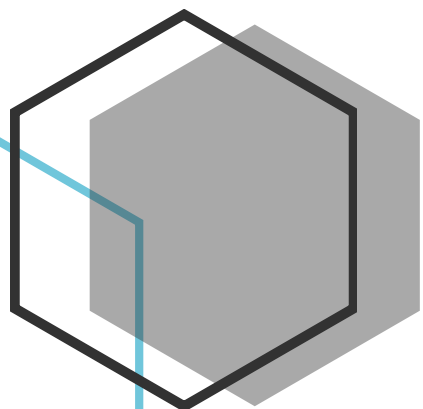




Buffs Discuss Substance Use

**2021 End of Semester Findings
AOD Early Intervention Outreach**

Health Promotion offers the Buffs Discuss Substance Use program to provide facilitated peer-to-peer conversations on substance use. The intent is for participating students to reflect on their choices and identify ways to reduce risk or make changes.





Bufs Discuss Substance Use

2021 End of Semester Findings AOD Early Intervention Outreach

Introduction

From February to May 2021, Health Promotion undergraduate interns and peer educators facilitated 181 Zoom conversations with their peers about substance use behavior through the free Bufs Discuss Substance Use program. These conversations would normally be in person and were held over Zoom due to COVID-19 restrictions. Students signed up online and received a Zoom link to participate. Peer facilitators then asked the students questions using an existing survey while incorporating motivational interviewing skills for additional reflection. Conversations lasted between 15 and 20 minutes.

Demographics

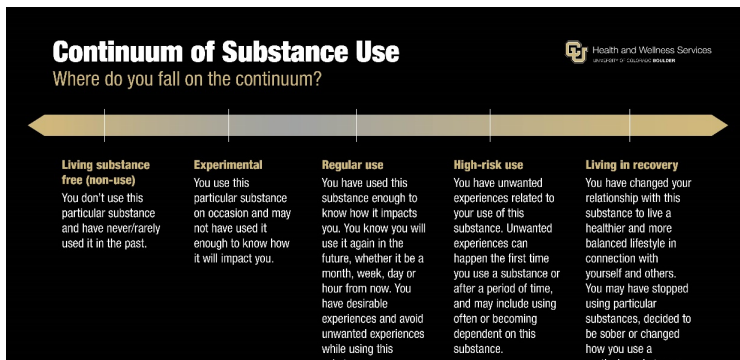
All participants were undergraduate students.

When asked about their most-used substance, students reported:

- Alcohol - 53%
- Marijuana - 30%
- Nicotine - 2%
 - 92% indicating nicotine was their most-used substances use a vape or e-cigarette
- Don't use substances - 15%

Continuum of Use

Students were asked to place their current and anticipated substance use on a continuum to identify any shifts in their behavior.



About AOD Early Intervention

Alcohol and other drug early intervention exists along a continuum between prevention and treatment. Early intervention is more directed than prevention and less intensive than treatment.

AOD early intervention is grounded in evidence-based practices such as motivational interviewing and evidence-based processes such as screening, brief intervention, and referral to treatment.

This process allows individuals to explore and reflect on their knowledge and experiences related to alcohol and other drugs, which may lead to behavior change.



Most of those using alcohol and marijuana indicated their use prior to coming to CU was experimental, and a majority said their current use was regular. Comparatively, those using nicotine indicated their use was regular before coming to CU and remained regular in the present. They also indicated a desire to change their nicotine use patterns in the future.

Reasons for Use

Many students use of alcohol, marijuana, and nicotine included both a stress and social element. When asked about factors influencing the choice to use substances, those choosing to use alcohol, indicated “to be more social, or outgoing.” The next most common answer was, “to fit in or because of social/peer pressure” and “stress relief.” For those using marijuana, the most prevalent answer was “stress relief, reduce anxiety, and relax”, followed by “to bond with friends.” For those using nicotine, the top answer was “stress relief, reduce anxiety, and relax,” and next, “social opportunity.” For those not using substances, the top reasons for abstaining were, “I have no interest” and “I have seen alcohol or other drugs harm other people.”

Screening Results

The AUDIT (Alcohol Use Disorder Identification Test) and the CUDIT (Cannabis Use Disorder Identification Test) were used as an opportunity for conversation around risk and harm associated with use and to highlight discrepancies between how students saw their use and how an objective tool categorizes their use. A comparable screening tool for nicotine use does not exist.

For the AUDIT, 66% fell into the low or moderate risk category with a score of 0 to 7, 34% fell into the hazardous use category with a score of 8-15. No students scored in the harmful use category (score of 16-19) or possible dependence (score 20 plus).

For the CUDIT, 50% fell into the low or moderate risk score of 0-7, 29% fell into the hazardous use category having a score of 8-15, and 21% fell into the possible dependence category.

Mixing substances is associated with more unwanted experiences; 58.3% of nicotine users reported using another substance while using nicotine (alcohol and marijuana), while 41.4% of marijuana users reported using another substance when using marijuana (mainly alcohol) and 23.7% of alcohol users reported using another substance while using alcohol (marijuana and nicotine).

Harm Reduction

Below are student responses on outcomes they wish to avoid, listed by substance.

Alcohol

- Getting sick or vomiting
- Hangover
- Academic consequences (i.e., missing class, lower grades, etc.)

Marijuana

- Academic consequences
- Legal consequences (i.e., MIP)
- Addiction, dependence

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Nicotine

- Financial consequences
- Long-term health consequences (i.e., cancer, reduced lung capacity)
- Cravings

Students were also asked about harm reduction strategies they use to reduce unwanted outcomes. Below are the most employed strategies listed by substance.

Alcohol

- Drinking water
- Eating food

Marijuana

- Being in a safe location
- Being with people they trust

Nicotine

- Not buying or owning any nicotine products
- Telling people in their lives that they want to reduce or stop

Student Reflections

When asked how reflecting on their current and past experiences with substances would impact their future experience, if at all, students highlighted the following:

- Greater awareness of their relationship with substances including reasons for using
- Being more knowledgeable or informed, using reflection and the past as a learning experience
- Being safer and identifying harm reduction strategies they will use

Resource Awareness

For those desiring to make a change in their substance use, they were most familiar with Counseling and Psychiatric Services and less familiar with other campus resources. This highlights the need to promote additional resources available to students such as the Collegiate Recovery Center, Health Promotion, and the benefits available to them through their insurance plans.