



# Did You Know?

June 2015

June is National GLBT (Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual and Transgender) Pride Month. In light of Bruce (Caitlyn) Jenner's recent coming out as a transgender person, it is appropriate to celebrate this month and also take a closer look at the GLBT community.

Persons who identify as GLBT often face higher rates of health disparities including higher incidences of alcohol and other drug use/abuse. Many members of the community turn to alcohol or other drugs to help them cope with the difficulties faced as a GLBT person. Internal struggles, conflicts between family and friends, and issues within society as a whole are all difficult matters members of the GLBT deal with on a daily basis. Frequent battles dealing with discrimination and stigma often leave members of this community depressed and looking for an outlet.

It took Bruce (Caitlyn) Jenner until the age of 65 to finally decide to address the internal feelings she had been dealing with for so many years. She's spoken candidly about bouts of confusion, suppression, and depression faced throughout her life, living in a male body, yet feeling like a female.

- GLBT people are more likely to use drugs and have a higher rate of substance abuse.
- They tend to abuse drugs later into life as opposed to the heterosexual population.
- Gay men are significantly more likely to have used marijuana, stimulants, sedatives, cocaine, and party drugs than men in the general population.
- Few studies have been done on drug abuse in the lesbian population, however the little information that is available "suggests that drug abuse in lesbians occurs at higher rates than heterosexual women and could equal the rates of occurrence in gay men."<sup>1</sup>
- It is estimated that between 20 percent to 30 percent of gay and transgender people abuse substances, compared to about 9 percent of the general population.<sup>2</sup>
- Gay and transgender people smoke tobacco up to 200 percent more than their heterosexual and non transgender peers.<sup>2</sup>
- Twenty-five percent of gay and transgender people abuse alcohol, compared to 5 to 10 percent of the general population.<sup>2</sup>
- Gay men are:<sup>2</sup>
  - 3.5 times more likely to use marijuana
  - 12.2 times more likely to use amphetamines
  - 9.5 times more likely to use heroin

## What Can You Do:

- **Educate yourself.** Know the facts and be open-minded.
- **Reach out.** If you or someone you know or work with is struggling as a GLBT person and/or with substance abuse there are many resources available online as well as in your local community.

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The Erie County Council for the Prevention of Alcohol and Substance Abuse, Inc., publishes Did You Know, a regular update about alcohol & other drugs - - America's #1 public health problem. ECCPASA • 1625 Hertel Ave., Buffalo, NY 14216 • 716-831-2298 • [www.eccpasa.org](http://www.eccpasa.org)

<sup>1</sup> Pride Institute,

<sup>2</sup> Center for American Progress, 2012