

# NavCo Coalition Against Drug Abuse

A Coalition of Concerned Navajo County Residents Banned Together to

- EDUCATE the Community on the methamphetamine & drug crisis
- REHABILITATE those who have fallen into the addiction
- ENFORCE laws pertaining to the spread of meth & drugs in our communities



## PRESS RELEASE

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**For Immediate Release**

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## Teen Smoking Linked to Brain Damage, Alcohol and Drug Use and Mental Illness

The nicotine in tobacco products poses a significant danger of structural and chemical changes in developing brains that can make teens more vulnerable to alcohol and other drug addiction and to mental illness, according to Tobacco: The Smoking Gun, a new white paper released this week by The National Center on Addiction and Substance Abuse (CASA) at Columbia University. The paper was commissioned by The Citizens' Commission to Protect the Truth, a group of all former U.S. Secretaries of Health, Education, and Welfare and of Health and Human Services, all former U.S. Surgeons General, and all former Directors of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

The Commission asked CASA to assemble the scientific evidence of the impact of nicotine on the adolescent brain, conduct original analyses of data from the National Survey on Drug Use and Health (NSDUH) on the relationship between teen smoking, alcohol and illegal drug abuse and addiction and mental health, and issue a report on its findings.

CASA's original analysis of data from the NSDUH finds that teens who smoke are nine times likelier to meet the medical criteria for past year alcohol abuse or dependence and 13 times likelier to meet the medical criteria for abuse and dependence on an illegal drug than teens who don't smoke.

"These findings sound an alarm for parents, teachers, pediatricians and others responsible for children's health that smoking by teens may well signal the fire of alcohol and other drug abuse and mental illnesses such as depression and anxiety disorders," said Joseph A. Califano, Jr., chairman and president of CASA and speaking on behalf of The Citizens' Commission as its chairman. "We have known for a long time that smoking causes deadly and crippling cancers and cardiovascular and respiratory diseases. Now we see the devastating effects that nicotine can have on the developing brains of our children and teens."

**Navajo County Coalition Against Drug-Abuse -**

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<http://www.co.navajo.az.us/courts/drug.aspx>

*Mission Statement:*

To develop a diverse community representation, coordinate a sustained effort in educating and preventing the use and abuse of crystal meth through a plan for change in local social norms through prevention, treatment and vigorous enforcement of existing laws.

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CASA found that compared to 12- to 17-year olds who don't smoke, those who do are more than five times likelier to drink and 13 times likelier to use marijuana than nonsmokers. Compared to those who never smoked, those who began smoking at age 12 or younger are:

- More than three times likelier to binge drink;
- Nearly 15 times likelier to smoke marijuana; and
- Nearly seven times likelier to use other illegal drugs such as heroin and cocaine.

The CASA analysis also found that among teens ages 12 to 17, twice as many smokers as nonsmokers suffered from symptoms of depression in the past year. Teens who reported early initiation of smoking were more likely to experience serious feelings of hopelessness, depression and worthlessness in the past year. The report also notes that smoking at a young age is related to panic attacks, general anxiety disorders and post-traumatic stress disorder.

To read Tobacco: The Smoking Gun and CASA's full press release and summary, visit [www.casacolumbia.org](http://www.casacolumbia.org)

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