

# 42nd Annual InterCourt Conference



Session 1B: Adolescent  
Development and Substance  
Use

March 12, 2026  
Hilton Columbus at  
Easton Town Center  
Columbus, OH

## FACULTY BIOGRAPHIES

**PAUL BOWEN, LSW**, is a Project Director at All Rise, where he leads initiatives under the Juvenile Treatment Court Project. He provides training and technical assistance to treatment court programs nationwide and contributes to developing training materials and publications.

Before joining All Rise, Paul served as the court administrator for a juvenile court in Mississippi. In that role, he oversaw the court system and its supporting services, including probation, juvenile drug treatment court, family treatment court, and administrative staff.

With over twenty years of experience in the juvenile justice system, Paul has co-authored multiple grants and successfully secured and managed funding to expand services across various programs. He has served on the Advisory Council for the National Center for State Courts' Rural Justice Collaborative and held board positions with the Mississippi Court Administrators Association and the Mississippi Association of Drug Court Professionals.

# Adolescent Development and Substance Use

**Paul Bowen, LSW**

*Project Director*

*AllRise Treatment Court Institute*



# Adolescent Development and Substance Use

Paul Bowen, Project Director, All Rise

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## Learning Objectives



- Review fundamental knowledge of the science of adolescent brain development. (Cause)
- Identify common patterns in teen behaviors and how they differ from adults. (Effect)
- Discuss the prevalence of substance use within the juvenile justice system and evidence-based/research-informed methods for effectively responding to a youth's substance use.

# Science of Adolescent Brain Development (Cause)



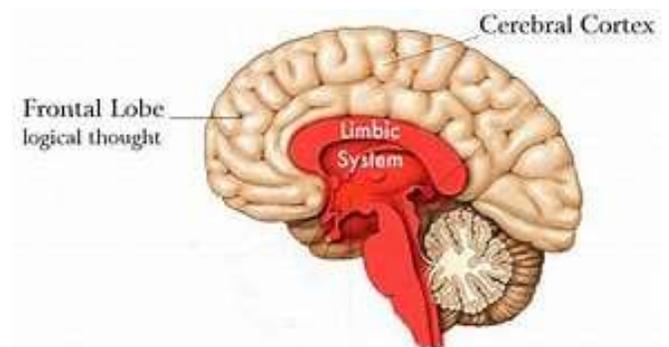
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## Limbic System



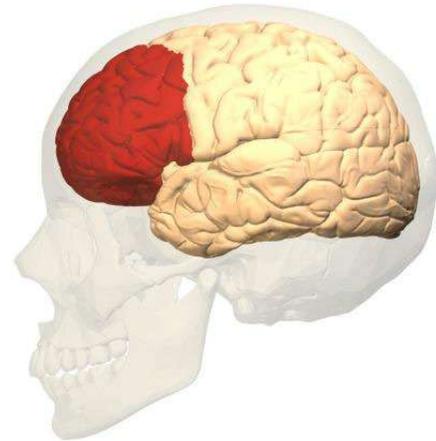
- Develops years ahead of the prefrontal cortex
- Hypersensitive to the rewarding feeling: risk-taking and taking more risks, particularly with friends
- Processing emotional experiences and social information





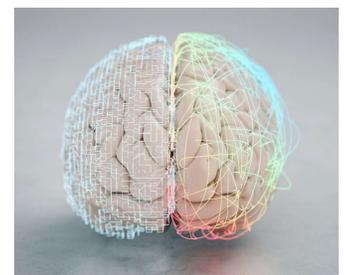
# Prefrontal Cortex

- Enables us to assess situations
- Make sound decisions
- Stops us from taking risks/impulse control
- Prefrontal Cortex is not fully developed, still maturing well into adulthood.



# Dr. Jay Geidd – The Amazing Teen Brain

- Not a child brain, or undeveloped adult brain. It is unique and characterized by the ability to change and grow.
- Mismatch between limbic system and prefrontal cortex: Biology encourages separation in order to explore and recreate
- What most determines teen behavior, then, is not so much the late development of executive functioning, or the early onset of emotional behavior, but the mismatch of timing between the two.



