

**In a survey of drug dealers, CODA confirmed that while the business of dealing drugs is about profit, the way in which business is gained however, may come as a surprise to some people.**

**55% of drug dealers are males between the ages of 17 and 24. The most common street drugs sold by these dealers are:**

- **Marijuana**
- **MDMA**
- **Crystal meth**
- **Cocaine**

Many of the dealers reported that they were still living at home with their parents when they were dealing, however, a number of survey participants noted that when their dealing activities were discovered by their parents, they were forced to find new accommodations. Being forced from their home was rated as a top fear of these dealers, along with being discovered by the police.

Almost all of the dealers surveyed were drug users themselves and noted that they consumed their own supply. “When drug dealers start using their own product, it’s a sign that they have no control over their addiction. Down the road, this can lead to bigger problems like being in debt with their own suppliers, short-selling their own customers and ‘cutting’ their drug supply with cheap, and potentially dangerous, ingredients.” Said CODA educator Heather Angus-Kelley.

The majority of dealers sold to their peers at school or in clubs, and at other hotspots where drug users hang out. Advertisement of their product and services was always by word of mouth and in some cases, the dealer would actually use a drug in front of others as a way to promote what they do and the quality and safety of their product. In other words, they demonstrated that their drugs were ‘good stuff’.

To drive sales and retain customers, some dealers participated in ‘sampling’ and would provide free drugs or larger counts of their products. All dealers surveyed reported that they found it offensive when their customers asked for credit, or ‘a spot’. Drug dealing is all about money and profit. In the event that the customers are provided credit and they don’t pay their bills, a dangerous situation arises. Depending on how ‘hard core’ the dealer is, the use of force to cause physical injury to the customer is a common method of collection; it has been reported that the killing of clients who have not paid their debts is not unheard of.

An interesting theme that consistently appeared in the survey results surrounded the dealers who ‘care’. Some dealers would refuse to sell to their friends out of concern for the fact that they may have, in the dealer’s opinion, already taken too many drugs or because they don’t want to see people they care about get hooked. All of the dealers surveyed were adamantly opposed to seeing their younger siblings use drugs. Interestingly, though, approximately 63% of the dealers surveyed didn’t care if they sold drugs to kids and approximately 42% did not support these kids when they told the dealer that they wanted to quit.

More than half of the dealers surveyed agreed that they had never seen an anti-drug messaging campaign that they felt would deter their business. They noted that some of the approaches used were unrealistic and that kids will ultimately make their own choices no matter how much their parents may shield them from, or inform them of, how bad drug use is. A high percentage of the dealers surveyed believed that kids will use drugs because they are more concerned with fitting in, following the crowd, emotional issues, family crises or just the thought of being rebellious. Many dealers use these circumstances to their advantage when trying to build their business. It was very clear from the dealers' comments that they believe in the very philosophy on which CODA programs are built; ***it is best to be straight forward and speak with kids honestly and openly about the perceived pros and cons of using drugs.***

A positive note in all of this is that 95% of the drug dealers surveyed have stopped dealing. These former dealers came to realize the horrific lifestyle they had chosen. Unfortunately, or fortunately, some of them had to learn the hard way by getting caught by the police, being on the brink of losing their lives or having to enter rehabilitation programs. All of the dealers agreed that their own lives were examples of how bad being involved with drugs can be.

Testimonies from real-life drug dealers and recovering addicts can encourage our youth to make wiser choices when they are faced with the decision to use drugs or not. This type of open, honest communication is again, supportive of CODA's program philosophy.