



**BARNSTABLE COUNTY
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Is the use of 'scare tactics' in substance use prevention messaging effective?

March 22, 2016 – Barnstable County Department of Human Services recently published the first in a series of issue briefs on topics related to substance use. “The Use of Scare Tactics in Prevention Messaging” explores the effectiveness of using ‘scare tactics’ in messages targeted at substance use prevention among youth.

“It's so important to talk to our kids about substance use and it's critically important that we understand the safest way to present prevention messaging effectively to reduce risky behavior.” says Beth Albert, Director of Barnstable County Human Services and co-chair of the Regional Substance Abuse Council.

The research on using scare tactics in prevention messaging shows that fear based messages may be counterproductive because they appeal to kids who are already prone to risk-taking. The Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) provides substantial evidenced based guidance on best practices in prevention messaging, including: frame the conversation as a health issue; use real-life, relatable examples; do not glamorize or demonstrate drug use; do not lecture, guilt, shame or encourage sensation-seeking behavior.

The issue brief, along with data and resources for substance use prevention, is available on the Barnstable County Department of Human Services [Regional Substance Abuse Publications and Data](http://tinyurl.com/bcdhs-RSACdata) webpage (<http://tinyurl.com/bcdhs-RSACdata>).

If you are concerned about yourself or someone else facing addiction, please call the Massachusetts Substance Abuse Information and Education Helpline at 1-800-327-5050 or visit www.Helpline-Online.com.

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