



America's Silent Crisis: Addiction

Downturn Fuels Rising Drug and Alcohol Abuse, Phoenix House Study Reveals

WASHINGTON, D.C., June 18, 2009 – “Addiction is on the upswing, fueled by pressures from our economic downturn,” says Howard Meitiner, President and CEO of Phoenix House, the nation’s largest non-profit alcohol and drug abuse treatment and prevention facility. “Eighty-eight percent of the population feels that drug abuse is at either serious or crisis levels today, reflecting the devastating impact that addiction is having on individuals, families, and communities.”

Says Mr. Meitiner: “When people lose their jobs, lose their homes, lose their savings, lose their pensions, they can often lose their self-respect, as well. And they can often escape into substance abuse and addiction. At Phoenix House, we have been seeing strong signs of an increase in addiction among those who have been hurt in the financial crisis. This is fueling a secondary crisis in many American homes – the crisis of addiction.”

To gauge public perception and awareness of addiction levels since the economy’s sharp turn last fall, Phoenix House commissioned market research firm Penn, Schoen & Berland Associates to conduct a study that analyzed public attitudes toward various aspects of substance abuse. The study, which gathered data from more than 400 respondents, reveals the vast number of people affected by addiction:

- 34% have friends or family members who are currently struggling with a substance abuse problem.
- 40% stated that drugs have been the cause of troubles in their family at some point during their lifetime.

“These numbers demonstrate that addiction is indeed at a crisis level,” says Mr. Meitiner, “but the majority of people surveyed admitted that they know only a little or nothing at all about substance abuse treatment. We know that truly only 1 in 10 individuals with addiction receive the treatment they need.”

The economic downturn is having serious repercussions in the rising use of drugs and alcohol, the study found:

- 29% feel that younger people are abusing illegal drugs more than usual, and 26% think younger people are drinking more in this economy.
- 18% feel their friends and neighbors are drinking more than usual, and 17% say that is true of their co-workers.
- 8% admit they are abusing drugs more than usual, and 7% admit they are drinking more.

“What these rising numbers underscore is a dangerous, and growing, gap between the need for treatment and the community resources that are available. States, local governments, and non-profits are all facing tremendous budget shortfalls – and they are cutting the resources to help this growing group of addicts in trouble, just when they need it the most,” warns Mr. Meitiner.

“We must recognize and address the debilitating effects of addiction on all of us – whether the addict is a family member, neighbor, or co-worker. Re-allocating resources to treatment is vital not only to the well-being of our communities but to our very ability to weather the severity of this downturn.”

###

Phoenix House is one of the nation's leading non-profit substance abuse prevention and treatment service organizations, serving close to 7,500 men, women (including women with children), and teens each day at more than 152 drug and alcohol treatment and prevention programs in 10 states – California, Connecticut, Florida, Maine, Massachusetts, New Hampshire, New York, Rhode Island, Texas, and Vermont. For information, visit www.phoenixhouse.org.

Penn, Schoen & Berland Associates, a unit of the WPP group (NASDAQ = WPPGY) is a global research-based consultancy that specializes in messaging and communications strategy for blue-chip political, corporate and entertainment clients. We have over 30 years of experience in leveraging unique insights about consumer opinion to provide clients with a competitive advantage - what we call Winning Knowledge™. PSB executes polling and message testing services for Fortune 100 corporations and has helped elect more than 30 presidents and prime ministers around the world. More information is available at www.psbresearch.com.