



FORSYTH COUNTY
DRUG AWARENESS COUNCIL

**EDUCATE.
ADVOCATE.
EMPOWER.**

Proud to be an AMERICAN!

Strategizer

Leading the way to a
healthier Forsyth County



FORSYTH COUNTY
DRUG AWARENESS COUNCIL

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TODAY!**



SCAN ME

July 2025 Volume 5 Issue 3

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As we celebrate our 249th year as a nation,
let us never forget the sacrifices of our men



Let us never forget the sacrifices of our men and women in uniform throughout our History and who continue to make sacrifices to protect our God-given right to Life, Liberty, and the pursuit of happiness. Live and demonstrate gratitude this 4th of July and every day!

FCDAC Council Meeting, Work and Programs Round-up

Hello
Baby

Kayden's Korner



My husband, Kevin, our son, Cash, and I are thrilled to welcome our sweet baby, Cooper Diane, to our family! It is our joy to announce that she was born on June 30, and we are both doing well!

We come
Cooper Diane Kayden
June 30, 2025



I want to thank you all for your love and support! A special shout-out to Alycea Vega for holding down the fort and leading the council meetings during the last months of my pregnancy, when I was homebound. I am truly blessed to have her on my team!

I am excited to hear about this month's meeting focusing on the great work of Mentor Me.

Lindsey Simpson, Prevention Facilitator for Forsyth County Schools and the FCDAC

the School Sector will represent us at **CADCA's 24th Annual Mid-Year Training Institute, taking place from July 20 to 24 in Nashville.** We are looking forward to benefiting from Lindsey's report at an upcoming meeting.

MARK YOUR CALENDAR!



Our next FCDAC Council Meeting is on
Wednesday, August 6
8 a.m.
United Way Offices

Council Meeting Highlights

FCDAC Program Coordinator, Alycea Vega, opened the 8 a.m. monthly council meeting by announcing that our Director, Rachel Kayden, announced the arrival of their sweet baby girl, Cooper Diane Kayden.

that our Director, Rachel Kayden, announced the arrival of their sweet baby girl, Cooper Diane Kayden, on June 30. Both Mom and baby are doing fine. I welcome everyone here this morning, and those attending by Zoom.

Announcements:

- **Lindsey Simpson**, Prevention Facilitator for Forsyth County Schools and the FCDAC School Sector, will represent us at **CADCA's 24th Annual Mid-Year Training Institute, taking place from July 20 to 24 in Nashville.**
- **Keertana Uppala announced the winners of Voices of Change Literary Competition: First Place, Evelyn Qiao; Second Place, Sophia Britt; and Third Place, Dhiti Ragin.**
- **The Connection event, Rebuilding Together, Practical Tools for Parents (See flyer below) is Saturday, July 19, 11 a.m.-1 p.m.**
- **Mindful Moments by Forsyth Community Clinic, July 12, 1 p.m. (See flyer below)**
- **The Youth Council Billboard Challenge winner will be announced in August.**
- **Sarah Pedre, director of Forsyth County Community Connection which is the Georgia Family Connection Partnership, announced a back-to-school event with Beaver Toyota on July 18. They will distribute school supplies and backpacks—registration is required. Contact Sarah.**
- **Sarah also announced August 23rd, we have our Blues and Q charity event out at Kinsey Family Farms. Adults only, weather permitting, tethered high balloon rides. There's good barbecue food, a great silent auction, and live music.**

This month's guest speaker is **Rachel Kern with Mentor Me.** Mentor Me North Georgia's mission is to connect young people, ages 6-17, with trusted adults and role models who provide opportunities for them to reach their full potential. We serve school-aged children and youth by matching them to positive role models to help them grow into healthy members of our community.

Rachel Kern serves as the Youth Program Director for Connect, an in-school club for all grades in Forsyth County, which aims to provide a brain break, a safe space for relevant and needed conversations, and enjoy team-building activities. She has lived in Forsyth County for over 20 years with her husband, their son, a senior at FCHS, their daughter, who is in fifth grade at WES, and a golden doodle. She loves giving back to her community through mentoring and serving in several faith-based programs through her church, Browns Bridge.