# Common Patterns in Teen Behavior (Effect)



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## Three Primary Ways Adolescents Differ from Adults



1. Less able to self-regulate in emotional situations
2. More sensitive to peer pressure and immediate incentives
3. Less able to consider the long-term consequences

## MORE likely to:

- Act on impulse
- Misread or misinterpret social cues and emotions
- Get into accidents of all kinds
- Engage in dangerous and risky behavior



## LESS likely to:

- Think before they act
- Pause to consider the outcomes
- Change their dangerous or inappropriate behaviors



## This does not mean:

- They cannot make good decisions
- They do not know the difference between right and wrong
- That they should not be held responsible for their behavior



# Research Findings:

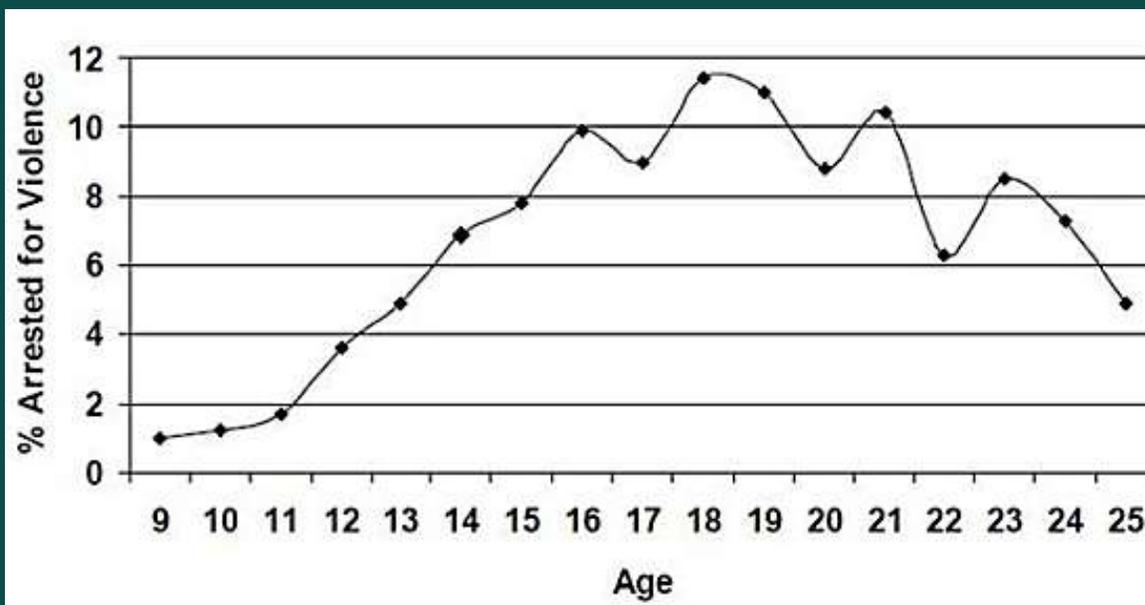
Childhood – Adolescence – Adulthood

## Normative Features

- ✓ Hypothetical and abstract thinking
- ✓ Self-control
- ✓ Future orientation and reasoning
- ✓ The role of peers



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Piquero, A., Hawkins, J. D., & Kazemian, L. (2012). Criminal career patterns. In R. Loeber & D. P. Farrington (eds.). *From juvenile delinquency to adult crime: Criminal careers, justice policy, and prevention* (pp. 14-46). New York: Oxford University Press.)

# Developmentally Appropriate Services



- Service providers should recognize that adolescents may be experiencing a number of changes (physical, cognitive, social, and emotional).
- Uniform responses tend to be inefficient and ineffective.
- Emphasize rehabilitation over punishment.
- Services that address the individual needs produce greater efficiency.
- Create opportunities for autonomy and skill development.
- With support and interventions, youth can reduce high-risk behavior.

