

## ALCOHOL AND DRUG ADDICTION FACT SHEET

- The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services reports that the disease of addiction affects nearly one out of every 10 adults.
- One of every eight Americans has a significant problem with alcohol or drugs, with 40 percent of the group having a "dual diagnosis," or concurrent mental/nervous disorder, according to SAMHSA.
- The National Institute of Drug Addiction has reported that the estimated annual direct cost to our society resulting from substance abuse is more than 250 billion dollars – including nearly \$185 billion for alcohol and \$181 billion for illicit drugs.
- In 2008, 15.2 million Americans age 12 and older had taken a prescription pain reliever, tranquilizer, stimulant, or sedative for nonmedical purposes.
- Alcoholism is the third leading cause of death (at least 100,000 deaths a year) in the US today (behind only heart disease and cancer).
- Among those aged 50 to 59, the rate of illicit drug use increased from 2.7 percent in 2002 to 4.6 percent in 2008.
- Both alcohol and drug addiction are life-threatening, chronic diseases of the brain. Constant substance abuse chemically alters the brain, causing an individual to become dependent upon the substance. Over time, the individual will begin to experience powerful cravings, and when they don't respond quickly enough, strong and sometimes deadly withdrawal symptoms occur.
- Continued use of alcohol and drugs can also result in irreversible damage to the brain, liver, kidneys, heart and other organs – causing other severe health problems.
- According to the U.S. Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA), chemical dependency, along with associated mental health disorders, has become one of the most severe health and social problems facing the United States.
- Similar to chronic diseases like diabetes and asthma, there are treatments available to manage addiction. In order to increase effectiveness, treatment must go beyond traditional talk and group therapy and incorporate the best science and medicine has to offer.
- Science has shown that a comprehensive approach to treating addiction – behavioral therapy, pharmacotherapy (anti-addiction medication), 12-Step involvement, family therapy, psychiatric treatment when needed, and a wellness and nutrition approach – is essential for long term sobriety.