

Reporting Drug Addicts in Nigeria - Whose Responsibility?

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ABSTRACT

This is an expository paper based on literature sources and anecdotal evidence. The menace of drug abuse and addiction in Nigeria cannot be over emphasized. Yet not much attention is paid by scholars to the issue of reporting drug addicts/addiction. It is everybody's responsibility to report drug addicts. The objectives of the paper include; to identify an addict, determine who is responsible for reporting drug addicts and how to report addicts. Some recommendations were made which include among others parents and guardians should learn to identify signs of drug use, close supervision of their wards and report drug activity in the neighborhood to the appropriate authority, decriminalizing drug abuse etc. it was finally concluded that it is everybody's responsibility to report drug addicts.

INTRODUCTION

The menace of drug abuse and addiction cannot be overemphasized as many nations and peoples are enmeshed in drug crises. Drug barons and peddlers are becoming rich while our youths and women are becoming insane by the day.

Addiction is an acquired condition where an individual persistently pursues and obtains some form of reward at the expense of other important motivations or activities, and to the detriment of his or her own mental or physical health.

The root of the term addiction comes from a Latin word *addicere*, which means "to enslave". This enslavement is inherently damaging, as it is invariably related to significant physical, psychological, or social harms. The term addiction is used widely throughout society but is mostly applied in a pejorative sense, implying social disapproval. The root causes of drug addiction are complex and the influences on the course of an addiction are many and varied. Determining exactly what addiction is continues to spark much scientific research and debate. It has been suggested that a number of factors—including biological, psychological, and socio-cultural factors—maintain addictive behavior.

The behaviors associated with addiction are the result of an escalating need to take a drug or repeat an activity. Although the individual may

know that the behavior is unhealthy, he or she feels unable to resist its repetition.

The incidence of drug abuse and addiction is becoming alarming in recent times in most societies, especially in Western Europe. As revealed by social research findings and depicted in literature, drug abuse is a social problem that has spread and increased rapidly in recent decades across diverse segments of countries of the world, constituting a threat to the effective functioning and survival of the society (Parul and Arun, 2007; World Drug Report, 2010).

In Nigeria, more especially, in the North East where the devastation by the Boko Haram Insurgency is taking its toll, the scourge can be better imagined. It has been reported that three million bottles of cough syrup is consumed daily in Kano and women, including housewives, indulge in drugs.

It has become imperative therefore, to report drug addicts or illegal drug activity so as to curtail the menace of drug abuse. It is the responsibility of everybody to report drug addicts to the appropriate authorities as can be seen later in this discourse. However, what is important in this paper, is how is the report is being done, is it meaningfully done, and what action is to be taken? This paper shall find answers to the following questions: - who is an addict? How do you recognize an addict? Who is responsible for reporting an addict? How do

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you report an addict? And to whom do you report to?

OBJECTIVES OF THE PAPER

- To identify who an addict is;
- To determine who is responsible for reporting addicts/addiction;
- To find ways of reporting addicts and illegal drug activity and
- To examine the role of media in reporting drug addicts.

Definitions

Drug

A drug refers to a substance that could bring about a change in the biological function of the body through its chemical action.

Drug Abuse

This is a patterned use of a drug in which the user consumes the substance in amounts or with methods neither approved nor supervised by medical professionals.

Drug Addiction

Addiction is the continued compulsive drug use despite physical and/or psychological harm to the user and the society.

Drug Addict

An addict is a person who is dependent on a drug. Dependence describes a state in which an individual cannot function normally without using a drug. Drug dependence is both physical and psychological

Recognizing Drug Addicts

As a parent or care giver, chances are that you know your child better than anyone. You may even see some of your bad habits reflected in them. Various physical, psychological and behavioral signs will be present that indicate that your child might be using drugs or alcohol, according to the National Council on Alcoholism and Drug Dependence.

