



17971 Biscayne Blvd.
Suite 116-117
Aventura, FL 33160

Phone (305) 935-4987
& 305-935-6726
Fax (305) 931-3643
clapacoalition@bellsouth.net
kingdavidinc@bellsouth.net

Family Prevalence Survey in Alcohol and Drug in the Hispanic/Latino Population of Miami-Dade County (Report 2006)

Preface

Good health and wellbeing are social phenomenon that can be understood when we observe that; according to the work that we do; the type of home we live in; the way we nourish our bodies; and the way we relate to one another, are directly related to the types of biological and psychological diseases we as a community will manifest.

Therefore with in this context, we can understand that every community will choose according to their cultural prescriptions certain work activities; and homes according to certain criteria for physical space and income level. They will nourish themselves with a diet that is related to cultural food parameters, and will address the resolution of health problems according to cultural concepts that integrates a magical, religious and/or scientific thought processes.

Therefore it is necessary that when addictions appear in the context of our community we must take into account, the language that is spoken in the home, intra-familiar relationships, cultural dynamics, and how food and drink are used. In the case of communities that are influenced by the Hispanic/Latino culture, food and drink are part of celebration activities, which imply gathering around an abundance of food and drink, and share these in a loving and family setting. The harmonious family unit is the fundamental factor needed to initiate the open communication about the different situations that individuals and families face when assimilating into a new community or into a new country.

If we analyze these elements, we will understand that each community has the responsibility of collecting the data about addictions and how these affect their particular community. This way the statistics that are used by government will be integral, timely, and trustworthy.

Therefore, we have executed this first of its kind, survey of Alcohol and Drug Use in the Hispanic/Latino community of Miami-Dade County. A study that was conceptualized, implemented, analyzed and reported on by a group of Hispanic/Latino Professional Members of the Latino-American Coalition for the Prevention of Addictions (CLAPA).



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Overview of Parent Population:

Parent surveys were collected from 280 parents from four areas: Kendall, Opa Locka, Hialeah, and North Miami Beach. The 280 parent surveys were entered into an excel spreadsheet on-site by staff in Florida. The excel spreadsheet data was subsequently transposed into a SPSS spreadsheet to facilitate that analytical process off-site. Included in this batch of 280 parent respondents, 101 were males and 149 were females, 30 parents did not respond to the gender question. Two hundred seventy parents responded to the question regarding race, 116 (White), 12 (Black), 44 (Mulato), 97 (Mestizo), and 1 (Asian). Because Latinos or Hispanics can be of any race, it can be said that most, if not all of these parents are Hispanic or Latino.

The parent survey consisted of 50 questions with sub-questions. All together, 208 questions and sub-questions were transposed into a customized SPSS database for analysis. The survey contained questions along the following major themes: 1) parent attitudes toward drug usage of their children, 2) parent rule setting regarding drug use, 3) parent affirmation of children, 4) parent attitudes toward drug testing, 5) parental drug usage, 6) parents' sources for information related to drugs, and 7) parent perception of availability of treatment programs for drug users.

General Findings:

A clear majority of parents stated disapproval of their children if they were to engage in bad behavior. Ninety percent considered drinking alcoholic beverages by their children to be "Very Bad" or "Bad". Other categories considered "Very Bad" or "Bad" by parents as they relate to their children were as follows: 93.6% use of tobacco, 96.5% to smoking marijuana, 96.1% to stealing an item of less than \$5 in value, 93.1% to defacing buildings using spray paint, and 94.8% to starting a fight.

Regarding other important issues relating to children, parent responses revealed areas of concern. As to the question asking parents if the rules in the family are clear, 1 out of 5 (21.6%) respondents indicated that family rules were NOT clear. Similarly, 17.8% of parents indicated that



they did NOT have family/house rules on the use of drugs and alcohol. Another disturbing finding was that slightly over 10% of parents indicated they did NOT know where their kids are when their kids are not home, or who their kids are with, when their kids are not at home. In the area of positive reinforcement, 8.2% of parents said they “Never” or “Almost Never” tell their kids they are proud of something they have done.

One of the findings that present a challenge, in terms of interpretation is the question dealing with parents’ disposition to take a drug test to prove they do not use drugs. For this question, more than a third of parents (34.2%) indicated they would NOT take such a test.

Regarding drugs use, 5% and 3% of parents reported “Past 30 Days Use” of Marijuana and Cocaine respectively. Slightly more than 1 in 10 parents reported to have used Cocaine at some point during their lifetime, and slightly more than 1 in 5 parents reported having smoked marijuana at some point in their lifetime.