Mentor Me began in 2002 here in Forsyth County. A **mentor is a trusted role model or a caring support.** I am the Youth Program Director for Mentor Me North Georgia. I run the **Connect Clubs.** Susan Tanner volunteers with the Connect program. We visit schools in Forsyth County during the school day and run a program for approximately 45 minutes. We begin with a team-building activity, which allows our students (elementary, middle, or high school) to relax their shoulders, take a deep breath, look at their peers, make eye contact, look around the room, and recognize that they can still be kids. We then have relevant conversations with them. We talk about things that the counselors have either said, "This is kind of a hot topic right now. Can you address this?" We have many conversations about social media and proper cell phone usage. Sometimes the high schoolers will go, "Can you please talk about dating? Can you please talk about healthy boundaries and what that looks like?"

I run two small groups at Gateway Academy, one for girls and one for boys. I have a couple of male mentors who help me present with the boys' groups. I love these groups because they get real. They're obviously at a point where they're like, "Okay, I want to do what I have to do to transition from here back to where I want to be and to start reaching some goals." Can you talk about what it's like to work through something difficult, whether it's an addiction or a bad relationship, to get to the other side of it? What are the practical steps?" These conversations matter, and it's crucial that we connect with our kids on both a social and emotional level. It allows them to be honest, to share from their heart, to say, "Hey, I could use maybe a mentor in my life."

We have three parts to our organization. Our mission at Mentor Me North Georgia is to empower students from kindergarten through 12th grade through impactful mentoring relationships. We've

noticed that these foster self-confidence, support academic success, strengthen social and emotional well-being, and promote personal growth. Our primary goal is to help every child develop the resilience and skills they need to thrive in school and the community. Research indicates that mentored youth are 55% more likely to enroll in college, 78% more likely to volunteer, 40% to 46% less likely to use drugs or participate in risky behavior, and 81% more likely to participate regularly in sports or extracurricular activities.

Our model is volunteer-driven but professionally supported. Every child we serve is a future contributor to our community. Mentoring ensures they're prepared to lead and not just survive. Our programs include:

- One-to-One Mentoring Program
- Connect Club
- Mentoring After School Program

If you can recommend someone to this program to become a mentor, please pass the information to them. Thank you for your time.

If you missed the meeting, [Click Here](#) to watch

Community Outreach, Youth, Members, and Partners

Youth Outreach

Youth Council

Uppala Announces Winners of Voices for Change Literary Contest



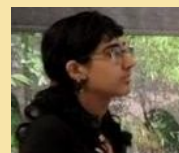
Keertana Uppala, FCDAC Youth Council, announced the winners of the **2025 Voices for Change Literary Contest** at the end of June. **First Place** was awarded to Evelyn Qiao (Center) for her story, entitled "Professor Snake." **Second place** went to Sophia Britt (far right), with her poem, "Needle in A Haystack." Our **third-place** recipient was Dhiti Ragin for her poem, "The Light That Brings Them Home."



Keertana Uppala said, "I have a passion for writing, for poetry, and for good stories. The **2025 Voices for Change Literary Contest** combines both my passion for writing with my passion to be a part of drug prevention work." Keertana is a part of the **Georgia Youth Writers Collective**, a non-profit organization, and **FCDAC** partnered with them to **sponsor the literary contest**. The contest invited students from around Forsyth County to submit original works of stories, poetry, free verse, and spoken word

following themes about drug prevention and awareness, personal or societal impact of

drug use, or stories of resilience, recovery, and hope. The top three entry recipients received gift cards of \$100, \$50, and \$25, respectively. **Ankita Khatri Jaikumar**, rising senior at **Lambert High School**, pictured right, founder of the **Georgia Youth Writers Collective**, joined Keertana in making the presentation of the winning entries at the



Collectively joined Keetala in making the presentation of the winning entries at the Council Meeting.



