

Substance Abuse: Health Hazard - 1989

Issue

Substance abuse (drugs and alcohol) is escalating its impact affecting the social and physical well-being of all population segments and societies, showing no regard to age, sex, socioeconomic level or national identity. Crime is escalating domestically and internationally with drug trafficking causing serious economic, political and military problems within and among the nations.

Increased dependence upon prescription and over-the-counter drugs, alcohol, caffeine and nicotine are becoming hazards to the health of the user and to the larger society.

Background

The National Federation of Temple Sisterhoods adopted wide-reaching resolutions on drug abuse in 1971 and on alcoholism in 1983. Effective efforts to curb drunk driving, through legislative action and societal attitudes, have made significant progress but much has yet to be done. The scourge of illegal drug abuse seems out of control, ever increasing in its reach across socioeconomic lines and spreading downward affecting larger numbers of children at younger ages. Increasingly, women and children are affected. Pregnant mothers using illegal drugs and alcohol are delivering babies experiencing withdrawal, and according to present medical evidence, having lesser capacities for mental and physical development.

We are a prescription and over-the-counter drug using society exposed daily to a media that promotes painkillers, alcohol and cigarettes. The increase in youth population, economic prosperity, increased communications and travels, reduced respect for authority and emphasis on instant pleasure have contributed significantly to the epidemic of abuse.

Presently the tobacco industry advertises overseas in ways not acceptable in the United States and has fewer trade barriers than other United States products. It should be noted that in the United States tobacco growers are among those who receive federal subsidies.

Addictions, whether to prescription or over-the-counter drugs, alcohol, caffeine or nicotine, while not of criminal or illegal consequence, nevertheless are health hazards that are of grave concern.

Resolution

Therefore the National Federation of Temple Sisterhoods urges all of its affiliated Sisterhoods to:

1. Undertake programs of education motivating individuals to set appropriate examples of refraining from use of dangerous substances, to discourage advertisers and the media from promoting the use of such substances and to encourage the governments to enter bilateral and multilateral agreements among their nations to eliminate escalating drug trafficking.
2. Call upon our congregations, religious schools and camps to include within their curricula education programs and materials emphasizing the Judaic value of respect and care for the body and specifically how it is abused by drugs, alcohol, caffeine and nicotine.
3. Commend the government of the United States for its efforts in establishing programs of treatment and education, particularly as it deals with illegal drugs. However, we call upon federal, state and local governments as well as the private sector to provide adequate funding to:

1. Expand treatment programs for substance abusers, including those in penal institutions.
2. Provide treatment rather than incarceration for pregnant substance abusers.
3. Intensify educational programs that discourage drug, alcohol and tobacco use among young children and pregnant women.
4. Strengthen law enforcement to protect neighborhoods against drug-related crimes.
4. Encourage warning labels on alcoholic beverages and prescription or over-the-counter drugs which will provide an inventory of substances which might cause health dangers to the user and its consequences to the fetus.
5. Call upon our respective governments, and especially the United States, as well as the scientific, educational and other private groups, to investigate and develop new strategies and programs of prevention and rehabilitation, particularly in examination of the societal circumstances that encourage large segments of populations to resort to chemical satisfactions in the absence of opportunities for educational, social, economic and political achievements.