



**Healthy Missoula Youth**  
Coalition

# TOOLKIT FOR SUBSTANCE USE PREVENTION

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# Acknowledgements

A special thanks to the teachers of  
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without whom this toolkit would not exist.

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# MEET YOUR PREVENTION SPECIALIST



Hi All!

My name is Jacqueline Kline, and I work with Western Montana Mental Health Center as the Prevention Specialist for Missoula County. You may have seen me around through my work in the schools with the Healthy Missoula Youth Coalition.

I believe one of the best ways to support a community is to support those who work with our youth. In my role as a prevention specialist, I get to work with schools, local organizations, and the Healthy Missoula Youth Coalition to try and create an environment where youth and families feel supported by their communities, and are empowered to make choices that positively impact their health.

This Toolkit is the first step towards a community-wide initiative to set up our youth for success. We've used an evidence-based framework to educate on the detriments of underage substance use, while also providing resources for teachers to use in the classroom.

It really does take a village, so partnerships with educators and schools is crucial to ensuring that we have a sustainable impact on improving the health of our community. As the Chair of our Youth Groups & Activities Committee, I am here to support the work you are already doing in the schools and answer any questions you have about this Toolkit.

If you have thoughts, ideas, questions, or would like to join our coalition in its mission to address substance misuse and support a healthy local environment where youth can make informed decisions and thrive, please reach out!

*~ Jacqueline*

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# INTRODUCTION

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# INTRODUCTION

## Purpose of the Section

- Explain the need for the Toolkit
- Explain how/when to use the Toolkit
- Provide a general overview of the Toolkit content

## What Educators Can Do

- Learn about Prevention
- Understand their impact on youth
- Positively impact health behaviors

## Why is this important?

Research has shown that youth who experience positive family and community relationships, supportive peer interactions, and have the opportunity for participation in extracurricular activities are more likely to succeed in school and develop into healthy, productive members of society.<sup>1</sup>

The Healthy Missoula Youth Coalition is a community based alliance of organizations and people of Missoula County, Montana. At HMY, we believe that youth and families in our community deserve all the support and care possible. We envision a thriving Missoula County where individuals and families feel supported by their community and are empowered to make choices that positively impact their health around substances. In order to make this vision a reality, we address substance misuse through community collaboration and best practices to create a healthy local environment where youth can make informed decisions and thrive.

# WHY THE NEED FOR A TOOLKIT?

There are a variety of prevention interventions in circulation, but knowing which is the most beneficial intervention for a community can be challenging. As new problems arise and prevention research grows broader, the science of prevention evolves to best meet the needs of society in an evidence-based way. As research continues, prevention interventions are analyzed and evaluated, and studies develop new techniques that prove to be innovative and promising, or reveal what may no longer be best practice. This toolkit will help lay the groundwork for finding and implementing prevention interventions in schools.

During autumn of 2022, teachers and school staff throughout Missoula County participated in a survey to assess what current prevention practices schools are using in regard to underage substance use prevention programming. This survey, conducted by the Healthy Missoula Youth Coalition, found that most teachers and school staff felt the need for extra support, despite the variety of prevention practices already in place (See more on this under “Healthy Missoula Youth School Survey”).

The National Center for Education Statistics estimates that most youth living in Montana spend an average 1,215.41 hours in school every year<sup>2</sup>. That’s 27.75% of their time awake that is spent in school, surrounded and influenced by teachers and peers. It is because of this large influence that the Healthy Missoula Youth Coalition wants to provide a toolkit full of resources that school administration, staff, and teachers can utilize to assist in increasing commitment to school and supporting students’ social and emotional health.



# HOW/WHEN SHOULD THIS TOOLKIT BE USED?

Teachers and school staff want what's best for youth in Missoula County, and many are already implementing prevention interventions. This toolkit will serve as a springboard from which they can grow their cache of prevention tactics. It will lay the groundwork for finding and implementing prevention interventions that not only mesh well with a community, but when implemented to fidelity, are proven to be effective.

With a large community in which there is a high demand for extra prevention efforts, the Healthy Missoula Youth Coalition wants to help supplement the resources available for schools and teachers. The resources in this toolkit will provide a general overview of prevention practices identified by the Healthy Missoula Youth Coalition. Teachers and school staff can use this information as a guide to implement a strong prevention approach that supports Missoula youth.

## WHAT IS IN THE TOOLKIT?

In this toolkit, you will find a brief description of the work the Healthy Missoula Youth Coalition supports, an explanation of the purpose and need for prevention work within our community, and descriptions of varying schools of thought on child development and the strategic prevention framework. It will address what science has shown to be best practice in prevention work, resources for teachers, and a variety of methods in which to institute after-school activities. For more information on prevention work in Missoula, check out the Healthy Missoula Youth website: <https://www.healthymissoulayouth.org/>.

# INTRODUCTION

## Conclusion

The Toolkit for Substance Use Prevention in Missoula County Schools is a compilation of prevention best practices and recommendations from the Healthy Missoula Youth Coalition. Teachers and those who work in the education field should use this resource to guide the prevention interventions they use, and to learn about how they can supplement protective factors in their community.

## Action Items

- **REVIEW** the table of contents to find sections that are most applicable to you.
- **READ** the Toolkit.
- **USE** the recommended interventions.
- **SHARE** what you learned with colleagues & administration.

## ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

- [Healthy Missoula Youth Coalition Website](#)
  - [Drive Safe Missoula Coalition Website](#)
  - [Montana Department of Public Health and Human Services: Evidence-Based Program Dashboard](#)
- 
- 1: [Montana Prevention Needs Assessment - Missoula County 2020 Profile](#)
  - 2: [National Center for Education Statistics](#)





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# WHAT IS HEALTHY MISSOULA YOUTH?

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# WHAT IS HEALTHY MISSOULA YOUTH?

## Purpose of the Section

- Introduce the Healthy Missoula Youth Coalition
- Explain Coalition Objectives
- Acknowledge coalition history & members

## What Educators Can Do

- Connect with coalition members
- Attend free trainings

## Why is this important?

Creating a network of prevention resources for the Missoula community through coalition work allows for more sustainability in supporting youth. Sharing information and collaborating to address community-wide issues results in a wider net of protection for kids and adolescents.

## HEALTHY MISSOULA YOUTH OBJECTIVES

1. Strengthen community collaboration to prevent and reduce substance use among youth.
2. Address and change the laws and norms that lead to substance use among youth.
3. Partner with parents, caregivers, after-school providers, etc., in supporting the social-emotional development of children.
4. Create opportunities for youth to develop leadership skills & engage in prosocial activity.

# HISTORY & MEMBERS

Healthy Missoula Youth (HMY), in some shape or form, has been around since 1996. Started by the Grants and Community Programs department under Missoula County, the initial mission was to create an environment that allowed key community leaders, parents, young people, and providers of services the ability to come together in a collaborative, pro-active effort that focuses on youth prevention strategies.

Though the name and mission have changed over time, many things have remained the same. Initially named the Missoula Prevention Coalition, it then became the Missoula Underage Substance Abuse Prevention (MUSAP) Coalition. Funding has come from various sources, such as the CDC Drug Free Communities (DFC) grants, the Missoula Substance Abuse Prevention Mill Levy, and SAMHSA Block and Partnership for Success Grants.

Healthy Missoula Youth was adopted as a program under the Missoula City-County Health Department in 2017. The Coalition envisions a thriving Missoula County where individuals and families feel supported by their community and are empowered to make choices that positively impact their health around substances. Community collaboration and best practices are used to address substance misuse in an effort to create a healthy local environment where youth can make informed decisions and thrive.

As a local community-driven coalition, we are represented by a multitude of organizations throughout the county that care about youth in our communities.

## Healthy Missoula Youth Partners & Members

All Nations Health Center  
Boys and Girls Club of Missoula  
County  
Brightways Learning  
City Life Community Center  
Empower MT  
Frenchtown Community Coalition  
Missoula DUI Task Force  
Missoula City-County Health  
Department  
Missoula YMCA  
Mountain Home Montana  
The Parenting Place  
Providence St. Patrick Hospital  
Substance Use Disorder Connect  
United Way of Missoula County  
Tobacco Free Missoula County  
Western Montana Mental Health  
Center  
Youth Dynamics

# WHAT IS HEALTHY MISSOULA YOUTH?

## Conclusion

The Healthy Missoula Youth Coalition is a local, community-driven, and prevention-oriented coalition. We work towards creating an environment where people feel empowered to make choices that positively impact their health around substances. Connect with HMY for free training, volunteering, and getting involved with prevention in your community.

## Action Items

- **LOOK** for a community coalition near you.
- **EVALUATE** your capacity.
- **CONSIDER** how you can join:
  - informational only
  - active participant
  - committee facilitator.
- **CONNECT** with a coalition member to discuss more.

## ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

- [Healthy Missoula Youth Coalition](#)
- [Drive Safe Missoula Coalition](#)
- [Missoula Substance Use Disorder Connect Coalition](#)
- [Frenchtown Community Coalition](#)
- [Safe Kids Missoula Coalition](#)
- [Community Health Alliance](#)





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# PURPOSE & NEED FOR PREVENTION EFFORTS

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# PURPOSE & NEED FOR PREVENTION EFFORTS

## Purpose of the Section

- Establish the rising public health concern related to substance use
- Introduce public health evaluation tools & strategies
- Present current trends in data regarding substance use and protective/risk factors

## What Educators Can Do

- Understand the purpose of prevention needs assessments
- Utilize data to guide curriculum and/or policy development

## WHY IS THIS IMPORTANT?

Understanding public health evaluation tools and strategies gives educators a valuable opportunity to learn more about the needs of their students. This data can be used when applying for grant funds, conducting evaluations on student health and well-being, and showcases factors that will help target behavior problems related to substance abuse, violence, delinquency, and truancy. Participation in prevention needs assessments allows schools to prepare improvement plans relative to school environment, external factors that present barriers to learning, community involvement, learning process, and school risk factors as well.

# PURPOSE & NEED FOR PREVENTION EFFORTS

## Rising Public Health Concern

Why youth substance use is concerning, and the results of the Healthy Missoula Youth School Survey.

## Public Health Evaluation Tools & Strategies

An explanation of the Montana Prevention Needs Assessment, Youth Risk Behavior Surveillance System, and Monitoring the Future.

## Protective & Risk Factors

Protective & risk factor explanations, and how these factors influence risky health behaviors.

## Current Trends in Data

A summary of the priority substances for Montana.

