

# The Guide Line

**February 2010**

## Children of Alcoholics Week – February 14<sup>th</sup> to February 20<sup>th</sup>

Alcoholism and drug addiction is taking a toll on the American family. As a result, 8.3 million children in the United States, approximately 11 percent, live with at least one parent who is in need of treatment for alcohol- or drug-dependency. **One in four children under the age of 18 is living in a home where alcoholism or alcohol abuse is a fact of daily life.** Countless others are exposed to illegal drug use in their families.

A child in such a family may have a variety of problems:

- Guilt. The child may see himself or herself as the main cause of the mother's or father's drinking.
- Anxiety. The child may worry constantly about the situation at home. He or she may fear the alcoholic parent will become sick or injured, and may also fear fights and violence between the parents.
- Embarrassment. Parents may give the child the message that there is a terrible secret at home. The ashamed child does not invite friends home and is afraid to ask anyone for help.
- Inability to have close relationships. Because the child has been disappointed by the drinking parent many times, he or she often does not trust others.
- Confusion. The alcoholic parent will change suddenly from being loving to angry, regardless of the child's behavior. A regular daily schedule, which is very important for a child, does not exist because bedtimes and mealtimes are constantly changing.
- Anger. The child feels anger at the alcoholic parent for drinking, and may be angry at the non-alcoholic parent for lack of support and protection.
- Depression. The child feels lonely and helpless to change the situation.

In addition, children whose parents abuse alcohol or drugs are almost three times more likely to be verbally, physically or sexually abused; and four times more likely than other children to be neglected. Strong scientific evidence also suggests that addiction tends to run in families. Children of alcoholics are four times more likely than non-COAs to develop alcoholism or other drug problems.

Although the child tries to keep the alcoholism a secret, teachers, relatives, other adults, or friends may sense that something is wrong. Child and adolescent psychiatrists advise that the following behaviors may signal a drinking or other problem at home:

- Failure in school, truancy;
- Lack of friends, withdrawal from classmates;
- Delinquent behavior, such as stealing or violence;
- Frequent physical complaints, such as headaches or stomachaches;
- Abuse of drugs or alcohol;
- Aggression towards other children;
- Risk taking behaviors;
- Depression or suicidal thoughts or behavior.

Whether or not their parents are receiving treatment for alcoholism, these children and adolescents can benefit from educational programs and mutual-help groups such as programs for children of alcoholics, Al-Anon, and Alateen. Early professional help is also important in preventing more serious problems for the child, including alcoholism.

Information taken from <http://ncadistore.samhsa.gov/catalog/facts.aspx?topic=17> and [http://www.aacap.org/cs/root/facts\\_for\\_families/children\\_of\\_alcoholics](http://www.aacap.org/cs/root/facts_for_families/children_of_alcoholics).

*The Guide Line is a publication from The COAD Group through funding from the Chester County Department of Drug and Alcohol Services. If you have something you would like to share with others in The Guide Line, please contact Jacquelyn Taylor, Director of SAP Services at [jtaylor@coadgroup.com](mailto:jtaylor@coadgroup.com).*

# Al-Anon/Alateen

Alateen is a fellowship of young Al-Anon members, usually teenagers, whose lives have been affected by someone else's drinking.

## In Alateen, younger people come together to:

- share experiences, strength, and hope with each other
- discuss their difficulties
- learn effective ways to cope with their problems
- encourage one another
- help each other understand the principles of the Al-Anon program
- learn how to use the Twelve Steps and Alateen's Twelve Traditions

## What Alateen members learn:

- compulsive drinking is a disease.
- they can detach themselves emotionally from the drinker's problems while continuing to love the person.
- they are not the cause of anyone else's drinking or behavior.
- they cannot change or control anyone but themselves.
- they have spiritual and intellectual resources with which to develop their own potentials, no matter what happens at home.
- they can build satisfying and rewarding life experiences for themselves.

Information taken from <http://www.pa-al-anon.org/index.php>.  
Visit <http://www.al-anon.alateen.org/meetings/meeting.html> to find an Al-Anon/Alateen meeting in your area.

## Display Board Materials Available

The Community Prevention Services (CPS) Department of The COAD Group will have available for use display board materials for the following national campaigns:

February ~ Children of Alcoholics  
March ~ Inhalant & Poison Awareness  
April ~ Alcohol Awareness  
May ~ Co-Occurring Disorders Awareness

Please contact CPS at 610-363-6164 to request your materials today!



The National Association for Children of Alcoholics (NACoA) has developed a website 'Just 4 KIDS.' A place where children of alcoholics can:

- Learn how alcohol and other drugs hurt everyone in a family
- Learn how to feel safer and less stressed out
- Find new ways to deal with hassles at home
- Find hope, even if their parents don't change

Children of alcoholics oftentimes feel responsible for the behavior of their parent. Be sure to remember to teach them 'The Seven C's':

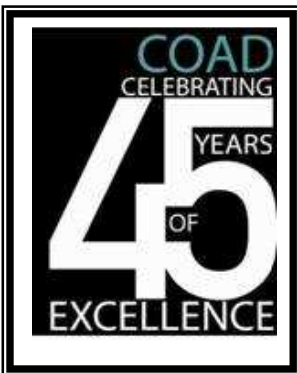
I didn't **CAUSE** it.

I can't **CURE** it.

I can't **CONTROL** it.

I can help **CARE** for myself by **COMMUNICATING** my feelings, making healthy **CHOICES**, and by **CELEBRATING** myself.

Information from <http://www.nacoa.org/kidspage.htm>



**Saturday, April 17<sup>th</sup>**  
**Penn Oaks Country Club**  
**6 - 10pm**

**Call The COAD Group**  
**for more information**  
**about supporting this**  
**event - 610-363-6164.**

## Secondary SAP Training

March 9<sup>th</sup>, 10<sup>th</sup>, & 11<sup>th</sup> at The COAD Group  
8 a.m. to 3:15 p.m.

This 3-day certification training prepares school and agency staff to join existing school SAP core teams and meets the requirements of the PA Interagency Committee for Student Assistance Programs. Completion of the competency based activities, including a post-training assignment, results in SAP certification and receipt of 30 Act 48 hours.

For more information: Jacquelyn Taylor at 610-363-6164

*Chester County visualizes a unified system of care that maximizes all resources around an individual or family. This system of care includes child and adult serving agencies and community partners that join with an individual or family to meet their goals.*