On the question dealing with where parents get information on drugs and its effects on users, parents named the following as the four major sources of information: Radio or TV (56.8%), Books (44.6%), Newspapers (37.5%), and Priests or Pastors (27.9%). Slightly over 14% of parents indicated they DID NOT KNOW where to get information on drugs and its effects.

Lastly, on the question dealing with parents’ perception on the degree of difficulty for a person same age as the parent, to get help with addiction, 20.5% said is was Very Difficult, 18.2% said Somewhat Difficult, 8% said Somewhat Easy, 14% said Very Easy, and 39.4% said Don’t Know.

Discussion and Summary

Based on the results of the analysis of the parent survey, it appears that there is broad parental disapproval of bad behavior among their children. While most of the behaviors queried resulted in over 90% or higher levels of parental disapproval, student behavior regarded as “A little bad” or “Not Bad at All” by parents ranged from a low of 3.5% for marijuana smoking to a high of 10% for alcohol consumption. This suggests that for certain bad behaviors, 1 in 10 students have minimal parental disapproval.



Also alarming was the finding that suggests that 1 in 5 households do not have clear rules, and 17.8% of households don't have rules about alcohol and drug use. These findings on rules indicate that for a significant percentage of students, the lack of rules and boundaries from parents put them at risk for alcohol and drug use.

Other parent centered behavior or issues that potentially contribute to putting students at risk are parent knowledge of kids' whereabouts and parent positive feedback. Ten percent of parents reported not knowing where their kids are or who they are with when they are not at home. This lack of awareness of their kids' whereabouts is also a source that puts kids at-risk. Similarly, 8.2% of parents reported giving no, or almost no positive feedback to their kids. This speaks to the issue of student self-esteem development. Students with low-self-esteem are also at-risk for alcohol and drug use.

Turning the attention toward parents and drugs, 34.2% of parents indicated they would not be willing to take a drug test to prove they did not use drugs. This finding is somewhat challenging to interpret because it could be a matter of privacy, culture, or other issues that form parents' disposition to take drug tests. Further investigation on this issue is warranted.

As it relates to parent drug use, it was surprising to find that 10% of parents surveyed reported having tried cocaine at least once during their lifetime. When asked about drug use within the past 30 days, 5% of parents reported marijuana use, and 3% reported using cocaine. The combination of a certain percentage of parents not disapproving of drugs use by their kids, not knowing where their kids are, who their kids hang-out with, and parental drug use all contribute to putting students at-risk for drug use.

Regarding the sources that inform parents' knowledge and understanding about drug use; Radio/TV, Books, Newspapers, and Priests/Pastors were reported to be the most influential. This survey did not ask any questions relating to the use of the internet as a source to inform parents on drug issues. In future investigations, question relating to the role of the internet as an information source for parents need to be explored.

One of the most troubling finding of this study had to do with the question on parents' perception on the degree of difficulty for a person same age as parent to get help with drug addiction. Parents reported the following: 20.5% said is was Very Difficult, 18.2% said Somewhat Difficult, 8% said Somewhat Easy, 14% said Very Easy, and 39.4% said Don't Know. These figures indicate that a large block of parents (almost 40%) have no idea as to difficulty of getting help with drug addiction. Another large block (38.7%) perceives getting help as very difficult or somewhat difficult. This finding points to the need for public information campaigns to inform parents as to the resources available in the community for the treatment of drug addiction.

This parent survey provides some information as to the attitudes parents have toward the use of alcohol and drugs by their kids, parent disposition to have home rules regarding drugs and alcohol, and parents' sources for information on drugs, and parents' perceptions on the access to drug addiction treatment. This survey revealed that most parents disapprove of bad behavior of students such as using drugs and alcohol. Most parents have clear rules regarding drug use and have sources to acquire information regarding the bad effects of drugs. What parents are lacking is information dealing with drug addiction treatment programs in the community. This survey did not explore the use of the internet by parents to get information of drugs, drug use, and drug addiction programs. It would be helpful if a local organization would create and publicize and web site specifically designed for parents to get general and in-depth information on drugs and drug addiction programs.

