

**ANNUAL ANALYSIS OF THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE NATIONAL YOUTH ANTI-  
DRUG MEDIA CAMPAIGN**

**Report to Congress**



**May 2011**

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

### Purpose of the Report

The Office of National Drug Control Policy's (ONDCP) 2006 Reauthorization requires the Director to submit an evaluation of the National Youth Anti-Drug Media Campaign (hereafter referred to as the Campaign) annually that “enables consideration of whether the national media campaign has contributed to reduction of illicit drug use among youth.” The evaluation report presented here discusses data from three national surveys and from the Campaign's copy testing and in-market tracking studies. It also presents findings from two separate, independent, academic research studies that suggest the *Above the Influence* Campaign has had an effect in reducing drug use among youth.

Taken together, the findings and data discussed in this report show the Campaign produced advertising that tested well among target audiences; increased awareness of its advertising for the *Above the Influence* and Anti-Meth campaigns; improved drug-related attitudes and beliefs related to the campaigns; and suggest the Campaign has proven effective in reducing youth drug use.

### Overview of the Campaign

The National Youth Anti-Drug Media Campaign is managed by ONDCP. In Fiscal Year (FY) 2010, following extensive consultation with experts in the fields of health communications and drug prevention, ONDCP began implementation of a new multi-tiered vision and a messaging strategy that encompassed a broader range of drugs. These enhancements sought to better align the *Above the Influence* Campaign with the prevention principles outlined in the *National Drug Control Strategy*—that is, to provide sound information to young people about the dangers of drug use and to strengthen efforts to prevent drug use in communities.

In June 2010, ONDCP re-launched the *Above the Influence* Campaign, with broad prevention messaging at the national level—including television, print, and Internet advertising—as well as more targeted efforts at the local level. The Campaign's local efforts provided youth-serving organizations with a recognized, national platform to further their specific goals and initiatives. Finally, in response to the threat posed by methamphetamine in communities across the country, ONDCP's Anti-Meth Campaign delivered messages targeted to young adults (ages 18 to 34) in the states with the highest rates of methamphetamine use.

### Drug Trends

According to three national studies, namely Monitoring the Future (MTF), the National Survey on Drug Use and Health (NSDUH), and the Partnership Attitude Tracking Survey (PATs), the downward trend in youth drug use that was witnessed through most of the early 2000s has now stabilized and, by some measures, actually reversed. These studies also show recent declines in the percentage of youth who have seen or heard drug prevention messages.

In addition, these national studies (as well as the Campaign’s own in-market tracking study) depict disconcerting trends regarding teenagers’ beliefs and perceptions about drug use. That is, there appears to be some “normalizing” of drug use, including a decrease in the social disapproval of drug use and a decrease in the perception of the risks associated with using drugs. These trends may be driven, in part, by the pro-drug content with which teenagers are faced on a daily basis, particularly online, where they spend a significant amount of time. As the most visible and comprehensive provider of drug prevention messaging in the Nation, the Campaign must continually counter these pro-drug messages and other environmental factors that contribute to teen drug use.

### **Effectiveness of the Above the Influence Teen-Targeted Campaign**

The continued prominence of the *Above the Influence* Campaign is encouraging, particularly when juxtaposed with the declining awareness of drug prevention messages in general, as reported in the national surveys discussed above. This may signal the importance of the Campaign, which provides research-driven drug prevention messages as a counter against the prevalence and influence of pro-drug themes confronting America’s youth, particularly as the national debate on marijuana legalization gains public attention.

Independent analyses by academic researchers suggest the *Above the Influence* Campaign is an effective component of an overall strategy to reduce youth drug use. A recent study published by the peer-reviewed journal *Prevention Science* concluded that “exposure to the ONDCP [*Above the Influence*] campaign predicted reduced marijuana use.”<sup>1</sup> In addition, research recently published in the *American Journal of Public Health* found that greater exposure to the *Above the Influence* Campaign is positively associated with reduced marijuana use. Specifically, lower rates of past month marijuana use and lifetime marijuana use were found among 8<sup>th</sup> grade girls who had greater exposure to the Campaign’s *Above the Influence* advertisements; however, there was no substantive relationship between Campaign advertising and marijuana use among 8<sup>th</sup> grade boys or students of either sex in grades 10 and 12.<sup>2</sup> These positive findings for early adolescent teenagers are consistent with earlier research that showed stronger effects among this age group for programs such as “truth@,” the national tobacco prevention campaign conducted by the American Legacy Foundation.

Highlights of the findings described in this evaluation report follow:

- All five of the *Above the Influence* television advertisements aired in FY 2010 conveyed the intended message and strengthened anti-drug beliefs, according to the Campaign’s copy testing protocol.

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<sup>1</sup> Slater, M., et al. (2011). Assessing media campaigns linking marijuana non-use with autonomy and aspirations: “Be Under Your Own Influence” and ONDCP’s “Above the Influence.” *Prevention Science*, 12(1), 12-22.

<sup>2</sup> Carpenter, C.S. & Pechmann, C. (2011). Exposure to ‘Above the Influence’ anti-drug advertisements and youth marijuana use in the US, 2006-2008. *American Journal of Public Health*, 101, 948-54.

- The Campaign’s in-market tracking study shows teenagers who were aware of *Above the Influence* advertisements held significantly stronger anti-drug beliefs than those who were unaware of the Campaign.
- According to the MTF study, the percent of students reporting that drug prevention advertisements had made them less likely to use drugs in the future to a “great” or a “very great extent” increased overall among 8<sup>th</sup>, 10<sup>th</sup>, and 12<sup>th</sup> graders from 2000 to 2010. The trend from 2009 to 2010 was stable among 8<sup>th</sup> and 12<sup>th</sup> graders but declined among 10<sup>th</sup> graders.
- An evaluation of the Campaign’s recently launched *Above the Influence* community-targeted efforts found that teenager participation in a Campaign activity was associated with positive changes in anti-drug beliefs. Further, local community partners reported overwhelmingly that the local *Above the Influence* activities were useful in meeting their mission to serve their local youth.

### **Effectiveness of the Anti-Meth Young Adult-Targeted Campaign**

The Anti-Meth Campaign combined paid advertising with public communications outreach and public service announcements to deliver methamphetamine use prevention and treatment benefit messages to the people who need them most. In FY 2010, 17 states received the full suite of anti-methamphetamine advertising, including television, print, out-of-home, and Internet advertising. According to the Campaign’s in-market tracking of Anti-Meth Campaign advertising:

- Awareness of anti-methamphetamine advertising increased following the launch of the Anti-Meth Campaign in June 2010.
- Young adults who were aware of Anti-Meth Campaign advertising were more likely to hold strong anti-methamphetamine beliefs than those who were not aware of the advertising.



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## EVALUATING THE NATIONAL YOUTH ANTI-DRUG MEDIA CAMPAIGN

### Introduction

This report is submitted in response to Congress's mandate—as iterated in Section 501 of the Office of National Drug Control Policy (ONDCP) Reauthorization Act of 2006, (P.L. 109-469, amending Section 709)—that each year ONDCP provide an evaluation of the National Youth Anti-Drug Media Campaign (hereafter referred to as the Campaign). Specifically, Congress requires that:

In using amounts for the evaluation of the effectiveness of the national media campaign under paragraph (1)(E), the Director shall—

“(i) designate an independent entity to evaluate by April 20 of each year the effectiveness of the national media campaign based on data from—

“(I) the Monitoring the Future Study published by the Department of Health and Human Services;

“(II) the Attitude Tracking Study published by the Partnership for a Drug-Free America;<sup>3</sup>

“(III) the National Household Survey on Drug Abuse;<sup>4</sup> and

“(IV) other relevant studies or publications, as determined by the Director, including tracking and evaluation data collected according to marketing and advertising industry standards; and

“(ii) ensure that the effectiveness of the national media campaign is evaluated in a manner that enables consideration of whether the national media campaign has contributed to reduction of illicit drug use among youth and such other measures of evaluation as the Director determines are appropriate.

This report fulfills the requirement stipulated in section (i) above. This is the fifth such report, following reports submitted to Congress each April of 2007 through 2010. (The larger evaluation detailed in section (ii) above entails different methods of analysis and will be provided in a separate report.<sup>5</sup>) The purpose of the current report is to assess the effectiveness of the Campaign. This assessment is based upon data from multiple sources: independent academic research; formative and process evaluation research (including in-market tracking data) conducted on the Campaign's advertising; data from the three nationally representative

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<sup>3</sup> In late 2010, the Partnership for a Drug-Free America was renamed the Partnership at Drugfree.org.

<sup>4</sup> In 2002, the National Household Survey on Drug Abuse was renamed the National Survey on Drug Use and Health.

<sup>5</sup> In July 2010, ONDCP awarded a contract to an independent Contractor to undertake this larger evaluation (i.e., the Outcome Evaluation).

surveys of youth drug use —named in section (i) above—and related attitudes, beliefs, and perceptions; and findings from an assessment of the Campaign’s new Tier Two community-focused initiative.

The standard this report relies upon in assessing the effectiveness of the Campaign is gauged by determining whether the results of these disparate data sources are consistent with the Campaign’s objectives to reduce drug-use behaviors and to improve anti-drug attitudes, beliefs, and perceptions. That is, we seek to establish whether the trends observed in the various data sources are consistent with what we would expect to see if the Campaign were to have an impact—we would expect to observe improvements in exposure, attitudes, beliefs, and intentions and, ultimately, decreases in youth drug initiation and use.

The data presented in this report cannot establish a *causal* relationship between the Campaign’s activity and trends seen in the data. That is, it cannot be definitively asserted that the Campaign’s efforts directly caused changes in youth drug-use behavior or attitudes within the context of other factors. There are various reasons for this. First, the data compiled by two of the national surveys—the Monitoring the Future (MTF) study and the National Survey on Drug Use and Health (NSDUH)—are not linked to the Campaign’s messages, i.e., they measure trends regarding drug use and youth, but they do not assess the subjects’ exposure to the Campaign. Second, the data that are collected in the context of the Campaign’s activity—as is the case with the Partnership Attitude Tracking Survey (PATS) data and third party advertisement tracking<sup>6</sup> data—only establish an association to exposure to the Campaign. That is, these data can demonstrate whether a subject claims to have been exposed to Campaign messaging, but they cannot determine whether changes in the subject’s attitudes, beliefs, and behavior were attributable to that messaging. Finally, because all of these data are cross-sectional, they cannot provide evidence that, for example, improvements in attitudes and perceptions preceded changes in behavior.

