

MATTERS OF SUBSTANCE



Quarterly Newsletter of the National Council on Substance Abuse



Project SOFT *Graduation 2018*

Submitted by: Mrs. Makeada Bourne, Community Programme Officer, NCSA.

Prince Cave Hall, District 'A' Police Complex, Station Hill, was the venue for smiles and cheers as 35 campers and 26 parents graduated from the 16th annual Project Safeguarding Our Future Today (Project SOFT) Programme on December 9th, 2018.

The Feature Address was delivered by Mr. Hadford Howell, Chairman of the NCSA Board. He encouraged the parents and children to be the rational and drug-free thinkers who lead the way in changing their families and communities across Barbados. Ms. Kay Smith and Ms. Melissa Small, parents of two of the participants who attended Project SOFT 2017 and 2018 respectively, gave moving remarks on the positive impact the programme had on their children's self-esteem and on them as parents. The children also played their part by entertaining the attendees in song and dance, displaying the skills learnt while they were at the residential camp.

The aim of Project SOFT is to increase the protective factors of 11 year old students transitioning from primary school to secondary



Mr. Hadford Howell, NCSA Board Chairman with participants from the Project SOFT Camp: Top boy Antoine Payne (left) and top girl Nakayla O'Neal (right).

school in order to prevent or delay the onset of drug use or abuse. The four-month programme includes a residential week for the children during the month of August. At the end of the camp, the parents participated in socio-development sessions which were conducted from September to November. Congratulations to Antoine Payne and Nakayla O'Neal who emerged as the top campers with high scores in the following areas: participation and completion of tasks, respect, room inspection,

helpfulness and leadership. Zahara Tudor and Xabian Trotman were the runners up.

Project SOFT's lifeline is hinged on sponsorship. This year, we were fortunate to see past parents and members of staff volunteering to sponsor children to attend the camp. That decision spoke volumes about the impact Project SOFT had on them and their families. With that said, I wish to thank all partners and sponsors for supporting Project SOFT 2018.

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CHRISTMAS MESSAGE

It's that time of year again when we celebrate the birth of our LORD and Saviour Jesus Christ.

On behalf of the Board of Directors, Manager and Staff at the National Council on Substance Abuse (NCSA), I am delighted for this opportunity to wish readers of NCSA's Quarterly Newsletter "Matters of Substance" greetings for Christmas 2018. It is that wonderful time of the year when we hear, see and experience the best in ourselves and those persons around us who we care for, work with or serve. One NCSA staff member asks us around this time each year in song "Why can't this Christmas feeling go on...?" A great question, to which there is no simple answer. Perhaps it is human nature not to be nice to one another all of the time, but we can surely be nicer to each other more often during the year as well as at Christmas. We at the NCSA are committed to making this sentiment a reality – in our daily work and lives where we will strive to inculcate feelings of love,

understanding, commitment, genuine humanity and caring for each other not only during this Christmas season, but throughout the coming year.

I wish on behalf of my fellow Directors to thank our Manager, Mrs. Betty Hunte and all NCSA staff for the meaningful work they have done in 2018. The NCSA's new year starts with Drug Awareness Month which is recognized annually in January. As a new Board, we have quickly gotten down to work and we are looking forward to pursuing some exciting initiatives with staff and stakeholders in 2019. The past five months has seen the Board explore new working relationships with the NCSA staff through our Board Committees. I am pleased with the commitment and enthusiasm shown to date by everyone as we move to become a more effective Team-NCSA and fulfil our mandate through our established Vision Statement of being the authority in Barbados for drug abuse reduction. These responsibilities are being taken seriously by us all.



Mr. Hadford S. Howell MBE, JP, Board Chairman, National Council on Substance Abuse (NCSA)

Where relevant policy amendments or changes are necessary, the NCSA will be at the forefront of what transpires as we continue to work towards substance abuse reduction for the betterment of all Barbadians.

The NCSA Board is committed to working with our local, regional and international stakeholders including our staff and volunteers, by deepening and enhancing existing relationships, fashioning new ways of doing old things and pursuing new initiatives that should be more impactful given the challenges we face in the fight against substance abuse.

Once again, I wish our readers a happy, prosperous and substance abuse-free 2019.

So, watch this space!!



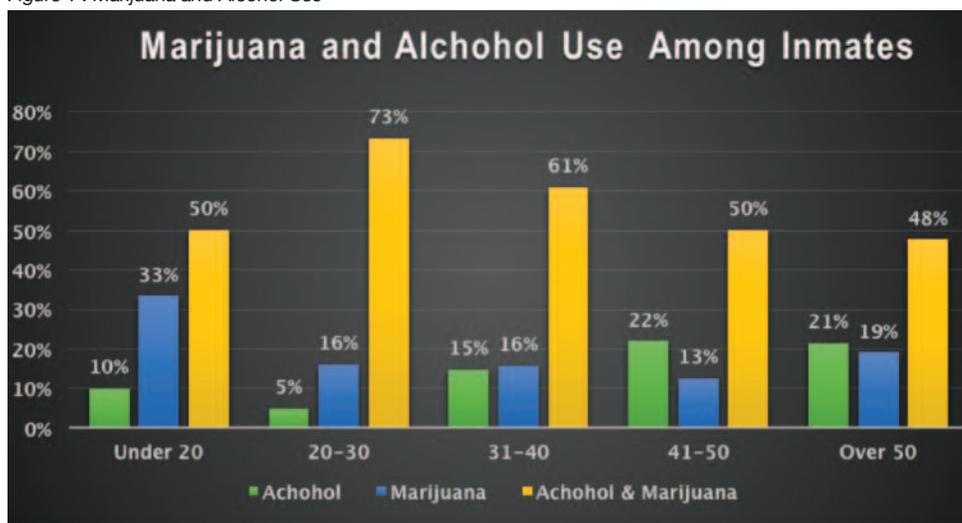


MARIJUANA AND ALCOHOL: *A dangerous cocktail*

Submitted by: Ms. Sabrina Haynes, Criminal Justice Research and Planning Unit.

The marijuana debate continues to engage many persons at the regional and international levels, with the primary arguments ranging from maintaining the status quo to its full legalization. Daily additions to this ongoing debate produce new facets of information, which propel the local discussion to focus on the benefits and dangers of marijuana use and its implications for society, especially among our youth. However, an examination of research among persons incarcerated at Her Majesty Prisons (HMP) Dodds, suggests that marijuana should not be the sole focus of attention as statistics reveal that the collective use of alcohol and marijuana is more prevalent than marijuana use alone.

Figure 1 : Marijuana and Alcohol Use



Findings from the Profile of Persons Incarcerated (2017) Study, conducted by the Criminal Justice Research and Planning Unit (CJRP), revealed that 17% of persons incarcerated admitted to marijuana use only, 12% admitted to alcohol use only, and 63% admitted to the joint use of alcohol and

marijuana, prior to incarceration. These statistics introduce a new perspective on substance abuse in Barbados concerning alcohol and marijuana. Traditionally, these two substances have been examined separately and whenever there is a comparison between the two, the objective is usually to weigh one against the other. This approach can no longer continue if effective preventive solutions are to be derived from these discussions on marijuana.

Figure 1 shows the combinations of marijuana and alcohol use by inmates in 2017. It highlights the prevalence of the joint use of marijuana and alcohol among all age groups with the 20 to 30 being the most prevalent. With so many individuals

engaging in this poly-drug use, there is a need to examine the risks of combining these two substances and their implications for society.

The Dangers of Combined Use

The individual dangers of marijuana and

alcohol use are magnified when they are combined. According to studies at the Northwestern University, combined use of marijuana and alcohol increases the risk of psychosis and alcohol poisoning, among other harms that come from an increased psychoactive state and decreased motor skills. Alcohol and marijuana both affect the central nervous system and have the potential to trigger and worsen psychosis. Marijuana is an antiemetic, which prevents vomiting. When the alcohol levels in the body are at dangerously increased levels, it emits the excess alcohol through vomiting. This combination therefore, increases the risk of overdosing on alcohol. Alcohol enlarges the blood vessels in the gastrointestinal tract, allowing for the faster absorption of Tetrahydrocannabinol (THC). THC is a cannabinoid, which is one of the chemical compounds that exist in the cannabis plant. It binds itself to cannabinoid receptors in the brain that influence pleasure, memory, thinking, concentration, movement, coordination, and time perception.

