



Message from the Director - An open letter to parents



I remember when I entered middle school and my mother, a very wise woman, gave me the speech about substance abuse. "Son, be careful with your new friends. If someone gives you something to drink or to take, use good judgment.

I prefer that you don't take it". "Do you know what drugs are?" As she continued her lecture, it opened my eyes to a different world. Yes I was a naïve kid. I had no idea what she was talking about but she was sure I knew by the end of her lecture.

It has been 41 years since I entered middle school, but the parents' concerns about substance abuse continues today. How can I be sure my son/daughter does not get involved with the wrong crowd? How would I know if he/she is doing what they are supposed to be doing? These are legitimate concerns for parents of all ages, race, national origin, religion, and sexual preference.

Parents have a natural instinct to protect their children. Sometimes they don't know how or are not sure of what they need to protect their children from. They are usually guided by their own experiences when they were growing up. They don't seek more information or advice. What else can they do? After all, children do not come with an instruction manual.

Sole reliance on our own childhood experiences and our family are not enough in our modern society. It certainly was not enough when I entered middle school.

Today, more information is available to assist parents.

The early onset of substance abuse by our youth demands that today's parents must be prepared earlier and with more information. The challenges are enormous

and the complexity of information can be overwhelming. What we do know is that using a balanced parenting style is best. It includes nurture, discipline and respect for your child as well as setting standards and clear, reasonable limits. It requires parents to enforce limits and consequences on behavior firmly and consistently. Balanced parenting is where love, discipline and respect intersect.

I will never forget when I worked as a Student Assistance Counselor (SAC) and I had to notify a parent of her daughter's substance use in the school. The mom and dad arrived extremely concerned about their daughter. Is she OK? They asked. I got an unexpected reaction when I informed them about their daughter's alcohol use in school — "Thank God, she is not pregnant". As a novice counselor, I could not understand that reaction. Later I learned that their values were influencing their behavior and how they evaluated the problem. They were not doing anything wrong; they were raising their daughter with their own family values that tolerated underage drinking but not out-of-wedlock pregnancy. They did not have the information they needed to be concerned about their daughter's substance abuse and its consequences.

Such parents' responses are one of the major concern we have as counselors, therapists, teachers and SACs. Our clients' parents have a great instinct to protect their children but they do not seem to know what they should protect them from. They have adapted to the problems today's adolescents and children are facing, especially in the substance abuse area. As counselors, we provide parents and their children with the information they need so that everyone can make appropriate choices. After all, parents are on the frontline of protecting children against addiction.

My mother passed away eight years ago; however, I still remember her words of wisdom, her directions, and her teachings about being a man, a brother, and a son. I still remembering her look when I misbehaved. Those teachings are still guiding me today.

Would you like to accomplish the same with your children?

Prescription Drugs and Our Youth. A Bad Combination

The reports are in: Although the percentage of teens using illegal drugs is down, the number of teens abusing prescription medication and over-the-counter drugs has reached record highs. Drugs such as OxyContin, Ritalin, and Vicodin have become so common among today's youth that more than 15 percent of high school seniors say they've taken at least one prescription or OTC pill for nonmedical purposes within the past 12 months.

The latest National Survey on Drug Use and Health revealed that more than two million teens had abused prescription drugs last year alone.



The adolescents and teenagers who use prescription or OTC medication for other than approved purposes do so for a wide range of reasons - some take the drugs recreationally to get high, while others cite sleep problems, concentration lapses, and pain as precursors to their illicit use of these substances. Regardless of what initially motivated them to take the drugs, though, youth who use prescription and OTC medications without a doctor's supervision expose themselves to considerable risks - not the least of which are arrest, addiction, and death.

Seashore Family Services can help parents, relatives, and other concerned individuals become active participants in the fight against teen abuse of prescription and OTC drugs. We can provide you with a wealth of information about prescription and OTC drug abuse, as well as ways to identify the drugs, methods of determining if your child is abusing these medications, and how we can help.

Parenting a teenager has never been an easy proposition, and the rising popularity of prescription and OTC drug abuse makes this difficult endeavor all the more challenging. But constant vigilance and continued education remain the primary tools for raising a healthy child. Learning all you can about the emerging threat of prescription and OTC drug abuse will put you in the best position to stop your children from making the wrong choice, or get them the help they need if they have already taken their first steps down this dangerous path.

Teenagers may feel less stigma about taking pills because they see them as medicine. They're also just easier to get. The 2005 Partnership survey found that many teens experiment with the prescriptions from their very own parents' medicine cabinets. Adults often forget about the pills once they have recovered from whatever malady they were prescribed for.

Here are three important things you should do to prevent your child from misusing prescription medication:

- EDUCATE yourself about medications that kids are abusing. Share this information with others who are in contact with your children such as

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**Featuring two SFSNJ Employees:
Tamatha Rettberg, LCSW and John M.
Petrocco, MSW, LCSW**



Tamatha is a Social Worker with professional experience with children, adolescent and adults in the mental health and the substance abuse counseling fields. Tamatha has previously worked with individuals with

mental health disorders, as well as dually diagnosed individuals in inpatient facilities. Her treatment modality experiences includes outpatient setting as well, a substance abuse intensive outpatient program and partial program for individuals with mental health disorders. She provides individual, family and group counseling across a wide range of issues including; mental health, addiction, anger, truancy and defiance. She is presently facilitating the Adolescent Intensive Outpatient Program and also provides services to an adult relapse prevention group. She obtain her license as a Licensed Clinical Social Work in New Jersey and she is currently working toward her license as Clinical Alcohol & Drug Counselor.