**90% OF PEOPLE WITH A SUBSTANCE USE  
DISORDER INDICATED THAT THEY STARTED USING  
BEFORE THE AGE OF 18.<sup>1</sup>**

# RISING PUBLIC HEALTH CONCERN

Excessive substance use is a public health concern in Montana and in Missoula County. An estimated 1 in 10 Montana adults (~100,000) currently have a substance use disorder (SUD), however, only 10% of those individuals receive treatment<sup>2</sup>. In addition, more than 100 people die each year due to drug overdose, and 22,000 hospital or ER visits annually are attributable to alcohol and drug use<sup>2</sup>. Rates of heavy drinking are particularly high in Missoula County, where 25% of adults report that they regularly drink heavily or binge drink (as compared to the U.S. report of 19%)<sup>3</sup>. This is the highest rate of excessive drinking in Montana and also one of the highest rates in the nation (top 13%)<sup>3</sup>.

This issue not only affects adults, but deeply affects our youth. Montana has the 2nd highest rate in the nation of youth being placed in foster care, with 65% being removed in 2019 due to parental drug use<sup>4,5</sup>. Evidence suggests that the earlier a person starts using substances, the more likely they are to develop a substance use disorder and experience other consequences, such as academic difficulties, health related problems (including mental health), poor peer and family relationships, and involvement in the juvenile justice system. In fact, 90% of people with a substance use disorder indicated that they started using before the age of 18. In 2022, 53.2% of Missoula students in grades 8, 10 and 12 indicated drinking alcohol at some point, the majority starting between the ages of 12-15<sup>6</sup>.

# 2022 HEALTHY MISSOULA YOUTH SCHOOL SURVEY

With this rising public health concern in Missoula County, the Healthy Missoula Youth Coalition thought it prudent to assess what prevention measures are currently in place to best protect our youth. Teachers, counselors, and other school staff throughout the entirety of Missoula County were surveyed and asked questions about how they felt their school was doing with underage substance use prevention programming. This survey addressed questions such as which substances teachers were seeing their students use, which substances teachers heard their students talk about, what current prevention strategies are in place in their school, what the barriers to implementing underage substance use prevention programming are, and what additional strategies they would like to see implemented in their school. This survey also asked which policies and interventions are used to address underage substance use/substance use violations, if the teacher felt that Health Enhancement Learning Standards related to underage substance use were being met, the biggest issues related to underage substance use in the school, as well as asking for an assessment of parent involvement in this regard.

The results of this school survey indicated that the top two substances of concern for schools in Missoula County are electronic cigarettes/vaping and marijuana.



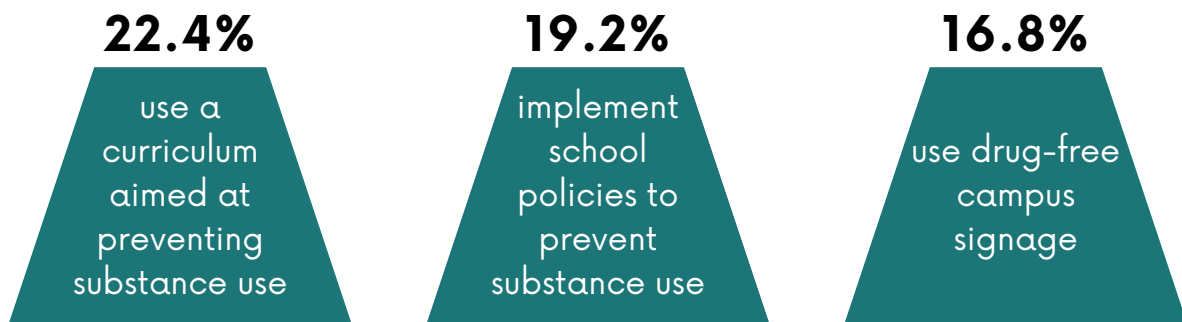
of teachers surveyed listed vaping as a substance they have seen students use on campus



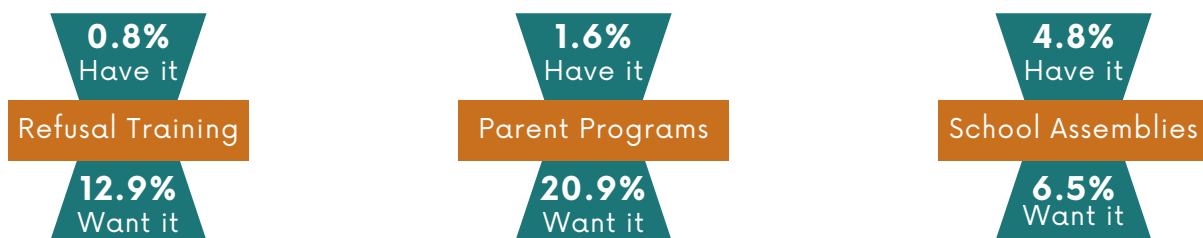
of teachers surveyed listed marijuana as a substance they have seen students using on campus, either as an edible, dab, concentrate, or THC vapes

# 2022 HEALTHY MISSOULA YOUTH SCHOOL SURVEY

The top three strategies teachers listed as being used to prevent this underage substance use were curriculum, school policies, and drug-free campus signage. However, despite these three strategies being listed as the most frequently used, nearly all survey respondents also listed these strategies as ones that need updating or additional support. In terms of whether this curriculum is meeting Health Enhancement Learning Standards, only 38.46% of survey respondents either “agree” or “strongly agree” that their school is meeting these guidelines as they are related to underage substance use.



The least frequently used strategies, and the ones most desired by survey respondents to be implemented in the future, are refusal training, programs for parents, and assemblies.



Other prevention interventions that survey respondents listed as desirable for the future include after-school programming, early intervention programs like Project Success, and substance use prevention campaigns.

# PUBLIC HEALTH EVALUATION

## TOOLS & STRATEGIES

In addition to the aforementioned School Survey conducted by the Healthy Missoula Youth Coalition, there are a variety of evaluation tools used to assess this rising public health concern. The Montana Prevention Needs Assessment Survey, the Youth Risk Behavior Surveillance System, and Monitoring the Future are some of the most commonly used tools when it comes to assessing youth behaviors on a county, state, and national level.

### MONTANA PREVENTION NEEDS ASSESSMENT

Though the Prevention Needs Assessment is conducted nationally, each state has their own customized survey that features additional questions about problem behaviors based on areas of interest to state and local leaders. The Montana Department of Public Health and Human Services has conducted the Montana Prevention Needs Assessment (MPNA) since 1998, updating the question bank over the last several survey administrations to best reflect the current environment youth live in. This is a voluntary survey of youth in 8th, 10th, and 12th grades, with the option of inclusivity for 7th, 9th, and 11th grades, which gathers “information about their knowledge, attitudes, and behaviors towards alcohol, tobacco, and other drug use to help communities address root causes of antisocial behavior<sup>7</sup>.” This survey is conducted every even numbered year, and asks students questions across four main domains: community, family, school, and peer/individual. These answers help determine where additional support is needed outside of school that can have an impact on a student’s readiness to learn, as well as determining where the strengths of a community are that can assist those in need. Each school who completes the MPNA receives their results directly, with county and state-level data available for comparison.

# PUBLIC HEALTH EVALUATION

## TOOLS & STRATEGIES

### YOUTH RISK BEHAVIOR SURVEILLANCE SYSTEM

Though it can still provide data on a state-level, unlike the Montana Prevention Needs Assessment, the Youth Risk Behavior Surveillance System (YRBSS) cannot be adapted on a state-by-state basis. This national survey was developed in 1990 “to monitor health behaviors that contribute markedly to the leading causes of death, disability, and social problems among youth and adults in the United States,” and the questions used in the survey remain consistent throughout the nation. The specific behaviors, often established during childhood and early adolescence, addressed in the YRBSS include:

- Behaviors that contribute to unintentional injuries and violence.
- Sexual behaviors related to unintended pregnancy and sexually transmitted infections, including HIV infection.
- Alcohol and other drug use.
- Tobacco use.
- Unhealthy dietary behaviors.
- Inadequate physical activity.
- The prevalence of obesity, asthma, and other health-related behaviors, plus sexual identity and sex of sexual contacts.

The CDC, through the Office of Public Instruction, conducts this YRBSS survey every odd numbered year, using a random sample of approximately 10% of all 7th-12th grade students in each state to provide data representative for each jurisdiction.



# PUBLIC HEALTH EVALUATION TOOLS & STRATEGIES

## MONITORING THE FUTURE

Perhaps the most widely known evaluation tool of these three is Monitoring the Future. Since 1975, Monitoring the Future (MTF), known by some as the National High School Senior Survey, measures drug and alcohol use and related attitudes among adolescent students nationwide. A nationally representative sample of survey participants report their drug use behaviors across three time periods: lifetime, past year, and past month. As a long-term epidemiological study, MTF looks not only at 8th, 10th, and 12th grade students, but also college students and young adults, to investigate substance use patterns, attitudes and beliefs about drugs, perceived availability of drugs, and norms among peer and role model groups. This survey is conducted annually by researchers at the University of Michigan's Institute for Social Research, and is funded by research grants from the National Institute on Drug Abuse.

# PROTECTIVE & RISK FACTORS

The Montana Prevention Needs Assessment Survey not only looks at trends and rates of substance use, it also looks at what are known as protective and risk factors. Protective and risk factors are elements that influence a person's life, and either increase or decrease the likelihood of that individual participating in high-risk behaviors like underage substance use, delinquency, school dropout, depression and anxiety, suicide, and/or violence.

The MPNA is a data source frequently referenced by prevention specialists because it looks specifically at questions that are focused across four domains of protective and risk factors (community, school, family, and peer/individual). These questions help assess where the strengths of a community lie, and how these strengths can be used as an additional support for students.

The four domains of these questions give a glimpse into the root causes of risky behaviors. For example, these questions look at:

- Family relationships
- Neighborhood connectedness and safety (attachment, availability of drugs, community norms)
- Participation in extracurricular activities
- School climate and safety (commitment to school, violence, bullying)
- Social Emotional Health (depression, suicide ideation)
- Drug and alcohol use (and risk for use – perception of harm, acceptance by parents, siblings, peers, etc.)

"The questions also help determine where potential problems may exist outside of school that can have an impact on a student's readiness to learn when they arrive at school each morning"<sup>7</sup>. These factors play a large role in influencing youth in their decision making, healthy choices, and overall well-being.

"By not just looking at rates of problem behaviors but also at the root causes of those behaviors, the MPNA allows schools and communities to address reasons (such as lack of commitment to school) rather than only looking at symptoms after the fact (like poor grades). This approach has been repeatedly shown in national research studies to be the most effective in helping youth develop into healthy, productive members of society."<sup>7</sup>

# PROTECTIVE & RISK FACTORS

According to the 2022 Missoula County Prevention Needs Assessment, **Family Opportunity for Prosocial Involvement** and **School Opportunity for Prosocial Involvement** were the top two protective factors<sup>6</sup>. This means students felt there was an abundance of opportunities to become positively involved with their family or school. As a result, these students have an extra buffer of protection from risk because the impact of the risks influencing them are reduced, or students change the way they respond to risks as a result of their involvement.

