



MARYLAND ASSOCIATION OF PREVENTION PROFESSIONALS AND ADVOCATES

POSITION STATEMENT ON INHALANT ABUSE

Inhalant abuse is the deliberate inhalation or sniffing of common products found in homes and schools to obtain a “high.”

MAPPA supports age-appropriate education about inhalant abuse for youth ages 4-18. Skills that should be taught and reinforced include (1) careful reading of labels; (2) safety precautions; (3) following product directions; (4) recognition of poisons/toxins; (5) an understanding of the physical and mental effects of inhalation and sniffing; (6) refusal skills; and (7) decision-making skills. Parents, teachers and other adults working with youth should ascertain children’s knowledge at each level and build on existing skills and information.

MAPPA supports naming general categories of substances that are inhaled without naming specific brand names. Information to youth should be specific about the toxic substances that produce “highs” but should not give details on “how to use” or trendy products being abused. Instructors may respond to questions concerning specific products by describing negative effects and consequences. Instructors should not rely on scare tactics but should give young people a clear, factual description of the consequences of abusing these substances.

MAPPA supports data indicating that parents and adults often overlook inhalant abuse. More than nine out of ten parents refuse to believe their children may have ever abused inhalants. (1997 National Household Survey.) In fact, inhalant abuse is the fourth most common form of substance abuse among high school students, behind alcohol, tobacco, and marijuana. Parents, teachers and other adults should receive rigorous education about inhalant abuse. Topics should include:

- Definition of inhalant abuse;
- Effects of inhalant abuse (including permanent brain damage and death);
- Local and national prevalence of inhalant abuse;
- Products that are abused and methods used to inhale them;
- Street terms and current trends;
- Signs and symptoms of inhalant abuse;

- How to talk to a young person about inhalant abuse;
- Where to get help locally if an adult suspects there is a problem;
- Local resources that can offer more information;
- National resource: The National Inhalant Prevention Coalition, 1-800-269-4237.

Education for parents and other adults should stress that young people often abuse toxic substances because they can be found around the home and can be purchased easily by young people, seemingly for legitimate purposes.

MAPPA supports educating all Maryland citizens about inhalant abuse laws. It is unlawful to sniff/inhale certain substances to cause intoxication. It is against the law to provide any person with any substance if the intent is to induce unlawful inhaling or with knowledge that the person will unlawfully inhale the substance. It is also against the law to instruct any other person about how to unlawfully inhale these substances. (Annotated Code of Maryland, Article 27, Sections 301 and 301A.)