The following points for consideration on the portrayal of other drugs use and addiction were created as a resource for entertainment development and production. They are not intended to limit the creative process.

**Club Drugs**

A number of illegal drugs (Hallucinogens, LSD, MDMA [Ecstasy], PCP, Ketamine, Rohypnol, GHB) have been emerging in recent years and are quickly developing a following of use among adolescents and young adults. When portraying these emerging drugs:

- Attempt to realistically reflect drug use as a potentially addictive behavior rather than as a positive social activity.
- Try to reflect the reality that the majority of people don’t use these emerging drugs. Avoid reinforcing the false image that drug use is a normal, everyday activity.
- Unless a character’s drug use truly reveals something important about the character, consider other unique behaviors as creative alternatives that might convey the same information.
- Occasional lines of dialogue with people reacting negatively regarding use of emerging drugs can contribute to a more accurate public perception about drug norms that glamorizes such use.
- Anti-drug billboards can be used as a location set piece.
- The use of educational posters in scenes can send a subtle anti-drug message in such places as police stations, hospitals, schools, and public agency buildings. (For more information on educational posters or additional materials, please call the Entertainment Industries Council, Inc., 800-783-3421.)
- When making creative decisions about the behavior of a character, bear in mind that young people view drug use in entertainment as a kind of role modeling. Will others, especially young people, want to emulate the behavior of your character?
- The norm that drug use is not a desirable behavior can be reinforced when nonusing characters, particularly teens, refuse an offered drug.
- For some youth, rebellion is a positive trait to be emulated. True rebellion can be shown by young characters in the form of rejecting the pressure of their peers to try drugs, when appropriate.
- When depicting drug use, consider the manner of portrayal and the probable audience for your production as well as the potential that graphic portrayal of use and related
paraphernalia can inadvertently serve as instruction for young people.

**Health Consequences:**

Try, when possible, to portray the health and social consequences of the use of these emerging drugs.

1. Ecstasy (MDMA) is an addictive hallucinogen with powerful mind-altering effects on the user's perceptions of reality, including sight and sound.

2. In addition to hallucinations, use of ecstasy can cause depression, confusion, sleep problems, severe anxiety, and paranoia.

3. Dehydration, coupled with hyperthermia (an unusually high fever), arises from use of ecstasy at “raves.” Proper and rapid treatment, drinking fluids, and cooling down can be life saving.

4. GHB (gamma-hydroxybutyrate) has been abused in the United States for euphoric, sedative, and anabolic (bodybuilding) effects. It is widely used as a date-rape drug.

5. Rohypnol or flunitrazepam, also known as roofies, rophies, and roche, produces sedative-hypnotic effects including muscle relaxation and amnesia; it can also produce physical and psychological dependence. Like GHB, it is also widely used as a date-rape drug.
“Club drug” is a vague term referring to a variety of drugs. Because some club drugs are odorless, colorless, and tasteless, they can be added to beverages by individuals who want to intoxicate or sedate others, usually to commit sexual assaults. Uncertainties about the drugs’ sources, pharmacological agents, chemicals used to manufacture them, and possible contaminants make it difficult to determine toxicity, consequences, and symptoms that might be expected in a particular situation.1

Hallucinogens:
- Hallucinogens are drugs that cause altered states of perception and feelings and can produce a flashback (recurrence of previous hallucinations).2
- Included in this classification of drugs are natural substances such as mescaline and psilocybin that come from cacti and mushrooms, respectively, and chemically manufactured drugs such as LSD and MDMA, also known as ecstasy (see Glossary, Chapter 27).3
- Hallucinogens have powerful mind-altering effects that can change how the brain perceives time, everyday reality, and the surrounding environment.4
- They affect regions and structures in the brain that are responsible for coordination, thought processes, hearing, and sight.4
- Researchers are not certain that brain chemistry permanently changes from hallucinogen use, but some people who use them appear to develop chronic mental disorders.6
- PCP and MDMA are both addictive; whereas LSD, psilocybin, and mescaline are not.7

LSD:
- LSD is manufactured from lysergic acid, which is found in ergot, a fungus that grows on rye and other grains (see Glossary, Chapter 27).8
- LSD binds to and activates a specific receptor for the neurotransmitter serotonin. Normally, serotonin binds to and activates its receptors and then is taken back up into the neuron that released it.9
- LSD produces widespread effects, including rapid emotional swings and altered perceptions, and if taken in a large enough dose, delusions and visual hallucinations.10

MDMA (Ecstasy):
- MDMA (methylenedioxymethamphetamine), which is similar in structure to methamphetamine, causes serotonin to be released from neurons in greater amounts than normal (see Glossary, Chapter 27).11
- Scientists have also shown that MDMA causes release of excess dopamine from dopamine-containing neurons.12
MDMA can cause hallucinations, confusion, depression, sleep problems, drug craving, severe anxiety, paranoia, and hyperthermia.13

PCP:
- PCP (phencyclidine), while not a true hallucinogen, can affect many neurotransmitter systems. It interferes with the functioning of the neurotransmitter glutamate (see Glossary, Chapter 27).14
- Like many other drugs, PCP also causes release of dopamine from neurons into the synapse.15
- At low to moderate doses, PCP causes altered perception of body image, but rarely produces visual hallucinations.16
- PCP can also cause effects that mimic the primary symptoms of schizophrenia, such as delusions and mental turmoil.17
- People who tend to use PCP for long periods of time have memory loss and speech difficulties.18

Club Drugs:
- Ketamine (also known as Special K, K and Vitamin K) gained popularity for abuse in the 1980s, when it was realized that large doses cause similar reactions to those associated with PCP, such as dream-like states and hallucinations (see Glossary, Chapter 27).19
- Ketamine is produced in liquid form or as white powder that is snorted, often in conjunction with the use of marijuana or tobacco products. Some reports show that this drug is being injected.20
- Higher doses of ketamine can cause delirium, amnesia, impaired motor function, and high blood pressure.21
- Low-dose intoxication of ketamine may result in impaired attention, learning ability, and memory loss.22
- Rohypnol (also known as roofies, rophies, and roche) is tasteless, odorless, and dissolves easily in carbonated beverages. The sedative and toxic effects of rohypnol are aggravated by concurrent use of alcohol. When taken with alcohol, a dose of rohypnol as small as 1 milligram can impair the victim for 8 to 12 hours (see Glossary, Chapter 27).23
- The most widely known effect of rohypnol is anterograde amnesia; individuals may not remember events they experienced while under the effects of the drug. As a result, it is often slipped into rape victims’ drinks by would-be rapists to reduce the risk of being caught. Thus, rohypnol has a developed a wide reputation in recent years as a date-rape drug.24
- Coma and seizures can occur following abuse of GHB (gamma-hydroxybutyrate) and when GHB is combined with methamphetamine there appears to be an increased risk of seizures (see Glossary, Chapter 27).25
- GHB is usually abused either for its intoxicating, sedative, and euphoriant properties or for its growth hormone-releasing effects which can help build muscles, although with great risks.26
- GHB’s intoxicating effects begin 10 to 20 minutes after the drug is taken. The effects typically last up to 4 hours, depending on the dosage. At lower doses, GHB can relieve anxiety and produce relaxation; however, as the dose increases, the sedative effects may result in sleep and eventual coma or death. It, too, has become increasingly used as a date-rape drug.27
- Overdose on GHB can occur rather quickly, and the signs are similar to those of other sedatives: drowsiness, nausea, vomiting, headache, loss of consciousness, loss of reflexes, impaired breathing, and ultimately death.28

Sources: