

2012 FAMILY DINNERS WHITE PAPER FINDS: TEENS WHO HAVE EXCELLENT RELATIONSHIPS WITH THEIR PARENTS LESS LIKELY TO HAVE USED MARIJUANA, ALCOHOL OR TOBACCO

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Teens who have frequent family dinners (5 to 7 per week) are more likely to report having excellent relationships with their parents, according to *The Importance of Family Dinners VIII*, a new white paper released today by The National Center on Addiction and Substance Abuse at Columbia University (CASAColumbia™).

The CASAColumbia white paper revealed that compared to teens who have infrequent family dinners (fewer than 3 per week), teens who have frequent family dinners are almost 1 ½ times likelier to say they have an excellent relationship with their mother and 1 ½ times likelier to say they have an excellent relationship with their father.

Relationships Between Parents and Teens are Important

Teens who have excellent relationships with their Mom and Dad are less likely to use drugs, drink or smoke. Compared to teens who say they have an excellent relationship with Dad, teens who have a less than very good relationship with their father are almost 4 times likelier to have used marijuana; twice as likely to have used alcohol; and 2½ times as likely to have used tobacco. And compared to teens who say they have an excellent relationship with Mom, teens who have a less than very good relationship with their mother are almost 3 times likelier to have used marijuana; 2 ½ times as likely to have used alcohol; and 2 ½ times likelier to have used tobacco.

“If I could wave a magic wand, I would make sure that every child in America had dinner with his or her parents at least five times a week. Dinner serves as an ideal time to strengthen the quality of family relationships and helps kids grow up healthy and drug free,” said Joseph A. Califano, Jr., Founder and Chairman Emeritus of CASAColumbia and former U.S. Secretary of Health, Education, and Welfare.

Family Dinners and Teen Substance Use

The CASAColumbia white paper found that compared to teens who have frequent family dinners, those who have infrequent family dinners are:

- Almost 3 times likelier to say, “it’s okay for teens my age to use marijuana”
- 3 ½ times likelier to say, “it’s okay for teens my age to get drunk”
- Twice as likely to say that they expect to try drugs (including marijuana and prescription drugs without a prescription to get high) in the future

Family Dinners and Teen Stress Levels

Nearly half of teens surveyed report high levels of stress in their lives (6 or higher on a scale of 1 to 10). The white paper finds that compared to teens who have infrequent family dinners, teens who have dinner with their parents at least 5 times per week are less likely to report high levels of stress in their lives. Compared to teens who report low stress in their lives, those who report high stress are:

- Nearly 3 times likelier to have used marijuana
- Twice as likely to have used alcohol
- Almost twice as likely to have used tobacco

“Family dinners are an excellent forum for parents to share their beliefs on substance use with their children, but dinner certainly isn’t the only time parents can engage with their children,” said Kathleen Manning, who manages the CASAColumbia *Family Day* initiative and is the CASAColumbia Director of Marketing. “Whenever the conversations occur, it is important for parents to talk to their teens about what is going on in their teen’s life and what is expected of them with respect to alcohol and drugs.”

Frequency of the Family Dinner

57% of teens surveyed report having family dinners with their families at least 5 times a week. The proportion of teens that have frequent dinner with their families has remained constant over the past decade.

“Teens who have frequent family dinners are more likely to say that their parents know a lot about what’s really going on in their lives, and such parental knowledge is associated with decreased incidence of teen substance use,” said Emily Feinstein, Senior Policy Analyst at CASAColumbia.

“Family dinners are the perfect opportunity when kids can talk to their parents and their parents can listen and learn.”

Family Day — A Day to Eat Dinner with Your Children™

Family Day is a national movement launched by CASAColumbia in 2001 to remind parents that frequent family dinners make a difference. Celebrated on the fourth Monday in September—the 24th in 2012—promotes parental engagement as a simple and effective way to reduce children’s risk of smoking, drinking and using illegal drugs. What began as a small grassroots initiative has grown to become a nationwide celebration, which is expected to once again be proclaimed and supported by the president, all 50 U.S. governors and the mayors and executives of more than 1,000 cities and counties. This year the first spouses in 33 states are serving as Honorary Chairs of *Family Day*. The Coca-Cola Company is once again serving as *Family Day*’s Presenting Sponsor. Fourteen Major League Baseball teams are celebrating and promoting *Family Day* as well as The World Famous Harlem Globetrotters. The Empire State Building, Niagara Falls, the Wrigley Building in Chicago, the Cira Centre and One Liberty Place in Philadelphia, the Terminal Tower in Cleveland, and the governor’s residences in Nevada and New Jersey are lighting up in red and blue in support of *Family Day*. For more information about *Family Day* visit **CASAFamilyDay.org** or find *Family Day* on Facebook or Twitter.

The findings in this report come from *The National Survey of American Attitudes on Substance Abuse XVII: Teens*, released on August 22, 2012. QEV Analytics conducted the survey from April 18 to May 17, 2012. The firm interviewed at home by telephone a national random sample of 1,003 12- to 17-year olds (493 boys, 510 girls). Sampling error is +/- 3.1%.

CASAColumbia is a science-based, multidisciplinary organization focused on transforming society’s understanding of and response to the disease of addiction. Founded in 1992 by Former U.S. Secretary of Health, Education, and Welfare Joseph A. Califano, Jr., CASAColumbia assembles the professional skills needed to research, prevent, treat and eliminate this disease. CASAColumbia conducts its own research and also utilizes the scientific findings of others to inform Americans of the economic and social costs of substance use and addiction in all sectors of society and its impact on their lives. CASAColumbia aims to reduce the stigma attached to this disease and replace shame with hope. For more information visit **www.CASAColumbia.org**.

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