## **Organization of the Report**

The remainder of this report is organized into six major sections. The first section provides an overview of the Campaign’s activity in 2010, including a discussion of the Campaign’s goals and target audiences. The second section describes findings from recent independent, academic research. The third section describes the ongoing research that shapes the Campaign’s approaches and techniques; this formative and process evaluation research includes copy testing and in-market tracking. (Copy testing is conducted initially with focus groups prior to final production of advertising and then quantitatively before advertisements are aired to ensure the desired messages are being communicated effectively and no adverse effects are detectable. In-market tracking is conducted on a continuous basis among a sample of the target population once the advertising is in the market place, e.g., airing on television,

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<sup>6</sup> The Campaign’s advertising contractor provides quarterly reports depicting findings from advertisement tracking data collected by a reputable, independent market research firm.

to determine how well the advertising is performing in the “real world”.) In the fourth section, data from the national surveys are presented. The fifth section supplies findings from an assessment of the Campaign’s new community-focused initiative. And, finally, in the sixth section, a synthesis of the findings from the preceding sections is provided, including a conclusion about whether the data support an interpretation that the Campaign was effective in 2010.

Note that, throughout the report, terms such as “increased” and “decreased” are reserved for changes that are statistically significant. In the instances where changes are not statistically significant, trends are characterized as stable.

# THE NATIONAL YOUTH ANTI-DRUG MEDIA CAMPAIGN

## Overview of Campaign

Congress created the Office of National Drug Control Policy's National Youth Anti-Drug Media Campaign (hereafter, the Campaign) in 1998 with the goal of preventing and reducing youth drug use across the Nation. Today, the Campaign exposes teenagers to drug prevention messages through a combination of paid advertising (i.e., television, Internet, and cinema) and public communications outreach (i.e., community events, community-based partnerships, and youth-centered activities).

## Methods

The Campaign accomplishes its goals by integrating national paid advertising with community-based public communication outreach to achieve an impact on its target audiences. As required by its authorizing legislation, the Campaign allocates the great majority of its funding to the purchase of advertising time and space in media outlets, including national television, radio, newspapers and other publications, out-of-home venues (such as billboards), cinema, and the Internet. A Congressional mandate requires that all Campaign funds allocated to the purchase of time and space be matched with time and space equivalent in value and placement. In essence, this "match" policy doubles the amount of media exposure and enables more continuity,<sup>7</sup> stronger reach,<sup>8</sup> and greater frequency<sup>9</sup> levels throughout the year. Since its inception in 1998, the Campaign has received match advertising worth \$1.29 billion.

While paid and match advertising allow the Campaign to reach audiences with drug prevention messages on a national level, community-based public communications outreach is critical to augmenting and amplifying the messages in ways that resonate with various audiences. This communications support includes maintaining Internet sites and developing partnership opportunities with nationally recognized organizations and companies to extend the reach of the Campaign's messages. This two-tiered approach allows the Campaign to reach all teenagers across the country with a highly visible national media presence while fostering the active engagement and participation of youth at the community level.

## Audiences

In Fiscal Year (FY) 2010, the Campaign spoke directly to two key audiences: 1) youth aged 12 to 17 (with a particular focus on 14- to 16-year-olds); and 2) young adults aged 18 to 34, who are more likely to use methamphetamine than other age groups.<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>7</sup> Continuity refers to consistent advertising presence without hiatus ("dark") periods. The Campaign seeks to have few breaks (i.e., periods when the Campaign is off the air) to ensure that drug prevention messages remain continually in the media and are at the forefront of the minds of those in the Campaign's target audience.

<sup>8</sup> Reach is the percentage of people who can potentially see or be exposed to an advertisement or message.

<sup>9</sup> Frequency is the number of times that people potentially see or are exposed to an advertisement or message.

<sup>10</sup> SAMHSA, 2009 National Survey on Drug Use and Health, September 2010.

In its efforts to prevent drug use among young people in the United States, the Campaign has been guided by academic research. In particular, the Campaign has acted upon studies showing that young people at critical transition periods, e.g., those moving from junior high to senior high school, are most likely to experiment with drugs.<sup>11</sup> Guided by this research, the Campaign addresses all youth from 12- to 17-years-old but specifically focuses on teens between 14 and 16 years of age—that is, those most at risk.

In addition, the Campaign recognizes that teenagers are exposed to substantial pro-drug content in their digital media environment, which is important because they spend increasing amounts of time with the media, particularly online and with social networking sites. Such exposures—few of which show any negative consequences of drug use—tend to foster the perception that teenage drug use is both common and without significant consequences, thereby lessening the perception of risk associated with drug use. In a review by Nielsen Online on behalf of ONDCP, almost 40 percent of online video streams with drug references in their titles depicted explicit use of drugs and/or intoxication.<sup>12</sup> That study also found that more than a third of those viewing drug-related content are under the age of 16. In addition, content analysis of music popular among youth has revealed that youth in the study were exposed to an average of 40 marijuana references in music per day, and that there is an independent association between such exposure in popular music and early marijuana use among adolescents living in urban areas.<sup>13</sup> To counter pro-drug messages, the Campaign combines traditional media, such as television, Internet, and cinema with increasing emphasis on digital media, such as Google and YouTube, as well as with social networking partners such as Facebook.

Similarly, research drives the Campaign’s decision to focus its anti-methamphetamine efforts on young adults, i.e., individuals aged 18 to 34, and adult influencers of methamphetamine users. Data from the NSDUH, published by the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA), show young adults<sup>14</sup> are more likely to abuse methamphetamine than are individuals aged 12 to 17 or those 26 and older. Also, NSDUH data show that the average age at which individuals abuse methamphetamine for the first time is slightly over 19 years. In addition, the Campaign identified the geographic areas where its anti-methamphetamine efforts were most needed by drawing upon state-level NSDUH data<sup>15</sup> (which show areas of greatest use) and clandestine methamphetamine laboratory seizure statistics<sup>16</sup> (which indicate

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<sup>11</sup> Analysis of historical data from the MTF study, supported by the National Institute on Drug Abuse, typically show significant increases in drug abuse among teenagers transitioning from junior high to senior high school.

<sup>12</sup> Nielsen Online, “Teen Viewing of Drug- and Alcohol-Related Videos Online,” September 2008, available online: [http://www.ncjrs.gov/ondcppubs/publications/pdf/teenviewing\\_darvideos\\_online.pdf](http://www.ncjrs.gov/ondcppubs/publications/pdf/teenviewing_darvideos_online.pdf).

<sup>13</sup> Primack, B.A., Douglas, E.L., Kraemer, K.L. (2009). Exposure to cannabis in popular music and cannabis use among adolescents, *Addiction*, 2009, 105, 515-523.

<sup>14</sup> SAMHSA, 2009 National Survey on Drug Use and Health, September 2010.

<sup>15</sup> SAMHSA provided ONDCP with a data extract that estimates methamphetamine use in the past year among persons aged 12 and older, by state and age group (annual averages based upon 2005 through 2008 data).

<sup>16</sup> Methamphetamine laboratory seizure statistics were taken from the National Seizure System maintained by the El Paso Intelligence Center, a component of the Drug Enforcement Administration.

areas where methamphetamine is produced). Using these data, the Campaign targeted the population most at risk: individuals aged 18 to 34 in the parts of the country where methamphetamine use is most prevalent.

### **Fiscal Year 2010 Activities**

In FY 2010, the Campaign comprised three initiatives: 1) messages directed at youth bearing the *Above the Influence* brand; 2) the implementation of the Campaign's *Above the Influence* Tier Two—a community-level effort focused on youth-centered organizations conducting *Above the Influence* activities with their respective youth; and 3) an anti-methamphetamine campaign focused on communities where the methamphetamine problem is most severe.

### **Above the Influence Campaign**

Since November 2005, the Campaign has been using messages around the theme of “Above the Influence,” a brand designed to capture the attention of youth between the ages of 12 through 17, years when they are most vulnerable to drug initiation and use. In FY 2010, following extensive consultation with experts in the fields of health communications and drug prevention, ONDCP began implementation of its new two-tiered vision and broader *Above the Influence* messaging. The enhancement sought to better align the Campaign with the prevention principles of the *National Drug Control Strategy*—to provide sound information to young people about the dangers of drug use and to strengthen efforts to prevent drug use in communities.

In FY 2010, Campaign advertising was suspended for approximately 8 months—from October 1, 2009 to June 6, 2010—to redesign the Campaign. The new design includes messaging about a broader range of substances and a new two-tiered messaging delivery strategy, moving from a strictly nationally focused advertising campaign to one that builds upon a national advertising foundation with additional youth-targeted and customizable efforts at the community level.

The *Above the Influence* Campaign reached 96 percent of its target audience an average of two to three times per week each week the advertising ran. The Campaign disseminated its drug prevention messages by harnessing a variety of media (cable and network television, print publications, Internet sites and social networks, radio, and mobile marketing). Also, the Campaign made significant progress in its efforts to strengthen the *Above the Influence* brand and make teenagers aware of the messages. Campaign research indicates that, as of September 2010, an average of 85 percent of the Campaign's target audience was aware of *Above the Influence* advertising, up significantly from 2006, when average awareness was 64 percent.<sup>17</sup> In addition, Campaign research indicates that an average of 85 percent of teens recognized the *Above the Influence* logo.

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<sup>17</sup> To enable ONDCP to monitor exposure to its paid advertisements, a third party vendor (OTX Research) collects data by interviewing youth using online panels. In FY 2010, ONDCP received quarterly reports of these advertisement tracking efforts from its advertising contractor, DraftFCB.

## Tier Two Community-Based Above the Influence Campaign

While a national campaign remains a valuable asset to which communities can anchor their individual programs, the Campaign recognizes that it is at the community level where youth substance abuse prevention must ultimately occur. In FY 2010, the Campaign launched its community-based *Above the Influence* Tier Two initiative. This new effort is composed of three main parts: Campaign partnerships with local youth-serving organizations that administer on-the-ground *Above the Influence* activities; paid advertising that employs youth-generated messages and artwork in advertisements that are then placed in the community; and outreach to local media to increase the awareness of *Above the Influence* activities occurring within the community.

To initiate and test the new community-based *Above the Influence* effort, in June 2010 the Campaign conducted *Above the Influence* activities and media events in three communities—the Bronx, NY; Portland, OR; and Milwaukee, WI. These three cities served as pilot sites to engage youth in a conversation about the positive and negative pressures that influence their decisions, and to test youth activities and implement them among youth-serving organizations. After the success of the three pilot community events, the Campaign expanded its *Above the Influence* community-based initiative, partnering with more than 40 youth-serving organizations in more than 20 communities and providing technical assistance and training to more than 500 community organizations through conference workshops and webinars. The objectives of this outreach were as follows:

- Actively engage youth at the local level to allow them to inform and inspire the Campaign;
- Provide local youth-serving organizations with a recognized, national platform to further their specific goals and initiatives; and
- To generate additional awareness, provide localized advertising—including customized banners in 1,150 high schools as well as posters and bus shelter advertisements featuring artwork created by teenagers—in all of the partner communities.

