

## Prevalence of Substance Abuse – Substance Use Module

Start by dividing the group into thirds. You can do this by having them number off by 3's, or give out pieces of three different colors of paper. Have each group gather together (the 1's together, the 2's, etc., or all those w/blue paper together, etc.)

Once they are in their respective groups, proceed as follows:

*Group 1: You are the people for whom drugs and alcohol will never be a problem. You may try it a few times, but it just isn't your thing, so you can go through life without it.*

*Group 2: You all are the experimenters, using when you get together with friends. You may try new things sometimes if everyone else is doing it. You sometimes abuse, but for the most part, you don't go overboard and you manage to keep your life functioning pretty well.*

*Group 3: You started out experimenting, but progressed more rapidly into abusing, using almost every day, and then several times a day. You have some problems as a result of your abuse—getting into trouble, letting your schoolwork slide, problems at home.*

Then tell the people in group 3: *Now half of you move over here (direct half of them to a different part of the room). You are the ones who are now dependent on one or more substances; you have become addicted. Your life is a mess. Your main focus becomes obtaining and using your drug. It has crowded out many other interests and activities you used to have in your life. You enter adulthood, having lost many of the options you had for higher learning, meaningful relationships and a fulfilling occupation.*

*Even though the prevalence rate for dependence for the entire population is around 10%, meaning about 10% of the total population of the country is considered to have an addiction to drugs and/or alcohol, the rate for people 18-25 is **21%**!*

*People don't just start using and immediately become addicted at age 18. They've usually started using at the age most of you adolescents are right now.*

*They progressively use more and more, and use to deal with their feeling.*

*Where they initially got a really good feeling when they used, now they use just to feel normal because their brain chemistry has been altered, and become dependent on the drug or alcohol to produce the chemicals needed.*