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CONTACT: Jeff Stewart
Coordinator, Communication Strategies
513-751-8000, ext. 18
JStewart@DrugFreeCincinnati.org

**ADOLESCENT DRUG AND ALCOHOL USE DOWN; COMMUNITY EFFORT WORKING
SAYS COALITION FOR A DRUG-FREE GREATER CINCINNATI SURVEY**

CINCINNATI— The Coalition for a Drug-Free Greater Cincinnati’s 2008 student drug use survey data results indicate that drug and alcohol use among seventh through twelfth graders in the greater Cincinnati region continues to decline.

Data from 54,366 seventh through twelfth grade students, from 133 public and private schools across the region, reveal that regular use rates, defined as the percent of youth who report having used at least once in the past 30 days, continue to decline. Alcohol, tobacco, and marijuana remain the region’s top three substances of choice for youth.

In greater Cincinnati, the number of youth reporting they regularly use alcohol is at 20% in 2008 compared to 23% in 2006. Regular use of tobacco is at 14% in 2008, compared to 17% in 2006 and use of marijuana is at 10%, compared to 11% in 2006. Illicit drugs, such as cocaine, heroin, meth, hallucinogens, steroids, uppers, downers (category does not include marijuana) range from 1-4% in both 2006 and 2008, depending on the drug.

Across time, since the Coalition’s first implementation of the survey in 2000, alcohol use is down 33%; tobacco use is down by 28%; marijuana use is down by 33%.

“The Coalition is excited to share this news of a continuing decline in adolescent drug and alcohol use,” said Holly Molony, Coalition President/Executive Director. “We can see

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2008 Coalition Student Drug Use Survey: Fewer Youth Are Using

from the data that Greater Cincinnati is changing when it comes to youth use of alcohol and drugs. Youth are getting the message. The collaborative, community-wide efforts of the Coalition, its partners and the local coalitions focused on increasing the protective factors and reducing the risk factors for youth through school, home and community appear to be working. This results in lower drug and alcohol use rates among youth.”

This year’s data also reveals another important fact in that youth initiating use of alcohol, tobacco and marijuana are now older than ever before. This is an important trend, as the longer use is delayed the less likely the individual is to become harmfully involved with the substance as they grow older. This year, the average age of first use for alcohol is 13.2, for tobacco 13.1 and for marijuana 13.7. In 2006, the average age of first use for alcohol and tobacco was 12 and for marijuana was 13.

Molony also stated that the data indicated a significant increase in several protective factors, which are elements that protect or shield youth from using drugs and alcohol. “Parents talking to their kids about drugs/alcohol, participating in school or community activities and school sports teams, all showed growing effectiveness with increases in the percentage of youth who are less likely to use when exposed to these factors.”

The data also indicate that continued reductions appear to be attributable to shifts in attitude as well. Between 2006 and 2008, there is a 5% increase in the number of youth who report that their parents would disapprove of alcohol, tobacco and other drug use. This is up from 3% in the 2004-2006 period. Further, there is a significant increase, 18%, in the number of youth who report that their peers would disapprove of alcohol, tobacco and other drug use, which is up from 10% in the years between 2004-2006.

Jim Sowar, Chairman of the Board for the Coalition reminds us that, “While this continuing decline in adolescent drug use is good news, there remain several concerns that warrant continued prevention efforts at home, at school and in the community in general.”

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The Coalition’s data directs attention to several areas that require continued focus. Regionally, drug and alcohol use takes place in a private residence at much greater rates than in school or other locations. Second, data indicates that transition points remain an important time for parents and community to pay close attention to youth needs. Local data indicate that certain times in a young person’s life, specifically the transition from middle school to high school and the change from high school to college and/or the workplace, may open the door to increased use of drugs and alcohol.

Finally, the data also indicate that one’s peers continue to play a role in an individual’s choice to use, specifically if one reports his/her peers are using then the individual is 64-67% more likely to have used as well. “Each of these factors requires further work with parents, schools and the community at large to mitigate the risks youth experience,” noted Molony.

“The 2008 data results show us that a collaborative approach to prevention works and most importantly, that an increasing majority of kids are not using drugs. No one sector of the community can single-handedly address adolescent drug and alcohol use. However, by parents, schools, businesses, law enforcement, the faith community, the media and other sectors working in concert, we can have a significant, long term impact in preventing adolescent substance use. We’re seeing the results of this collaboration here in our area with the data presented today,” said Sowar.

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The student drug use survey is a project of the Coalition for a Drug-Free Greater Cincinnati that provides in-depth analysis of the self-reported drug use patterns of area youth. Every two years, the Coalition implements this survey to collect youth drug use data from seventh through twelfth graders throughout the 10-county Greater Cincinnati area. The Coalition is leading the nation in collecting and disseminating current, reliable adolescent regional drug use data. This survey is recognized across the region and nationally as the most current and reliable source of validated information on local youth substance abuse.

About the Coalition for a Drug-Free Greater Cincinnati

The Coalition for a Drug-Free Greater Cincinnati (CDFGC), established in 1996 by former U.S. Congressman Rob Portman of Ohio, has become a model for community coalitions nationwide. The Coalition serves communities throughout the 10-county, tri-state region by promoting drug-free environments for youth by enhancing partnerships to educate, advocate and support locally-based community mobilization. This is accomplished through partnering with business leaders, parents, schools, youth, faith-based leaders, law enforcement, community groups, media and other partners in local communities to implement comprehensive, community-wide, anti-drug initiatives with a goal of reducing substance use and abuse through prevention education.