Reporting Strategies For Inhalant Abuse in Maine

1. The media is encouraged to inform the public about the dangers of inhalants <u>without</u> providing lists of inhalable products or pictures of how to use inhalants. Reports that illustrate products that can be inhaled may inadvertently teach someone how to use inhalants. Scenes of people "huffing" or "sniffing" these chemicals/poisons, which can be easily found in any household, can also arouse interest in the behavior. In general, the media should avoid reproducing lists of inhalable products which may be abused or graphically representing details of the procedures of inhalant abuse.

2. Positive images of youth can be portrayed by interviewing and/or photographing young people in their work as Peer Leaders. Access to Peer Leaders can be facilitated by contacting the Maine Youth Action Network (MYAN) at the number listed below (*).

3. Use clear, fact-based information about the health effects of inhalants. Messages about inhalant abuse must be based on solid evidence coming out of the latest scientific research. Overly morbid or exaggerated claims are often dismissed by youth and parents alike. Though such images may make a temporary impression, the longest-lasting changes in behavior are seen through the assimilation of balanced, fact-based information.

4. Reports about inhalant abuse should inform the reader of the seriousness of the problem and the need for caution, and engage the reader with a call for action. Messages can make the reader aware of the need for increased vigilance or the need for further information. They should also present a desired behavior so the message is not merely negative. Positive actions called for might include encouraging an inhalant-abusing friend to seek counseling or other treatment, or calling a referral number for further information. Parents can be encouraged to educate themselves and spend time with their children. Communities can be encouraged to provide opportunities for growth-enhancing activities for youth.

For more information on the Maine Youth Action Network please contact:

Beth Yvonne, PROP Project Manager 510 Cumberland Ave., Portland, ME 04101
Ph: 207-874-0060 www.myan.org

* MYAN is a resource for connecting the community to positive youth movements. MYAN is a youth resiliency project that is a part of PROP (People's Regional Opportunity Program).

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Maine Inhalant Abuse Prevention Work Group
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For more information about inhalants please contact
<u>Maine Office of Substance Abuse Information and Resource Center</u>
Phone: 1-800-499-0027 TTY – 1-800-606-0215
Email: osa.ircosa@maine.gov Web Address: http://maineosa.org/irc