Physical signs of drug abuse:

- Bloodshot eyes
- Frequent nosebleeds (indicative of snorting drugs such as cocaine or meth)
- Changes in appetite or sleep patterns
- Sudden weight gain or loss
- Seizures

- Deterioration of physical appearance
- Injuries your teen can't or won't tell you about
- Unusual smells on breath, body or clothes
- Shakes or tremors
- Incoherent or slurred speech
- Impaired coordination

Behavioral signs of drug abuse:

- Declining grades, skipping class or trouble at school
- Poor attendance and performance at work
- Loss of interest in extra-curricular activities
- Complaints from teachers or supervisors
- Borrowing or stealing money
- Missing valuables or prescription drugs
- Isolation, withdrawing, silence or secretive behavior
- Clashes with other family members
- Drug-related music, posters or clothing
- Demanding more privacy, locking doors or avoiding eye-contact
- Changing friends, relationships, hang-out spots and hobbies
- Using incense or perfume to hide the smell of drugs
- Using eye drops to hide bloodshot eyes or dilated pupils

Psychological signs of drug abuse:

- Sudden change in personality or attitude
- Mood swings, irritability, angry outbursts or laughing at nothing
- Unusual hyperactivity or agitation
- Lack of motivation and inability to focus
- Appearing fearful, withdrawn, anxious or paranoid for no reason

Signs of Drug Use and Drug Paraphernalia:

- Possession of drug related paraphernalia such as pipes, rolling paper, decongestant
- Possession of drugs, peculiar plants or bolts, seeds of leaves in ashtrays or clothing pockets
- Odour of drugs, smell of incense or other cover up scents.

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Identification with Drug Culture:

- Drug related magazines, slogans on clothing
- Hostility in discussing drugs. (AHIP, 2011).

Many of these signs are typical behaviors that adolescents adopt as they get older regardless of drug use. That's what makes identifying drug use among teens tricky. If you feel like your teen is exhibiting some of the more severe [signs of drug use](#) listed above, it might be time to confront them in a loving way about your suspicions.

Teen Drug Experimentation

Half of new drug users are under the age of 18. Experimentation plays the biggest role in teenage drug use. However, experimentation is a fact of life and just because a teen has tried drugs or alcohol doesn't mean they will become an addict. It's more important to understand why some teens are tempted to experiment.

Common reasons that make teens to abuse drugs include:

- Curiosity
- Peer pressure
- Stress
- Emotional struggles
- A desire to escape

The majority of adults with an addiction first experimented with drugs before they turned 21. The good news is that the rates of teenage drug abuse have been declining. If you think your teen is using drugs, there are [teen addiction treatment options](#) available.

Who is Responsible for Reporting Drug Addicts

Kale, (2011) in his study on "factors responsible for substance abuse among youths in Maiduguri Metropolis", opined that there is no particular person who is responsible for reporting drug addicts. It is everybody's responsibility. However, the following were identified as having the onus of reporting drug addict/ addiction;-

- Parents/ guardian
- Peer groups/ Friends/siblings
- Community/religious leaders
- The media
- School authorities
- Law enforcement agents

- Co-workers/supervisors

How Teens Can Report Drugs and Alcohol at School

Schools are designed to be safe places where teens can focus on learning more about reading, writing and arithmetic. While most schools do offer these lessons, they might also offer teens lessons in an entirely separate subject. By reporting the presence of drugs or alcohol at school, these teens can ensure that school truly is a safe place. And, they might even be able to help the authorities identify those students who need help with their addiction issues.

However, the problem is there are no readily identifiable studies that indicate how many teens bring drugs or alcohol to school, but news reports indicate that teens are bringing these substances to their schools in large numbers.

In order to combat the presence of drugs in schools, some districts are responding by performing random sweeps with drug-sniffing dogs. These canines are specially trained to identify drugs when they smell them, and police officers respond with a search when the dogs indicate that drugs are present. This can be quite helpful in spotting small amounts of drugs that teens bring with them to school. However, some states have strict laws regarding searches, and performing routine searches is a violation of those laws.

According to an article produced by the [University of Minnesota](#), schools may also adopt these policies to help prevent students from bringing drugs or alcohol to school or to school events:

- Banning all bags that are not see-through
- Asking monitors to check all thermoses or bags before students can enter
- Patrolling parking lots or shared areas,
- Forbidding students from reentering an event once they have left

However, parents and authority figures can't see everything that happens at the school, and students are often quite adept at hiding things from watchful eyes. [Sometimes peers provide the best support](#) that can keep the school safe.

