

ABUSERS STARTED USING DRUGS AT 12, SURVEY FINDS

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Adolescents at eight non-profit drug rehabilitation centers across the country, including one in Richardson, began using drugs at the average age of 12, according to a survey released Monday of 880 youths being treated at the centers.

Of the 45 youths surveyed at the Richardson center, the average age for their first drug use was 13.

The survey was conducted by Straight Inc., a family treatment center for adolescent drug abusers, at its urban centers in Richardson and in St. Petersburg and Orlando, Fla.; Marietta, Ga.; Milford, Ohio; Stoughton, Mass.; Springfield, Va. (near Washington, D.C.); and Plymouth, Mich.

An overwhelming majority of the respondents said they had been involved in some type of criminal activity. All said they had committed some type of vandalism, 97 percent had shoplifted, 95 percent had committed misdemeanors and 60 percent felonies.

At a news conference in Dallas, Cliff Deardorff, program director for the Richardson center, said his clinic produced the highest percentage of cocaine users in the survey, 88 percent. The average for the survey was 63 percent.

Deardorff said he could not explain why the Richardson figure was higher.

Results from the Richardson center differed from the national results in several other areas.

According to the survey, 31 percent of the Richardson youths began using drugs, including alcohol, at age 12 or younger, compared with 46 percent in the nationwide average.

Fifty-three percent of the Richardson youths said they had been using drugs for one year before their parents became suspicious.

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