

Substance Abuse and the Community

According to the US Department of Health and Human Services Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA), substance abuse is a national health crisis. In 2004, according to SAMHSA, the number of persons aged 12 or older needing treatment for an alcohol or illicit drug use problem was 23.48 million, which is 8 percent of the total U.S. population. Of those, only 2.33 million received treatment. **If Alexandria matches the national trends, then 8 percent of its citizens may also have addiction problems, and only a small number are being treated.**

The abuse of alcohol and illicit drugs has a significant impact on the health of communities, including Alexandria. Besides the negative physical, financial, social and legal health of the person with addiction, substance abuse leads to increases in the community of crime, family instability, child neglect and abuse, job loss and economic instability, suicide and violence, emergency room visits, and incidence of disease such as HIV/AIDS, Hepatitis, tuberculosis, chronic pulmonary disease, and vascular disease. These create an added burden on the health care resources of the community.

While the consequences of addiction are severe, **the good news is that addiction is a disease of the brain which is treatable and manageable.** A goal of SAMHSA is to increase the number of people with substance abuse problems who receive treatment. **Including Substance Abuse prevention and treatment as one of the Mayor's priorities in the health initiative would improve the health and well-being of Alexandrians suffering from addiction, and would reduce associated costs to the community.**

<u>Behavior</u>	<u>Associated Costs</u>
Crime	<p>Costs to Victims (physical, material, financial, emotional). <i>According to the Bureau of Justice Statistics National Crime Victimization Survey, approximately 20% of victims reported that the offender was under the influence of substances.</i></p> <p>Costs of arrest, adjudication, incarceration, probation. <i>According to the Alexandria Police, approximately half of the calls for service and reported crime evolve through some form of substance abuse.</i></p> <p><i>In the Alexandria Detention Center, 18% of the total population requests treatment through the Sober Living Unit program. Nationally, according to SAMHSA, it is estimated that 45-60% of incarcerated individuals need SA treatment.</i></p>
Impaired driving	<p>Potential victims or loss of life. Costs of arrest, diversion, adjudication, probation. <i>According to Alexandria ASAP, during FY 2005, 324 citizens were arrested and convicted for DUI in the city.</i></p>
Domestic Violence	<p>Child abuse and neglect. Harm to child or significant others. Family instability. Involvement in court and foster care systems. <i>According to the National Clearinghouse on Child Abuse and Neglect, an estimated 6 million children in this country (9 percent) live with at least one parent who abuses alcohol or other drugs.</i></p>
Emergency room visits	<p>Cost of ER care. Potential loss of life.</p>
Communicable Disease	<p>Added burden on the health care resources of the community. Spread of disease.</p>
Job Loss or Instability	<p>Increased unemployment costs, children/families unstable financially.</p>
Suicide and violence	<p>Cost of emergency mental health care/treatment</p>