Alternatively, the 2020 Montana Prevention Needs Assessment showed that **Perceived Risk of Drug Use** and **Low Commitment to School** were the two highest overall risk factors for students, both at a state level and for Missoula County specifically<sup>6</sup>. What this means is that the majority of youth in Missoula County (72.3%) do not believe that using substances will pose a risk of harming them (physically or in other ways), and that 63.1% of students in Missoula County do not feel connected to their schools, and thus are at a higher likelihood of involvement in drug use and problem behaviors<sup>6</sup>. This assessment is composed of two main sections: perceived importance of school, and whether school is seen as a positive, reinforcing environment.

Students were asked the following questions to assess their commitment to school:

- Now thinking back over the past year in school, how often did you:
  - Enjoy being in school?
  - Hate being in school?
  - Try to do your best work in school?
- How often do you feel that the school work you are assigned is meaningful and important?
- How important do you think the things you are learning in school are going to be for your later life?
- How interesting are most of your courses to you?
- During the LAST FOUR WEEKS how many whole days of school have you missed because you skipped or “cut”?

# PROTECTIVE & RISK FACTORS

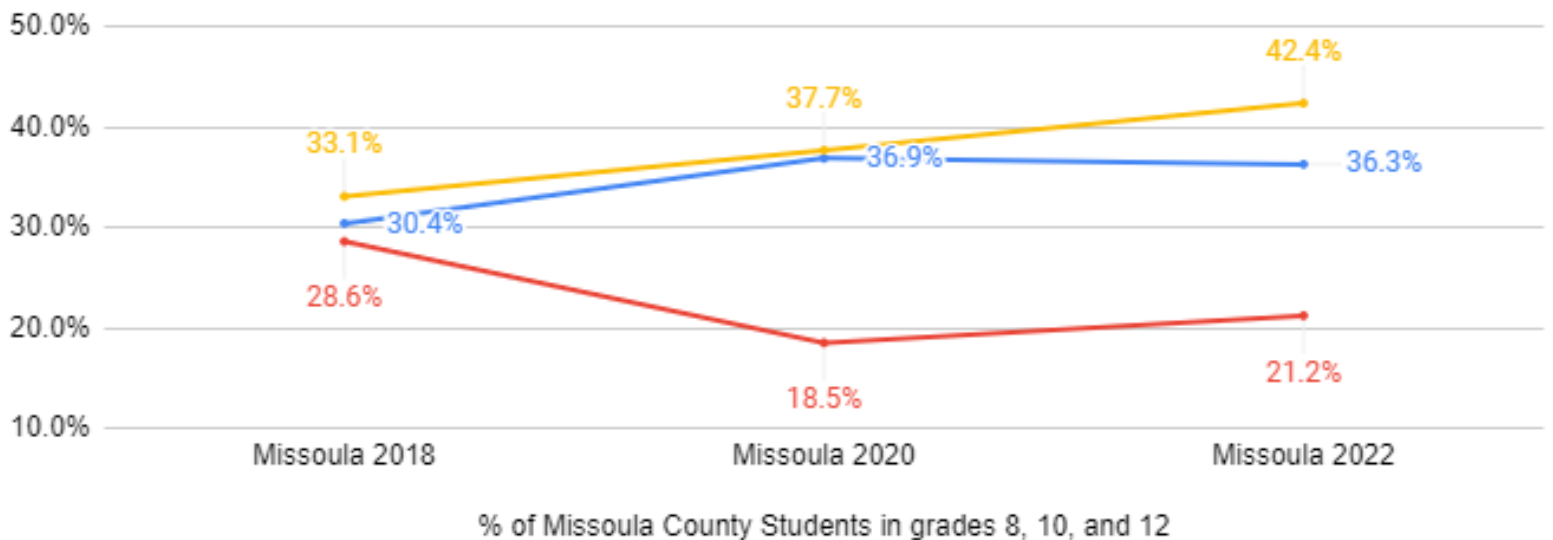
As depicted in the graph below, 2022 data trends show that within the domain of school commitment, the top three questions that were most concerning for Missoula County are the following:

- Thinking back over the past year, students "often" or "almost always" hated being in school.
- Students feel that the things they are learning in school are "quite important" or "very important."
- During the LAST FOUR WEEKS students have missed 1 or more whole days of school because they skipped or "cut."

## Biggest Changes in Missoula County: Low School Commitment

2020/2022 Missoula Prevention Needs Assessment

- Students who "often" or "almost always" hated being in school when thinking back over the past year.
- Students who feel that the things they are learning in school they are "quite important" or "very important."
- During the LAST FOUR WEEKS students have missed 1 or more whole days of school because they skipped or "cut."



# PROTECTIVE & RISK FACTORS

There are many factors to take into consideration when looking at this information. The 2020 Montana Prevention Needs Assessment was administered right around the time the COVID-19 virus was becoming a major issue in the United States. This had a large impact on the mental health of youth in Missoula, as they were no longer able to access the resources they were accustomed to. Many after-school sports and activities were no longer taking place, and some schools made the transition from teaching in the classroom, where students are surrounded by their peers and friends with many opportunities for engagement and activity, to a virtual platform in which students were learning from home.

As teachers work tirelessly to rectify this situation now that schools are open to in-person classes again, it is imperative to not only bring students back to this baseline, but to improve upon it. Enhancing commitment to school and providing students with the opportunity to once again be engaged with their learning and involved with their peers is an essential factor to growing their social and emotional wellbeing.

# PROTECTIVE & RISK FACTORS

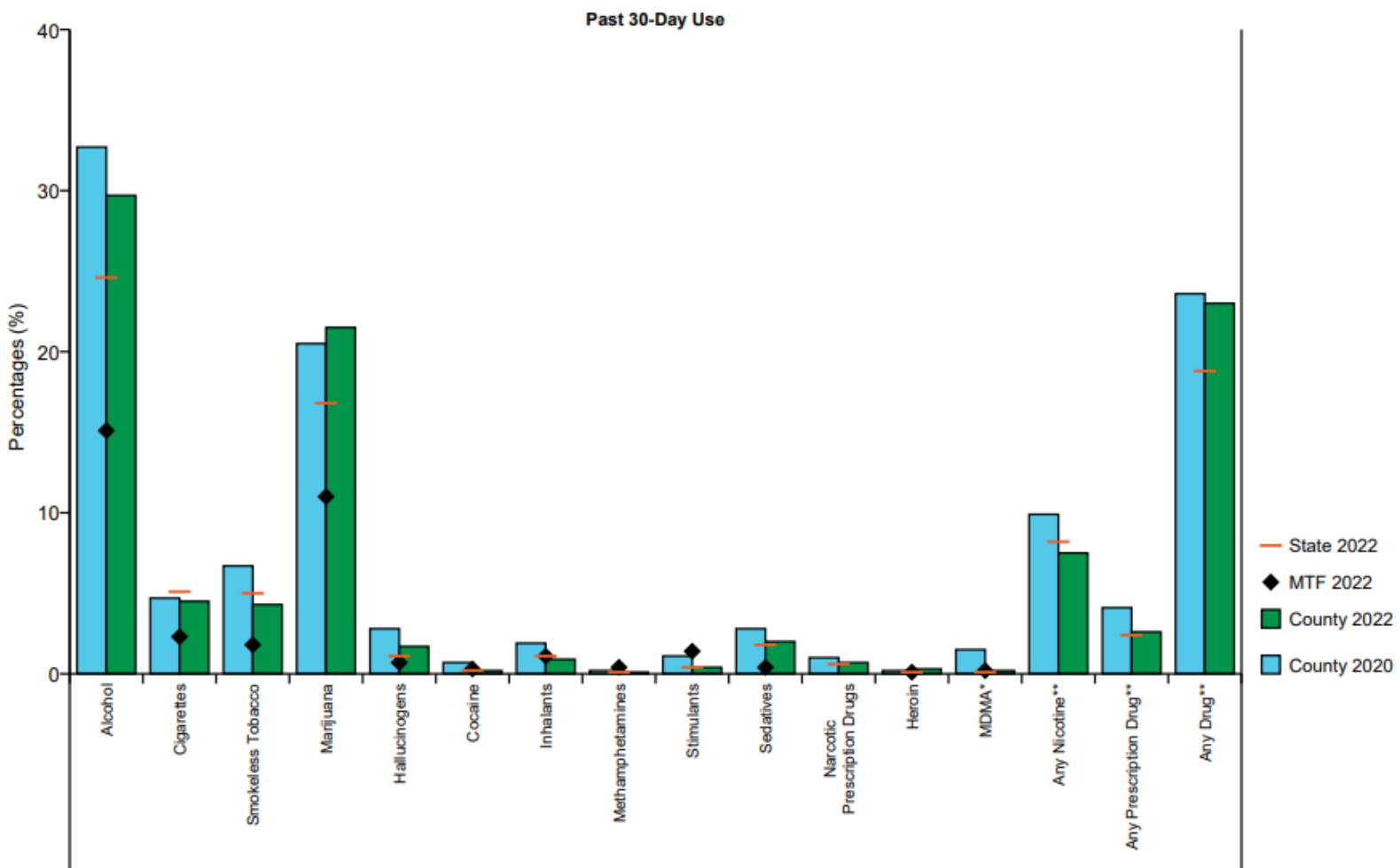
Implementing prevention practices based on these protective and risk factors is crucial, because they aim to preclude involvement in risky behaviors and underage substance use before it even has a chance to happen. Many of these protective and risk factors are related to multiple community outcomes. As such, it is important to use a holistic approach that acknowledges all aspects of social determinants of health.

By addressing factors like school commitment, neighborhood attachment, opportunities for prosocial involvement, perceived risk of drug use, and community laws and norms favorable towards drug use, firearms, and crime, there is a greater likelihood of preventing not only underage substance use, but also delinquency, teen pregnancy, school drop-out, violence, depression and anxiety, and suicide.

As a result, youth have more opportunity to form healthy bonds within the community, build life skills, form healthy beliefs and clear standards, as well as receive recognition for their efforts. Overall, this has a substantial impact on “children’s academic success, positive youth development, and the prevention of health and behavior problems”<sup>7</sup>.