John is a Licensed Clinical Social Worker who provides both mental health and substance abuse services to adolescents and adults. He has extensive experience working with adolescents in individual, family and group forums as well as working in inpatient psychiatrics with co-occurring and other mental health disorders. John leads Adolescent Intensive Outpatient groups and adult education groups specific to substance abuse. A trained Pranic Healer, John has undergone extensive training with this National Association of Social Workers approved Eastern Philosophical form of energy healing. While working on his Masters Degree in Social Work, John's internships offered him experiences working with adults living with severe and persistent disabilities in a partial-care setting, as well as working with voluntary clients in an outpatient clinical therapeutic setting. John is currently seeking his Licensed as Clinical Alcohol and Drug Counselor in New Jersey.



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**35 Beaverson Blvd.
Bldg. 8 Suite 8A
Brick, NJ 08723
732-477-3507**

**270 Chambers Bridge Road
Brick, NJ
732-920-2700**

**226 Main Street
Toms River, NJ
732-244-1600**

www.sfsnj.org

SFSNJ FY 2008 - 2009 Audit and 990 Forms Available on Website

SFS has posted its IRS Form 990 and Financial Audit for the Fiscal Year that ended June 30, 2009.

IRS Form 990 is the tax document that tax-exempt nonprofit organizations file each year with the IRS. The 990 allows the IRS and the public to evaluate nonprofits and how they operate.

The new Form 990 requires more disclosure of potential conflicts of interest, compensation of board members and staff, and other details having to do with financial accountability and avoidance of fraud.

SFSNJ's Fiscal 2009 Audit (or Financial Statement) includes various financial statements, including a cash flow statement, statement of activities and a statement of financial position.

If you are interested in reviewing these documents, please go to our website at <http://www.sfsnj.org/index.php?id=33>. For more information about Seashore Family Services of New Jersey, please call or Executive Director, Roberto Flecha, at 732-477-3507.



**Seashore
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Comprehensive Services for Families

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school administrators, coaches and counselors.

- **COMMUNICATE** with your kids. Talk to your teens and find out whether your kids are aware of their peers using medications without doctors' orders. Make sure they understand the dangers of taking any medication that has not been prescribed specifically for them.
- **SAFEGUARD** medications at home and other places. Take an inventory of prescription and even over-the-counter medications such as cough syrup or allergy medications with epinephrine. Pay attention to quantities. Keep medications out of reach and out of easily accessible places like the medicine cabinet.

Teens must learn that pharmaceutical drugs can be just as dangerous as illicit street drugs. They need to know it's not just a matter of overdosing, but that mixing different drugs, or combining drugs and alcohol, can be just as deadly.

And they need to know that it is illegal to use, or to provide someone else with, a prescription drug that has not been prescribed specifically for them.



SFSNJ Launches S.T.A.R.T - Steps Toward Adolescent Recovery Today

To help combat teen substance abuse, Seashore Family Services of New Jersey (SFSNJ) now offers Adolescent Substance Abuse Treatment which incorporates:

- Educational and Therapy Services
- Anger Management / truancy
- Support Building for teens and family members
- Relapse Prevention Planning.



We believe that the earlier one seeks help for their teen's behavioral or drug problems, the better the outcome.

SFSNJ also offers a family group program. Meetings are held weekly and offer an opportunity for both

the teen and family members to interact in a group setting which offer both Support & Education.

Our group facilitators are educated and either licensed in substance abuse counseling or supervised by a licensed clinician. Our approach to group treatment involves both informational and interactive sessions with a solid foundation in teaching teens the tools they can use to remain sober upon completion of treatment with Seashore Family Services.

SFSNJ's intensive outpatient program (IOP) offers clients a minimum of nine hours of weekly contact which consists of both group and individual counseling. Similarly, SFSNJ's Outpatient Treatment offers clients one to three hours of weekly group and/or

individual sessions with a Primary Counselor.

Treatment programs can also include family therapy to bring about positive changes in the way family members relate to each other by examining the underlying causes of dysfunctional interactions. This type of therapy may help decrease family conflict and improve effectiveness of communication. Family members, both parents and youth, can learn how to listen to one another and solve problems through negotiation and compromise.

As a result, we strongly impress upon families the importance of their involvement in the treatment of their adolescent, as substance abuse and Addiction effect not only the substance abuser but their significant others as well. And, individual family sessions are offered to our clients and are encouraged in maintaining the involvement of family members.

We are also firm believers in 12-Step emphasis which encourages the adolescent to work on changing people, places & things.

Our Program attempts to engage teens in increasing insight about their substance abuse and how it has affected their lives, both internally and externally.



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