## Anti-Meth Campaign

In response to the threat posed by methamphetamine, Congress directed that Campaign resources be allocated to reducing the use of methamphetamine.<sup>18</sup> The 2010 Anti-Meth Campaign, which launched in June and ran through December, delivered most of its advertising weight to those states with high rates of methamphetamine use and/or high numbers of methamphetamine

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<sup>18</sup> The ONDCP Reauthorization Act of 2006 includes the following language: (1) *Requirement to use 10 percent of funds for methamphetamine abuse prevention.—The Director shall ensure that, of the amounts appropriated under this section for the national media campaign for a fiscal year, not less than 10 percent shall be expended solely for the activities described in subsection (b)(1) with respect to the advertisements specifically intended to reduce the use of methamphetamine.* In FY 2010, the Campaign expended approximately 12.2 percent of its annual appropriation for the Anti-Meth Campaign.

laboratory seizures. The Anti-Meth Campaign conveys the risks of methamphetamine use, the effectiveness of treatment, and the possibility of recovering from methamphetamine addiction.

The Anti-Meth Campaign combined paid advertising with public communications outreach and public service announcements to deliver methamphetamine use prevention and treatment benefit messages to the people who need them most. In FY 2010, the bulk of the Anti-Meth Campaign effort was directed to those states with the highest rates of methamphetamine use. Seventeen states<sup>19</sup> received the full suite of anti-methamphetamine advertising, including television, print, out-of-home radio, and Internet advertising. The Anti-Meth Campaign reached 84 percent of its target audience an average of one or two times per week every week that the advertising ran. To reach rural and smaller suburban communities, Anti-Meth advertising appeared on billboards and signs on gas station pumps and in convenience stores. The states that had both high rates of methamphetamine use and significant Hispanic populations received Spanish-language television and radio advertisements in their respective media markets. Also, print advertisements, billboards, posters, and other materials were available for downloading, and television and radio advertisements are available for use by local organizations as customizable public service advertisements.

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<sup>19</sup> The 17 states are Arizona, Arkansas, California, Illinois, Indiana, Iowa, Kentucky, Minnesota, Missouri, Nebraska, Nevada, New Mexico, Oklahoma, Oregon, South Dakota, Washington, and Wyoming.

## INDEPENDENT ACADEMIC RESEARCH

Two recent studies conducted by independent academic researchers have yielded encouraging findings about the effectiveness of the Campaign. The first of the two studies, whose results were published in the peer-reviewed journal *Prevention Science*, found “clear evidence” that exposure to the *Above the Influence* Campaign predicted reduced marijuana use among youth.<sup>20</sup> This study assessed the *Above the Influence* Campaign alongside another, much smaller prevention effort with a similar theme—the *Be Under Your Own Influence* initiative.<sup>21</sup>

This independent scientific analysis, funded through a grant by the National Institute on Drug Abuse (NIDA), showed that those youth who reported exposure to the *Above the Influence* Campaign were less likely to begin use of marijuana compared with those not exposed to the *Above the Influence* Campaign. From 2006 through 2009, this longitudinal study collected data in three waves from a total of more than 3,200 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> grade students in 20 U.S. communities. The study found that, among 8<sup>th</sup> grade students, “exposure to the ONDCP [*Above the Influence*] campaign predicted reduced marijuana use.”

Further, the study observed that the change in the Campaign’s theme in 2005—from *My Anti-Drug* to *Above the Influence*—was “well-advised.” The change in Campaign theme was driven, in part, by research that found the *My Anti-Drug* Campaign may have had delayed unfavorable effects.<sup>22</sup> This recent study’s findings appear to validate the decision to adopt the new *Above the Influence* theme, which inspires teenagers to live “above the influence” of drugs and alcohol.

In presenting their conclusions, the researchers cautioned that, due to the associational, non-experimental nature of the study’s design, there exists uncertainty as to the causal relationship between exposure to the *Above the Influence* Campaign and the reduced likelihood of marijuana use among 8<sup>th</sup> graders. The authors discuss several potential threats to an interpretation of causation, including false claims of familiarity with the *Above the Influence* messages, better recall among those interested in experimenting with marijuana, or better recall among those with other protective factors in their lives. However, the authors counter each potential threat and conclude that exposure to the *Above the Influence* messages “predicting lower uptake and greater association of non-use with personal aspirations and autonomy seems plausible.”

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<sup>20</sup> Slater, M., et al. (2011). Assessing media campaigns linking marijuana non-use with autonomy and aspirations: “Be Under Your Own Influence” and ONDCP’s “Above the Influence.” *Prevention Science*, 12(1), 12-22.

<sup>21</sup> In contrast to the nationwide *Above the Influence* Campaign, the NIDA-supported *Be Under Your Own Influence* initiative was limited to the communities receiving its messaging as part of this study and a previous trial conducted in 2005. The *Be Under Your Own Influence* program was based upon preventing youth drug use by focusing on themes of youth aspirations and autonomy. As part of this effort, middle school students received in-school and community-based media and promotional materials. While the principal focus of this study was to assess the efficacy of the *Be Under Your Own Influence* initiative, researchers seized this unique opportunity to test the common theories on which these two campaigns were based as well as to evaluate the effectiveness of the campaigns themselves.

<sup>22</sup> Hornik, R., et al. (2008). Effects of the National Youth Anti-Drug Media Campaign on youths. *American Journal of Public Health*, 98(12), 1-8. The results of this study indicated that increased exposure to the *My Anti-Drug* Campaign was associated with an increase in marijuana use among youth.

In addition, the authors note that non-response bias among youth at the schools surveyed is also an issue in interpreting the findings. The average rate of participation in each school was 32 percent of total student enrollment, which appeared to result in more participants with lower initial use of marijuana (i.e., the sample may under-represent youths at higher risk of marijuana use). However, as the authors note, since the *Above the Influence* campaign targets non-users, a bias toward them may not be a negative factor. They do acknowledge that “to the extent that there may be more users in a truly random sample, it is possible the analyses overstate average effects overall assuming effects are greater on non-users.” The authors conclude that despite these limitations “these findings provide independent evidence that the ONDCP ‘*Above the Influence*’ campaign is trending towards [sic] positive impacts on attitudes and behavior, and that these effects may be explained in part by impact on perceptions that personal autonomy and aspirations are linked to substance non-use.”

The second study, published in the *American Journal of Public Health*, provides evidence that greater exposure to the *Above the Influence* Campaign is positively associated with reduced marijuana use.<sup>23</sup> Specifically, this research found that lower rates of past month marijuana use and lifetime marijuana use were found among 8<sup>th</sup> grade girls who had greater exposure to the Campaign’s anti-drug advertisements. Positive findings for early adolescent teenagers in this study are consistent with other research that has shown stronger effects for this age group, such as “truth®,”<sup>24</sup> the national tobacco prevention campaign conducted by the American Legacy Foundation.<sup>25</sup>

This study’s findings were based on relationships between monthly advertising exposure data<sup>26</sup> for the *Above the Influence* Campaign for 210 media markets, and drug use data from the Monitoring the Future study, a cross-sectional, school-based survey of drug, alcohol, and tobacco-related outcomes for youth in the United States.<sup>27</sup> The independent research study used data from the 2006 through 2008 Monitoring the Future studies (N=130,245) for boys and girls in grades 8, 10, and 12.

Using these measures, the study yielded promising findings. While there was no substantive relationship between Campaign advertising and marijuana use among 8<sup>th</sup> grade boys or students

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<sup>23</sup> Carpenter, C.S. & Pechmann, C. (2011). Exposure to ‘Above the Influence’ anti-drug advertisements and youth marijuana use in the US, 2006-2008. *American Journal of Public Health*, 101, 948-54.

<sup>24</sup> The “truth” campaign is the largest youth smoking prevention campaign in the country. It was created in 2000 as a result of the Master Settlement Agreement and is funded by the American Legacy Foundation, an independent public health organization.

<sup>25</sup> Farrelly, M.C., Davis, K.C., Haviland, M.L., Messeri, P., & Heaton, C.G. (2005). Evidence of a dose-response relationship between “truth” anti-smoking ads and youth smoking prevalence. *American Journal of Public Health*, 95, 425-31.

<sup>26</sup> To estimate rates of exposure to Campaign advertising, the researchers used monthly target ratings points (TRPs), which measure the delivery of a media campaign to a target audience and therefore the audience’s potential (i.e., likely or estimated) exposure to the campaign.

<sup>27</sup> The study’s authors obtained a restricted-access version of data from the 2006 to 2008 MTF surveys that included information on the month and year of survey administration and the location (zip code) of each school. They then used school zip code to match each youth to a media market.

of either sex in grades 10 and 12, among 8<sup>th</sup> grade girls there was a positive association between *Above the Influence* advertising and reduced marijuana use. First, greater exposure to Campaign advertising was “significantly related to lower odds of having ever used marijuana among grade 8 girls.” Also, “grade 8 girls were significantly less likely to report past month marijuana use when they were exposed to more anti-drug advertisements.”<sup>28</sup>

Teenagers are subject to major physical and emotional transitions, which potentially increase their vulnerability to drug use initiation,<sup>29</sup> and having a positive effect on young females is of particular importance to the Campaign because of ONDCP’s special initiative focusing on substance abuse among women and girls. Also, the authors of this study note that teenage girls “might be especially receptive to the *Above the Influence*’s anti-drug messages about achievement and living life above negative influences.” This is consistent with the Campaign’s own Youth Ad Tracking Survey, which has shown strong affinity toward the Campaign among teenage girls.

Like the first study discussed above, this analysis is subject to limitations. For one, the data considered here are not longitudinal—they do not follow the same youths over time. Thus, the researchers are not able to assess how the outcomes (i.e., lifetime and past month marijuana use) change among the panel of youth over time as the level of exposure varies, a condition that would be necessary to establish causation. The researchers also do not know why the exposure varies over time or across geographic areas, nor are they able to rule out potential causal factors not included in their model.

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<sup>28</sup> Carpenter, Pechmann, 2011.

<sup>29</sup> Larson, R.W., Moneta, G., Richards, M.H., & Wilson, S. (2002). Continuity, stability, and change in daily emotional experience across adolescence. *Child Development*, 73, 1151-65.

## FORMATIVE AND PROCESS EVALUATION RESEARCH

The Campaign draws upon two forms of research in developing its approaches and techniques: copy testing and in-market tracking. In-market tracking is conducted on a continuous basis among a sample of the target population once the advertising is in the market place (e.g., airing on television) to determine how well the advertising is performing in the “real world.”<sup>30</sup>

### Copy Testing

Copy testing is a technique used by the advertising industry and social marketing practitioners to evaluate advertising quantitatively prior to its airing to ensure specific desired outcomes are achieved (e.g., strengthening of attitudes, intent to take action) and that no adverse effects are created by the messaging. Advertising industry-standard copy tests typically are either pre-post or test-control designs. In pre-post designs, responses to measures are collected both before and after subjects see an advertising message; responses from those individuals are then compared to quantify changes. In experimental test-control designs, a test group of respondents views advertising while a control group does not. Responses to a series of questions related to the message content of the advertising (e.g., anti-drug attitudes and beliefs) are obtained from both the test and control groups and the differences quantified. This latter design is employed by the Campaign because it is a more rigorous approach and has a cleaner means of comparison.<sup>31</sup>

### Purpose of Copy Testing

The Campaign uses copy testing methodology to screen all individual television advertisements to ensure they are suitable for airing and that they meet the objectives for the Campaign. The key research questions the copy test is intended to answer are as follows:

- Does the advertising have any adverse effects in terms of beliefs or intentions related to drug use?
- Does the advertising strengthen beliefs or intentions associated with not using drugs?
- Does the advertising convey the message expressed in the creative brief from which it emanated?