First Place entry, "Professor Snake," written by Evelyn Qiao. Evelyn is a rising sophomore at South Forsyth High School and she decided to write this piece as she believed people are not aware of the harm drugs do. Teens falsely believe that a fun time comes with drugs and alcohol, but Evelyn believes that is a distorted picture and a sober life, lived among caring friends and family is far more meaningful, and enjoyable.

[Click Here to read "Professor Snake."](#)



Sophia Britt, our Second Place winner, submitted a poem, "Needle in a Haystack." Sophia is a rising junior at South Forsyth High School. Her poem portrays the person's ongoing battle with intravenous addiction, the shame, secrecy, and self-destruction that accompany it. At its heart, the poem's theme is the inescapable cycle of dependency: even when recovery seems within reach, the lure of relapse lies waiting, underscoring how addiction can persist beneath the surface.

[Click Here to read "Needle in a Haystack."](#)



The Third place entry, "The Light That Brings Them Home," also a poem was written by Dhiti Ragin. Dhiti is a rising junior at Denmark High School. The poem is written from a child's perspective. The child describes a once joyful father fade into someone physically present but emotionally absent. Ultimately, the poem shows that even when addiction seems to have taken someone entirely, the light of hope and steadfast love can guide them back home.

[Click Here to read "The Light that Brings Them Home."](#)

School News



By Ainsley Miller, Prevention Coach, North Forsyth High School.

Summer is in full swing as we approach the Independence Day holiday! As school ended, our small groups and individual students were counseled about how to handle the situations and negative emotions that can arise. I had a few students who

expressed interest in having "check-in appointments" with me.

I met with three students in June. Two of the students reported maintaining sobriety and staying busy with summer activities that kept them distracted from the occasional pull towards relapse. I offered reminders of the "game plans" we'd learned and encouraged them to use them and choose to hang out

reminders of the "game plans" we'd learned and encouraged them to use them and choose to hang out with sober friends.

One student I met with admitted relapsing soon after school ended, giving in to peer pressure and overwhelming family issues. I commended the student's honesty and for keeping the check-in appointment, which indicates a desire to live a sober life. We discussed the relapse scenarios and what they might have done differently. We talked over positive hobbies to alleviate boredom and how they could utilize their list of positive peers when negative thoughts and feelings arose.

I am proud of these students and their efforts to maintain and restart their sobriety. It is always one day at a time, and remembering connection is the opposite of addiction.

Our Partners in Prevention

More Great Community Events and Resources ...



Johnny's Ambassadors', John Stack's story is featured in the Wyoming PBS Series, High Risk—The Truth About Weed.

Season 2 Episode 7

In this gripping documentary, scientists and survivors uncover the hidden mental health dangers of cannabis use. Through personal stories and cutting-edge research, this program explores the unsettling link between cannabis and psychosis, delving into hallucinations, paranoia, and long-term mental health consequences.

[CLICK HERE TO WATCH](#)

Job Opportunity



KENNESAW STATE
UNIVERSITY

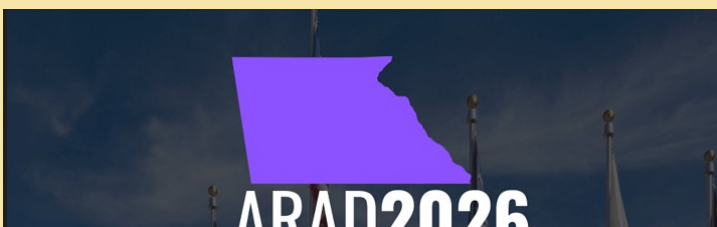
Dr. Monica Nandan

Director of Strategic Partnerships and Social Impact and Professor of Social Work and Human Services

Department of Social Work and Human Services sent this announcement though FCDAC

friend, John Bringuel.

Academic Program Support Specialist -HHS- Social Work and Human Services.





