

# PARENTS

## What You Need to Know About Inhalant Abuse

**This document is intended for  
ADULTS ONLY**

### The Dangers of Inhalant Use:

- Breathing gases and vapors can cause brain, nerve, kidney, and liver damage.
- Death can result from even one-time use. Some children have accidents, choke or suffocate to death, or have heart attacks.
- For some, inhalant abuse becomes an addiction. Younger children may just abuse inhalants, while older youth are more likely to abuse inhalants with alcohol and other drugs.

### Here's What We Know About Inhalant Abuse in Maine:

- More than one out of every ten Maine students between grades six and twelve has tried inhaling gases or solvent vapors to get high.
- Abuse may start as early as third grade and peaks in grades eight and nine.

### Here are Some Examples of What's Being Abused:

- Products in aerosol cans
- Fuels (gases and liquid)
- Solvent-based correction fluid, markers, glues
- Common shop and household solvents
- Computer gas duster

### Why Children and Teens Are Using Inhalants:

- Inhalants are very easy to obtain, free or inexpensive, and difficult to detect.
- Many adults are not aware of inhalants, so use may go unnoticed.
- Many children are not aware of how dangerous these products are.
- It takes effect within seconds.

### What Parents Can Do About Inhalant Abuse:

- *Understand that Inhalants are Poisons.* Educate yourself about the nature of inhalant abuse.
- Share what you know about inhalant abuse with other adults, the types of products that can be abused, and signs of abuse.
- Talk to your school principals, teachers and health educators about including appropriate inhalant related discussions in the classroom.
- Don't buy products that can be easily abused. These include air freshener, solvent-based correction fluids, glues, and magic markers. Instead, buy water-based versions of these products.
- Be aware of how much of an item is being used. When solvent-based products are being used, they should be used with adult supervision.
- If you are concerned about your child's behavior, ask about inhalants, stressing that they are poisons, and be specific about why you are worried. Remember, one of the attractions of inhalants is that adults don't often ask about them.
- Request a copy of our fact sheet: School, Home, and Office: Examples of Inhalants and Safer Alternatives.

Last Revised, January 2009

### Maine Inhalant Abuse Prevention Work Group

A Project of the New England Institute of Addiction Studies / Funded by the Maine Office of Substance Abuse

For more information about inhalants please contact

Maine Office of Substance Abuse Information and Resource Center

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