### Copy Testing Procedures

Before an advertisement is produced and made ready for quantitative testing, its content and proposed execution first undergo a rigorous qualitative evaluation by members of the audience for which the work is intended. This occurs in a small, focus-group setting where an experienced moderator shows story boards, scripts, and other sample advertisement concepts and content to

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<sup>30</sup> The methods employed as part of the Campaign’s formative and process evaluation research (which includes its copy testing and in-market testing) have been reviewed by and have received clearance from the Office of Management and Budget (OMB).

<sup>31</sup> The Campaign’s copy testing approach is cited in the *Wiley International Encyclopedia of Marketing* as adhering to Positioning Advertising Copy Testing (PACT), the major industry document on copy testing standards. See Pechmann, C., and Andrews C. (2010). Copy test methods to pretest advertisements. *Wiley International Encyclopedia of Marketing* West Sussex, United Kingdom: John Wiley & Sons.

approximately six teens per group and solicits feedback. After the qualitative phase of research has been completed, the concepts are winnowed, and recommendations for how the remaining advertisements might be improved are made prior to production. When the television advertisements are in final form, they are submitted for copy testing with target audience members recruited in approximately 60 shopping malls around the country. Data collection typically is conducted over one weekend. The dataset is then analyzed according to an established protocol, and formal decision criteria are then employed to determine if the advertisement should air. In addition, any scientific claims made in an advertising concept are reviewed by NIDA prior to qualitative testing.

The copy testing process evaluates all individual advertisement executions within the Campaign. Each of the youth advertisements is copy tested among 300 respondents, split among 100 Caucasian, 100 Hispanic, and 100 African-American youth in grades 7 through 10. This youth sample is stratified to ensure equal numbers of male and female respondents and equal numbers of teens (ages 14 to 16) and tweens (ages 11 to 13) in each ethnic category. Also, 300 youth are randomly assigned to a control group—with the same ethnic composition as the test group—that is not exposed to any advertising.

### **Decision Criteria to Air Advertisements from Copy Tests**

An individual advertisement execution will air if it has a positive net effect on general or ad-specific beliefs or intentions. The decision criteria are as follows:

- If an advertisement significantly strengthens anti-drug beliefs and/or weakens intentions to use drugs among the overall sample or any subgroup (by gender, ethnicity, or teens vs. tweens), the execution is recommended for airing, except in the instances noted below.
- If an advertisement significantly *weakens* anti-drug beliefs and/or *strengthens* intentions to use drugs within any subgroup, that execution cannot be used until it is revised and successfully retested.

### **Findings from Copy Testing**

In FY 2010, the Campaign copy tested five *Above the Influence* television advertisements, and three met the criteria for airing (i.e., they conveyed the intended messages, strengthened anti-drug use intentions and beliefs, and did not have any adverse effects). Two advertisements initially failed to meet all of these criteria; they were revised based upon the copy testing findings and subsequently met the criteria for airing.

## **In-Market Tracking**

In general, tracking studies serve to assess the performance of advertising in the actual marketplace, based on key measures, including awareness, recall, attitudes, and intent to take action.<sup>32</sup> Tracking data typically are evaluated in conjunction with other data (often using statistical modeling techniques that compare multiple factors at the same time). These other data include the following:

- In-market sales of consumer products
- Behavioral panel data
- Media expenditures, i.e., gross ratings points (GRPs)<sup>33</sup>
- Competitive activity

## **Purpose of In-Market Tracking**

The Campaign tracking study serves as a valuable resource in guiding Campaign decisions, strategic direction, and media spending, which results in a more efficient use of Campaign resources. The tracking data typically are utilized in a variety of analytic capacities, covering both long-term and short-term (“real time”) process evaluation functions. These functions include the following:

- Optimizing media weight through modeling awareness
- Refining media plans (e.g., determining how long advertisements stay on the air, selecting which media to use)
- Providing information for making changes and improvements to strategic direction on an ongoing basis
- Validating logic model linkages that show how the campaign effectively communicates messages (i.e., establishing a connection between spending and awareness and then linking that to attitudes, intentions, and, ultimately, to drug-related behavior)
- Conducting advertising pre-launch/post-launch studies in order to identify differences and gauge real-time responses

## **In-Market Tracking Procedures and Methodology**

### **Above the Influence**

In FY 2010, the Campaign employed a new method for its in-market tracking study. In the past, a third-party research company surveyed 100 teenagers each week in shopping malls throughout

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<sup>32</sup> In addition to an aided awareness measure of the *Above the Influence* Campaign, measures of familiarity and message comprehension also are covered in the tracking study. The tracking study provides descriptive data on teenagers’ responses to the tracking metrics and is intended as a monitoring tool to ensure that Campaign objectives are fulfilled. Deeper analysis linking responses to gross rating points has been conducted by outside research studies (see Carpenter & Pechmann, 2011), indicating a positive relationship between responses and exposure to advertising. Past modeling studies conducted by ONDCP have yielded similar findings.

<sup>33</sup> A gross ratings point (GRP), a standard measure of exposure in the advertising industry, is the calculation of *reach* multiplied by *frequency*. (Reach is the percentage of people exposed to the advertisements, and frequency is the number of times people are exposed to the advertisement.) GRPs allow the Campaign to estimate the level of advertising exposure upon a target audience.

the country. Beginning in FY 2010, however, a different third-party research company<sup>34</sup> instead surveyed 200 teenagers each week using online panels. To validate the new methodology, the mall-based and online surveys were conducted simultaneously for a 3-month period: the two approaches produced similar results.<sup>35</sup>

The new methodology of the *Above the Influence* Campaign's in-market tracking study includes the following features:

- Samples of 200 teenagers aged 14 to 16 were surveyed each week during two periods—one series prior to the relaunch of the Campaign in June 2010 and a second series after the relaunch
- The sample is balanced by gender and by race/ethnicity
- Key measures include brand and logo awareness, ad recognition, beliefs about substance use, and intentions to use drugs

Also in FY 2010, the in-market tracking study was altered to reflect the Campaign's new vision, which addresses the behavior associated with drug use instead of focusing on a particular drug, such as marijuana. The study tracks both anti-drug beliefs—benefits of non-use, risks of use—and brand value attitudes about *Above the Influence* to determine whether the brand is relevant, informative, and important for teenagers. The study also asks teenagers about the different ways in which they interact with *Above the Influence*.

### Anti-Meth Campaign

In FY 2010, a tracking study was conducted in five states (Illinois, Indiana, Iowa, Kentucky, and Missouri) to gauge awareness of Anti-Meth Campaign advertising and awareness of, and beliefs about, specific prevention and recovery messages. Prior to the launch of the 2010 Anti-Meth Campaign in June, researchers surveyed young adults in the five-state area using an online national consumer panel. A second wave of online surveys was conducted following the launch of the Anti-Meth Campaign. For both the pre- and post-launch interviews, the samples of young adults were balanced by gender, ethnicity, and state population.

### Findings from In-market Tracking Study

#### Above the Influence<sup>36</sup>

The findings of the in-market tracking study focus on the association between awareness of the *Above the Influence* Campaign, the extent to which teenagers engaged with the Campaign, and

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<sup>34</sup> Prior to FY 2010, ONDCP obtained tracking data from Millward-Brown. Data are now provided by OTX Research.

<sup>35</sup> The methods employed as part of the Campaign's formative and process evaluation research (which includes its copy testing and in-market testing) have been reviewed by and have received clearance from OMB.

<sup>36</sup> In-market tracking data are available only for Campaign initiatives that incorporate paid advertising outreach, i.e., the *Above the Influence* and Anti-Meth Campaigns. The community-focused Tier Two initiative relies instead upon outreach through youth-serving organizations; thus, in-market tracking data are not available for Tier Two Campaign activities.

youth attitudes and beliefs. The findings are presented here in three sections: 1) awareness of *Above the Influence* advertising; 2) engagement with the Campaign; and 3) attitudes and beliefs associated with drug use.

While awareness of the *Above the Influence* Campaign has increased (and continues to outpace awareness of advertising for national commercial brands), anti-drug attitudes such as the social disapproval of drug use, have proven less responsive to Campaign messages.

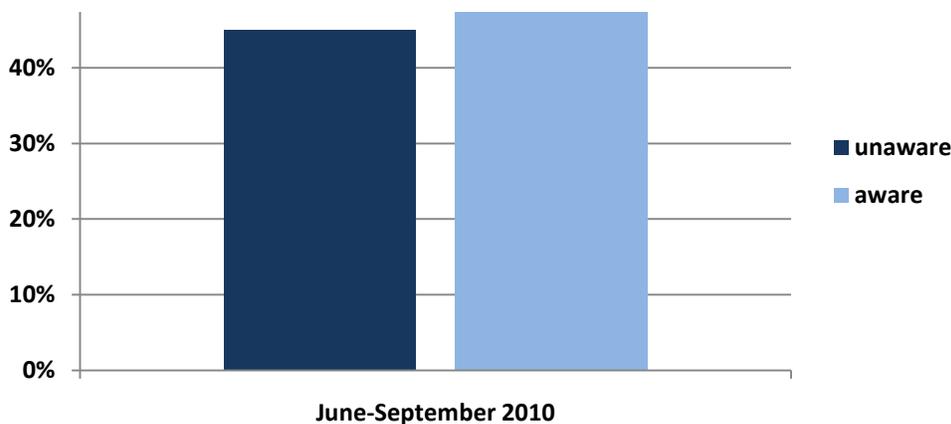
### Awareness of Advertising

- Teenagers who were aware of the Campaign were more likely to hold strong anti-drug beliefs (55%) than those who were not aware of the Campaign (45%). (See Figure 1.)
- Average awareness of *Above the Influence* advertising increased from 78 percent during the period prior to the Campaign’s relaunch in June 2010 to 85 percent following the relaunch.
- Awareness of *Above the Influence* advertising surpassed major teen-targeted national brands such as Burger King (82%), Pepsi (80%), and Nike (72%).

Figure 1. Anti-Drug Beliefs among Teenagers by Campaign Awareness Levels

#### **ANTI-DRUG BELIEFS ARE STRONGER WITH AD EXPOSURE**

Youth who are aware of *Above the Influence* advertising are more likely to hold strong anti-drug beliefs compared to those unaware of Campaign advertising.