Join the CARES Team as they present the ROSC/CARES Workshop. There are several Workshop options to choose from: 3 virtual workshops that will be hosted on the Zoom Platform, and 1 in-person workshop that will be hosted at Wecovery Peer Recovery Center. Please register for the one that fits your schedule and learning style.

During the ROSC CARES Workshops, the facilitators present an overview of Georgia's Recovery Oriented Systems of Care (ROSC) and its role in uplifting those new to recovery. An understanding of a ROSC is foundational for the CARES Academy and the way that peer support services are provided in Georgia.

To Register, Click on the workshop that works best for you.

[Virtual ROSC CARES Workshop Tuesday, July 22, 2025 10am-2pm](#)

[Virtual ROSC CARES Workshop Thursday, August 7, 2025 10am-2pm](#)

[Virtual ROSC CARES Workshop Tuesday September 9, 2025 10am-2pm](#)

[IN Person ROSC CARES Workshop Tuesday](#)

KEY RESPONSIBILITIES:

1. Develops, plans and coordinates the implementation and execution of programs, special projects, events and other initiatives designed to achieve the overall mission, goals, and objectives of the assigned program(s) and/or department(s)
2. Oversees and administers all facets and activities related to day-to-day operations of the assigned program(s) and/or departments
3. Serves as liaison with internal and external clients on all matters relating to program and/or department activities
4. Provides, administers and/or coordinates the provision of technical guidance, consultation, related support to clientele within area of program focus
5. Assists with forecast projections and budget for each fiscal year and evaluates progress towards financial goals and may be responsible for the program or department's purchasing card (PCard)
6. Prepares and delivers presentations and collateral for program and/or department and events
7. Coordinates and administers the collection, compilation, and analysis of program activity data, prepares comprehensive program reports and evaluation summaries
8. May coordinate, administer and monitor social media presence and program outreach
9. May supervise and/or lead assigned staff and/or students assistants

Required Qualifications

Educational Requirements

Bachelor's degree from an accredited institution of higher education in related field

Required Experience

One (1) year of work experience related to the position

Salary Range \$47,000 – 51,500.

[Click Here for more Information](#)

THE CONNECTION

REBUILDING TOGETHER
PRACTICAL TOOLS FOR PARENTS
SUPPORTING RECOVERY

**IN-Person ROSC CARES Workshop Tuesday,
September 23, 2025 1-am-2pm at the Wecovery
Peer Recovery Center.**

Following the introduction to a ROSC, the facilitators will provide detailed information about the ways that CARES Academy applications are evaluated. Each person will be given examples of both writing and reference samples. This workshop ends with a mock group interview to assist those attending to understand this part of the CARES Application process.

All peers including those who use Medication-assisted treatment are welcome to attend the workshop!

Connect with us
Dwayne Ellis, Cares Outreach and Training
Coordinator at dwayne@gc4recovery.org
or call 678-306-7035

Gain practical tools and guidance to navigate a child's substance use, mental health, and general behavioral challenges. Learn from lived experience and science-based strategies to support healing and reconnection.

- ✓ Support emotional regulation and relationship repair
- ✓ Reduce isolation, shame, and reactive patterns
- ✓ Empower parents with clarity, confidence, and calm



Facilitated by
Marti Roveda,
CPS-P, CPC

SATURDAY
JULY 19, 2025
11am - 1pm

THE CONNECTION FORSYTH
4950 BROWNS BRIDGE RD
CUMMING, GA 30041

REGISTER TODAY

For more information:
(470) 253-8564
jillian@theconnectionforsyth.org



SCAN HERE



***CARES Ethical
Behavior
Code Explained
CARES***

July Webinar!
Join us on Thursday, July 17th, 2025
5:00 pm- 6:30 pm

This training will guide Certified Addiction Recovery Empowerment Specialists (CARES) through the principles and expectations outlined in the CARES Ethical Behavior Code. Participants will gain a clear understanding of the ethical behavior code through comprehensive instruction designed to clarify its principles and practical applications. This training will equip individuals with the knowledge and tools necessary to better uphold ethical standards, safeguarding not only their own professional integrity but also the well-being of the organization and the peers they serve. **This training is required each year to meet the ethics continuing education unit (CEU) requirement for Certified Peer Specialists in Mental Health (CPS-MH), Addiction (CPS-AD), and Parent Peer Support (CPS-P).**



IT'S EASY TO FEEL
OVERWHELMED. IT'S NOT
ALWAYS EASY TO KNOW
HOW TO COPE. LET US HELP.