Self explanatory with Tables and Heading

How bad do you consider that your children do the following? Table 1

	Very Bad	Bad	A little Bad	Not Bad at All	Total
Drink alcoholic beverages regularly	144 (61.5%)	67 (28.6%)	17 (7.3%)	6 (2.6%)	234 (100%)
Smoke Cigarettes	126 (62.1%)	64 (31.5%)	9 (4.4%)	4 (2.0%)	203 (100%)
Smoke Marijuana	137 (68.5%)	56 (28.0%)	3 (1.5%)	4 (2.0%)	200 (100%)
Steal an item of less than \$5 in value	140 (68.6%)	56 (27.5%)	5 (2.5%)	3 (1.5%)	204 (100%)
Deface buildings using spray paint	145 (66.5%)	58 (26.6%)	10 (4.6%)	5 (2.3%)	218 (100%)
Start a fight	129 (60.8%)	72 (34.0%)	5 (2.4%)	6 (2.8%)	212 (100%)

In my family, rules are clear.

Table 2

YES	NO
196 (79.4%)	54 (21.6%)

My family has rules on the use of alcohol and drugs.

Table 3

YES	NO
203 (82.2%)	44 (17.8%)

When my kids are not at home, I know where they are, and who they are with.

Table 4

YES	NO
200 (89.6%)	23 (10.3%)

How often do you tell your kids you are proud of something they have done?

Table 5

Never/Almost Never	Sometimes	A lot	All the time
19 (8.2%)	55 (23.7%)	79 (34.1%)	79 (34.1%)

Parent's disposition to take a drug test to prove they do not use drugs:

Table 6

	YES	NO	Total
	169 (65.8%)	88 (34.2%)	257 (100%)

Where do parents get information on the effects produced by people who use drugs?

Table 7

Priests or Pastors	78(27.9%)
Members of my family	42 (15%)
My Doctor	44 (15.7%)
My parents	47 (16.8%)
The police	54 (19.3%)
Newspapers	105 (37.5%)
Books	125 (44.6%)
Radio or TV	159 (56.8%)
I don't know	40 (14.3%)
For each question the number of potential respondents	280= (100%)

Parents Use of Marijuana

Table 8

<u>Times Using</u>	<u>Lifetime use</u>	<u>Past 12 months use</u>	<u>Past 30 Days use</u>
None	159 (77.9%)	106 (87.6%)	115 (95%)
1 to 2 times	12 (5.9%)	4 (3.3%)	2 (1.7%)
3 to 5 times	8 (3.9%)	4 (3.3%)	2 (1.7%)
6 to 9 times	7 (3.45)	3 (2.5%)	0 (0%)
10 to 19 times	10 (4.9%)	2 (1.7%)	1 (0.8%)
20 or more times	8 (4%)	2 (1.7%)	1 (0.8%)
TOTAL	204 (100%)	121 (100%)	121 (100%)

Parents Use of Cocaine

Table 9

Times Using	Lifetime use	Past 12 months use	Past 30 Days use
None	176 (89.8%)	111 (96.5%)	106 (97.2%)
1 to 2 times	10 (5.1%)	1 (0.9%)	0 (0%)
3 to 5 times	2 (1%)	0 (0%)	1 (0.9%)
6 to 9 times	3 (1.5%)	1 (0.9%)	1 (0.9%)
10 to 19 times	1 (0.5%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)
20 or more times	4 (2%)	2 (1.8%)	1 (0.9%)
TOTAL	196 (100%)	115 (100%)	109 (100%)

Parent's perception on the degree of difficulty, for a person same age as the parent, to get help with drug addiction:

Table 10

Very Difficult	54 (20.5%)
Somewhat Difficult	48 (18.2%)
Somewhat Easy	21 (8%)
Very Easy	37 (14%)
Don't Know	104 (39.4%)
Total	264 (100%)



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Overview of Youth Population

A total of 71 student surveys were analyzed: 25 from Kendall, 19 from Opa Locka, 15 from Hialeah, and 12 from North Miami Beach. Included in this batch of 71 student respondents, 23 surveys were filled-out in English and 48 surveys were filled out in Spanish. Of the 71 student respondents, 63 responded to the gender question, 26 were males and 37 were females. Sixty-Eight students responded to the question regarding race, 35 (white), 7 (black), 10 (mulatto), 4 (mestizo), 1 (Asian), and 11 (other). Note that the “Other” category was filled in as Hispanic because Hispanics/Latinos can be of any race. It can be said that most, if not all of these students are Hispanic or Latino.