## Engagement with the Campaign<sup>37</sup>

- Teenagers who engaged with the Campaign were more likely to hold strong anti-drug beliefs (48%) than those who did not engage (31%), although it cannot be definitively stated that Campaign engagement strengthened anti-drug beliefs. It is possible that youth with existing strong anti-drug beliefs may have been more likely to seek out Campaign activities or to engage with the Campaign.
- Engagement with the Campaign increased from 34 percent during the period prior to the Campaign's relaunch in June 2010 to 40 percent following the relaunch.

## Attitudes and Beliefs<sup>38</sup>

- The percentage of teenagers who hold strong anti-drug beliefs increased from 49 percent during the period prior to the Campaign's relaunch in June 2010 to 54 percent following the relaunch.
- The more teenagers are exposed to and engage with the Campaign, the more likely they are to have strong anti-drug beliefs: 57 percent of teenagers who saw Campaign advertising in three or more places held strong anti-drug beliefs compared with 52 percent of teenagers who saw Campaign advertising in two or fewer places.
- Also, the more teenagers are exposed to the Campaign, the more likely they are to have strong beliefs about the importance of *Above the Influence*: 44 percent of those teenagers who saw Campaign advertising in three or more places felt strongly about the importance of *Above the Influence* compared with 32 percent of teenagers who saw Campaign advertising in two or fewer places.
- Social disapproval of drug use—for example, teenagers' perception that their close friends would disapprove of their getting high—are among the only measures<sup>39</sup> that were not affected by the relaunch of the Campaign in June 2010.

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<sup>37</sup> Teenagers' engagement with the Campaign is assessed by asking them questions such as, Have you recently spent some time on the *Above the Influence* website? Blogged/wrote things online about *Above the Influence*? Done a project or assignment about *Above the Influence*? Posted anything about *Above the Influence*?

<sup>38</sup> The in-market tracking study solicits responses about the benefits of not using drugs and the risks associated with drug use. For example, respondents were asked to assess "how much better off" a person their age would be by not using drugs or drinking alcohol with regard to specific outcomes, such as, "being healthier physically," "being more successful in life," and "doing better in school." To gather information about the risks of drug use, respondents were asked "What is the risk of each of the following if teens get buzzed or high at least once a month" and were offered selections such as, "disappointing friends or family," "doing things that are very irresponsible," and "putting someone they know in danger."

The study also inquires about teenagers' feelings about the Campaign itself. For example, respondents are asked about their agreement or disagreement with statements such as, "It's a good thing *Above the Influence* is out there," "The messages hit home," and "I want to see more from *Above the Influence*."

<sup>39</sup> Teenagers also were asked whether they strongly disapproved of someone their age getting high and whether they disagreed with the statements "I would have a better time with friends if I got buzzed or high" and "I would be more like the popular kids if I got buzzed or high." Responses to these questions were the same both prior to the relaunch of the Campaign and after the relaunch.

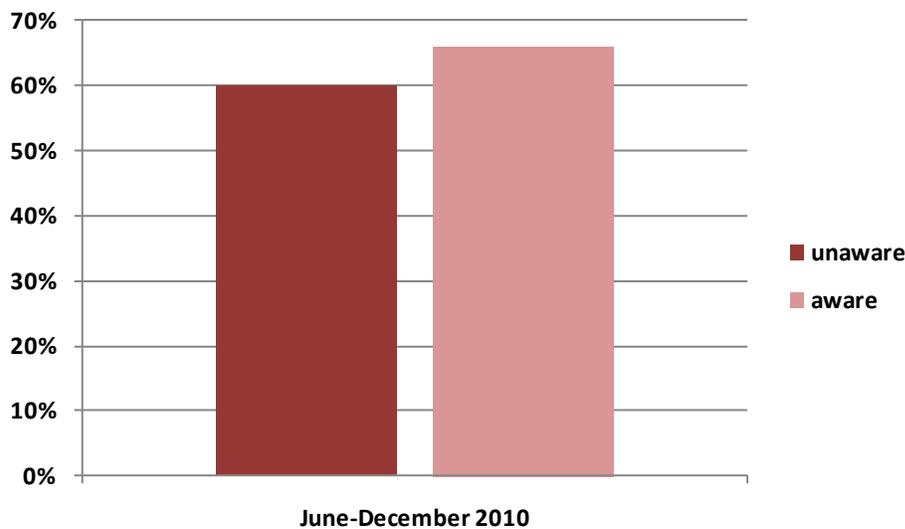
## Anti-Meth Campaign <sup>40</sup>

- The Anti-Meth Campaign tracking study focused on beliefs and intentions consistent with the Campaign’s objectives, i.e., preventing methamphetamine use and dispelling the myth that recovery from methamphetamine addiction is impossible.
- Within the five-state area where the tracking study was conducted, awareness of anti-methamphetamine advertising increased after the launch of the Anti-Meth Campaign, and those young adults who were aware of the advertising were more likely to hold strong anti-methamphetamine beliefs.
- Awareness of anti-methamphetamine advertising increased from an average of 32 percent prior to the launch of the Anti-Meth Campaign to 43 percent after the launch.
- Young adults who were aware of Anti-Meth Campaign advertising were more likely to hold strong anti-methamphetamine beliefs (66%) than those who were not aware of the advertising (60%). (See Figure 2.)

**Figure 2. Anti-Methamphetamine Beliefs among Young Adults by Campaign Awareness Levels**

### ***ANTI-DRUG BELIEFS ARE STRONGER WITH AD EXPOSURE***

Young adults who are aware of anti-methamphetamine advertising are more likely to hold strong anti-drug beliefs compared to those unaware of Campaign



Source: Campaign in-market tracking data, 4<sup>th</sup> quarter, 2010

<sup>40</sup> The Anti-Meth tracking study asks young adults about both their awareness of the Anti-Meth Campaign and about their beliefs regarding methamphetamine use. For example, respondents are asked to report their agreement or disagreement with statements such as, “Meth use turns users into someone they don’t want to be,” “Once you start taking meth, it quickly takes over your life,” and “If I had a friend or loved one who was using meth, I’d step in to help them.”

## DATA FROM NATIONAL SURVEYS

The data<sup>41</sup> provided by the national surveys present a complex picture. The 2010 MTF study yields generally encouraging results in the area of illicit drugs. Since 2000, use of any illicit drug decreased overall; however, the leveling off of that trend over the past few years is troubling. Also, while weekly exposure levels to drug prevention messages in general continued to decrease, the percent of those reporting that exposure to drug prevention advertisements has made them feel less favorable toward drugs to a “very great extent” has increased overall since 2000 in spite of recent fluctuations. In addition, results from the 2009 NSDUH are broadly consistent with an interpretation of Campaign effectiveness. Rates of use of both “any illicit drug” and marijuana in particular declined overall from 2002 (the earliest year for which comparable data are available) through 2009; rates increased slightly between 2008 and 2009. Youth perceptions about marijuana use present an additional area of concern: 2010 MTF data show that the percentage of 10<sup>th</sup> and 12<sup>th</sup> grade students who perceived “great risk” in using marijuana regularly declined from 2009 to 2010. Similarly, 2010 PATS data show that, while a majority of youth disapprove of use of drugs such as heroin and cocaine, fewer than half disapprove of someone their age using marijuana.

### Monitoring the Future

Researchers at the University of Michigan’s Institute for Social Research conduct the MTF study under a grant from NIDA. Since 1975, MTF has collected data on drug use and related behaviors, attitudes, and perceptions among high school seniors; in 1991, the study began collecting similar data on 8<sup>th</sup> and 10<sup>th</sup> graders. Each year during the late winter and early spring, researchers collect data from 15,000 to 18,000 students in each grade in schools across the country.

This section discusses information collected by the MTF study regarding students’ reactions to and beliefs about out-of-school drug prevention advertising; however, these questions are not specific to the Campaign. The report also presents data regarding students’ reported use of any illicit drug.

Highlights from the 2010 MTF study are presented below.

### Exposure to Media Messages

The MTF measures self-reported exposure to general drug prevention media messages, which would include *Above the Influence* advertising and messaging from other organizations. As was noted previously, the *Above the Influence* Campaign was off the air between October 2009 and early June 2010, a period that coincided with the data collection for the MTF study. Thus, *Above*

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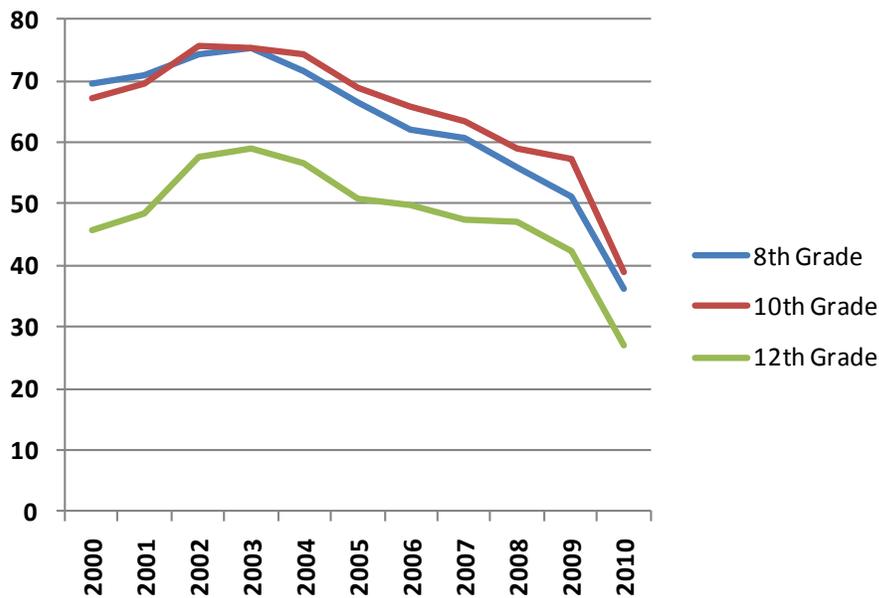
<sup>41</sup> The national surveys discussed here present data regarding youth—the target audience of the *Above the Influence* Campaign. Data relevant to the Anti-Meth Campaign are not discussed here because single-year data that address the target audience (young adults) in the subset of states where the Campaign is present are not available. Likewise, the Campaign’s community-focused Tier Two initiative is not discussed in this section because data specific to the 48 sites where that initiative was active in FY 2010 are not available.

*the Influence* messages would not have been airing when respondents were asked about their exposure to drug prevention advertising. The MTF reports data on four measures: 1) exposure to messages on television or radio; 2) less favorable attitudes toward drugs as a result of messages; 3) perceived exaggeration of messages; and 4) reduced intentions to use drugs as a result of messages.

Rates of students saying they have seen or heard drug prevention advertisements weekly decreased both between 2000 and 2010 and between 2009 and 2010. (See Figure 3.) Among 8<sup>th</sup>, 10<sup>th</sup>, and 12<sup>th</sup> graders, rates declined 48 percent, 42 percent, and 41 percent, respectively, from 2000 through 2010. From 2009 to 2010, rates decreased 29 percent among 8<sup>th</sup> graders, 32 percent among 10<sup>th</sup> graders, and 36 percent among 12<sup>th</sup> graders.