Student Reporting

Students who spot drug abuse or alcohol abuse at school should report it to the school's authorities. While all schools have a principal, some schools also offer additional staff

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members who could help with issues of addiction, including:

- Addiction counselors
- Mental health counselors
- School nurses
- Security guards

Students should attempt to speak to an authority figure like this right away, and they should be clear about what has happened, where, and when. Students should strive to be as accurate and factual as they can when they report what has happened.

According to the Students who are caught with substances are usually expelled, as the schools are forced to make a commitment to keep their schools clean and provide a safe environment for students.

HOW TO REPORT ILLEGAL DRUG ACTIVITY

If you suspect that there is illegal drug activity in your neighborhood, you are right to be concerned. Drug activity can lead to increased violence and more crimes.

Even though you are concerned, you might also be confused or worried about how to safely report the activity.

Fortunately, most cities have made the process non-intimidating. You can even keep your identity anonymous. There are several steps you can take if you are aware of illegal drug activity.

Method 1: Making a Report

Collect the Necessary Information

If you suspect that there is illegal drug activity occurring in your area, you will want to make a report with the proper authorities. First, make sure that you have written down all of the information that you will need. You want to make sure that your report will be detailed and accurate, so that it will be useful to officials.

- Make sure that you are able to provide the exact address of the location where you suspect drug activity is happening. If you know the full names of the people who live there, provide that information, too.
- If you see a car connected with the drug-related activity, take note of number plate. You should also write down when car arrives, how long it remains at the address, and how frequently it appears.

- You should also tell the authorities if you see small packages being exchanged. These could be either drugs or money.
- Note patterns, but also notice if those patterns change. Don't assume that the authorities are aware of any changes you can always update your report as necessary.
- You will also want to point out anything else specific you know. Are there children living there? Are there dogs on the property? Is there a specific time of day where the activity most often occurs? Make notes of anything you think might be relevant.

Contact Local Resources

Your first step should be to contact the police department nearest to you. If you feel unsafe or feel that something dangerous is presently happening call the police on your area's emergency number immediately. If you do not see immediate danger, you can call the non-emergency police phone number for your local precinct or constabulary.

- Ask the person handling your call who you can speak to about reporting drug related activity. It is possible a clerk may take your report and pass it along to the appropriate department. If you would feel more comfortable, you can ask to be connected to an officer who handles drug related crimes.

Find National Agencies

Often a federal law enforcement agency will get involved if there is significant illegal drug activity. If you do not feel that your local agency is equipped to deal with the situation, you can reach out to a notional agency. Two appropriate agencies to contact are the police department and NDLEA (National Drug Law Enforcement Agency).

- Use a hotline or online form. Both the NDLEA and police department have phone numbers and websites you can use to report illegal drug activity
- If you live in a large city, it is likely that a federal agency will have a local office near you. You can phone that office to report your information.

Stay Anonymous

Drug activity is often associated with violence and intimidation. it makes sense that might want to stay anonymous when reporting a tip. Law

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enforcement agencies are perfectly happy to take your information about a possible crime without needing to know your name.

- When making a report, you might be asked to provide your personal information. However, this is completely voluntary. If you want to stay anonymous, you can.

Method 2: Determining whether there is Illegal Activity

Notice Physical Evidence

if you suspect illegal drug activity in your area, you will want to take note of certain signs. There are many indicators that can help you figure out if there is a possible crime occurring. Take note of specific things that you see happening near the address where you expect there are drugs.

- Look for shoes with the shoelaces tied together and hung over telephone/power wires. This is a signal that a drug house is nearby.
- Look for larger amounts of plastic bags in the yard or on the porch of the house in questions.
- A porch light that is on at odd hours of the day or night is another possible indicator of drug related activity.
- If a house is occupied, but the blinds or shades are always drawn, this is another possible sign that something illegal is happening.
- Make a note if you see people arriving at the house/building regularly for very short period of time. It does not take long for drug deals to be completed.
- Chemical odors are a sign that drugs are actually been manufactured on the premises. You should be aware of any strange strong smells that come from the suspected residence.

Be Aware of Suspicious Behavior

You can keep an eye out for people acting in certain ways. For example, keep your eyes out for large numbers of people visiting the house in question for brief periods of time. Another possible suspicious behavior is a person sitting in a car for extended periods of time while pedestrians approach him.

- Also be on the lookout for people standing on corners and talking to others down the street on a two-way radio.