The student survey consisted of 72 questions with sub-questions. In total, 243 questions and sub-questions were entered into a customized SPSS/PC database for analysis. The survey contained questions along the following major themes:

- 1) drug usage
- 2) onset of drug usage
- 3) drug usage among friends/peers
- 4) perceptions of risk to friends/peers from drug usage
- 5) students’ approval/disapproval toward use of drugs by friends
- 6) drug acquisition
- 7) information sources and treatment programs for drug users
- 8) influences against drug usage
- 9) knowledge of drug effects
- 10) students’ perceptions of parental disapproval of drug usage

General Findings

There was no significant difference in the rates of usage of alcohol, tobacco, and marijuana between male and female student respondents. Around half of all students surveyed reported use of tobacco (52%), alcohol (58%), and marijuana (44%) at some point during their youth. Additionally, nearly half, 46% (33 out of the 71) students surveyed, reported using either: alcohol, tobacco, or marijuana during the past 30 days. Another finding was that while the percentage rates of students using more serious drugs was low overall, two serious/hard drugs, MDMA (Ecstasy) and Amphetamines were relatively high (8.5% & 8.8%, respectively).

One of the more interesting findings of this survey analysis was that onset of drug use (cigarettes, alcohol, and marijuana), of those students who have used drugs, about half began to use drugs in grades 7 & 8, while the other half began during the early high school years. This finding suggests that a significant proportion (>50%) of students began using drugs and alcohol at a very early age (12 and 13) and prior to reaching high school.



The questions dealing with drug usage by friends indicate that 77% of students reported they have a friend that has smoked cigarettes, while 70% of students reported having a friend who has consumed alcohol, and 55% of students reported having a friend who has smoked marijuana.

In general, students' perceptions of the risk drugs pose to friends can be described as somewhat alarming. A clear one-third of the students surveyed seem to think that most drugs, even hard drugs such as heroin and cocaine pose NO risk to their friends. Interestingly, responses to these questions were bifurcated at both extremes (see tables at end of this narrative), since a large block (42%) of students also thought that drugs of all type posed GREAT risk to their friends.

Among questions regarding students' approval or disapproval of friends doing certain things such as smoking and drinking, 36% of students indicated that they "Don't Disapprove" of friends smoking cigarettes, 27% of students reported they "Don't Disapprove" of friends drinking, and 35% indicated they "Don't Disapprove" of friends smoking marijuana.

The questions regarding the ease or difficulty obtaining cigarettes, alcohol, and marijuana provides challenging news. Students indicated that it was "very easy" or "fairly easy" to obtain the following items at these rates: cigarettes (73%), Alcohol (72%), and Marijuana (62%). This suggests that the availability of drugs and alcohol are, at minimum, perceived to be readily available to students, even those students who choose not to smoke or drink alcohol.

The questions dealing with information gathering, such as, where or to whom students go to get information about the effects of drugs provides good avenues for further programmatic strategies that incorporate these important information providers. The top three sources of information for students about drugs and drug programs, as reported by students are: teachers/counselors (61%), parents (56%), and radio/TV (55%). The top three sources of influence on students' decision not to use drugs were reported to be: parents (59%), teachers/counselors (51%), and the D.A.R.E. program (40%).¹ The least influencing source was friends (26%).

In terms of the risk effects of drugs, more than one-third of students incorrectly thought downers make the heart beat faster, almost one-third either thought alcohol was not a drug or were unsure if it was a drug. One-third of student respondents indicated that they DID NOT KNOW that illegal drugs may have other unknown substances mixed into them. More information needs to be providing to students on the harmful and dangerous additives to illicit drugs.

On perceptions of parental influence and disapproval, a clear majority (73%) indicated that their parents had a level of influence in their decision NOT to use drugs. Regarding the perception of parental disapproval of the use of alcohol (drinking beer), tobacco (smoking cigarettes), and smoking marijuana, students perceive parents as disapproving of those activities as "a little bit wrong," or "not wrong," as follows: beer (14%), cigarettes (18%), and marijuana (9%). While these perceptions of parental disapproval seem low, considering it relates to harmful cigarette smoking, alcohol, and marijuana use, as opposed to less dangerous bad behavior such as cursing or skipping school, these rates on perception of parental disapproval can potentially provide a barrier in any subsequent efforts to reduce drug usage rates.

¹ This program was being taught at the schools and was the only program that provided information at the school level.



Discussion and Summary

Based on the results of the analysis of the student survey, it appears that there is a high level of usage of drugs such as cigarettes, alcohol, and marijuana among the youth targeted by this survey. The good news is that hard drug usage such as cocaine and heroin, is substantially low compared to the use of cigarettes, alcohol, and marijuana. The analysis reveals that half of the youth who engage in drug activity begin in middle/ junior high school; therefore it is imperative that greater efforts be made to combat the onset of drug use among middle school students.