**Figure 3. Trends in Weekly Exposure to General Drug Prevention Advertisements on Television or Radio, By Grade, 2000-2010**

***The Percent of Youth Who Say They Saw or Heard Drug Prevention Advertisements Weekly Declined from 2009 to 2010.***

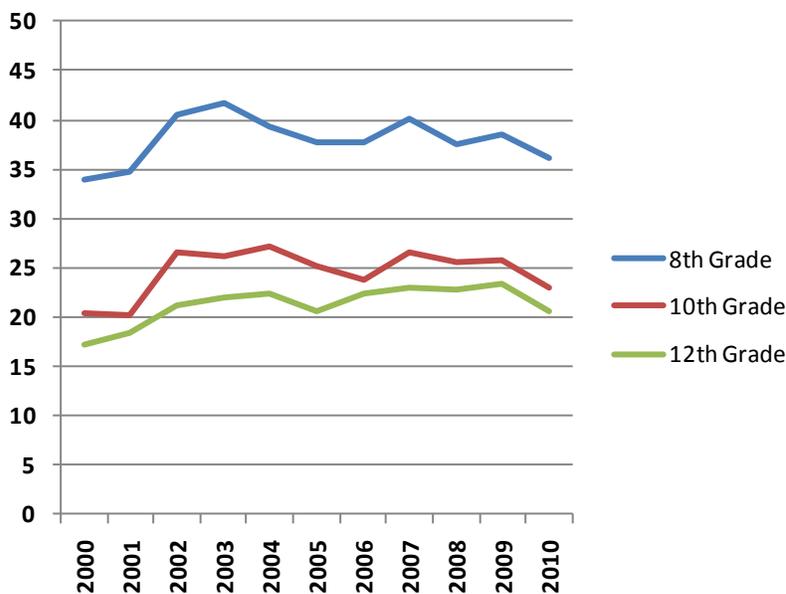


Source: 2010 Monitoring the Future Study, December 2010

The percent of students saying drug prevention advertisements have made them feel less favorable toward drugs to a “great” or a “very great extent” has fluctuated in recent years, but increased overall from 2000 through 2010 among 10<sup>th</sup> and 12<sup>th</sup> graders. (See Figure 4.) Among 10<sup>th</sup> and 12<sup>th</sup> graders, rates increased 13 percent and 19 percent, respectively, from 2000 through 2010. Among 8<sup>th</sup> graders, rates were stable from 2000 through 2010. Between 2009 and 2010, rates decreased for 10<sup>th</sup> and 12<sup>th</sup> graders (11% and 12%, respectively) and were stable among 8<sup>th</sup> graders.

**Figure 4. Trends in Less Favorable Attitudes Toward Drugs as a Result of General Drug Prevention Advertisements Commercials on Television or Radio, By Grade, 2000-2010**

***From 2009 to 2010, the Percent of Youth Who Say Drug Prevention Advertisement Made Them Feel A Lot Less Favorable Toward Drugs Was Stable Among 8<sup>th</sup> Graders but Decreased Among 10<sup>th</sup> and 12<sup>th</sup> Graders.***

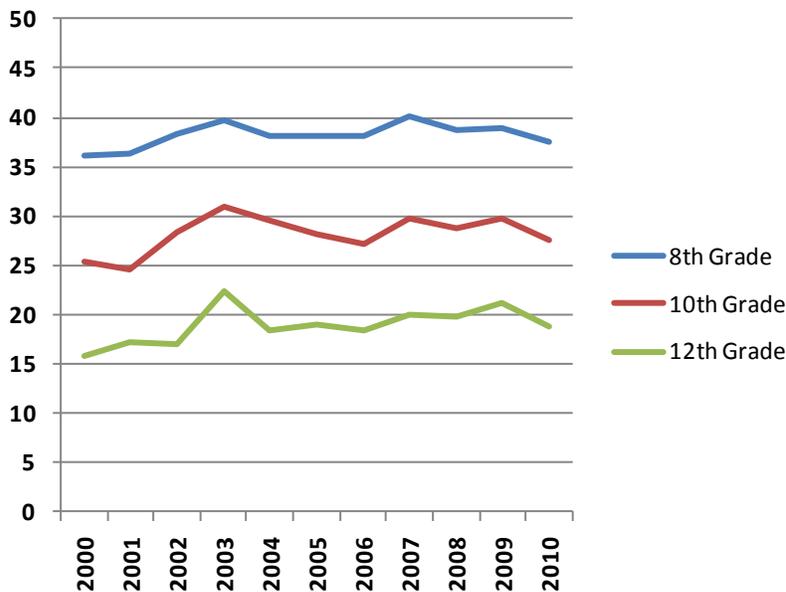


Source: 2010 Monitoring the Future Study, December 2010

Researchers also inquired about the extent to which students felt drug prevention advertisements overstated the dangers or risks of drug abuse. The rates of students reporting they felt advertisements overstated the dangers and risks to a “great” or a “very great extent” increased from 2000 through 2010 among 10<sup>th</sup> and 12<sup>th</sup> graders (9% and 18%, respectively) but remained stable among 8<sup>th</sup> graders. (See Figure 5.) (In contrast, copy testing of *Above the Influence* advertisements among the targeted youth audience indicates that the majority of teenagers find *Above the Influence* advertising especially “true to life” (77%), “well done” (75%), and “informative” (74%).) From 2009 through 2010, rates decreased among 10<sup>th</sup> graders (7%) and were stable among 8<sup>th</sup> and 12<sup>th</sup> graders.

**Figure 5. Trends in Perceived Exaggeration of General Drug Prevention Advertisements on Television or Radio, By Grade, 2000-2010**

***From 2009 to 2010, the Percent of Youth Who Say Drug Prevention Advertisements Overstated Dangers to a Great or Very Great Extent Was Stable Among 8<sup>th</sup> and 12<sup>th</sup> Graders but Decreased Among 10<sup>th</sup> Graders.***

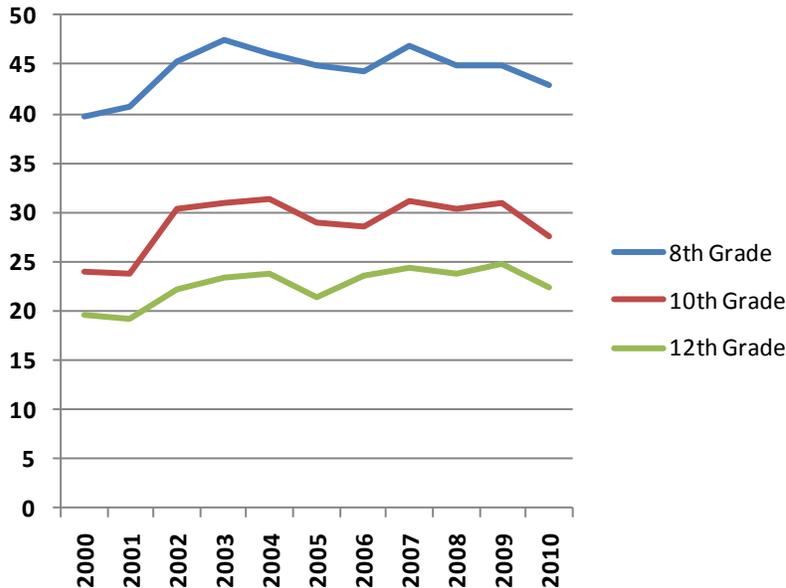


Source: 2010 Monitoring the Future Study, December 2010

The percent of students reporting drug prevention advertisements had made them less likely to use drugs in the future to a “great” or a “very great extent” increased overall across all three grades from 2000 to 2010 in spite of fluctuations throughout that period. (See Figure 6.) The trend from 2009 to 2010 was stable among 8<sup>th</sup> and 12<sup>th</sup> graders and decreased (11%) among 10<sup>th</sup> graders.

**Figure 6. Trends in Reduced Intention to Use Drugs as a Result of General Drug Prevention Advertisements on Television or Radio, By Grade, 2000-2010**

***From 2009 to 2010, The Percent of Youth Who Say Drug Prevention Advertisements Made Them a Lot Less Likely to Use Drugs Was Stable Among 8<sup>th</sup> and 12<sup>th</sup> Graders but Decreased Among 10<sup>th</sup> Graders.***



Source: 2010 Monitoring the Future Study, December 2010

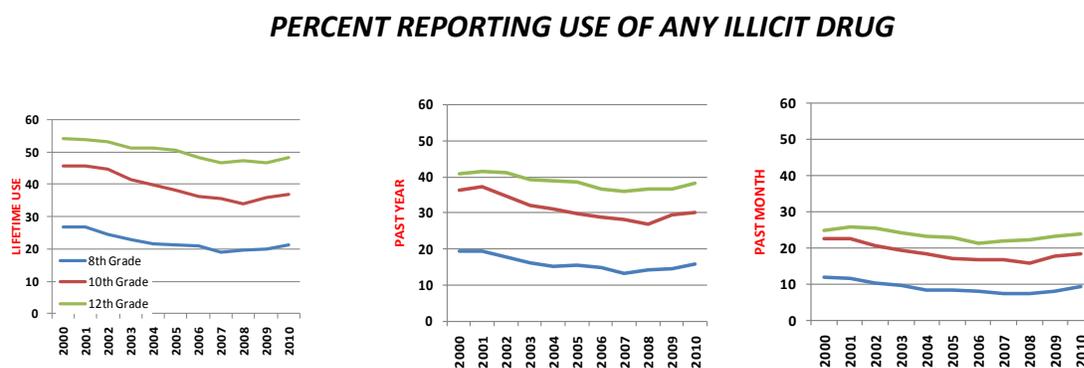
### Perceptions of Risk

The MTF also provides information about trends in the harmfulness of drugs as perceived by 8<sup>th</sup>, 10<sup>th</sup>, and 12<sup>th</sup> graders. From 2009 through 2010, the percentage of 10<sup>th</sup> and 12<sup>th</sup> grade students who said they perceived “great risk” from smoking marijuana regularly decreased (2% and 6%, respectively). The trend among 8<sup>th</sup> grade students was stable.

## Drug Use Trends

Use of *any* illicit drug decreased overall from 2000 through 2010 among 8<sup>th</sup>, 10<sup>th</sup>, and 12<sup>th</sup> graders. (See Figure 7.) However, the leveling off of that trend in more recent years is cause for concern. In addition, among all three grades surveyed, daily marijuana use is the highest it has been in 7 years and, from 2009 to 2010, daily marijuana use increased significantly among 8<sup>th</sup>, 10<sup>th</sup>, and 12<sup>th</sup> graders.

