



The National Center on
Addiction and Substance Abuse
at Columbia University

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**2010 FAMILY DINNERS REPORT FINDS:
TEENS WHO HAVE INFREQUENT FAMILY DINNERS
LIKELIER TO EXPECT TO USE DRUGS IN THE FUTURE**

**MORE THAN 70 PERCENT OF TEENS THINK THAT EATING
FREQUENT FAMILY DINNERS IS IMPORTANT**

NEW YORK, NY, September 22, 2010 – Compared to teens who have frequent family dinners (five to seven per week), those who have infrequent family dinners (fewer than three per week) are more than twice as likely to say that they expect to try drugs in the future, according to *The Importance of Family Dinners VI*, a new report from The National Center on Addiction and Substance Abuse (CASA*) at Columbia University.

The CASA family dinners report reveals that nearly three-quarters (72 percent) of teens think that eating dinner frequently with their parents is very or fairly important. Compared to teens who have frequent family dinners, those who have infrequent family dinners are:

- Twice as likely to have used tobacco;
- Almost twice as likely to have used alcohol; and
- One and half times likelier to have used marijuana.

The report found that compared to teens who talk to their parents about what’s going on in their lives at dinner, teens who don’t are twice as likely to have used tobacco and one and a half times likelier to have used marijuana.

“The message for parents couldn’t be any clearer. With the recent rise in the number of Americans age 12 and older who are using drugs, it is more important than ever to sit down to dinner and engage your children in conversation about their lives, their friends, school--just talk. Ask questions and really listen to their answers,” said Kathleen Ferrigno, CASA’s Director of Marketing who directs the [*Family Day-A Day to Eat Dinner with Your Children*TM](#) initiative. “The magic that happens over family dinners isn’t the food on the table, but the communication and conversations around it. Of course there is no iron-clad guarantee that your kids will grow up drug free, but knowledge is power and the more you know the better the odds are that you will raise a healthy kid.”

The report also reveals that teens who have fewer than three family dinners per week are twice as likely to be able to get marijuana or prescription drugs (to get high) in an

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hour or less. Teens who are having five or more family dinners per week are more likely to say that they do not have any access to marijuana and prescription drugs (to get high).

This year the trend survey found that 60 percent of teens report having dinner with their families at least five times a week, a proportion that has remained consistent over the past decade.

Family Dinners and Having Friends Who Use Substances

Teens who have frequent family dinners are less likely to report having friends who use substances.

Compared to teens who have five to seven family dinners per week, those who have fewer than three family dinners per week are:

- More than one and a half times likelier to have friends who drink regularly and use marijuana;
- One and half times likelier to have friends who abuse prescription drugs (to get high); and
- One and a quarter times more likely to have friends who use illegal drugs like acid, ecstasy, cocaine, methamphetamine and heroin.

“We have long known that the more often children have dinner with their parents the less likely they are to smoke, drink or use drugs. We can now confirm another positive effect of family dinners--that the more often teens have dinner with their parents, the more likely they are to report talking to their parents about what’s going on in their lives,” said Joseph A. Califano, Jr., CASA Founder and Chairman and former U.S. Secretary of Health, Education, and Welfare. “In today’s busy and overscheduled world, taking the time to come together for dinner really makes a difference in a child’s life.”

Family Ties

CASA’s 2010 teen survey took a close look at Family Ties, the bond between parents and their teens, and discovered that strong Family Ties are associated with a reduced likelihood that a teen will smoke, drink or use illegal drugs. The family dinners report found that teens who say they have an excellent relationship with their parents are less likely to use substances.

Compared to teens who have infrequent family dinners, teens who have frequent family dinners are three times likelier to say they have an excellent relationship with their father, almost three times as likely to say they have an excellent relationship with their mother, and more than twice as likely to say that their parents are very good at listening to them.

Among teens who don’t drink or use marijuana, those who have frequent family dinners are more likely to cite their parents as the reason why than teens who have infrequent family dinners.

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

Family Day is a national movement launched by CASA in 2001 to remind parents that frequent family dinners make a difference. Celebrated on the fourth Monday in September—the 27th in 2010—*Family Day* 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 and all 50 U.S. Governors as well as leading sponsors Stouffer’s and The Coca-Cola Company. This year the Empire State Building will light up in red and blue in support of *Family Day*.



The findings in this report come from *The National Survey of American Attitudes on Substance Abuse XV: Teens and Parents*, released on August 19, 2010. This year we surveyed 1,055 teenagers ages 12 to 17 (540 males, 515 females), and 456 parents of these teens via the Internet, from April 8 to April 27, 2010. Sampling error is +/- 3.1 for teens and +/- 4.6 for parents. We also conducted our usual telephone survey of 1,000 teens ages 12 to 17 (511 boys and 489 girls) in order to continue tracking trends from prior years, from April 6 to April 27, 2010. Sampling error is +/- 3.1.

CASA is the only national organization that brings together under one roof all the professional disciplines needed to study and combat abuse of all substances—alcohol, nicotine, illegal, prescription and performance enhancing drugs—in all sectors of society. Founded in 1992 by former U.S. Secretary of Health, Education, and Welfare, Joseph A. Califano, Jr., CASA and its staff of some 60 professionals aim to inform Americans of the economic and social costs of substance abuse and its impact on their lives, find out what works in prevention and treatment of this disease, and remove the stigma of substance abuse and replace shame and despair with hope.

CASA has issued 73 reports and white papers, published three books, conducted demonstration programs focused on children, families and schools in 36 states and Washington, D.C., held 19 conferences, and has been evaluating drug and alcohol treatment and prevention programs to determine what works best for what individuals. The most recent CASA book, *How To Raise a Drug-Free Kid: The Straight Dope for Parents* by Joseph A. Califano, Jr., a practical, user- friendly book of advice and information for parents, is widely available in paperback. For more information visit www.casacolumbia.org

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