COURSE NAME: Substance Abuse and Addiction: Current Trends and Prevention

DATES/TIMES: Summer 2024

CREDIT HOURS: One graduate credit

INSTRUCTOR: Caroline Maloney

978-270-3952

LOCATION: Online Blackboard Learning Management System

COURSE DESCRIPTION: This course will offer effective tools and resources that will keep one up-to-date on current substance abuse information and prevention. These resources will aid in creating lessons or implementing a school/district-wide plan that will impact teens in their decisions around drug/alcohol use. Part of the approach will include holistic strategies including how teaching about good decision-making, healthy coping, and stress management are key components to helping a child avoid turning to drug involvement.

Do you wonder if we prepare our younger generation enough to fight the battle against drugs? Do you feel like your school doesn’t do enough prevention? Are you not sure how to teach about the dangers of marijuana with all the changes going on in our country with medical marijuana and legalization? Are your students educated about the drug Fentanyl? Do you feel overwhelmed with keeping up with all the new trends? Is it hard or awkward to talk about this issue?

COURSE OBJECTIVES:
Participants will:

- Recognize that addiction is a disease that continues to be an ongoing battle and often requires ongoing treatment.
- Identify common stressors and healthy ways for teens to cope
- Analyze and explain the current trends in drug use
- Explore how drugs affect the developing Teenage Brain more significantly than an adult brain
- Distinguish between the facts and myths about marijuana
- A look at medical marijuana and what information is out there currently
- Prepare a comprehensive substance abuse plan for your classroom, school, or district
• MA COMPREHENSIVE HEALTH STANDARDS

1. Describe the contribution of a personal support system to good mental health

2. Analyze healthy ways to express emotions and to cope with feelings, including the common causes of stress, its effects on the body, and managing stress

3. Describe addictions to alcohol, tobacco, and other drugs, and methods for intervention, treatment, and cessation

4. List the potential outcomes of prevalent early and late adolescent risk behaviors related to tobacco, alcohol, and other drugs, including the general pattern and continuum of risk behaviors involving substances that young people might follow

5. Describe the relationship between multi-drug use and the increased negative effects on the body, including the stages of addiction, and overdose

6. Demonstrate the ability to make informed decisions regarding the use of tobacco, alcohol, and other drugs Students generate a list of alternatives to teenage drinking, tobacco, and other substance use

7. Apply promotion skills to encourage healthy behaviors (such as identifying and evaluating initiatives and opportunities for promotion, collecting and disseminating information, and modeling)

COURSE EXPECTATIONS:

a) Online attendance is mandatory which includes posting several times a week to the discussion board

b) Participants will be expected to complete the weekly assignments on time which will include readings, video viewing, written responses, and participating in a class discussion.

c) A final project is required and due before the end of the course
COURSE OUTLINE:

WEEK ONE: Delaying the onset of drug use. Vaping/E-Cigarettes

Delaying drug and alcohol use until later in adolescence or even early adulthood is beneficial for several reasons. Firstly, the teenage brain is still undergoing significant development, and substance use during this critical period can disrupt neural pathways, impair cognitive functions, and increase susceptibility to addiction. Secondly, delaying use allows teens to better comprehend the potential risks and consequences associated with substance abuse, leading to more informed and responsible decisions. Lastly, during this time, individuals are more likely to engage in healthy social and educational activities, fostering positive habits and reducing the likelihood of falling into harmful patterns of substance misuse.

- We will discuss the importance of delaying first-time drug use (13 is the average age of first-time drug and alcohol use) and some strategies that work.
- Keeping up with the trends. Let’s look at recent national/state surveys of drug use. Compare them from past years, and identify the most significant changes.
- Assessing drug involvement in your community.
- Where it all begins (the gateway drugs: nicotine, alcohol, and marijuana).
- “Vaping/E-Cigarettes” A trend that is still on the rise and is making smoking cool again. The link between vaping and cigarette smoking.

WEEK TWO: Prevention: Healthy Coping Skills

Healthy coping with stress significantly lowers the risk of a teenager turning to drugs. When teens adopt positive coping mechanisms such as exercise, mindfulness, and seeking support from trusted adults, they develop healthier ways to manage stressors. These strategies provide outlets for emotional expression, enhance resilience, and reduce the likelihood of turning to drugs as a means of escape or self-medication. This week you will look closer at the stress response and what it looks like to cope vs avoid stress. You will explore some resources that could guide teens in developing healthy coping skills.

We will also be looking at another one of the gateway drugs. Last week it was nicotine and this week it was Marijuana or Cannabis.
**WEEK THREE: The Danger of Fentanyl and Alcohol**

We will dedicate time this week to educating teens about the dangers of fentanyl, its lethal potential, and the importance of making informed choices regarding substance use, so we can empower them to make safer decisions and protect their well-being.

We will also examine the gateway drug of alcohol and its impact on the teen brain and behavior. Alcohol can significantly affect the developing teenage brain, leading to impaired cognitive functions, memory deficits, and compromised decision-making abilities. Moreover, the consumption of alcohol during adolescence can influence behavior, increasing the likelihood of engaging in risky activities, impaired judgment, and a higher vulnerability to peer pressure.

**WEEK FOUR: The Media’s Influence**

This last week we will take a closer look at the media’s influence on teens especially when it comes to smoking and drinking.

Through various forms of entertainment, including movies, television shows, music videos, and social media, the media often portrays substance use in a glamorized and positive light. These depictions can create a perceived social norm around substance abuse, leading impressionable teens to believe that it is acceptable or even desirable. Additionally, targeted advertisements and product placements can further reinforce these perceptions, promoting alcohol and drug consumption (especially marijuana since it’s legal in many places now) as a means of fitting in and having fun. As a result, the media’s influence on teens can contribute to increased curiosity, experimentation, and potential addiction to substances, making it crucial for both media creators and parents to be mindful of the content being consumed by young audiences.

In addition, we will look at how to teach refusal skills so that teens are prepared for when they may feel some pressure and how having goals can reduce the temptations.

**Final project:**
Participants are required to develop a Substance Abuse Prevention plan for their school or district. This plan could be a curriculum unit for a Wellness/Health type class, or a school or district-wide plan for those in positions such as guidance, psychology, or administration. The project should be specific to what you think your school’s needs are using the information, resources, and knowledge you acquired from taking the class. The plan should be outlined in a platform that can be shared with others as though you were teaching a class or presenting your plan to an audience such as a school committee, school administrators, or parents forum.

Format choices: Slideshow, Prezi, Screencast
Grading Criteria:

Weekly board discussion participation 40%
Weekly homework assignments 40%
Final Project 20%

Grades by points:
94-100: A  90-93: A-  (Level of work exceeds expectations and includes a high level of quality work)
87-89: B+  83-86: B  80-82: B-  (Level of work has met the expectations and was acceptable based on expectations)
77-79: C+  73-76: C  70-72: C-  (Level of work did not adequately meet the requirement)

Academic Honesty Policy:
Integrity is essential to academic life. Consequently, students who enroll at Framingham State College agree to maintain high standards of academic honesty and scholarly practice. They shall be responsible for familiarizing themselves with the published policies and procedures regarding academic honesty.
Refer to FSU Graduate Catalog, Student Conduct section, page 7 at: