**Red Flags for Teen Substance Use**

The adolescent stage of development is the most unique, busiest and confusing of all the developmental stages. It is different for each young person, often starting as early as age 9 and wrapping up sometime around age 24. During this time, adolescents experience rapid physical, cognitive and psychosocial growth. This affects how they feel, think, make decisions, and interact with the world around them. With all these changes happening, it is often hard to recognize the signs of substance use. The signs often mask other changes in the body and therefore can be easily explained away or sometimes missed. It is important as parents to recognize potential signs of substance use, as early intervention is key. Below are a few red flags to look for:

* Changes in their social circle, activities or hobbies
* Heightened secrecy and/or lying
* Use of drug slag in social media conversations/text messages
* Sudden decline in academic performance
* Unexplained tardies, absences and missing appointments
* Irritability, sudden anger outbursts or volatility
* Changes in personal hygiene and appearance
* Decreased family involvement, missing family dinners and/or outings
* Possession of drug paraphernalia, including lighters, vape devices, chargers, etc.

Each teen is different and as parents you know your teen best. Rely on your instincts. If your teen as any of the above flags, it is important to follow up and gather more information. Again early intervention for substance use and or mental health is key. There are many resources available to parents, please reach out to Candi Davenport MS LADC to learn more about support that is available. She can be reached at cdavenport@relatemn.org.