# CURRENT TRENDS IN DATA

The Montana Department of Health and Human Services Addiction and Mental Disorders Division recognizes 30-day rates of alcohol use, binge drinking (5 or more drinks of alcohol in a row within a couple of hours), marijuana use, and tobacco use as the top priority substances to address<sup>7</sup>. This is due to the fact that alcohol, marijuana, and tobacco are often the first and most commonly used substances abused by youth. Below is a chart from the 2022 Montana Prevention Needs Assessment Profile Report for Missoula County. It looks at the self-reported rates of 30-day substance use for youth grades 8, 10, and 12 within Missoula County. Students were asked to respond to the question “On how many occasions (if any) have you used (insert substance here) during the past 30 days?”



\* New question for 2022. Data comparison is not available for 2020  
 \*\* Any Nicotine, Any Prescription Drug, and Any Drug are calculated variables  
 MTF = Monitoring the Future Survey



# CURRENT TRENDS IN DATA

This chart reflects similar data to what participants of the 2022 Healthy Missoula Youth School Survey stated they were seeing within their own schools. Since the legalization of marijuana and the return to in-person school post-pandemic, many teachers and counselors responding to the survey have reported an increase in the number of interactions with students who are using illicit substances. Respondents of this survey list the underage substance use problem in schools of Missoula County as “pervasive” and note that “in our community, substance use feels widely accepted and the norm.”

Already, teachers are seeing this reflected in students’ academic performance, disclosing that behavior, attendance, and focus have seen a decline. When asked about the biggest issue related to underage substance use in their school, one survey participant explained:

“Students have a hard time learning and staying focused, substances are affecting their day to day lives and are increasing as years go by.”

Some schools are seeing students leave campus to access substances during the day, while others mentioned that substance use on campus, whether it be in bathrooms, classrooms, or hallways, due to the easy concealment of THC vape pens or nicotine vapes, has become an increasing issue. This is further confirmed by the 2022 Montana Prevention Needs Assessment Crosstab Report: 17.7% of Missoula County students in grades 8, 10, and 12 have been offered, given, or sold an illegal drug on school property within the past 12 months, and 14.5% of Missoula County students in grades 8, 10, and 12 have been drunk or high at school within the past 12 months.

This MPNA report can provide more information on the current conditions of underage substance use in Missoula County as well. If interested in learning more, contact the Healthy Missoula Youth Coalition at [info@healthymissoulayouth.org](mailto:info@healthymissoulayouth.org), and they will help access and explain this data further.

# PURPOSE & NEED FOR PREVENTION EFFORTS

## Conclusion

The rising public health concern related to underage substance use confirms the need for prevention needs assessments. The data taken from these public health evaluation tools is crucial in guiding which risk or protective factors will be addressed in a specific school or community. This data can be used in grant applications, curriculum choices, or policy changes.

## Action Items

- **ASK** your school for their most recent YRBS or MPNA data.
- **READ** the data and make decisions that are guided by student needs.
- **CONTACT** the Healthy Missoula Youth Coalition with questions or for support in interpreting data.
- **ASK** administration if they have registered for this year's needs assessment.

## ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

- [Montana Prevention Needs Assessment](#)
- [Youth Risk Behavior Surveillance System](#)
- [Monitoring the Future](#)

- 1: [Partnership to End Addiction, 2011](#)
- 2: [Silvers, 2021](#)
- 3: [BRFSS, 2020](#)
- 4: [Child Trends in Foster Care](#)
- 5: [Sepulveda & Williams, 2019](#)
- 6: [2022 Missoula County PNA Crosstab](#)
- 7: [2022 Missoula County PNA Profile](#)





**Healthy Missoula Youth**  
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# LONG TERM EFFECTS

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# LONG TERM EFFECTS

## Purpose of the Section

- Create a basis of knowledge for the effects of substance use
- Explain why underage substance use can produce a stronger negative impact on youth

## What Educators Can Do

- Increase knowledge of credible resources for educational purposes
- Educate youth about the effects of substance use

## Why is this important?

Youth who begin using substances at a young age are at an increased risk for developing a substance use disorder. Education on these impacts is crucial to guiding youth towards healthy life choices.

When compared with those who have their first drink at age 20 or older, people who use alcohol before age 15 are four times as likely to become addicted<sup>1,2</sup>.

Due to the increased risk for substance use disorders if initiation starts before 18, prevention efforts are essential for the overall well-being of youth.

# LONG TERM EFFECTS

## Brain Development

The impact underage substance use can have on brain development and how this can lead to a substance use disorder.

## Physical Effects

The negative physical effects that can result from early initiation of substance use.

## Mental & Behavioral Health

How substance use can disproportionately effect youth mental and behavioral health.

## Lifelong Outcomes

Underage substance use can cause changes that create a lifelong impact.

## INTRODUCTION

The World Health Organization classifies psychoactive substances as any drug or substance that actively affects one's mental processes like perception, cognition, or mood and emotions. These drugs can have a variety of effects, both short term and long term, which are intensified when used by an adolescent. In order to fully understand why adolescents are more severely impacted by substance use, it is important to first look at the science of substance use disorders in the developing brain before diving into how these effects are seen in both physical and mental/behavioral health, as well as the potential lifelong outcomes.

# BRAIN DEVELOPMENT

According to the CDC, the earlier people try alcohol or other drugs in their life, the more likely they are to develop a substance use disorder. For example, when compared with those who have their first drink at age 20 or older, people who use alcohol before age 15 are four times as likely to become addicted<sup>1,2</sup>. This is due in part to the development of the brain, which is not complete until age 25.

Imagine the brain is like a puzzle that is slowly being solved. The basic layout with all the pieces is there, but until the age of 25 the puzzle is not yet complete. Each of these "puzzle pieces," or neurons, connects to another and forms a variety of interconnected circuits that control specific functions of the body. The neurons that make up these circuits send neurotransmitters, the "chemical messengers" of the brain, to coordinate specific behaviors. However, drug use can interfere with the transmission of these signals. As the brain matures, the neural pathways used most frequently become solidified, and those used less frequently are "pruned" (depicted as the yellow to blue transition as the brain develops in the images below).

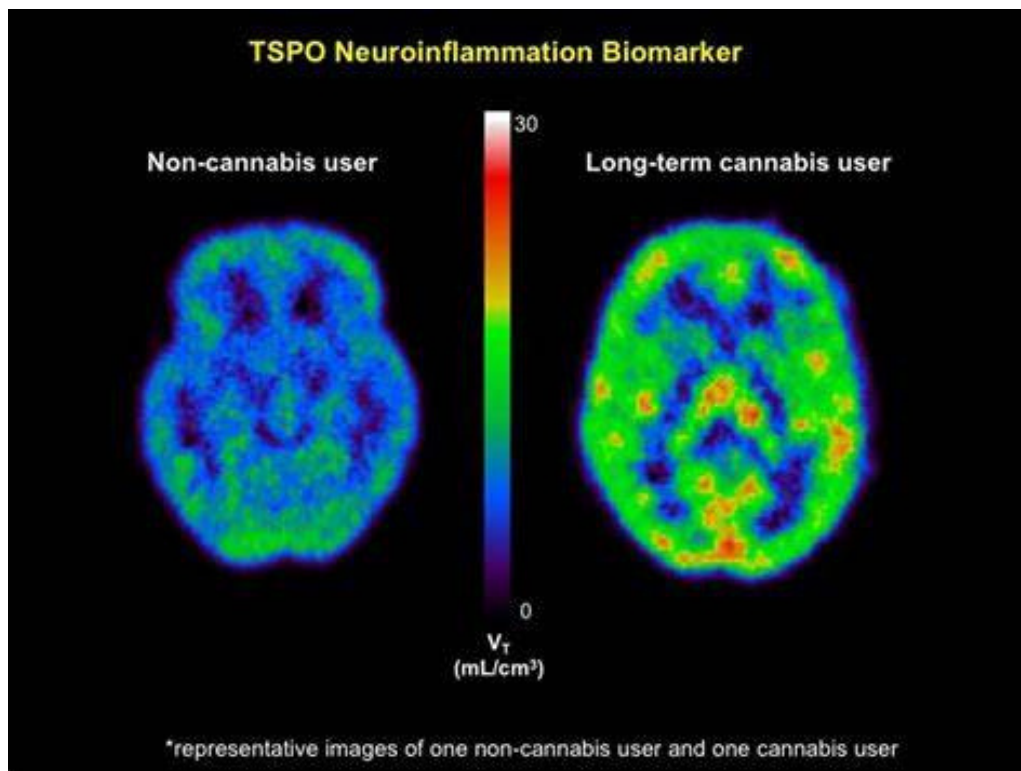
## Dynamic mapping of human cortical development



Source: "Dynamic mapping of human cortical development during childhood through early adulthood," Nitin Gogtay et al., Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences, May 25, 2004; California Institute of Technology.

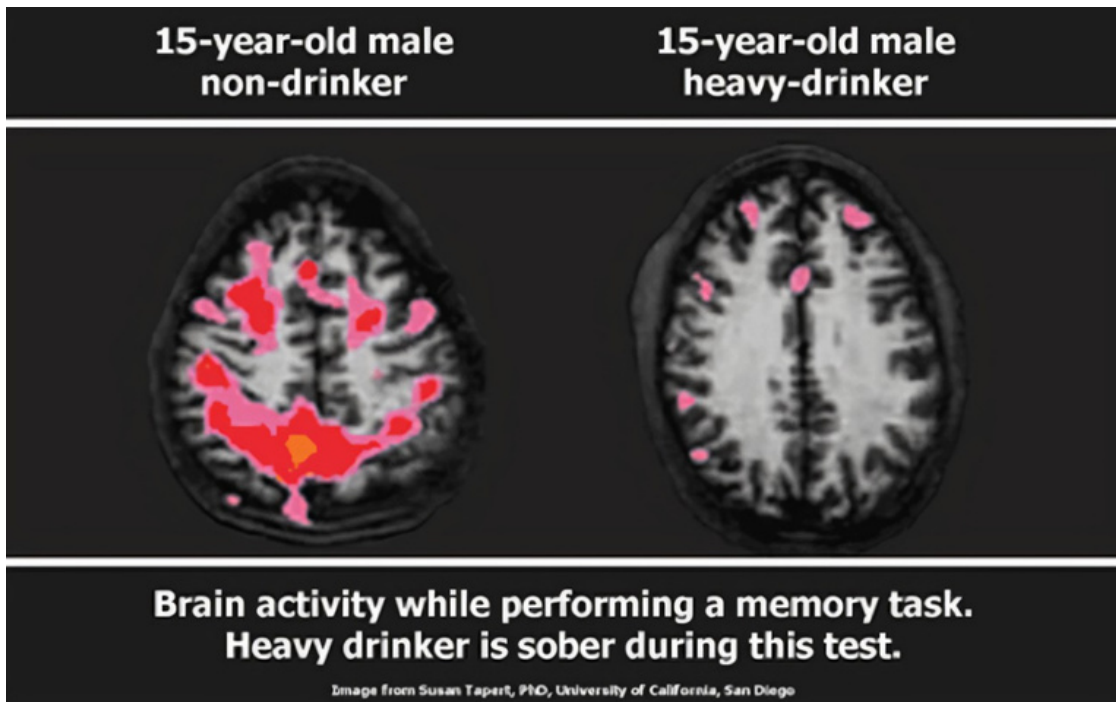
As a result, the brain circuits that emerge become more efficient. This is a process that can be beneficial if an individual practices healthy habits, but could also be detrimental if the brain is exposed to substances before it is fully developed. Not all patterns of behavior are desirable or healthy, yet the brain at this stage cannot differentiate which neural pathways to strengthen or which to prune<sup>3</sup>.