Know Which Drugs are Typically Sold

When trying to determine whether there is drug related activity in your area, it is useful to know which drugs are most common in your city. This can help you know some specific things to look for. For example, if methamphetamine is a big problem. You can learn how to spot a meth lab. Your local police department should be able to tell you which drugs are most commonly sold in your area.

- Meth is sold in small baggies. Many meth deals occur late at night. Users often suffer from lack of sleep, and this may be reflected in their appearance.
- Crack is another common street drug, and is often found in areas with gang activity. Crack is often smoked from a small glass pipe, so make sure to pay attention if you see those lying around.

Talk to Your Neighbors

If you have a neighborhood watch, you should voice your concerns to the organizers of that group. If you don't have a formal neighborhood patrol, you can ask neighbors that you know if they have noticed anything strange. Make sure not to make unfounded accusations.

- You do not have to use specifics when asking your neighbors if they have noticed any signs of drug related activity. You can ask vague questions and still receive some information.

Method 3: Knowing Why You Should Speak Up

Revitalize Your Neighborhood

When an area is known for a lot of drug- related activity, many residents choose to move out. Small businesses also tend to close, move, or have reduced hours. If you provide important information to law enforcement, you may be able to prevent this from happening in your neighborhood.

Reduce crime

Violence and robberies are often connected to drugs. If you are able to remove drug related activity from your neighborhood, chances are good that you will see a reduction in the overall crime rate. Your neighborhood will be a safer and happier place.

- Ask your local police department for information about the crime rate in your

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area and how it relates to drugs. It is good to be aware of what is happening in your area.

Do Your Civic Duty

In order to have a safe society, we all have to take responsibility for our areas. Part of fulfilling your responsibility is to report possible crimes. You are taking part in public safety, and helping to protect yourself and your neighbors.

- Remember to use caution when discussing your suspicions with others. You do not want to spread false information, nor do you want to draw unnecessary attention to yourself.

Steps to Take When You Suspect an Employee is Using Drugs

Protect your business and employees by conducting a fair assessment and acting on the results. Employees who abuse alcohol and drugs (including illegal drugs, prescription drugs, and over-the-counter drugs), either on their own time or at work, can pose significant problems for their employers, managers, and co-workers.

These problems can include:

- diminished job performance
- lowered productivity
- absenteeism
- tardiness
- high employee turnover
- increased medical and workers' compensation bills
- potential [workplace violence](#) issues

Employees who abuse drugs and alcohol can also make a workplace more volatile and dangerous, exposing employers to legal liability and other legal issues.

What do you do if you suspect an employee is under the influence of drugs or alcohol at work? There are specific steps that can and should be taken by management to properly execute and document any situation.

Check Your Policy

First and foremost, you must have a written drug and alcohol testing policy. It should include drug and alcohol testing for reasonable suspicion. A general policy statement is not enough to permit testing; if your policy does not include testing for reasonable suspicion, you may want to consult a workplace consulting

firm or your legal counsel to help you implement one.

Document

Suspicions regarding an employee who may be under the influence may come from co-workers or clients, often before it is noticed by a supervisor. Document any complaints, concerns, behavior patterns or witnesses to the behavior.

Observe

It is important that management also observe the behavior. A second management person should also observe the behavior. Both observers need to document their observations in detail. This should include references to:

- odors
- speech
- eyes being dilated or constricted
- emotional issues such as agitation or irritability
- drowsiness
- excessive sweating
- other telltale signs

Meet

Once the situation is documented and everyone is in agreement, only then should you meet with the employee for a discussion of what has been observed. And always have a second party at the meeting to act as a witness. You then have the options to follow whatever is stated in your company policy.

Test

Drug testing is a legal issue and may depend on your company policy and legal advisors. If your policy allows for it, contact your drug test facility to notify it that you have an employee on the way for reasonable suspicion testing.

If you send the employee for drug or alcohol testing always explain that in order to rule out the possibility that the employee is in violation of the company's drug and alcohol policy, you will be sending them for a drug and/or alcohol test. If you have not obtained a drug testing consent previously, you should have a consent form available at this meeting for the employee's signature.

Never allow the employee to drive themselves. Always provide transportation to and from the facility. If they refuse the test refer to your drug

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and alcohol policy, especially if your policy states that refusing the test will be treated as a positive drug test result or will result in immediate termination of employment.

