

District 303 works in collaboration with Rosecrance, a private not-for-profit organization which offers comprehensive, evidence-based addiction treatment and mental health treatment for children, teens, young adults and adults, to support D303 school based mental health staff with professional learning, consultation and assistance in connecting students and families to community resources. Recognizing the struggles many may be experiencing given our current health crisis, Rosecrance has provided information to assist in identifying students and family members in need of additional assistance.

Can Social Distancing with Your Teen Be a Time to Identify a Potential Substance Use or Mental Health Issue?

We are all stuck at home. For anyone living or working with teens, these times can be particularly challenging. Teens may be short-tempered or want to isolate from family members. For most people, including teens, this cabin fever is totally normal after an extended period of time homebound. But what if some of the attitudes or behaviors are a sign of a larger issue? This can be a time for adults to discern if what they are seeing is a symptom of an underlying substance use or mental health issue.

What to look for regarding a possible substance use issue in teens during this shelter-in-place:

- Extreme mood or behavioral changes. This can be related to intoxication or withdrawal. If a teen has been using regularly with friends and suddenly can't because they are stuck at home, they are likely to experience higher levels of irritability, restlessness, or depressed mood related to withdrawal. The mood/behaviors depend on which drug(s) were being used. Or they may spend excessive time in their room or show the traditional signs (red/glassy eyes, altered movements, mood changes) if they are continuing to use in the home.
- Unusual smells. This can be something as obvious as the smell of cannabis (skunk), but it could also be the smell of something used to cover up drug use (i.e. air fresheners, excessive mint or gum use). Today, common nicotine vaping devices often have fruit flavors (mango, cherry, mint) that have a corresponding sweet smell.
- Unreasonable insistence on still hanging out with friends/leaving anyway despite parent direction to stay home. Teens may still push to hang out with their friends even though they know they aren't supposed to. This is normal. However, if they won't let it go or are leaving anyway, this could mean that their cravings to use are so strong that they are willing to go to extremes.

For additional information, please visit:

[Resources for Parents](#)

[Rosecrance Helps Families with Teens in Recovery](#)

[Talking with Teens About Drugs and Alcohol](#)

[Family Support Groups: Coming Together for Lasting Recovery](#)

Sincerely,

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