# BRAIN DEVELOPMENT



This can have a large effect on the brain's production of natural hormones and chemicals, as well as on the structure itself. For example, this PET scan shows marijuana use can cause elevated levels of TSP0 in the brain even when not intoxicated<sup>4</sup>. As the protein TSP0 is involved in heart rate and contractile force regulation<sup>5,6</sup>, increased levels can be dangerous — leading to a limited inflammatory response, and in worse cases the potential for heart disease and a weakened ability to pump blood, which eventually can progress to heart failure and heart attack<sup>7</sup>.

# BRAIN DEVELOPMENT



Another such example of the harms caused by substance use while the brain is still developing is seen in these fMRI scans. Alcohol not only degrades the ability for critical thinking and information retention, but it can permanently damage the memory pathways in the brain<sup>8</sup>. The brain scan on the left shows a healthy functioning brain, where the pink areas denote brain activity. The fMRI scan on the right shows an unhealthy level of activity: the brain areas normally activated when working with memory showed significantly less activity. This 15 year-old male's memory ability was permanently affected by heavy drinking - despite being sober at the time of the memory task<sup>9</sup>.

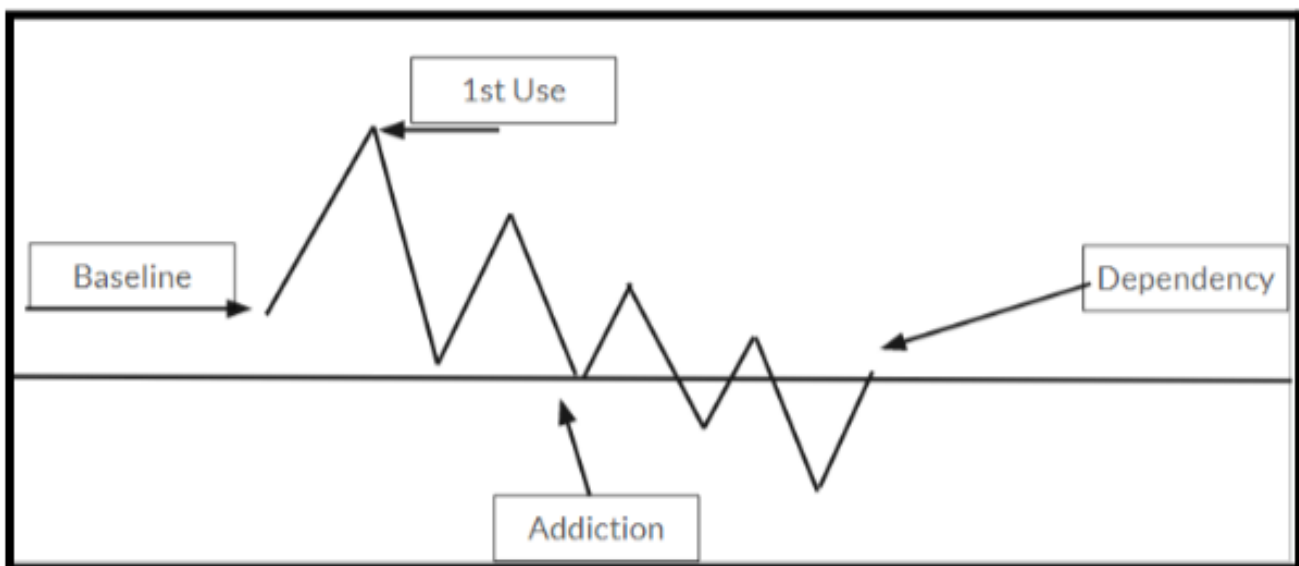


# BRAIN DEVELOPMENT

People know substance use is unhealthy, so why does it continue?

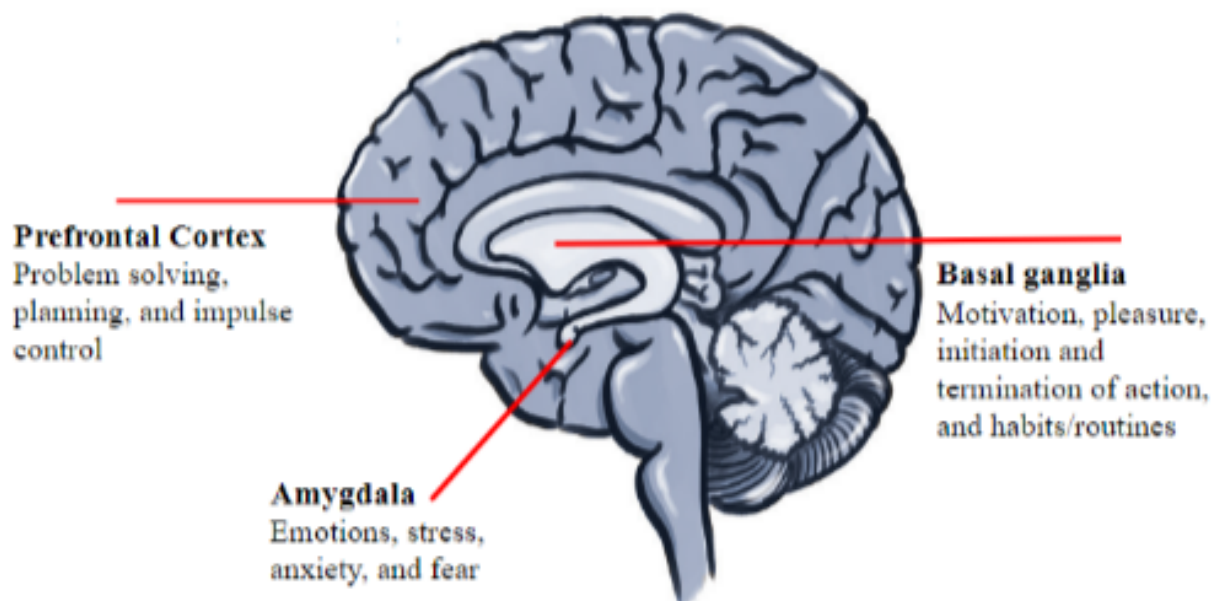
An easy way of looking at the science behind why use continues is to chart the brain's reaction to drugs. When psychoactive substances are used before the brain is done fully developing, it puts youth at a higher risk of becoming addicted. This is because drug use can change the chemical makeup of the brain and interfere with the transmission of signals throughout the neural circuit. Repeated use of substances as an adolescent can permanently impact some of these circuits, such as the reward circuit, due to increased levels of dopamine, aka the "happy" hormone.

Below is the **Line of Addiction**, which demonstrates this process. The Baseline arrow points to the level the brain normally functions at. The 1st Use is the highest "high" the brain will experience with this substance, but once it ends the brain doesn't return to that same baseline. Each subsequent use causes the natural baseline to drop lower and lower. Gradually, the only time the brain feels "normal," is when it is processing substances. When the brain requires these substances to function at a normal level it is called Dependency.



# BRAIN DEVELOPMENT

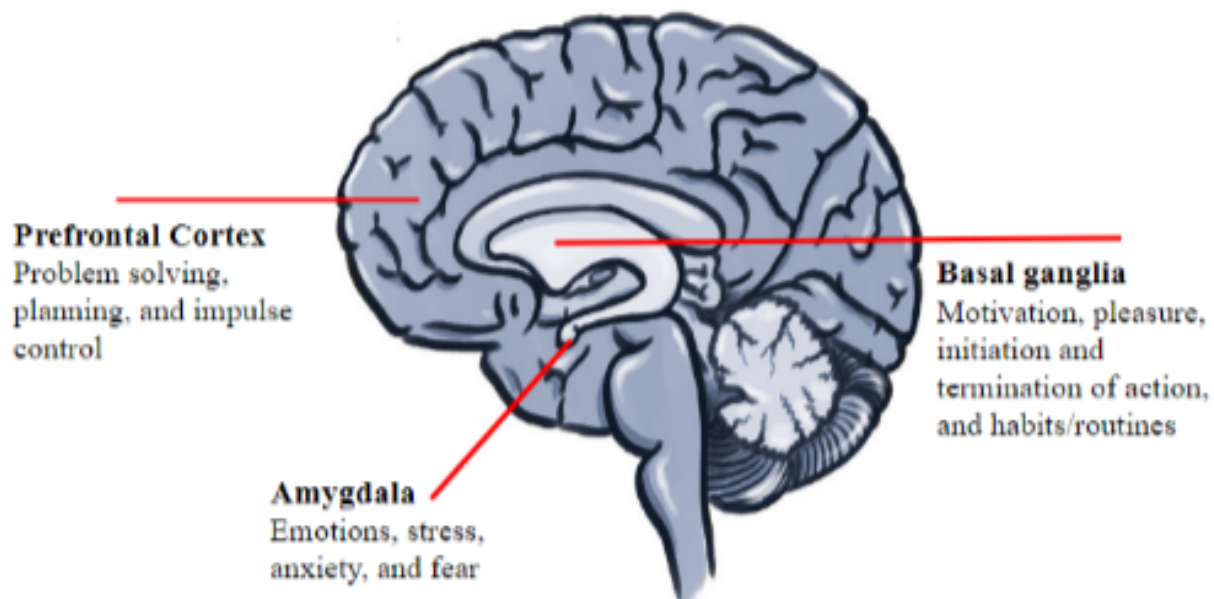
This is primarily due to what is known as the brain's **Reward Circuit**. The reward circuit is one of the areas most affected by drug use and chemical changes in the brain. Increased dopamine levels, when using substances, shifts the balance between the stress and reward circuits, reducing impulse control, which can make a person with a substance use disorder seek the drug compulsively. The reward circuit of the brain is composed of the prefrontal cortex, the amygdala, and the basal ganglia.



