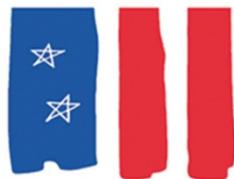


# Surgeon General Releases First-Ever Report on Alcohol, Drugs, and Health

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## The Partnership For A Drug-Free New Jersey

In Cooperation with the Governor's Council on Alcoholism & Drug Abuse and the NJ Dept. of Human Services

***Yesterday (11/17/16), the United States Surgeon General issued the Report on Alcohol, Drugs, and Health. This report is extremely significant as it is the first time in our country's history that a Surgeon General has addressed the issue of substance abuse in such a prominent manner. In fact, the Surgeon General identified substance abuse as the #1 public health issue facing America.***

***As many of you remember, PDFNJ along with Sens. Menendez and Booker, hosted Dr. Vivek H. Murthy, Surgeon General of the United States, in New Jersey as part of his "Turn the Tide" tour addressing the opiate epidemic. During his visit, Surgeon General Murthy spoke about the fact that nearly 50% of his day is spent developing a response to the issue of substance abuse and its devastating impact on each and every community in NJ and throughout the country. We are very fortunate that the Surgeon General has committed his office to raising awareness about this important public health issue and challenging all of us to be part of the solution and help save lives.***

### **Surgeon General's Report on Alcohol, Drugs, and Health**

#### **EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

In 2015, over 27 million people in the United States reported current use of illicit drugs or misuse of prescription drugs, and over 66 million people (nearly a quarter of the adult and adolescent population) reported binge drinking in the past month.<sup>1</sup> Alcohol and drug misuse and related disorders are major public health challenges that are taking an enormous toll on individuals, families, and society. Neighborhoods and communities as a

whole are also suffering as a result of alcohol- and drug-related crime and violence, abuse and neglect of children, and the increased costs of health care associated with substance misuse. It is estimated that the yearly economic impact of substance misuse is \$249 billion for alcohol misuse and \$193 billion for illicit drug use.<sup>2,3</sup>

Despite the social and economic costs, this is a time of great opportunity. Ongoing health care and criminal justice reform efforts, as well as advances in clinical, research, and information technologies are creating new opportunities for increased access to effective prevention and treatment services. This Report reflects our commitment to leverage these opportunities to drive improvements in individual and public health related to substance misuse, use disorder, and related health consequences. Most Americans know someone with a substance use disorder, and many know someone who has lost or nearly lost a family member as a consequence of substance misuse. Yet, at the same time, few other medical conditions are surrounded by as much shame and misunderstanding as substance use disorders. Historically, our society has treated addiction and misuse of alcohol and drugs as symptoms of moral weakness or as a willful rejection of societal norms, and these problems have been addressed primarily through the criminal justice system. Our health care system has not given the same level of attention to substance use disorders as it has to other health concerns that affect similar numbers of people. Substance use disorder treatment in the United States remains largely segregated from the rest of health care and serves only a fraction of those in need of treatment. Only about 10 percent of people with a substance use disorder receive any type of specialty treatment.<sup>1</sup> Further, over 40 percent of people with a substance use disorder also have a mental health condition, yet fewer than half (48.0 percent) receive treatment for either disorder.<sup>1</sup>

Many factors contribute to this “treatment gap,” including the inability to access or afford care, fear of shame and discrimination, and lack of screening for substance misuse and substance use disorders in general health care settings. Further, about 40 percent of individuals who know they have an alcohol or drug problem are not ready to stop using, and many others simply feel they do not have a problem or a need for treatment<sup>1</sup>—which may partly be a consequence of the neurobiological changes that profoundly affect the judgment, motivation, and priorities of a person with a substance use disorder.

To learn more about the [consequences of alcohol and drug misuse](#), review the sidebar.

Review other sections of the Executive Summary:

- [Reasons for Hope and Optimism](#)
- [The Time is Right For a Surgeon General's Report](#)
- [The Surgeon General's Report](#)
- [Conclusion](#)