MINDFUL MOMENTS

WHEN: July 12th
@ 1PM

WHERE: Piedmont
Fellowship Church

1170 Dahlonega Hwy
Cumming, GA 30040

Join us as we
discuss anxiety and
depression and
engage in activities
to better our
mental health!

Also:

Come hear from a representative from
Georgia Power about how to save over
\$33 per month on your energy bill.

Apply for Georgia Power Discount
onsite!

Basic childcare available! Bring the kids,
they'll have plenty to do!

678-812-6622

www.forsythcommunityclinic.org

enjoy
SUMMER



SAMHSA
Substance Abuse and Mental Health
Services Administration

Save the Date: Behavioral Pharmacology of Cannabis - Trends in Use, Novel Products, and Impact

Tuesday, July 15, 3–4:30 p.m. ET

CME/CEU Credits Available!

This activity is designated for 1.5 AMA PRA Category Credits™

As cannabis use continues to rise among young adults, adults, and senior adults, it is essential to understand patterns of use and the evolving range of cannabinoid products. The Behavioral Pharmacology of Cannabis: Trends in Use, Novel Products, and Impact webinar will be led by Dr. Ryan Vandrey, an experimental psychologist and professor at Johns Hopkins University's Behavioral Pharmacology Research Unit (BPRU) where he directs the Cannabis Science Lab. During the presentation Dr. Vandrey will review the effects of cannabis and share findings from his lab, highlighting how product type, dosage, and route of administration can influence acute effects, abuse, and impairment. He will also discuss emerging cannabinoid products including delta-8-THC and HHC. Following the presentation, attendees will have the opportunity to engage with Dr. Vandrey during a moderated question-and-answer session. The webinar is open to all, but registration is required.

Presented by:

- **Ryan Vandrey, Ph.D.**, Experimental psychologist and Professor, Johns Hopkins University, Behavioral Pharmacology Research Unit (BPRU)

Questions may be directed to: SAMHSAStateTA@JBSInternational.com

[Register Here](#)

Summer Is a Season of Prevention

by Peggy B. Sapp

When school is out, teens have more time on their hands and fewer structured activities—and while summer can be a time of growth, freedom, and fun, it can also bring increased risks. Research shows that first-time substance use often happens during the summer, simply because kids have more



during the summer, simply because kids have more unsupervised time and opportunities.

That's why this month, I want to encourage all of us—families, schools, and communities—to see summer as a season of prevention. It's a unique window to stay connected, stay informed, and continue building the habits that keep our children safe, healthy, and drug-free.

Here are a few ways we can all support prevention this summer:

1. Set a Summer Routine

Teens may not say it, but they do better with structure. Establish a daily rhythm that works for your family. You can even align screen time with the hottest part of the day, so they're staying cool and out of the sun. Routines don't need to be rigid—they just need to offer consistency.

2. Keep Them Engaged

- Keeping teens busy in meaningful ways over the summer can help reduce boredom, limit screen time, and lower the risk of risky behavior. Here are some practical ideas for all types of families:
- Break Down the Summer Reading List
- Help your teen divide their reading into manageable chunks. Create a simple checklist they can mark off daily or weekly, so it doesn't feel overwhelming by August.
- Start a Daily Challenge
- It could be a fitness goal, journaling prompt, or creative activity—something small they do each day to stay consistent and motivated. Get their friends involved.
- Volunteer Together, friends included!
- Many local nonprofits, churches, and animal shelters welcome teen volunteers. It's a great way to build responsibility and give back.
- Host a Theme Night at Home!
- Pick a night each week for a fun family activity, include their friends—movie night, DIY pizza, game night, or a cultural dinner night where you cook food from a different country.