**Figure 7. Trends in Lifetime, Past Year, and Past Month Use of *Any* Illicit Drug by Grade, 2000-2010**



Source: 2010 Monitoring the Future Study, December 2010

- Lifetime use of any illicit drug was down 20 percent from 2000 through 2010 among 8<sup>th</sup> graders (from 26.8% to 21.4%); 19 percent among 10<sup>th</sup> graders (from 45.6% to 37.0%); and 11 percent among 12<sup>th</sup> graders (from 54.0% to 48.2%). Changes from 2009 to 2010 are not statistically significant and indicate a leveling off of the downward trend.
- Past year use of any illicit drug was down 18 percent from 2000 through 2010 among 8<sup>th</sup> graders (from 19.5% to 16.0%) and 17 percent among 10<sup>th</sup> graders (from 36.4% to 30.2%). The trend among 12<sup>th</sup> graders was statistically unchanged. The trend leveled off in recent years among all three grades though changes were not statistically significant until an increase (10%) occurred among 8<sup>th</sup> graders between 2009 and 2010.
- Past month use of any illicit drug was down 20 percent from 2000 through 2010 among 8<sup>th</sup> graders (from 11.9% to 9.5%) and 18 percent among 10<sup>th</sup> graders (from 22.5% to 18.5%). The trend among 12<sup>th</sup> graders was statistically unchanged. As above, the downward trend leveled off in recent years. Changes from 2009 to 2010 were not significant among 10<sup>th</sup> and 12<sup>th</sup> graders, but there was an increase (17%) among 8<sup>th</sup> graders.

## **National Survey on Drug Use and Health**

Since the early 1970s, NSDUH (formerly known as the National Household Survey on Drug Abuse) has been collecting data on substance abuse and mental health issues among the general U.S. household population (ages 12 and older). To improve the precision of NSDUH's age-based estimates, youth (ages 12 to 17) are over-sampled—that is, researchers include a higher number of youth in their population sample so that trends specific to youth are more accurately represented. In its surveys in 1998 and 2002, SAMHSA introduced changes to the survey to improve both response rates and the precision of its estimates. These changes included converting from a paper and pencil self-interview to a computer assisted self-interview, increasing the sample size from approximately 24,000 individuals to nearly 70,000, changing the name of the survey, and improving interviewer training. A result of these changes is that data from the year of the change and later cannot be compared to earlier years (i.e., data from 1998 through 2001 cannot be compared with later years, and data from 2002 and later cannot be compared with earlier years).

Highlights for youth from the 2009 NSDUH are presented below.<sup>42</sup>

### **Exposure to Prevention Messages**

In 2009, approximately one in eight youths aged 12 to 17 (12.0%) reported they had participated in drug, tobacco, or alcohol prevention programs outside of school in the past year. This rate was higher than the 11.1 percent reported in 2008 but similar to the rate reported in 2002 (12.7%) and lower than the rate reported in 2003 (13.9%). The prevalence of past month use of illicit drugs, marijuana, cigarettes, or binge alcohol use among those who participated in these prevention programs outside of school (10.5%, 6.9%, 8.9%, or 8.1%, respectively) was not significantly lower than among those who did not (10.0%, 7.4%, 8.9%, or 8.9%, respectively).

Also in 2009, 77.0 percent of youths aged 12 to 17 reported having seen or heard drug or alcohol prevention messages in the past year from sources outside of school, which was similar to the 78.0 percent reported in 2008, but lower than the 83.2 percent reported in 2002. The prevalence of past month use of illicit drugs was lower among those who reported having such exposure (9.7%) than among those who reported having no such exposure (11.3%).

Finally, in 2009, 74.9 percent of youths aged 12 to 17 enrolled in school in the past year reported having seen or heard drug or alcohol prevention messages at school, which was similar to the 75.9 percent reported in 2008, but lower than the 78.8 percent reported in 2002. The prevalence of past month use of illicit drugs or marijuana was lower among those who reported having such exposure (9.2% and 6.7% for illicit drugs and marijuana, respectively) than among those who reported having no such exposure (12.7% and 9.7%, respectively).

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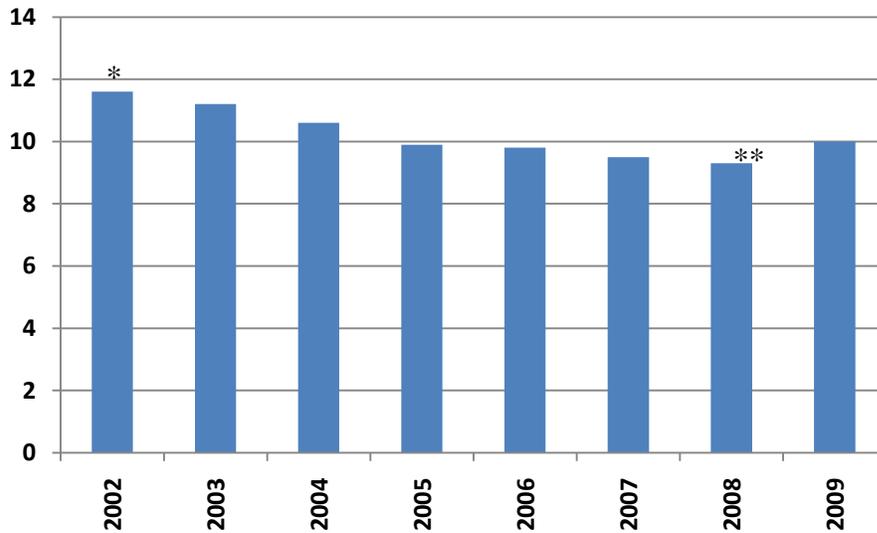
<sup>42</sup> NSDUH data for a particular calendar year are released in the fall of the subsequent year. Thus, this report provides highlights from the 2009 NSDUH, which was released in September 2010.

## Drug Use Trends

Overall, from 2002 through 2009, the rate of use of any illicit drug in the past month by youth aged 12 to 17 decreased nearly 14 percent (from 11.6% to 10.0%). However, the rate increased slightly from 2008 to 2009 (from 9.3% to 10.0%). (See Figure 8.) Meanwhile, the number of youth aged 12 to 17 who began using an illicit drug in the past year remained statistically stable from 2008 to 2009 (1.49 million and 1.60 million, respectively).

Figure 8. Illicit Drug Use Among Youth (Aged 12 to 17), 2002-2009

***The Percent of Youth Using Any Illicit Drug in the Past Month Increased from 2008 to 2009.***



Source: National Survey on Drug Use and Health (September 2010)

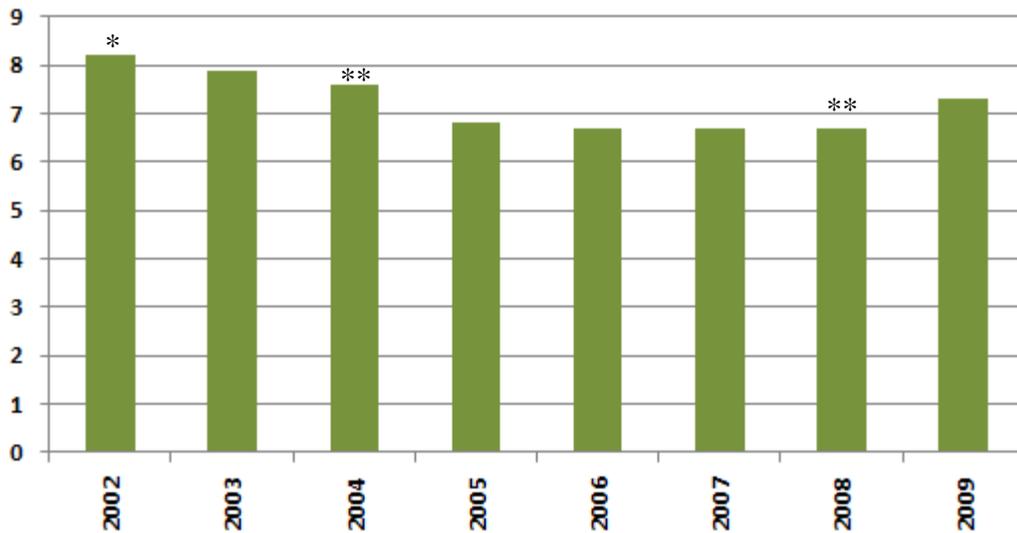
\*The difference between the 2002 and 2009 estimates is statistically significant at the 0.01 level.

\*\*The difference between the 2008 and 2009 estimates is statistically significant at the 0.05 level.

The rate of use of marijuana in the past month experienced a similar trend: between 2002 and 2009 the rate decreased overall (from 8.2% to 7.3%), but it increased slightly from 2008 to 2009 (from 6.7% to 7.3%). (See Figure 9.) The number of youth aged 12 to 17 who began using marijuana in the past year remained statistically stable (1.2 million in 2008 and 1.3 million in 2009).

**Figure 9. Marijuana Use among Youth (Aged 12 to 17), 2002-2009**

***The Percent of Youth Using Marijuana in the Past Month Increased from 2008 to 2009.***



*Source: National Survey on Drug Use and Health (September 2010)*

*\*The difference between the 2002 and 2009 estimates is statistically significant at the 0.01 level.*

*\*\*The difference between the 2004 and 2005 estimates is statistically significant at the 0.05 level.*

*\*\*The difference between the 2008 and 2009 estimates is statistically significant at the 0.05 level.*

## 2010 Partnership at Drugfree.org Annual Tracking Study

Since 1993, the Partnership at Drugfree.org (hereafter the Partnership) has conducted the Partnership Attitude Tracking Study (PATS), an annual, nationally representative school-based survey of U.S. students in grades 9 through 12.<sup>43</sup> In 2010, a total of 2,544 students from all types of schools—public, parochial, and private—were surveyed. The PATS survey assesses students' exposure to *Above the Influence* Campaign advertising as well as youth attitudes and behaviors relating to illicit drug use.

Highlights from the 2010 PATS survey are presented below in terms of exposure to *Above the Influence* advertisements and beliefs about drug use.

### Exposure to Campaign Advertising<sup>44</sup>

- Two in five (44%) of 9<sup>th</sup> through 12<sup>th</sup> graders say they have seen *Above the Influence* advertising at least weekly, with 22 percent saying they see *Above the Influence* advertisements daily or more often.
- Television remains the dominant medium for Campaign advertising, with 84 percent of 9<sup>th</sup> through 12<sup>th</sup> graders reporting they had seen or heard *Above the Influence* advertising on television. Other popular media were magazines (56%), Internet (48%), and radio (46%).
- One in five (24%) of 9<sup>th</sup> through 12<sup>th</sup> graders reported they had recently talked about *Above the Influence*, and one in ten (11%) said they had recently shared something about the *Above the Influence* Campaign.

### Drug Use and Beliefs About Drug Use

- Marijuana use remained relatively stable from 1998 through 2010. In 1998, 51 percent of 9<sup>th</sup> through 12<sup>th</sup> graders reported having tried marijuana, comparable to 49 percent in 2010. Similarly, in 1998, 27 percent reported having used marijuana in the past 30 days, compared to 25 percent in 2010.
- A majority of 9<sup>th</sup> through 12<sup>th</sup> graders reported they disapprove of individuals their age using heroin (65%), cocaine (63%), and prescription pain relievers like OxyContin (55%) or Vicodin (53%) to get high. Only 42 percent, however, reported disapproval of using marijuana.
- While the percentage of 9<sup>th</sup> through 12<sup>th</sup> graders who perceived “great risk” in upsetting their parents by using marijuana increased from 62 percent in 2009 to 71 percent in 2010, those who feared losing their friends decreased (from 47% to 41%).