This survey also provides information as to the avenues that can provide the greatest source for combating drug usage among youth. Parents and teachers/counselors, much more than peers and siblings, are sources where youth go to get information about drugs. Also, respondents indicated that parents and teachers/counselors have the greatest influence on youths' decision not to use drugs. Programs designed to reduce drug usage among youth need to incorporate the power of parent and educators as part of the solution. Furthermore, this survey indicates that the D.A.R.E. has not been as effective as would normally be expected as a source of information on the effects of drugs.

One area that needs to be explored in the future that this survey did not address is the Internet as a modality to obtain drugs. Organizations involved in deterring youths away from drugs and alcohol need to understand the role the Internet has on facilitating the acquisition of drugs and alcohol. Recent reports are pointing to the Internet as the current popular and new source to purchase alcohol among youth in America.

In conclusion, there is a problem regarding the relatively high rates of use of cigarettes, alcohol and marijuana by a large portion of youths surveyed in this study. Harder (or more serious) drug use among youths is much lower, but the lower threshold or use rate merits attention due to the seriousness of the drugs in question. Parents and educators are the best source for both information and deterrence of drug use. Programs aimed to deter youths from drugs need to be in place in elementary school, as by the time students get to 7th and 8th grades, half of all the students that will eventually use drugs have already begun.

Self explanatory with Tables and Heading

A. Grade of onset for various drugs (alcohol, tobacco, marijuana)

**Table 1
Grade of Onset, by Drug Type**

Grade	Sample Size (n)	Alcohol (row %)	Tobacco (row %)	Marijuana (row %)
6	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
7	8	1 (12.5%)	1 (12.5%)	0 (0%)
8	8	5 (62.5%)	6 (.75%)	4 (50%)
9	11	6 (55%)	4 (36%)	6 (55%)
10	11	8 (73%)	8 (73%)	5 (45%)
11	8	4 (50%)	4 (50%)	3 (37.5%)
12	21	14 (67%)	15 (71%)	13 (62%)
Total	67	38 (57%)	38 (57%)	31 (46%)

B. Gender, by type of drug usage (alcohol, tobacco, marijuana)

**Table 2
Gender, by Type of Drug Used**

Grade	Sample Size (n)	Alcohol (row %)	Tobacco (row %)	Marijuana (row %)
Male	26	14 (54%)	17 (65%)	12 (46%)
Female	37	17 (46%)	20 (54%)	18 (49%)
Total	63	31 (49%)	37 (59%)	30 (48%)

C. Past use of drugs (ever, during past year, 30-day use)

**Table 3
Drug Use Period, by Use and/or Drug Type**

Use Period	Sample Size (n)	No Use	Alcohol	Tobacco	Marijuana
Ever used	71	2 (2.8%)	31 (43.6%)	7 (9.8%)	31 (43.6%)
Used during past year	71	30 (42%)	22 (30.9%)	6 (8.4%)	13 (18.3%)
Used past 30 days	71	38 (54%)	15 (21.1%)	5 (7%)	13 (18.3%)

D. Perception of Parental Disapproval

Table 4
Perception of Parental Disapproval

Drug Activity	Very Wrong	Wrong	A Little bit Wrong	Not Wrong	Total
Drink Beer	35 (52.2%)	23 (34.3%)	5 (7.5%)	4 (6%)	67 (100%)
Smoke Cigarettes	34 (50.7%)	21 (31.3%)	6 (9%)	6 (9%)	67 (100%)
Smoke Marijuana	41 (62.15)	19 (28.8)	2 (3%)	4 (6.1%)	66 (100%)
Steal \$5 or more value	38 (56.7%)	22 (32.8%)	3 (4.5%)	4 (6%)	67 (100%)
Graffiti	38 (56.7%)	19 (28.4%)	5 (7.5%)	5 (7.5%)	67 (100%)

Table 5
Level of Influence of Parents on Youth's Decision not to Use Drugs

None at All	Some	Great	Very Great	Can't Say	Total
13 (19.7%)	9 (13.6%)	18 (27.3%)	21 (31.8%)	5 (7.6%)	66 (100%)

E. Perception of Risk

Table 6
Perception of Risk

Drug effect	True	False	Don't Know	Total
Downers make my heart beat faster	23 (35.9%)	14 (21.8%)	27 (42.1%)	64 (100%)
Cocaine is dangerous and addictive	56 (82.4%)	5 (7.4%)	7 (10.3%)	68 (100%)
Alcohol is a drug	48 (72.7%)	10 (15.2%)	8 (12.1%)	66 (100%)
Illegal drugs may have other substances mixed into them	35 (53.8%)	10 (15.4%)	20 (30.8%)	65 (100%)