## Substance Use and the Juvenile Justice System

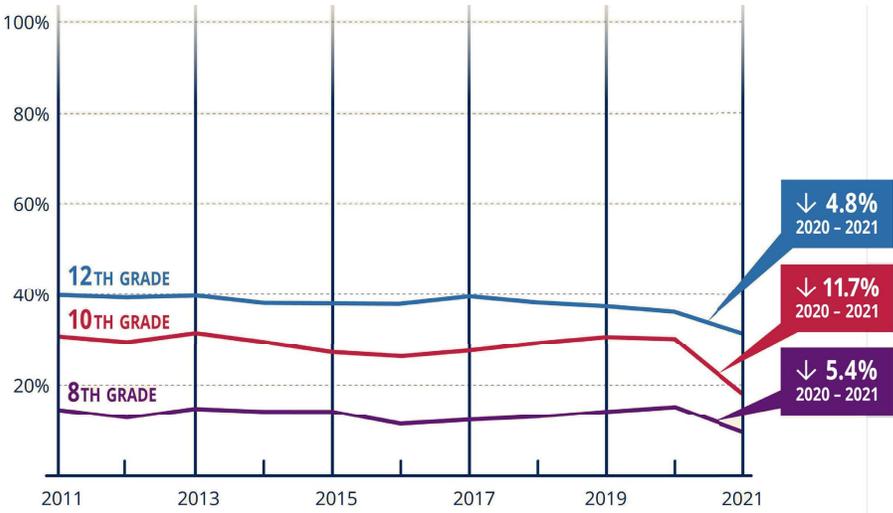




# Trends in Substance Use

U.S. Students Reporting Any Past-Year Illicit Drug Use\*

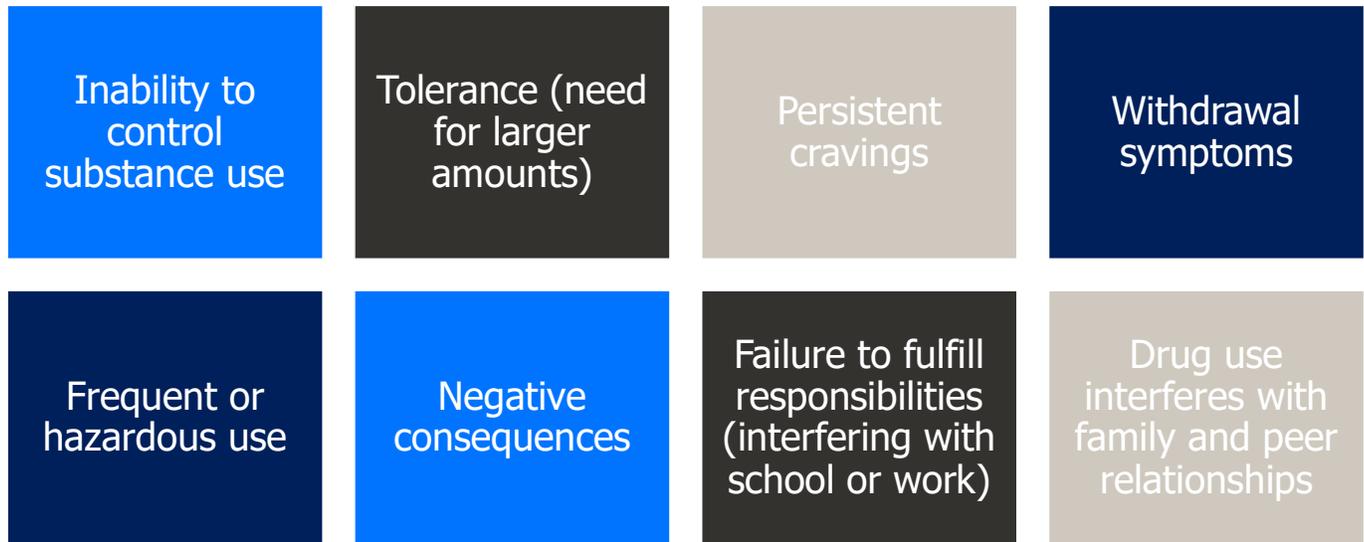
**31.7%**  
of 12th graders  
used illicit drugs  
within the past  
12 months.  
(Monitoring the Future National  
Survey Results on Drug Use, 2025)



Raise your hand if –  
  
What are some of the symptoms of a substance use disorder?



# Symptoms of a Substance Use Disorder



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(American Psychiatric Association, 2025)

# Prevalence of Substance Use Disorders



**9%** of all youth (12- 17 years old) in the U.S., have a SUD

(SAMHSA, 2023 National Survey on Drug Use and Health)

**33%** of justice-involved youth have a substance use disorder

(Journal of Mental Health and Substance Abuse, 2022)

**60%** of youth in juvenile facilities met the DSM-V criteria for a substance use disorder

(Drug and Alcohol Use Reported by Youth in Juvenile Facilities, 2008–2018)

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# Practice Implications

1. Recognize that SUD is a treatable disease.
  - Addiction is a disease, not a character flaw.
  - SUDs are treatable, chronic diseases.
2. Validated screening and assessment tools identify who needs services.
3. Therapeutic services must be used to address SUD.
4. Coordinated care is critical.

## Slido Quiz



**Thank  
You** 

Paul Bowen

PROJECT DIRECTOR, ALL RISE

[pbowen@allrise.org](mailto:pbowen@allrise.org)