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<sup>43</sup> Prior to 2009, students in grades 6 through 12 were surveyed; however, beginning in 2009, only students in grades 9 through 12 were surveyed.

<sup>44</sup> Exposure to Campaign advertising is based upon responses to questions such as: “How frequently do you see or hear commercials or ads that include the phrase, ‘Above the Influence?’”; “Where have you seen, heard or read anything about *Above the Influence*?”; and “Have you recently talked about *Above the Influence*?”

## FINDINGS REGARDING THE TIER TWO INITIATIVE

The launch of the *Above the Influence* Tier Two community-based initiative in the fall of 2010 enabled the Campaign to augment its national drug prevention advertising with local partnerships and youth activities. In conjunction with the launch, the Campaign contracted with a research firm<sup>45</sup> to evaluate one of the elements of the new initiative, the Tag It activity. In each Tag It session, teens are asked to literally “tag” (or identify) the influences in their lives and share them with the world. Using oversized Post-it® notes branded with the *Above the Influence* symbol, teens label negative influences in their surroundings (e.g., their neighborhoods, local malls, parks, schools), take a photo of what they have tagged, and then share it with their peers. The activity gets teens to recognize the power of the influences around them. It also hints at empowerment, providing a tangible way for youth to say, “I see it, and I’m above it.” The activity’s objectives are to increase awareness of the *Above the Influence* Campaign, to raise awareness of positive and negative influences in teenagers’ lives, to increase the perceptions of risks associated with drug use, and to foster skills to enable youth to avoid negative influences such as drug use.

The evaluation of the Tag It exercise comprised two components. The first component examined data on youth who completed pretest surveys, attended sessions of Tag It, and completed post-test surveys. The second examined data from those who facilitated Tag It sessions to explore facilitators’ perceptions of the activity, their experience facilitating it, and their perceptions of youths’ reactions to “Tag It.” A total of 597 youth and 50 facilitators were surveyed across 18 youth-serving, community-based organizations and their 48 sites.

Overall, the youth surveyed found Tag It favorable and useful, and youth participation in Tag It was associated with positive changes in anti-drug beliefs. Of the activity participants, 91 percent characterized it as at least somewhat favorable, and 76 percent of youth who attended Tag It found it to be useful in their lives. Also, teenagers’ reported ability to identify positive and negative influences in their lives increased from pretest to post-test. At the time of pretest, 66 percent of youth strongly agreed they could identify positive life influences at pretest; at post-test that percentage rose to 73 percent. Similarly, the percentage of participants who strongly agreed they could identify negative influences grew from 52 percent at pretest to 58 percent at post-test. Furthermore, youths’ perceptions of the risks of drug use trended upward from pre- to post-test. For example, the percentage of participants who think youth face some or great risk if they get buzzed or high at least once a month by using weed, alcohol, or pills increased from 87 percent at pretest to more than 92 percent at post-test.

The Tag It activity was likewise well-received by facilitators at community-based organizations that serve young people. Seventy-six percent of respondents reported they would highly recommend Tag It to other youth-serving organizations. Ninety-eight percent of respondents

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<sup>45</sup> The evaluation of the Tag It activity was undertaken by KDH Research & Communication (KDHRC).

reported they are willing to implement Tag It again. Facilitators also believed Tag It was valuable to their organization. All but one respondent indicated Tag It was at least somewhat useful in helping the youth served by their organizations, and 47 percent noted Tag It is very useful in this capacity. Every respondent suggested Tag It was at least somewhat useful in assisting their organizations in meeting their missions to help youth.

In addition, facilitators perceived that Tag It had beneficial effects for participating youth. All respondents perceived youths' participation in Tag It increased their ability to define influences and to provide examples of common influences in their lives. Further, 94 percent of respondents agreed youths' participation in Tag It increased their ability to understand the difference between positive and negative influences. Roughly 90 percent of respondents agreed participation in Tag It both increased youths' ability to recognize the power of influences to affect their decision making and to recognize drugs are a common negative influence in the lives of youth. Nearly 90 percent of respondents perceived youths' participation in Tag It increased their ability to think critically about negative influences, like drugs.

The findings of this evaluation, while encouraging, are subject to certain limitations. First, while the researchers did survey a diverse group of teenagers—56 percent were female and 47 percent were white—the subjects were not a representative sample. Thus, the findings of the survey cannot be interpreted to apply to teenagers as a whole. Second, while the evaluation supports the conclusion that the Tag It activity leads to positive changes in youths' ability to identify both positive and negative influences with regard to drug use, it cannot be definitively stated that the Tag It activity leads to reduced drug use among youth.

## CONCLUSION

### **The Impact of the National Youth Anti-Drug Media Campaign**

Independent, academic research found that the *Above the Influence* Campaign had a role in reducing marijuana use among youth. This research also affirmed the Campaign's earlier decision to embrace its current theme—*Above the Influence*. A recent study found that 8<sup>th</sup> grade students who were exposed to the Campaign were significantly less likely to use marijuana than those who had not been exposed to *Above the Influence* advertising. While earlier research suggested that the previous Campaign (*My Anti-Drug*) was associated with increased marijuana use among its target audience, this recent study found no such adverse effects, indicating the change in the Campaign's theme—from *My Anti-Drug* to *Above the Influence*—was “well-advised.” A second study concluded 8<sup>th</sup> grade girls were “significantly less likely to report past month marijuana use when they were exposed to more drug prevention advertisements.” The study also asserted “increases in anti-drug advertising may be an effective way to delay initiation of and reduce marijuana use for grade 8 girls.” With their more rigorous evaluation designs, these two independent studies suggest the Campaign's messaging is effective in preventing youth drug use.

In addition, the results of the Campaign's copy testing indicate the *Above the Influence* advertisements were effective in that, at the time of testing, they significantly strengthened anti-drug beliefs and/or weakened intentions to use drugs among the target audience or subgroup. Subsequent in-market data, however, present a more complex picture. While awareness of the *Above the Influence* Campaign increased and continued to be associated with stronger anti-drug beliefs, some anti-drug attitudes, such as disapproval of marijuana use, nonetheless appear to be decreasing. In-market tracking data related to the Anti-Meth Campaign are more encouraging. Young adults who were aware of Anti-Meth Campaign advertising were more likely to hold strong anti-methamphetamine beliefs than those who were not aware of the advertising.

The three national surveys (PATS, MTF, and NSDUH) reveal some troubling trends about youth attitudes towards drugs as well as a leveling off of drug use rates after nearly a decade of decline.

The Partnership's analysis of the 2010 PATS data suggest social disapproval among youth regarding the use of marijuana is an area of particular concern, especially because it is arguably consistent with general social trends, including the increasing public debate about the legalization of marijuana. The survey shows the majority of high school students reported they disapprove of individuals their age using drugs such as heroin and cocaine; however, less than half reported disapproval of using marijuana. And while the percentage of 9<sup>th</sup> through 12<sup>th</sup> graders who perceived “great risk” in upsetting their parents by using marijuana increased over the past year, those who feared losing their friends by using marijuana decreased.

This lessening in social disapproval and perceived risk associated with the use of marijuana has historically been a predictor of an uptick in use. The 2010 MTF and 2009 NSDUH data suggest we may now be at such a turning point. The 2010 MTF study yields generally encouraging results: use of any illicit drug from 2000 through 2010 among 8<sup>th</sup>, 10<sup>th</sup>, and 12<sup>th</sup> graders decreased across all measures (lifetime, past year, and past month use), a result consistent with the execution of a successful Campaign. However, the leveling off of that trend and the increase among 8<sup>th</sup> graders in 2010 causes concern.

Results from the 2009 NSDUH, though not directly attributable to the efforts of the Campaign, are broadly consistent with an interpretation of an effective Campaign. Rates of use of both “any illicit drug” and marijuana in particular declined overall from 2002 (the earliest year for which comparable data are available) through 2009; however, rates increased slightly between 2008 and 2009. Likewise, initiation of illicit drug use was relatively constant (between 1.5 million and 1.6 million in the previous year) in both 2008 and 2009.

These areas of concern in potential increases in youth drug use rates come at a time when teenagers recognize the importance of drug prevention advertising yet report viewing fewer drug prevention advertisements. According to MTF data, teenagers report drug prevention advertisements do, in fact, make them feel less favorable toward drugs to a “very great extent” (a level that has increased overall since 2000, in spite of recent fluctuations) and make them less likely to use drugs in the future (the percentage of students reporting that these advertisements have positively influenced them to a “great” or “very great extent” has increased among all three grades since 2000 in spite of recent fluctuations). Unfortunately, weekly exposure levels to drug prevention messages in general continued to decrease.

In the absence of high levels of teenagers’ exposure to drug prevention messages as part of a national-level paid campaign, the significance of establishing relationships and working with youth-serving, community-based organizations takes on increasing importance. Findings from an evaluation of the Campaign’s recently launched *Above the Influence* Tier Two initiative reveal teenagers who participated in the Campaign’s Tag It activity found the activity favorable and useful, and participation in the activity was associated with positive changes in anti-drug beliefs. Also, the Tag It activity was well-received by facilitators at youth-serving, community-based organizations, with three-quarters of respondents reporting they would highly recommend the activity to other youth-serving organizations, and nearly all of the respondents saying they would use the activity again.

Conclusions regarding the causal relationship between the Campaign and the trends relating to anti-drug attitudes, beliefs, and behaviors that are observed in the national data sets reviewed here cannot be made. Without the ability to assess causation—that is, to establish a definitive link between the Campaign and these national estimates—we can only assess whether the findings of the studies mentioned above are consistent with a finding that the Campaign has been effective at changing attitudes, beliefs, intentions, and ultimately, behavior. This should not be

interpreted as a conclusion that the Campaign has, or has not, had an impact on these youth trends.

The data discussed in this report, especially the independent analyses by academic researchers, suggest the Campaign, and in particular its current *Above the Influence* theme, can be effective in contributing to a reduction in drug use among youth. However, there are areas of persistent concern. In last year's report, we drew attention to an emerging problem—the apparent softening of anti-drug attitudes and beliefs. Unfortunately, this year, we have begun to witness the effects of those changes in attitude: trends in youth drug use that had been declining are now leveling off or reversing. Fortunately, however, the Campaign anticipated this development and in 2010 implemented a new, community-based approach, the Tier Two initiative, in a preemptive effort to address this concern. That new approach has yielded promising early results. Over the next year, the Campaign will build upon its strengths by maintaining its national prevention program while developing its new approach—focusing on local media markets and working closely with its community partners.