



The National Center on Addiction and Substance Abuse at Columbia University

CASA\*\* and TV Land/Nick at Nite Report Finds: Teens Having Two or Fewer Family Dinners Per Week Twice as Likely to Smoke Daily and Get Drunk Monthly

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Family Dinners Proven Proxy for Parental Engagement

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NEW YORK, September 19, 2006 – Teens who have infrequent family dinners (two or fewer per week) are twice as likely to smoke daily and get drunk monthly, compared to teens who have frequent family dinners (at least five per week), according to a new report from The National Center on Addiction and Substance Abuse (CASA) at Columbia University and sponsored by TV Land and Nick at Nite's Family Table. This is the first time the study has examined the relationship between a teen's current tobacco and alcohol use and family dinners.

The report, The Importance of Family Dinners III, also reveals that, compared to teens who have five or more family dinners per week, those who have two or fewer are:

- More than twice as likely to have tried cigarettes;
• One and a half times likelier to have tried alcohol;
• Twice as likely to have tried marijuana; and
• More than twice as likely to say future drug use is very or somewhat likely.

Findings in The Importance of Family Dinners III draw from CASA's 11th annual back-to-school survey, released this past August.

Parental Engagement

The report's findings underscore the significance of family dinners as a proxy for parental engagement.

Compared to parents who say their families have dinners together frequently, those who have infrequent family dinners are:

- Five times likelier to say they have a fair or poor relationship with their teen;
• One and a half times likelier to say they know the parents of their teen's friends not very well or not at all;
• More than twice as likely to say they do not know the names of their teen's teachers; and
• Twice as likely to say that parents deserve not very much blame or no blame at all when a teenager uses illegal drugs.

"This year's findings prove that family dinners and the communication that occurs over the course of a meal are critical in building a relationship with your children and to understanding the world in which they live," said Joseph A. Califano, Jr., CASA's chairman and president and former U.S. Secretary of Health, Education, and Welfare. "Parents who have frequent family dinners are those who take the time to know

their child's friends and the parents of these friends, know their child's teachers and chaperone their parties, and have healthier kids."

"Once again, the study's findings serve as a wake-up call to the benefits of engaging kids consistently at the family table," states Larry W. Jones, President, TV Land and Nick at Nite. "At TV Land and Nick at Nite, our *Family Table* initiative serves to spread the word on why families need to make sharing meals a priority. Each year, the *Importance of Family Dinners* study reminds us that making the commitment to eat together on a regular basis can influence your kids lives more than anything else you do. We're honored to put this messaging on our air and feel privileged to host familytable.info for participants around the country to register their family, friends and loved ones to celebrate *Family Day*."

### **Too Busy for Dinner**

This year, 58 percent of teens report having dinner with their families at least five times a week, the same proportion CASA has observed over the past several years. Consistent with what teens report, 59 percent of parents say they have frequent family dinners.

This year, for the first time the study asked teens and parents who have infrequent family dinners to tell us the main reason why their family does not have dinner together more often. More than one in five of these parents and teens say they are too busy to have dinner together more often. The reason most commonly given by parents for why family dinners are not more frequent is because of conflicting schedules, while the most common reason given by teens is because one or both parents work late.

### **Family Dining and Academic Performance**

Teens who have frequent family dinners are likelier to get better grades in school, and higher academic performance is associated with lower substance abuse risk.

Teens who have dinner with their families five or more times a week are likelier to say that they receive either all A's or mostly A's and B's in school compared to teens who have dinner with their families fewer than three times a week (63 percent vs. 49 percent). Teens who typically receive grades of C or lower are at twice the risk of substance abuse as those receiving all A's or mostly A's and B's.

### **Other Findings**

- Family dinners mostly take place at home: more than 90 percent of teens and parents say they have fewer than three family dinners per week at a restaurant or someplace other than their home.
- Family dinners are also more common than family breakfasts: only 17 percent of teens and 13 percent of parents say they eat breakfast with a family member five or more times per week.
- Twenty-six percent of 17-year olds have family dinners seven nights per week compared to 51 percent of 12-year olds and 40 percent of 13-year olds.
- Teens who have frequent family dinners are more than twice as likely to say that parents are always home during the house parties they attend.
- Compared to teens who have five or more family dinners per week, those who have two or less are twice as likely to report that half or more of their friends use marijuana and are one and a half times likelier to say half or more of their friends drink alcohol.