- Check your library, community center, or parks department for free or low-cost programs, classes, or events.
- Plan a "Staycation"
- Visit local museums, nature trails, or tourist spots in your area you've never explored. Make it a fun photo challenge or scavenger hunt.
- Encourage a Summer Job or Side Hustle
- Babysitting, dog walking, mowing lawns, or even selling handmade crafts online—these teach responsibility and independence.
- Enroll in a Camp or Workshop
- Whether it's art, tech, music, or sports, specialized camps can fuel their passions while keeping them active and social.
- Plan a Trip or Family Experience
- If it fits your budget, consider a weekend getaway, road trip, or even attending a concert or sporting event together. These moments create lasting memories and opportunities for connection.

3. Stay Involved

Informed Families/The Florida Family Partnership, Inc., a 501(c)3 nonprofit organization, is a broad-based, grass roots volunteer/parent organization that is affiliated with the National Family Partnership. Informed Families is an education, training and support center for parents, schools and communities to help raise safe, healthy and drug-free children. Informed Families has focused its efforts on educating and mobilizing the community, parents and young people in order to change attitudes.

Peggy B. Sapp, B.S.

Mrs. Sapp is President and CEO of **Informed Families/The Florida Family Partnership**, an agency she helped to create 37 years ago. She has developed the **Red Ribbon Campaign** into an annual national event that is a major force in raising awareness and mobilizing communities in the fight against drugs, reaching an estimated 80 million people nationwide. She is the volunteer President of the National Family Partnership, a national network of parenting organizations.

Check in often. Ask questions. Know their friends and their plans. Your presence and interest—even if they act like they don't notice—make a powerful difference.

4. Keep the Conversation Going

Use everyday moments—like car rides or family meals—to have open, honest conversations. Talking about the risks of drugs and alcohol shouldn't be a one-time lecture, but an ongoing dialogue. Most importantly, create a space where your child feels safe coming to you with questions. Don't shy away from the tough topics—give real, age-appropriate answers and let them know they won't be judged. When kids feel heard and supported, they're more likely to make healthy choices.

5. Lean on Your Community

Prevention is not something any one person does alone. Connect with other families, encourage your school or faith group to stay active, and support local youth programs whenever you can.

News For You

Local News

Cell Phone Policy Change in place for the 2025-2026 School Year

Forsyth County Board of Education votes on proposed cellphone ban for all grades.

Big changes are coming to Forsyth County classrooms regarding electronics. In a June 20, 2025 article by [WSBTV.com News Staffer, Bryan Mims](#), "The Forsyth County School District announced they'd be **banning all cell phone and personal communication devices** used by students on the first day of school, Aug.5. According to the district, the move was approved unanimously, and includes all phones, smart watches and tablets."

[Read the entire article here.](#)

State News

Missouri Marijuana Poison Control Calls for Children Under 5 Skyrocket by 2300% Over 6 Years

As Missouri has loosened its laws on marijuana, Poison Control Calls for Children have increased. Smart Approaches to Marijuana collected the data from the Missouri Department of Health & Senior Services, from 2018 to 2023, **the number of marijuana poison control calls for children aged five and under increased by 2,300%:**

- 2018: 7 calls
- 2019: 26 calls
- 2020: 57 calls
- 2021: 102 calls
- 2022: 125 calls
- 2023: 168 calls

