

Teen Addiction Anonymous: Addressing Addictive Behavior in a 12-step Program

Recent studies suggest Arizona must do more to address teen substance abuse. According to a 2011 report by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, Arizona teens binge drink and were offered, sold or given an illegal drug by someone on school property more often than any other state. Additionally, Arizona ranked second worst for drinking, drinking on school property, cocaine use, and marijuana usage before the age of 13. Because of the severity of these issues, Teen Addiction Anonymous (Teen AA) has increased its presence, helping Phoenix area teens with substance abuse problems and other addictive behavior.

Teen AA educates and empowers teens to overcome addictive behavior through the unconditional support of the proven Teen AA 12 step program. The program is strictly voluntary and there is no cost to participants.

“Teen Addiction Anonymous is the most profound and replicable program for teen intervention and prevention today,” says CEO of Teen AA, Susan Rothery. “Its value is a reflection of the fact that Teen AA was created by teens who were looking for a ‘better way,’ an opportunity for hope.”

Several schools have Teen AA programs for their students. Suzan Patalano, a clinical social worker at Camelback High School, works as a facilitator for program. She is one of more than 300 facilitators trained by Teen AA. “The beauty of this group is people have to want to be in it, and it’s not a punishment,” said Patalano. “It’s a support.”

With teen-created systems, school staff support and voluntary attendance, Teen AA has created an invaluable resource to the teens of Arizona. The program is not limited to substance abuse and covers other addictive behavior as well. Participants do not discuss the individual incidents but instead focus on the behaviors that cause the addictions. Initial data from Teen AA suggests GPA and attendance increases for students in the program along with the decrease of incident referrals.

For more information about Teen AA, please visit www.teenaddictionanonymous.org.

