



## FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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### WASHTENAW COUNTY PUBLIC HEALTH RELEASES NEW REPORT *A Closer Look at Substance Abuse Issues in Our Community*

Ypsilanti, MI., December 20, 2010 – Washtenaw County Public Health and the Washtenaw Community Health Organization are releasing a new report entitled “*Community Focus: Substance Abuse Indicators in Livingston and Washtenaw Counties.*” The report highlights important factors that will help communities better understand substance abuse prevention trends and take action. The report includes conventional measures regarding substance use (binge drinking, marijuana use, etc.) but also includes indicators of substance abuse risk. For instance, some predictors of substance abuse include unemployment, high school dropout, as well as perceived risk of use and parental approval. Assessment measures were also selected to monitor progress.

Identifying and understanding substance abuse related issues in our communities are vital to making recommendations for potential improvements. The *Community Focus* Report was developed to assist this process and share findings with the greater region. In times of limited funding opportunities, it becomes even more critical to determine specific needs and target efforts through community and research based strategies.

According to Marci Scalera, Substance Abuse Coordinating Agency Director for the Washtenaw Community Health Organization, “the report provides the basis for agencies to make data-driven programming decisions and to allocate substance abuse prevention resources in the most effective way.”

Multiple data sources were used in the report, including local data that was collected in the fall of 2009 from both youth 12 to 17 years old and adults in the same household.

“Because this new data brings together information from parents and youth in the same households, it gives us a new way of understanding substance use patterns,” says Richard Fleece, RS, Health Officer for Washtenaw County Public Health. “We are excited about it and the information it provides our communities,” he continued.

Report findings include:

- Significantly fewer Washtenaw County youth reported having parents who would feel substance use would be “very wrong,” as compared to Livingston County youth.
- Washtenaw County youth were more likely than Livingston County youth to report initiating use of alcohol, marijuana and cigarettes before age 13.
- Adult DUI arrest rates for Michigan and Livingston County decreased between 2000 and 2006, but increased 40% in Washtenaw County.
- Washtenaw and Livingston Counties had the highest rates of marijuana initiation during 2006-2008, compared to other Michigan counties and nearly all of the United States.

Links to the full report can be viewed on the Washtenaw County Public Health website: <http://publichealth.ewashtenaw.org> and the Human Services Collaborative Body of Livingston County website: <http://www.co.livingston.mi.us/hscb/>

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