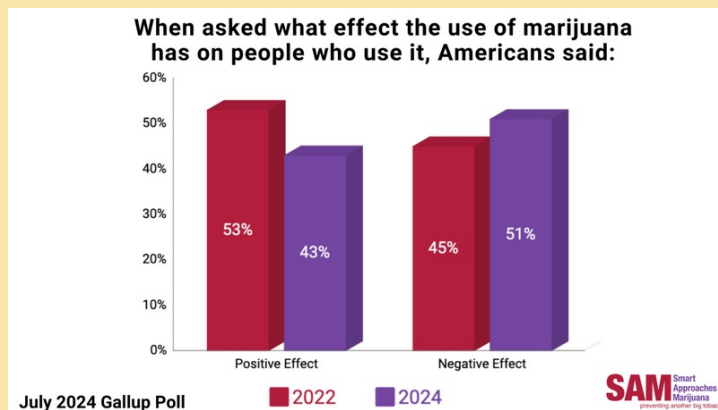
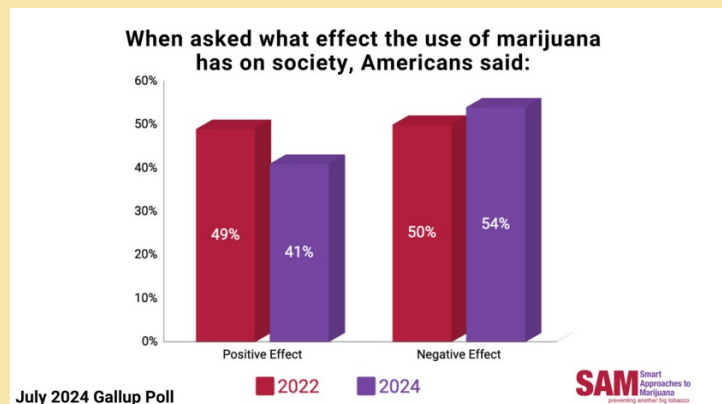
The emergence of child-attractive products and packaging is exacerbating this trend. The marijuana industry is developing products that appeal to adolescents, such as edibles that are similar to traditional candies and chips. A toddler certainly is unable to tell the difference between a gummy bear candy and a high-dose THC edible look-alike. Poisoning a toddler, many are being sent to the hospital. The industry is also finding ways to make their products more appealing to children. As a result, this

The packaging also often uses bright colors and cartoons to appeal to children. As a result, this increases the chances of accidental consumption, which can lead to a child becoming ill.

[Read More Here](#)

National News

Gallup Finds a Majority of Americans Now Think Marijuana Has a Negative Effect on Society and Users



FYI

GET SMART ABOUT DRUGS

A DEA RESOURCE FOR PARENTS, EDUCATORS & CAREGIVERS

Tips for Talking to Youth Available Now

Attention Parents and Caregivers! Conversation Guides tailored for preschool students, elementary school students, middle school students, high school students, or young adults about the dangers of substance use are now available for download.

[Download the Guides Here](#)



Dusting, A Dangerous Teen Trend

In a June 12, 2025, *Parents* magazine article by Sherri Gordon, CLC, a new trend among teens is emerging. In an article entitled, "Dusting' Is a Dangerous New Trend Among Teens—Here's What Parents Should Know," Gordon is sounding the warning to parents. While inhalant abuse isn't new, you may not have heard of "dusting."

[Click Here to Read the Article](#)



What happens to your appearance when you use

Cocaine
Meth
Heroin
Oxycodine
?



Elks National Drug Awareness Program is the largest volunteer drug awareness program in the United States. The Elks are committed to eliminating the use and abuse of illegal drugs by all members of society and believe that to ensure a bright future for our country, it is essential that our children be raised in a drug-free environment.

Ever wonder how different drugs
change the way you look?

Using the magic of make-up, members of the comedy group Smosh (an American YouTube sketch comedy-improv collective) were each transformed to look like hardcore drug users for their #SquadVlog.

The group went in not knowing what to expect, but the disturbing results of their "make-over" left them all shocked and emotional.

On the Calendar



July

- Independence Day, July 4
- National Marijuana Facts Week, July 4-10
- CADCA's 24th Annual Mid-Year Training Institute, July 20-24



August

- First Day of School, August 5
- FCDAC Council Meeting, August 6

International Overdose

Awareness Day: August 31





SCAN ME

Forsyth County Drug Awareness Council | 240 Elm Street | Cumming, GA 30040 US

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