



ROANOKE AREA YOUTH  
SUBSTANCE ABUSE COALITION

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# RAYSAC Radar!

## *Drugs and Driving* *A Dangerous Combination*

Driving under the influence of alcohol is one of the most serious threats on our roads and highways. However, through the efforts of many stakeholders including law enforcement, community organizations, MADD, and others we are seeing a decline in the number of people killed or injured as a result of drunk driving.

What we are seeing is an increase in drugged driving. According to the 2009 National Survey on Drug Use and Health (NSDUH), an estimated 10.5 million people aged 12 or older reported driving under the influence of illicit drugs during the year prior to being surveyed. The main concern with drugged driving is that driving under the influence of any drug that acts on the brain could impair one's motor skills, reaction time, and judgment. Drugged driving is a public health concern because it puts not only the driver at risk but also passengers and others who share the road.

According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, vehicle accidents are the leading cause of death among young people aged 16 to 19. It is generally accepted that because teens are the least experienced drivers as a group, they have a higher risk of being involved in an accident compared with more experienced drivers. When this lack of experience is combined with the use of marijuana or other substances that impact motor abilities, the results can be tragic. Drugs acting on the brain can alter perception, cognitive ability, attention, balance, coordination, reaction time, and other faculties required for safe driving.

Director Gil Kerlikowske of the Office of National Drug Control Policy explains "Drugged driving is a much bigger public health threat than most Americans realize and unfortunately, it may be getting worse. It is critical that communities across the Nation address the threat of drugged driving as we redouble our efforts to make America's roadways safer by increasing public awareness, employing more targeted enforcement, and developing better tools to detect the presence of drugs among drivers."

**Parents need to talk to their teens about the consequences of illicit drug use and the dangers of driving after using drugs.** Communities should work together to reinforce the message that drug abuse can cause serious harm on and off the road.

*Promoting a Safe and Drug Free Roanoke Valley!*