Treatment providers at the Substance Abuse Foundation and the Centre for Counselling Addiction Support Alternatives (CASA), both acknowledged the dangers of combined use, having both treated individuals for joint addiction. Ms. Sherryl Griffith, Addiction Counsellor at CASA, stated that while most individuals presented for one drug, usually marijuana, investigation revealed that combined alcohol use was a major factor. She confirmed that her organisation had seen three confirmed cases of joint addiction



An Affair With “Crack”

Submitted by: Pastor Steve Skeete, who works closely with individuals impacted by drug use.



When I first met “Alphonso” (not his real name) he was a faithful husband, devoted father and conscientious worker. Young, bright and ambitious, he was the individual whom close friends and acquaintances considered ‘most likely to succeed’.

Alphonso was loved by everyone who knew him. His wife and family doted on him and his relatives greatly admired him. He stood out in every crowd, not only because of his good looks and warm personality, but a genuine love of life and concern for others.

However, there was another side to him that no one close to him knew at the time, and would have been shocked if they did. Early in his working life he had been introduced to crack cocaine by a work colleague. One evening after a long hard day ‘at the office’ he was offered a substance and told to try it. Normally he

would have said no and walked away. This time however, whether due to tiredness, curiosity, or the persuasiveness of a work-mate he offered to try it ‘just once’. What he did not know at the time was that that one ‘try’ would bring him immeasurable pain and suffering and cause him to lose everything he valued in life.

The ‘disease’ was progressive. First it worked on his temperament. He started to change, very gradually at first, but as his drug use increased the ‘fun’ started to go out of his life. There were periods when he would become sullen and withdrawn. His wife was the first to notice: the irritability, the sudden, sharp outbursts of anger that would come seemingly ‘out of nowhere’. Then his attitude changed. His record of excellence at work was sullied by missed appointments and less than stellar performances. He started taking days off from work. Based on his past record

his employers tried their best to secure his job, but in the end they had no choice but to dismiss him, a decision which seemed to plunge him into a temporary state of depression and greater substance dependence.

The change in his personality was the hardest for his family to take. He would often spend long periods away from home, neglecting his wife, and the children who would inquire about him incessantly. The young ones could not understand why he was absent so often, why he seemed not to care for them anymore. When he did come home they observed that he was no longer cheerful, and no longer wanted to play. In fact, it seemed that he came home only to fight with ‘mommy’ before storming out of the house.

His wife, who at the time knew little about how ‘crack’ affected the individual, was totally confused. She had watched her

husband become in-disciplined, careless, resigned almost in his outlook. Much harder to bear was that there seemed to be little she could do. All the talking and the pleading she and all who cared about him had done, all the patience and kindness they showed, nothing worked. He remained



impervious to reason or advice. He had little time for relatives and friends, and he now seemed also to have little concern for a distraught wife and the three beautiful children of whom he was once so fond. A family that was once inseparable had unraveled.

Alphonso's deterioration took place over a period of three to four years. By this time everyone who knew him also knew about the drug use, which he could no longer strenuously deny as he had done in the past.

There were moments when even he could enumerate the losses sustained from his habit – his employment and a promising career, the inevitable physical and mental decline which had left him a mere shadow of his former self.

However, it was the permanent loss of his wife and children, who in spite of their affection for him, admittedly 'could not take

anymore', which marked the beginning of his final spiral into the depths of despair. After she left, his decline was steady, and almost unstoppable. As if acting on its own impulse, drug use led to homelessness and helplessness, and a life-style of begging, borrowing and petty crime. 'Crack' had taken away his family, estranged him from relatives and friends, and separated him from 'normal' society from which he was now in every sense an outcast.

Drug use had left in its wake a hurt and bitter ex-wife and three innocent children, wondering what had happened to a once faithful husband and father; parents contemplating where they had gone wrong; caring relatives not knowing how to deal with the 'elephant' in the community; and a society still bent on treating the symptoms and not the 'disease'.



Allow Life
To **Thrive,**
Don'T
Drink
& **Drive**

- The Fresh Quotes -

MARIJUANA AND ALCOHOL:

A dangerous cocktail

Continued from page 2

in males between the ages of 15 to 17, within the last three years. Manager of Clinical Services at Verdun House Ms. Jerine Griffith expressed similar sentiments stating that while one drug was more likely to be the onset drug, users usually gravitated towards a preference. Statistics show that marijuana was most likely to be that drug.