The **prefrontal cortex** is one of the areas that is last to develop in an adolescent's brain. This is the lobe in the brain that allows people to assess situations, make sound decisions, and keep emotions and desires under control. As the main area where critical thinking and decision making skills are developed, this portion of the brain is exceedingly important. When the brain is under the influence of substances this area is acutely impacted, which makes adolescents most vulnerable to the effects of drugs in relation to impulse control.

# BRAIN DEVELOPMENT

The **amygdala** is the emotional center of the brain. It controls feelings of stress, anxiety, and fear, which is dulled when using drugs. As the body processes the chemicals out of its system, these feelings resurface, characterizing what is known as withdrawal. Over time, with repeated use of drugs, this circuit becomes increasingly sensitive to the point where a person may use drugs simply to get temporary relief from the discomfort.



The **basal ganglia** are a group of structures near the center of the brain that form important connections. These connections allow different areas of the brain to work together. They are a key part of the network of brain cells and nerves that control your body's voluntary movements and process signals that affect your emotions and your motivation. That means it plays a role in learning and forming habits, and affects how you learn and how you feel in response to things happening around you. For example, cannabis causes dopamine levels in the basal ganglia to increase. With regular use, this process can be linked to the development of a substance use disorder.

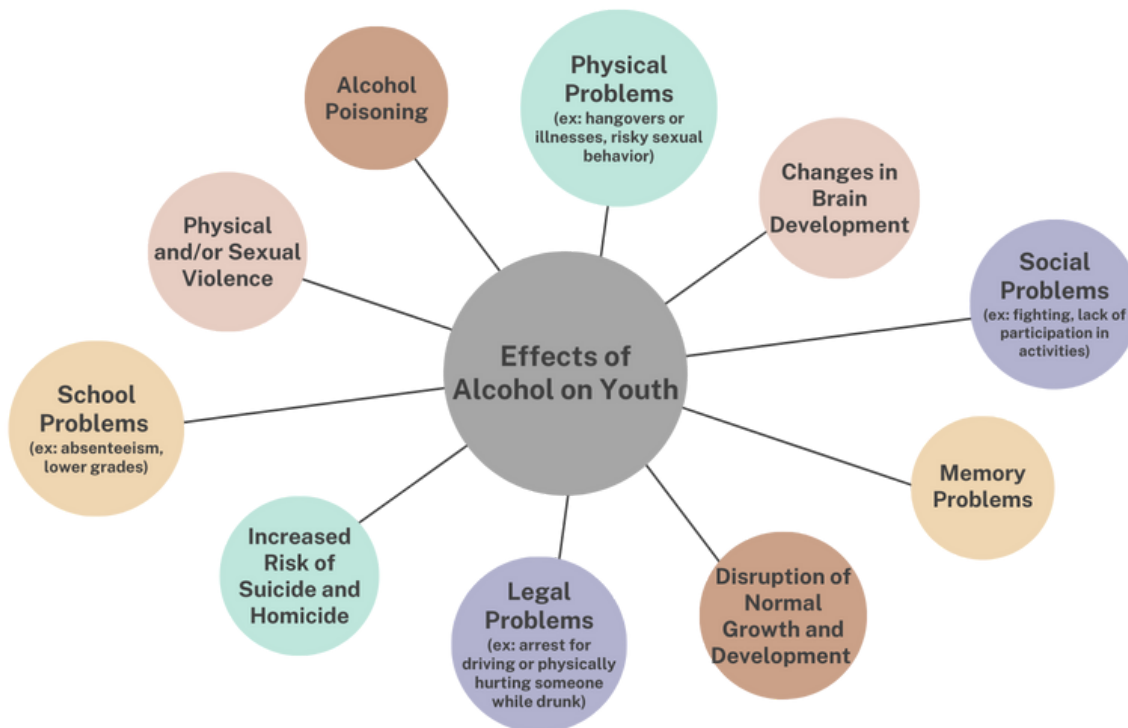
# PHYSICAL EFFECTS

As the adolescent brain develops, youth may sometimes make risky or dangerous decisions. The prefrontal cortex is, as previously mentioned, responsible for impulse control and judgment; essentially, it is the “voice of reason”<sup>10</sup>. Therefore, since the prefrontal cortex develops last, it is not surprising that teens make some questionable choices, like using drugs or drinking alcohol.

Substance use during this critical developmental period can negatively impact adolescent mental and physical health. For example, alcohol is a Central Nervous System (CNS) depressant, which means it slows down - or depresses - the brain's level of activity. This occurs due to alcohol increasing the effects of Gamma-Aminobutyric Acid (GABA), an inhibitory neurotransmitter that decreases activity within the brain and creates a calming effect. Increasing the effects of GABA can be dangerous; as the brain slows down, so do the parts of the brain responsible for coordination and decision making<sup>11</sup>. At dangerous levels, parts of the brain may slow or shut down vital bodily functions such as breathing, heart rate, and temperature control<sup>12</sup>.

# PHYSICAL EFFECTS

When used, alcohol (and most other drugs) increases the levels of dopamine in the brain. Dopamine is the brain's "feel good" chemical; it is responsible for pleasure and reward. Because alcohol causes an increase in dopamine - combined with decreased levels of brain activity - people are prone to drink more to maintain feelings of pleasure and euphoria, which may lead to poor decision-making and negative health outcomes. According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, youth who drink alcohol are more likely to experience:<sup>13</sup>



Source: *Underage Drinking*, Center for Disease Control and Prevention, 2022 - <https://www.cdc.gov/alcohol/fact-sheets/underage-drinking.htm>

As shown above, it is important to note that drinking can lead to decisions that cause harm to not only the individual drinking, but to others. Alcohol and other drugs increase the risk of car crashes, accidents such as drowning, violence, sexual assault, and more. Additionally, drinking too much alcohol can lead to alcohol poisoning. The CDC states, "Alcohol poisoning is caused by drinking large quantities of alcohol in a short period of time. Very high levels of alcohol in the body can shut down critical areas of the brain that control breathing, heart rate, and body temperature, resulting in death"<sup>14</sup>.

# PHYSICAL EFFECTS

This is only one example of how a single substance can impact the physical health of an adolescent. Other substances including nicotine (via cigarettes or e-cigarettes), marijuana (dabs, shatter, wax), psychedelics, and opioids can cause the same or worse effects. As another example, research shows that repeated use of high-potency THC found in marijuana concentrates, such as dabs, shatter, wax, and budder, can lead to Cannabinoid Hyperemesis Syndrome, also known as cyclical vomiting, and Cannabis-Induced Psychosis<sup>15</sup>. Each drug affects areas of the brain vital for learning and development.

As a result of the brain still developing, youth who begin using substances in adolescence may experience higher risks in terms of the physical effects substances have on the body due to changes in the brain's chemical structure. Brain imaging studies show that initiation of drug use at a young age "has more potential to disrupt brain function in areas critical to motivation, memory, learning, judgment, and behavior control," which explains the compulsive nature of substance use disorders<sup>16</sup>. Unfortunately, as youth continually use one or more substances, they are also increasing their risk of a substance use disorder.

**To learn more about the effects of drugs on the adolescent body, go to:**

[Drugs & Alcohol \(for Teens\) - Nemours KidsHealth](#)

This is a resource developed by the Nemours Foundation, which provides articles for parents, kids, and teens about different health topics. The articles for substance use education define what the substance is, the short and long term effects of use, as well as identifying resources for help quitting. There is also an educators section developed for teachers: [Kids Health in the Classroom](#). This covers Pre-K through 12th Grade, and provides free Teacher Guides that include lesson plans, activities, handouts, and discussion topics for in the classroom. These can be found within the "Health Problems" drop-down.

# MENTAL & BEHAVIORAL HEALTH

## WHY YOUTH "PRE-GAME"

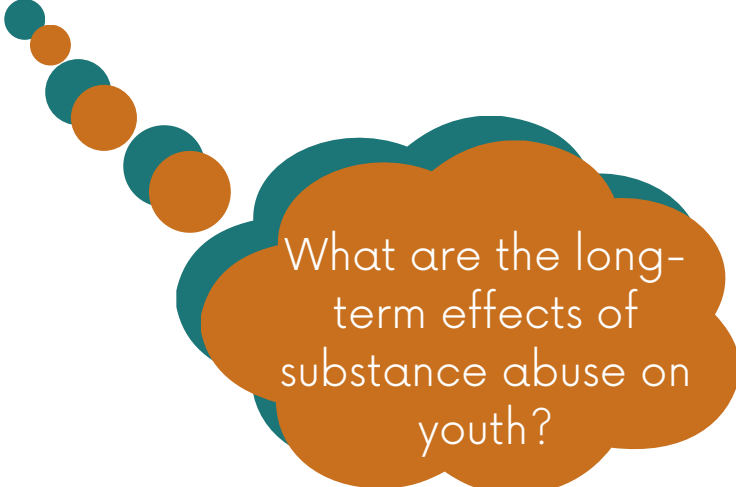
Youth mental health status and substance abuse behavior are interrelated in many cases. Often, substance use is a result of coping mechanisms related to self-medication for a youth's untreated mental health needs. An example is the popular action of "pre-gaming" which can be defined as the use of alcohol or cannabis prior to social situations<sup>17</sup>. Data has reflected that there are high rates of comorbid substance use disorders (SUDs) and mental health disorders such as generalized anxiety disorder, post-traumatic stress disorder, depression<sup>18</sup>, bipolar disorder<sup>19</sup>, and attention-deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD)<sup>20</sup>.

Child and Adolescent psychiatrist Dr. Taskiran states, "The rule of thumb is that almost half of kids with mental health disorders, if they're not treated, will end up having a substance use disorder"<sup>21</sup>. In fact, a study of 10,000 adolescents found that two-thirds of those who developed alcohol or substance use disorders had experienced at least one mental health disorder<sup>22</sup>. Substance use can also exacerbate long-term prognosis for teenagers struggling with mental health disorders as substance use often interferes with treatment for mental health disorders<sup>21</sup>.

Short-term substance use can feel like an immediate alleviation of mental health struggles for youth like anxiety, hopelessness, and negative thoughts, but long-term effects often are reflected as dependency and abuse. Child Mind Institute also states, "Substance use escalates from experimentation to a serious disorder much faster in adolescents than it does in adults, and that progression is more likely to happen in kids with mental health disorders than in other kids"<sup>21</sup>.



# MENTAL & BEHAVIORAL HEALTH



What are the long-term effects of substance abuse on youth?

Mental health problems such as depression, withdrawal, developmental delays, and many other psychosocial dysfunctions are frequently linked to substance abuse among adolescents. Increased rates of suicidal ideation amongst youth, regardless of gender, have also been linked to substance abuse, specifically in the case of marijuana use<sup>23,24</sup>. Youth who partake in frequent substance use often experience academic difficulties, poor peer relationships, and involvement with the juvenile justice system<sup>25</sup>.