"Of course there are no silver bullets; teen substance abuse can strike any family. But one factor that does more to reduce teens' substance abuse risk is parental engagement and one of the simplest and most effective ways for parents to be engaged in their teens' lives is by having frequent family dinners," Califano concluded.

QEV Analytics conducted *The National Survey of American Attitudes on Substance Abuse XI: Teens and Parents* from March 9 to April 30, 2006. The firm interviewed at home by telephone a nationally representative random sample of 1,297 12- to 17-year olds (591 boys, 706 girls) and 562 parents (84 percent of whom were parents of teens surveyed). Sampling error is +/- three percent for teens, +/- four percent for parents.

CASA and TV Land and Nick at Nite's *Family Table: Share More Than Meals* – Classic TV's very first pro-social initiative – are encouraging Americans to commit to eating dinner together as a family on *Family Day – A Day To Eat Dinner With Your Children<sup>tm</sup>* on Monday, September 25, 2006. Visit <http://www.familytable.info/> to pledge to have dinner as a family on *Family Day*. CASA created *Family Day* in 2001 as a national effort to promote parental engagement as a simple, effective way to reduce youth substance abuse and raise healthier children. For more information, visit <http://www.casafamilyday.org/>.

CASA is the only national organization that brings together under one roof all the professional disciplines needed to study and combat all types of substance abuse as they affect all aspects of society. CASA has issued 62 reports and white papers, published one book, conducted demonstration projects focused on children, families and schools at 158 sites in 64 cities and counties in 27 states plus Washington, DC and a Native American tribal reservation, and has been testing the effectiveness of drug and alcohol treatment, in a variety of programs and drug courts. For more information visit <http://www.casacolumbia.org/>.

*TV Land & Nick at Nite's Family Table: Share More Than Meals* was created by the two networks in 2003 and seeks to remind its viewers about the emotional and social benefits that come from taking the time to sit down and share with one another. Through a series of promotional spots – which both networks air in regular rotation daily – the networks encourage viewers to experience the benefits of dining together.

Now seen in over 87 million U.S. homes, TV Land's program mix features popular dramas, sitcoms, westerns, Retromercials and a TV-referential interstitial environment, all programmed with a specific audience in mind – the first generation of Americans to grow up watching television and features all-time Classic hits like *All in the Family*, *I Love Lucy*, *The Andy Griffith Show*, and *Bonanza*.

Currently seen in more than 88 million U.S. homes, Nick at Nite features timeless hit comedies: *The Cosby Show* – this Emmy Award-winning sitcom is one of the network's highest-rated shows; *Full House* – this popular family comedy launched on the network in October and is one of the highest-rated and most popular syndicated programs in television; and *Roseanne*, one of the most talk-about and celebrated sitcoms in television history.

MTV Networks, a division of Viacom International Inc. (NYSE: VIA, VIA.B), owns and operates the following television programming services -- MTV: MUSIC TELEVISION, MTV2, mtvU, VH1, NICKELODEON, NICK at NITE, COMEDY CENTRAL, TV LAND, SPIKE TV, CMT, NOGGIN, MTV INTERNATIONAL and THE DIGITAL SUITE FROM MTV NETWORKS, a package of 12 digital services, all of which are trademarks of MTV Networks. MTV Networks also has licensing agreements, joint ventures, and syndication deals whereby all of its programming services can be seen worldwide.

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**Abstract:** This bulletin highlights findings from the "The Importance of Family Dinners III," a report produced by the National Center on Addiction and Substance Abuse (CASA) at Columbia University and sponsored by TV Land and Nick at Nite. Findings in this report are based on CASA's 11th annual back-to-school survey. The report finds that teens who have infrequent family dinners (two or fewer per week) are twice as likely to smoke daily and get drug monthly compared to teens who have frequent family dinners (at least five per week). Those who have infrequent family dinners also are more than twice as likely to have tried cigarettes, one and a half times more likely to have tried alcohol, twice as likely to have tried marijuana, and more than twice as likely to say future drug use is very or somewhat likely. Parents who say they have infrequent family dinners are more likely to have a fair or poor relationship with their teen, less likely to know the parents of their teen's friends, and less likely to know the names of their teen's teachers. The report also discusses the reasons families say they do not have dinner together more often, the effects of family dining on teens' academic performance, and other findings.

**Availability:** The National Center on Addiction and Substance Abuse at Columbia University, 633 Third Avenue, New York, NY 10017-6706; Telephone: (212) 841-5200, Fax: (212) 956-8020, Web site: [www.casacolumbia.org](http://www.casacolumbia.org)

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