The Need for Research

Very little research exists on the effects of combined use of alcohol and marijuana as the primary focus has been on the individual impact of each drug. Some of the factors that may have affected a lack of local research is the fact that alcohol is legal and culturally accepted in Barbados. Alcohol use is encouraged among youth with many parents having a nonchalant attitude to children consuming beverages and foods that contain small amounts of alcohol such as shandy, cakes and ice cream. As a result, in-depth research is needed to add to the knowledge in this area as well as to educate on this growing practice.



Women and Drugs: Stigma and Discrimination

Submitted by: Ms. Nalita Gajadhar and Mr. William Warner, Programme Officers, Bureau of Gender Affairs.



Recently at a workshop, the terms stigma and discrimination were described in the following manner “stigma” as a feeling word and “discrimination” as the action word. These two words are almost always joined at the hip and inflict so much pain and shame as we try to create the good citizen that fits into our construct of the virtuous society. With the application of a gender guise, we set out to determine roles, functions and behaviours for our men and our women; we set rules for our good citizens, and inflict penalties on others who deviate. We also use this gender guise to respond and act to drug use and its impact on women. Let us first look at the expectation by the state of the good citizen woman.

We are taught to believe that the primary role of a woman is that of nurturer and care

giver. There is also the expectation of woman, which comes with a specific behaviour of gate keeper that upholds the morals of the society. Any deviation from that can attract severe penalties. In this context, the penalty incurred is the manifested feelings that breed stigma and the applied action of discrimination. For we may ask, what good woman would sit in the rum shop (not the bar or restaurant) drinking alcohol way past the point of sobriety?

Would any good woman - and we always make the point that she has children to emphasise the seriousness of such an action - sit on the block with the boys and smoke marijuana? Immediately our feelings of anger are evoked as we turn our backs on her. “How could she, we ask?” Our feelings and the action we choose to take however might not be the same when we

view the woman addicted to her prescribed painkillers and sedatives. We might choose to ignore that she is in fact committing a form of drug abuse; as we seek to comfort her, seek help for her children and for herself because as we moralise, she really was a good citizen, but those doctors.....

Women are also negatively portrayed in the areas of drug possession and trafficking. At April 5, 2017, there were 35 females incarcerated at Her Majesty’s Prison, Dodds. Of that number, 19 were incarcerated for possession and trafficking. In cases such as these, we tend to ridicule the woman who has been caught with the drugs and subsequently incarcerated. Although we cannot excuse the act of importing or attempting to import drugs, we should be mindful that these women, in some cases, because of hardships and

the need to support their families, are targeted by unscrupulous persons. The promise of good financial reward is used as the bait and, as humans seeking to improve their lot, the decision to accept the offer is a tempting one. In all of this, are the persons who take advantage of the women, not the guilty ones?

If we are to overcome the challenges that women face, we must make greater strides to reduce the stigma of drug and alcohol use that forces women into hiding their conditions and causes fear that they will lose their children when they seek help for their condition. We might also want to look at other solutions rather than incarceration, or strategies to reduce recidivism for our women who fall prey because of their economic situation. We must learn more about addiction, for we know enough to recognize addiction as a medical and psychological problem.

We have the opportunity to alter our “feelings”, and modify our “doing” to remove stigma and discrimination; for if we have learnt nothing else, we must have learnt that we cannot treat a person who, because of fear, is reluctant to seek help.

“If tolerance, respect and equity permeate family life, they will translate into values that shape societies, nations and the world.”

– Kofi Annan

Highlights from

Project Soft and Prevention First Graduation Ceremony 2018



Ms. Alicia Trotman, "Top Leader", Project S.O.F.T Camp 2018 receiving her prize from Manager of the NCSA, Mrs. Betty Hunte.

Ms. Kathyann Newton - 2018 Project SOFT parent receiving her certificate of participation from Mrs. King-Patrick, NCSA Board Member.



Mr. Dia Parris, "Top Group Leader" Green Champions, Project S.O.F.T Camp 2018.

Project S.O.F.T. participant Nicoli Small received the prize for the "Most Obedient Camper" from Ms. Clarke, NCSA Board Secretary



Mr. Phillip Marshall – 2018 Project SOFT parent receiving his certificate of participation from Mrs. King-Patrick, NCSA Board Member.

Ms. Kay Smith, 2017 Project SOFT parent delivering opening remarks on the impact of Project SOFT on her family.



NCSA Christmas Door Decoration Competition



Congratulations to Ms. Corbin, Counsellor, NCSA – winner of the Christmas Door Decoration Competition.