More recently, substance abuse has shown the potential for increasing a user's risk of developing mental disorders such as the link between adolescent use of marijuana and increased risk of psychosis and schizophrenia<sup>26,27</sup>. Another example is the frequent use of MDMA (3,4-methylenedioxymethamphetamine), commonly known as ecstasy, on the long-term health of youth. MDMA can result in long-term serotonin deficits within the brain which increase chances of mental disorders such as depression and anxiety<sup>28</sup>. This is especially true for youth with a genetic predisposition to develop a psychological disorder<sup>15</sup>.



# LIFELONG OUTCOMES

Chronic substance abuse by adolescents during their developmental years is a major concern because it can interfere with normal socialization and cognitive development, as well as the onset of serious mental health struggles that may affect them for the rest of their life<sup>29</sup>. These lifelong effects not only play into changes in the brain, but are correlated with suicidal ideation, relationship development, abuse, and violence.

90% of people with a substance use disorder (SUD) start using substances in their teen years<sup>30</sup>. SUDs can affect anyone regardless of age, ethnicity, or socioeconomic status. When someone struggles with an SUD, their whole family feels the effects. Conflicts may ensue, trust is lost between family members, and tempers rise. Families, relationships, and homes can be strained due to substance use disorders. Research also shows that children who have a parent with a substance use disorder are more likely to develop a SUD themselves<sup>30</sup>.

Due to the increased risk for substance use disorders if initiation starts before 18, prevention efforts are essential for the overall well-being of youth.

# LONG TERM EFFECTS

## Conclusion

Substance use is particularly detrimental to youth because the brain is not done fully developing until around the age of 25. This underage use can impact brain development, physical health, as well as mental and behavioral health, producing long term effects that may not be reversible. Teaching youth about these effects is one step educators can take to prevent the associated harms.

## Action Items

- **EDUCATE** yourself on the effects of substance use.
- **USE** credible resources when researching.
- **TEACH** your students about the effects of substance use
- **READ** the "Teacher Resources" and "Evidence Based Programs" sections of the Toolkit.

## REFERENCES

- 1: [Grant & Dawson, 1997](#)
- 2: [Hingson et al., 2006](#)
- 3: [National Institute on Drug Abuse, 2020](#)
- 4: [Da Silva et al., 2019](#)
- 5: [Papadopoulos et al., 2018](#)
- 6: [Qi et al., 2012](#)
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- 13: [Center for Disease Control & Prevention, 2022](#)
- 14: [Center for Disease Control & Prevention, 2015](#)
- 15: [National Institute on Drug Abuse, 2020](#)
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- 25: [Office of Justice Programs](#)
- 26: [Brande, 2023](#)
- 27: [Marconi et al., 2016](#)
- 28: [Meyer, 2013](#)
- 29: [Odgers et al., 2013](#)
- 30: [Lipari & Van Horn, 2017](#)





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# SCHOOLS OF THOUGHT

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# SCHOOLS OF THOUGHT

## Purpose of the Section

- Review the Theories of Child Development and how this relates to prevention
- Introduce Hart's Ladder of Youth Participation

## What Educators Can Do

- Tailor prevention interventions to the developmental level of the youth they work with
- Use Hart's Ladder of Youth Participation to evaluate their classroom, and improve student engagement

## Why is this important?

Utilizing prevention interventions tailored to suit the needs & developmental level of the students you work with will increase the effectiveness of programs.

## INTRODUCTION

The US Surgeon General released research which has shown that the younger an individual starts using substances, the more likely they are to develop a Substance Use Disorder<sup>2</sup>. As such, it is crucial to implement prevention interventions starting at a young age, and continue the conversation more in depth as they grow older. Early intervention practices "not only save young lives from being wasted," but also prevents the onset of adult criminal careers and reduces the likelihood of youth perpetrating serious and violent offenses<sup>4</sup>. Focusing on protective and risk factors is one way to begin developing a safe and healthy environment where a child can thrive.

# SCHOOLS OF THOUGHT

## Theories of Child Development

Prevention recommendations for each of the four levels of child development: Early Childhood, Middle Childhood, Early Adolescence, and Middle Adolescence.

## Hart's Ladder of Youth Participation

An evaluation model to be used in schools and youth activities groups that will increase youth engagement.

“While the targeted developmental stage may change, the primary focus of these interventions is on reducing risk and increasing protective factors that can modify proximal outcomes (e.g., self-regulation, skill development) as well as long-term, distal outcomes including psychological health, substance abuse, physical health, and other important areas (e.g., improved academic achievement and employment).”

- National Center for Complementary and Integrative Health

# THEORIES OF CHILD DEVELOPMENT

It is important to acknowledge that different prevention interventions will (or will not) work, depending on which stage of development the individual is in. Specialists often categorize the stages of development from kindergarten to high school into four sections: Early Childhood, Middle Childhood, Early Adolescence, and Middle Adolescence.

The following is a table containing information on appropriate prevention interventions for each age group. These age groups are categorized based on the characteristics and criteria listed in Iowa State University's "Ages and Stages of Development," a resource created by youth development specialists to assist volunteers in forming age-appropriate youth engagement activities<sup>1</sup>. The Healthy Missoula Youth Coalition has analyzed and adapted this resource to provide more information on how this relates to the field of prevention, and what prevention practices are appropriate for each age group.

**Disclaimer:** While most children develop in accordance with this order of stages, it is important to remember that they all grow at their own pace, and the age of a child may not necessarily match the stage of development they are in. **Age is not a perfect predictor of maturity.** A child may need different experiences or support systems than peers of their age group to reach their full potential.

# THEORIES OF CHILD DEVELOPMENT

## EARLY CHILDHOOD (TYPICALLY AGES 5-8)

### ELEMENTARY SCHOOL: GRADES K-3

Prevention at this stage of development should be about promoting protective factors, and establishing a solid decision making process for healthy risk taking. A majority of prevention interventions at this stage are primarily focused on building healthy parent-child relationships, decreasing aggressive behavior, and building children's social, emotional, and cognitive competence<sup>2</sup>.

**Youth may be more interested in the process of doing something rather than the actual result.**

- Give the opportunity for youth to engage in a variety of healthy behaviors and activities. For example: exercise, stretching, sports, etc.
- Use play-scenarios in which youth can pretend to be experiencing a healthy decision-making dilemma (ex: inviting a student who was isolated to play a game with them).

**Attention spans are relatively brief as they may become distracted by new stimuli.**

- Social development is an important focus. As they are building a network of peer support, give youth a variety of activities that will engage them in new ways with different people. This exposure in a safe environment at a young age helps teach them to moderate their stress response as they grow.

**Most of their learning will occur through interactions with others.**

- Address positive choices consistently, as they come up organically. Ex: "Did you notice I stopped and looked both ways before I crossed the street? I did that to make sure it was safe for us to cross."
- Adults should take the initiative to be role models for youth. One-time presentations are not effective at this age, so the message should be continuously reinforced.

# THEORIES OF CHILD DEVELOPMENT

## EARLY CHILDHOOD (TYPICALLY AGES 5-8)

### ELEMENTARY SCHOOL: GRADES K-3

**Youth at this stage of development have little to no impulse control.**

- The idea that kids should “know what not to do” is NOT best practice for this age group - the lack of impulse control may actually influence the young individual to engage in the risky health behavior more frequently if they think of it.

- Model positive behavior when around youth of this stage. Developing brains need nurturing and predictability to avoid stress responses.
- Give opportunities to the youth where they can get validation from an adult. For example: Play pretend together and let the youth be the leader who teaches the adult about healthy decision making.

**Youth seek adult approval because they are not confident enough yet to set their own standards.**

**Youth have a strong desire for affection and attention from adults, but are moving from dependence on parents to dependence on another adult.**

- Provide positive encouragement and assistance. Plan many concrete learning activities in which success can be experienced. Set up situations that foster cooperation and teamwork rather than competition.



# THEORIES OF CHILD DEVELOPMENT

## MIDDLE CHILDHOOD (TYPICALLY AGES 9-11)

### ELEMENTARY SCHOOL: GRADES 3-5

**Youth this age are quite active, and continue to have interests which often change rapidly.**

- Emphasize active learning experiences that take place in group settings or encourage interaction with their peers in a positive way. Continue to use brief learning experiences, or present work in small pieces.
- Interactions with their peers will encourage problem solving and self-regulation skills, as well as developing conflict management skills and improved communication.

**These youth enjoy need recognition or praise for doing good work in order to grow feelings of competence and self-concept.**

- Work closely with this age group, leading by example. Begin conversations about healthy decision making choices and how to say "no" when appropriate.
- Provide opportunities like a school "buddy" system or pen-pals with older grades. For example, mentoring programs like Big Brothers Big Sisters are beneficial.
- Address the protective factor Rewards for Prosocial Involvement by using positive reinforcement and expressing pride or approval when the individual does something correctly.
- Hold initiation ceremonies for new members of clubs. Present recognition in front of peers and parents for their accomplishments. Instead of comparing youth to each other, compare present to past performance of the individual.

There is still a nurturing aspect to prevention with this developmental stage, however, this focus expands to include the growth of social, emotional, cognitive, and substance refusal skills as well. Enhancing communication skills, establishing boundaries, and setting limits are three of the main goals of prevention for this group<sup>2</sup>.

**Youth in this stage need guidance from positive role models to achieve their best performance.**

# THEORIES OF CHILD DEVELOPMENT

## MIDDLE CHILDHOOD (TYPICALLY AGES 9-11)

### ELEMENTARY SCHOOL: GRADES 3-5

**Curiosity is a large characteristic of this stage of development. Youth may continuously ask "why" or broach more serious conversation about substances.**

- Do not answer all their questions right away, encourage the individual to think and come up with their own answer to "why." They will learn by finding some answers on their own. In a classroom, encourage a few students to find answers and report to the group.
- If they ask about substances, answer questions about alcohol and drug use truthfully, or direct them to trustworthy sites to find information on their own. It is appropriate for this age group to know the basics.

- Allow youth to show independence by asking for their input in decision making. Rather than only assigning one task, give the option of which of two tasks they would like to do first.
- Individualized attention and the opportunity to participate in classroom decision-making grows commitment to school, and this opportunity for prosocial involvement is a large protective factor.

**As independence grows, youth may express discomfort at following all directions. Disobedience, back-talk, and rebelliousness are common characteristics of this age.**

# THEORIES OF CHILD DEVELOPMENT

## EARLY ADOLESCENCE (TYPICALLY AGES 12-14)

### MIDDLE SCHOOL: GRADES 6-8

As youth at this age are experiencing a dramatic shift in their bodies and development, they can be sensitive to criticism, are self-conscious, and more vulnerable to bouts of low-esteem.