Act on the Results

If the drug or alcohol test results are negative, contact the employee and return them to their prior job as soon as possible. If it is positive, you have the option of sending them for counseling or treatment and returning to work. Most policies offer return to work rights with a clause that allows for termination if the employee is found under the influence at work again. An employer does have the option to terminate immediately for positive test results.

MEDIA REPORTING ON DRUG AND ALCOHOL ISSUES

People with drug and alcohol problems are often facing and dealing with significant personal issues and problems and it's vital that this is borne in mind when reporting on such issues. There are also many other people in their life that can be adversely affected by inappropriate or inaccurate media reports. In particular, consideration should be given to the potential impact on small and discrete communities, such as remote Indigenous communities where inappropriate media reporting of a drug and alcohol problem may be used to identify actual individuals and families.

Another key thought we would like to pass on is that whenever you are doing a drug and alcohol story, it would be ideal for you to offer a helpline contact as part of the story. Obviously people with drug and alcohol issues, and their families and friends often want to know how they can get help. Media should report public debate about drug use and addiction responsibly. In any reports the harmful effects of any particular drug should not be either exaggerated or minimized.

Media should avoid detailed accounts of consumption methods (even though many young people are often familiar with them). Media should be aware that outlining the chemical composition of a drug may well be justified in a report, but you should avoid providing any details which can help people understand how to manufacture it. Media should not quote the lethal dose of any particular drug in reports.

Media should guard against any reporting which might encourage a person to experiment with a drug.

Media should consider highlighting elements of a story which clearly convey that preventative measures against drug abuse do exist – and that people can be actually protected from the harmful consequences of addictive behavior. Media should bear in mind the arguments of people that point out that tobacco and alcohol use and addiction are another major aspect of the drugs story.

RECOMMENDATION

- Educate yourself about addiction .We see what we know. Thus, until sometime has some knowledge about drug use—the signs and clues that someone might be using, awareness of the lies that often go along with misuse of drugs, and so on—it is easy to simply not see things that are right in front of you.
- If we are not informed about something we simply might overlook something that in fact is right before our eyes.
- Don't "enable" the behavior by colluding with the user in some way or covering up the abuse. Allow the user to suffer some of the consequences of his or her drug abuse and do not cover-up or collude with the user Form Drug Free Clubs in schools
- Report Drugs and Alcohol at School. Schools are designed to be safe places where teens can focus on learning more about reading, writing and arithmetic. While most schools do offer these lessons, they might also offer teens lessons in an entirely separate subject. By reporting the presence of drugs or alcohol at school, these teens can ensure that school truly is a safe place. And, they might even be able to help the authorities identify those students who need help with their addiction issues.
- Parents should closely monitor and supervise their wards. Know who their friends are.
- Co-workers should report a worker with signs of drug addiction to the immediate supervisor.
- Peers, friends and siblings should not collude with drug abusers or hide their behaviour from parents and other authorities.
- Community and religious leaders should report to the appropriate authorities incidence of drug abuse or drug syndicates

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- Decriminalizing drug abuse and demand reduction.

CONCLUSION

Reporting drug addicts is everybody's business. However, parents/guardians, peers, co-workers and school authorities play the most prominent role in detecting and acting on drug addicts more promptly.

Drug abuse of any kind can wreak havoc on individual and family members. Determining whether to report drug abuse or whether to assist the addicted individual in seeking drug rehabilitation services can be a difficult choice to make.

Law enforcement agencies primarily focus on drug sellers or pharmacies operating in illegal prescription drug sales.

If you know of a pharmacy or individual selling drugs, report it to your local police or to the NDLEA.

Educate yourself to the signs and symptoms of drug abuse. If you suspect someone is abusing drugs, watch for common signs such as bloodshot eyes, unexplained changes in sleep or productivity, abnormal hyperactivity, lack of motivation, and frequent financial difficulties.

Contact the NDLEA if you suspect a pharmacy or doctor is over-prescribing or selling illegal prescription drugs.

Contact your local police if you suspect an individual is selling drugs. You will need to provide information about what you have seen, the location of the sales and any information you have on whether the individual has weapons. You can request that your report to be anonymous, though you may be asked to serve as a witness if an arrest is made.

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