

BREAKING NEWS

**Caron Treatment Centers**  
Wernersville, PA

---

## **Caron Study Finds Teen Online Talk Often About Sex, Drugs & Alcohol**

**Contact:**

Karen Pasternack  
Director of Public Relations  
610-743-6576  
210-371-3220 ext 6576  
[kpasternack@caron.org](mailto:kpasternack@caron.org)  
[www.caron.org](http://www.caron.org)

May 13, 2009

Parents who think their teens' online conversations with their peers are innocent may want to reconsider.

A Caron Treatment Centers qualitative study conducted by Nielsen Buzzmetrics found that 1 in 10 messages analyzed, involved teens seeking advice from their peers on how to take illicit drugs "safely" and without getting caught.

The messages were posted on common online message boards, forums and social networks, such as MySpace.com, ym.com and teenspot.com, among others.

The study also found that in messages about alcohol, hooking up and having sex when drinking were the top behaviors discussed by teens. While a few teens expressed regret over things they did while drunk, many chalked it up to "fun," "being wasted" and "having a good time." While both genders discussed hooking up and sex, more girls than boys talked about it, where gender was identifiable.

More than 160,000 of the 10.3 million messages posted by teens were about drugs or alcohol. Despite increased focus on drug trends, such as abuse of prescription medications like oxycontin and club favorites like ecstasy, less "trendy" substances were more commonly discussed.

Almost 80 percent of the messages posted by teens mentioned alcohol, marijuana, cocaine and acid/LSD.

"While much attention has been given to adult sexual predators preying on teens online, it's important for parents to know that their teen's conversations with peers can be equally dangerous," said David Rotenberg, executive director of Adolescent Services at Caron, the industry's leading authority on adolescent addiction treatment.

"This study and our teen glossary will provide parents with the tools needed to better understand how to talk to their teens about drugs and alcohol."

Caron's review of online teen talk around alcohol and drugs was prompted by concerns from adolescent counselors at the Pennsylvania-based rehab facility.

Teens mentioned how easily and freely they could chat with peers online about drugs and alcohol - and how falling in with the wrong "virtual crowd" often proved as destructive as a "real life" group.

"It used to be enough for parents to know their teens' friends," said Doug Tieman, President and CEO of Caron. "However, the online revolution requires parents to be much more sophisticated in terms of understanding not only how their teens are spending time online, but also what they are talking about."

Other findings from the study include:

### **Teen Behaviors:**

Teens confess that they engage in destructive behaviors when under the influence of drugs and alcohol.

Teens said that parties are more fun when alcohol is available or if they are already drunk. 1 in 10 messages about alcohol featured teens talking about drinking when partying. They frequently mentioned "pre-game," a popular term used to describe the practice of getting drunk before parties.

The most prevalent theme in marijuana messages was destructive behaviors, such as drinking alcohol, smoking cigarettes, cutting class or self mutilation while high.

### **Teen Relationships:**

Teens are concerned about how drugs and alcohol affect their relationships with family and friends.

In those messages that gender was identifiable, more girls than boys discussed alcohol online. Girls talked about romantic relationships and hooking up/having sex when drinking. Boys shared information and stories about drunken experiences.

Teens were concerned about friends and loved ones who are drinking alcohol or smoking marijuana (This was the second most prevalent marijuana discussion and the sixth most prevalent alcohol discussion). More girls than boys voiced their concern, generally for a boyfriend or girlfriend.

In response to the findings, Caron has created a "teen speak" glossary of common slang terms for drugs and alcohol online. It is posted on the Caron Web site, along with parenting tips for talking to teens about online activities and drugs/alcohol.

### **About Caron Treatment Centers:**

*Caron Treatment Centers is a nationally recognized non-profit provider of alcohol and drug addiction treatment. With more than 50 years in the field, Caron is one of the oldest and largest facilities offering primary, relapse and extended residential treatment for young adults, adults and adolescents, as well as families affected by the disease of addiction. Caron's gender separate and gender specific programs are housed in modern, state-of-the-art facilities.*

*Caron has extensive experience in the treatment of co-occurring psychological/psychiatric disorders within its patient community. Nearly 70 percent of patients at Caron have co-occurring disorders.*

*Caron utilizes research on Recovery for Life from leading institutions such as the National Institute on Drug Abuse (NIDA) and The University of Pennsylvania's Treatment Research Institute. Formerly the Caron Foundation, Caron Treatment Centers operates a residential treatment center in Wernersville, in southeastern Pennsylvania; a regional office in Philadelphia; Caron Renaissance, an extended care treatment center in Boca Raton, Florida; and recovery centers in New York City and Bermuda.*

*For more information, visit: [www.caron.org](http://www.caron.org) or [www.assessmyfamily.org](http://www.assessmyfamily.org).*

### **Study Methodology:**

For the study, Nielsen BuzzMetrics used proprietary software and analytic methodology to tap into the unaided conversations teens have in online communities, including web message boards, discussion forums and blogs. Analysts used a combination of automated and manual techniques to identify individual communities that include teen focused discussion and discussion on drugs and alcohol use. The analysts then gained insight into how teens discuss drugs and alcohol online.