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Watch for signs of **drugs**, parents told

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OTTAWA (CP) - Parents should act quickly if their children show signs of using **drugs**, says an American expert.

"You can take 10 minutes now and a little pain, or wait and pay \$50,000 and take six months to one year for treatment," said Bill Oliver, former chief of **Straight Inc.**, a family-oriented treatment program for young **drug** users.

Oliver, from Seminole, Fla., offered the advice last week at a three-day conference on youth and **drugs**.

The conference was sponsored by the Parent Resources Institute for **Drug** Education. The five-year-old organization, based in Saskatoon, was formed to fight **drug** abuse among youths mainly by forming parent and youth groups.

Oliver said plenty of clues point to **drug** use in young people: poorer marks in school, moodiness, taking on less responsibility, new friends, different clothes.

"If your kid's wearing a T-shirt that says, 'Party till you puke,' they will do (**drugs**). No doubt about it," he added.

When these signs appear, parents should start asking questions.

"As soon as you say, 'It's just a phase, they'll get over it,' you're likely to deal with it at the addiction stage," he said.

Oliver said parents should talk to their children about **drugs** as early as Grade 4. Parents have to tell them **drugs** are unacceptable, regardless of what television or their friends say, he advised.

While parents might be seen as "square" for being so strict, he said, they can't let children do whatever they want.

A tough stance against **drugs** gives children an excuse to say no, he said.

"If kids can say, 'I'd love to do **drugs**, but my crazy dad does a urinalysis every night,' they'll have a reason to say no."

Parents should meet their children when they come home at night and be wary of sleep-over parties. To test their children, they should drop in unannounced at their parties.

Children will accuse parents of not trusting them, Oliver said, but they have to earn trust.

"When it comes to **drugs**, there should be zero tolerance," he said.

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Another speaker, Dr. Paul King of Tennessee, said heavy metal rock lyrics are a "a potent negative force . . . It gives them (teens) inspiration for evil and violence and hatred."

King is the director of a rehabilitation program for youth.

He said he became interested in heavy metal when he noticed so many of the young people who came for treatment were also hooked on bands like AC/DC, Megadeth, Ozzy Osbourne and Motley Crue.

Such bands tend to glamorize and glorify evil, he said.

While some teens can listen to the music and not be affected by the words, many young people are inspired, he said.

King said heavy metal musicians and record companies are exploiting insecurity among youth.

"They're making millions of dollars promulgating negative material for kids who are feeling negative," he said. "It's adding fuel to the fire."

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