

American Drug Testing

Drug-Free Workplace Programs

Volume 1

Issue 111

(843) 747-4111

DRUG-FREE WORKPLACE ADVISOR

AN ONGOING SERIES TO PROTECT YOUR COMPANY BY HELPING TO KEEP DRUGS OUT OF YOUR WORK-

Baby Boomers Continuing Drug Use in Later Years, I

Many baby boomers (Americans in the generation born between 1946 and 1964) are continuing to use illicit drugs as they grow older, causing the rate of illicit drug use to go up within the 50 to 59 year old age segment of the population. According to a new analytical publication produced by the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA), those aged 50 to 59 reporting use of illicit drugs within the past year has nearly doubled from 5.1 percent in 2002 to 9.4 percent in 2007.

“These findings show that many in the Woodstock generation continue to use illicit drugs as they age,” said SAMHSA Acting Administrator Eric Broderick, D.D.S., M.P.H. “This continued use poses medical risks to these individuals and is likely to put further strains on the nation’s health care system -- highlighting the

value of preventing drug use from ever starting.” The report analyzes many aspects of this phenomenon including the types of illicit substances involved, different demographic and be-

“... Given the wide varieties of health and social problems affected by illicit drug use, it is important to develop effective screening and intervention strategies.”

havioral factors associated with higher rates of use, and other is-

In 2007, the rate of past year use in this age group was 9.4 percent for any illicit drug, 5.7 percent for marijuana, and 4.0 percent for nonmedical use of prescription drugs. Analyses show that the observed increases are driven primarily by the aging of the baby boom cohort, which

has a much higher lifetime illicit drug use rate than earlier cohorts, representing an increasing proportion of persons aged 50 to 59. Less than 3 percent of past year users initiated drug use at ages 50 to 59. Almost 90 percent of past year users initiated drug use before age 30, and many have been continuing users over the years. Looking at the broader population of persons aged 50 to 59, only about 14.4 percent of persons who had ever used drugs were using in the past year; most had discontinued use. With current and anticipated future increases in the numbers and proportions of aging adults using illicit drugs, the United States faces the challenge of re-



ducing drug use and treating drug use disorders and associated health conditions

in this segment of the population. Given the wide varieties of health and social problems affected by illicit drug use, particularly among older adults, it is important to develop effective screening and intervention strategies to ad-

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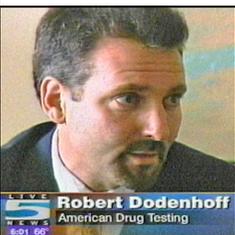


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dress the needs of this population. (Part II next) For additional information, see the “client area” at www.AmericanDrugTesting.net or call 843-747-4111.

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