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Survey Shows Overall Drug Use Down Among Florida Youth

~ Youth use of marijuana is a growing concern ~

TALLAHASSEE – Florida Lieutenant Governor Jeff Kottkamp and Office of Drug Control Director Bruce Grant announced significant long-term reductions in drug use among Florida's middle and high school students while releasing the results of the 2010 *Florida Youth Substance Abuse Survey*. The Florida Office of Drug Control and partners in national and state agencies, law enforcement organizations, anti-drug coalitions, schools, and families are succeeding by addressing substance abuse prevention as a collective responsibility.

"Reducing substance abuse not only benefits the individual and their family, it is also good for taxpayers," said Lieutenant Jeff Kottkamp who oversees the Office of Drug Control. "For example, underage drinking in Florida costs \$3.1 billion annually. Over one third of those costs are borne by taxpayers. The progress that we see in the Florida Youth Substance Abuse Survey is good news for taxpayers and good news for our communities."

"There has been a remarkable change in youth alcohol use," said Director Bruce Grant in noting major progress in the data. "It is especially rewarding to see the major reduction in the number of youth who start using alcohol at young ages."

Among the survey's measures of past 30-day drug use, all of them except marijuana use have posted reductions. Other long-term trends documented from 2000 to 2010 include:

- **Declines in early initiation continue.** The percentage of high schoolers that were early initiators of alcohol decreased from 41% in 2000 to 27% in 2010. The percentage of early initiators of cigarettes has been cut by more than half – from 39% to 17%. Early initiation of marijuana use has also decreased from 17% to 11%.
- **Alcohol use trends continue downward.** Overall, 28.8 percent of students surveyed say that they are current alcohol users, showing a reduction in the number of youth who are regularly consuming alcohol. Binge drinking rates also are declining from a high of 18.8 percent in 2000 to 14.1 percent in 2010. Even though current alcohol use improved, the rate of alcohol use among Florida's students continues to exceed comparable figures for the nation (national 2009 Monitoring the Future Survey).

- **Abuse of prescription stimulants and pain relievers is decreasing.** The past 30-day abuse of prescription stimulants decreased by 42% between 2001 and 2010. The past 30-day abuse of prescription pain relievers also decreased from 3.5% in 2002 to 2.9% in 2010.

The survey of Florida's middle and high school students has been administered every year since 2000. A recent trend that is of some concern and that will be closely watched in the future includes an uptick in marijuana use:

- **Current marijuana increases slightly while perceptions of harm diminish.** After decreasing from about 20% in 2000 to 15% in 2007, past 30-day use of marijuana among high schoolers began increasing over the last three years, rising back up to 19% in 2010. Among middle schoolers, past 30-day use decreased from about 8% to 4% from 2000 to 2008, but increases in 2009 and 2010 raised this figure to 6%. The survey shows that these recent increases in use correspond with decreases in perceptions of the harmfulness of marijuana. The percentage of high schoolers reporting that there is great risk of harm from regularly smoking marijuana fell from 55% in 2005 to 45% in 2010. The percentage of middle schoolers reporting great risk of harm fell from 71% in 2008 to 67% in 2010.

About the Florida Youth Substance Abuse Survey

The Florida Youth Substance Abuse Survey measures youth drug use annually across the state. The 2010 FYSAS surveyed 72,797 students in grades 6 through 12. The full report is available online at:

www.dcf.state.fl.us/mentalhealth/publications/fysas/

Florida's 2009 Drug Control Strategy is available online at:

www.flgov.com/drugcontrol/odc_strategies.html

Florida's Social Marketing Campaign – Be the Wall

www.bethewall.org

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