1111 W. 6th Street, Suite B220, Austin, Texas 78703.

For regularly updated statistics across all issue areas please see The CAN Community Overview document at [www.caction.org](http://www.caction.org).

This FAQ was created and reviewed by members of the CAN Substance Abuse Planning Partnership.

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CAN Partners: Austin Area Research Organization~Austin Independent School District~Austin Area Human Services Association~Austin Area Interreligious Ministries~Austin Travis County MHMR Center~Capital Metro~City of Austin~Community Justice Council~Greater Austin Chamber of Commerce~Health Partnership 2010~Higher Education Coalition~Travis County~United Way Capital Area~Worksource- Greater Austin Workforce Board

