

Family night at Dakota to focus on dangers of marijuana

Published: Monday, October 20, 2014
The Macomb Voice Newspaper

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A Family Night Out event focusing on the latest marijuana research will be held at Dakota High School Nov. 17. (Submitted Photos)

A frank discussion about the basics of marijuana, including medical and non-medical, detection in youth and physical effects, will be the focus of a Family Night Out event at Dakota High School.

Marijuana 101 is a free event sponsored by the Dakota High School Student Assistance Center and the Chippewa Valley Coalition for Youth and Families. The event will be held on Nov. 17 from 6:30 p.m. to 8:30 p.m. in the community room of Dakota High School in Macomb Township. Entrance will be through the north doors of the school. Parents are encouraged to attend with or without their children, but children younger than sixth grade are not encouraged to attend. The event includes pizza for participants. Registration is requested by Nov. 14 by calling (586) 723-2872 or emailing slange@cvs.k12.mi.us.

Dakota High School Student Assistance Specialist Stephanie Lange will offer current research information about marijuana, as well as dangers it can pose to youth. Lange described the Marijuana 101 event as having a different slant than other marijuana or drug focused Family Nights Out held in the past. Previously, the focus has been about drug addiction and recovery, Lange said.

“We will talk about youth use of marijuana using some of the latest research out of the National Institute on Drug Abuse,” Lange said.

The event is aimed particularly at middle school students and their parents, and is designed to encourage conversations, Lange said. Research supports the idea that parents are a more powerful influence on their children than friends, according to Lange.

“It helps parents get ideas on how to talk to their kids about the dangers of marijuana,” Lange said.

For Marijuana 101, a Mobilizing Michigan PowerPoint presentation created by the Chippewa Valley Coalition for Youth and Families will be used, according to Lange. The Mobilizing Michigan: Protecting Our Kids from Marijuana Campaign Tool Kit has many components to provide communities with information about youth marijuana use dangers. The complete tool kit components, including town hall meeting planning guides, PSAs and fact sheets, are free at cvcoalition.org.

Lange said that the discussion on Nov. 17 will also include ways to detect if your child is using marijuana and how to intervene. Paranoia, panic attacks, short term memory issues and balance problems can all be symptoms of use, Lange said.

“Some parents don’t know what it smells like,” Lange said.

Small group discussions are encouraged after informational presentations, according to Lange.

“One of the things we talk about is brain development in youth. The latest research shows IQ points drop when you use marijuana in your teens and 20s. We talk about the possible loss of financial aid for college,” Lange said.

The physical effects of marijuana on youth, as well as legal consequences, will be discussed, according to Lange.

“For the majority of children, marijuana is not medicine,” Lange said.

Lange said she did not plan to address the issue of whether medical marijuana was good or bad.

“The only thing I plan to say about medical marijuana is to show the process, how medications are approved in the U.S. and how they do testing... Marijuana never went through this process at all,” Lange said.

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