- Concentrate on developing a youth's individual skills, rather than comparing them to peers. Youth may need varied opportunities to achieve and to have their competence recognized by others.
- Promote the development of a more secure sense of self by allowing youth to plan activities and develop leadership skills. Help them evaluate the outcome, and let youth have responsibility for group activities.

Gaining skills in social relations with peers and adults is a continuing process.

- Peer pressure may frequently be a topic of conversation. Explain how this can have both positive and negative effects. Use the group to influence non-participation in unhealthy risk taking behaviors. For example, present information about substance use with a positive norming lens: "65.1% of youth in Missoula County DON'T use marijuana, according to the 2020 Missoula County Prevention Needs Assessment."
- Provide activities that would foster social interaction, and provide learning experiences outside of their typical comfort zone.

At this stage of development it is common for a student to have already been exposed to substances, whether it be from discussion with their peers, or seeing neighbors and family use. They may form attitudes about drug use from what they see at home, among their friends and in the media. As such, it is important to learn what they already know. Encourage them to ask questions, and clear up any misconceptions. It is important for adults to clearly explain to children what drugs are, their functions and potential harms<sup>3</sup>.

# THEORIES OF CHILD DEVELOPMENT

## EARLY ADOLESCENCE (TYPICALLY AGES 12-14)

### MIDDLE SCHOOL: GRADES 6-8

Youth at this stage of development are more likely to question the authority and values of adults in their lives.

- Be willing to spend time discussing values, morals, and ethics. Rather than just saying something and expecting the young individual to take it as fact, explain how the conclusion was made and why that decision works best. If they have false information, gently give them the correct information. Explain that they may come across more wrong information, but they can check everything with you.
  - Rather than “good” or “bad” choices, frame discussions about substance use in “healthy” or “unhealthy” terms. Be sure to sandwich this information with discussions of how they can and already do make healthy choices.
- 
- Look at the science of why substances affect the body negatively, rather than just discussing the negative effects. Direct youth to credible sources like SAMHSA or the CDC to find information on their own as well.
  - Mention the increased risk of developing a Substance Use Disorder if initiation of use starts before age 18. Be cognizant of placing blame or unintentionally shaming individuals who use.
  - Emphasize that though some substances are legal for adults it does not necessarily make them safe, and they are still illegal for youth.

Conversations about substance use

# THEORIES OF CHILD DEVELOPMENT

## MIDDLE ADOLESCENCE (TYPICALLY AGES 15-18)

### HIGH SCHOOL: GRADES 9-12

Youth in this stage of development typically are motivated by social needs and a desire for status within their peer groups.

- Utilize a discussion-based structure or group projects that inspire youth to seek information on their own, and provide access to adult guidance when necessary.
- In conversations with youth place more emphasis on personal development. Establish an environment where youth feel encouraged to take on leadership roles and set examples for other peers or surrounding youth.

Individuality and personal morals will grow rapidly, sometimes deviating from those of the adults in their life.

- Create scenarios that mimic real life problem-solving situations. Allow the youth to fully discover ideas, make decisions, and evaluate the outcomes on their own, providing feedback and corrections when needed.
- Allow time for youth to explore and express these values as they develop. Use activities that strengthen the development of a community consciousness or interest in world problems (i.e.: involvement in civic projects).

In this time of transition youths' social roles are changing rapidly and some social safety net supports may weaken. As a result of these forces, young adulthood is typically associated with increases in substance use, misuse, and misuse-related consequences<sup>2</sup>. As such, it is crucial to prepare adolescents for making tough life decisions by teaching them the skills needed to assess information and make health-minded choices on their own. Providing information about the detriments of substance use, as well as how to find accurate information from reputable sources on their own is a large part of prevention for this age group.

# THEORIES OF CHILD DEVELOPMENT

## MIDDLE ADOLESCENCE (TYPICALLY AGES 15-18)

### HIGH SCHOOL: GRADES 9-12

**As youths' areas of interest become more defined, focus on how the impacts of substance use are more far-reaching than just physical health.**

- In conversations about substance use, broaden the discussion to address lifelong outcomes. Allow students to speculate and remark on their own life goals and how these could potentially be affected.

- Be clear about the school's expectations and policies in terms of substance use, as well as addressing what the community's laws and ordinances are. Consider reviewing the Student Handbook's policy guidelines.
- Express understanding and do not cast judgment when speaking with students about drug-related issues (such as drunk driving), but also be sure to talk about the real risks of drug use both for the individual and for the community as a whole. For example, explain that driving under the influence is illegal (i.e.: a person who gets a DUI may go to jail), but also that someone driving under the influence could end up killing or severely injuring a pedestrian, a passenger, another road user or themselves.

**Conversations about substance use**

# HART'S LADDER OF YOUTH PARTICIPATION

In 1992, Roger Hart developed a model of participatory evaluation to be used in schools and youth activities groups. This model, now known as Hart's Ladder of Youth Participation, has been used throughout the nation, and is touted as one of the great theories of youth engagement, according to the Chicago Public Schools District. Hart's Ladder, in its basic form, is an eight-tiered system of assessment and reflection that can be used to see where an organization, school, or classroom stands on youth engagement levels, and can then help shape future goals.

Each of these eight tiers, or "rungs" of the ladder, indicate increasing degrees of student participation. The three "lowest" on the ladder are considered non-participatory, and the subsequent five steps are varying degrees of participation. The theory behind these steps is that as one moves up the rungs, the capacity for meaningful youth-adult partnerships grows.

Cornell University has a synthesized explanation of Hart's Ladder [here](#), as well as a [toolkit](#) from their Garden-Based Learning Program that provides examples and includes tips on using Hart's Ladder with ages 3-18, overly enthusiastic adults and well-formed programs.

In addition to Hart's Ladder of Youth Participation, Chicago Public School's Department of Social Science and Civic Engagement has released a variety of impactful toolkits for schools to utilize, including:

- [Say Their Names: Conversations on Race and Civil Disobedience Toolkit](#)
- [The Day After...A Classroom Discourse Guide for Timely Responses to Difficult or Controversial Events](#)

On the following page is a graphic depicting the eight tiers of Hart's Ladder of Youth Participation, as well as some examples of how this methodology may be seen in a school or classroom setting.



# Hart's Ladder

## Key Questions

Which level of Hart's Ladder is our project on?

Which level of Hart's Ladder should our project be on?

What do we need to do to move to the right level on the ladder for our project?

### NON-PARTICIPATION

It is important to remember that tokenism, decoration and manipulation are not examples of youth participation. You do have the choice to move away from these methods towards more meaningful participation.

## QUALITY OF PARTICIPATION

Young people and adults share decision-making

Young people lead and initiate action

Adult-initiated, shared decisions with young people

Young people are consulted and informed

Young people assigned but informed

Tokenism

Decoration

Manipulation

## EXAMPLES

Young people have the ideas, set up the project and invite adults to join them in making decisions throughout the project. They are equal partners.

Young people decide they need a one-stop shop in their community. They partner with adults in different youth organisations and together lobby the government for resources.

Young people have the initial idea and decide how the project is to be carried out. Adults are available and trust in the leadership of young people.

A group of students get permission from their principal to run an environmental day. The students make the decisions, and the school provides support.

Adults have the initial idea, and young people are involved in making decisions, planning and implementing the project.

A community co-ordinator asks young people for event ideas for Youth Week. The young people suggest having a skating event. The co-ordinator and young people work together to make decisions and apply for funding.

Adults design and facilitate the project, and young people's opinions are given weight in decision-making. Young people receive feedback about their opinions.

A local council runs several consultations to get young people's input about a recreation park. Young people tell the council about features in the park they want changed. The council provides feedback to the young people about how their views affected decision-making.

Adults decide on the project and young people volunteer for it. Young people understand the project and adults respect their views.

A conference creates positions for two young people on a panel of speakers. Young people decide how to select their representatives and work with adults to understand their role.

Young people are given a limited voice and little choice about what they can say and how they can communicate.

A young person is asked by adults to be on a panel and represent 'youth'. The young person is not given the opportunity to consult with peers or understand the role.

Young people take part in an event in a very limited capacity and have no role in decision-making.

A group of young people are given a script by adults about 'youth problems' to present to adults attending a youth conference.

Adults have complete and unchallenged authority and abuse their power. They use young people's ideas and voices for their own gain.

A publication uses young people's cartoons; however, the publication is written by adults.



# SCHOOLS OF THOUGHT

## Conclusion

Tailored prevention interventions that fit the developmental level of students not only are more effective, but also allow teachers to better connect with the youth. This can be enhanced through the use of Hart's Ladder and actively encouraging youth to become more involved.

## Action Items

- **ADAPT** lessons to fit the needs of the students.
- **ENGAGE** your students in the classroom decision-making process.
- **ASK** students to lead class activities.

## ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

- [Keeping Youth Engaged in School](#)
- [11 Ways to Get Your Teen Talking](#)
- [Playbook for Parents of Pre-Teens](#)
- [Playbook for Parents of Teens](#)

1: [Levings & Query, 2006](#)

2: [US Department of Health & Human Services, 2016](#)

3: [Department of Health, State Government of Victoria, Australia, 2022](#)

4: [Greenwood, 2008](#)





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# BEST PRACTICES IN PREVENTION

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# BEST PRACTICES IN PREVENTION

## Purpose of the Section

- Create a basis of knowledge for prevention best practices
- Establish how prevention has evolved
- Provide recommendations for program topic of focus

## What Educators Can Do

- Assess current programs
- Stop using scare tactics
- Positively impact health behaviors

## Why is this important?

Utilizing best practice interventions will increase the effectiveness of programs. Students will have more engagement and retain information better.

Various methods can be used to achieve an educational prevention best practice. Effective programs focus on the development of skills that enable the participants to avoid problem behaviors. Skills that have been associated with effective prevention include helping participants develop their cognitive (thinking) skills, their ability to communicate assertively, and the ability to negotiate resisting the problem behavior. These may provide a hands-on experience for participants, rather than only depending on sharing information and discussion, and will allow participants to develop and practice their new skills.<sup>5</sup>

# BEST PRACTICES IN PREVENTION

## What Does & Doesn't Work in Prevention

A brief history of the evolution of prevention.

## Effective Prevention Strategies for Families & Programs

How to positively impact health behaviors when working with families and choosing programs.

## Effective Prevention Strategies for Children & Adolescents

How to positively impact health behaviors when working with children and adolescents.

## Ineffective Prevention Strategies You Should Avoid

The most common strategies that are still used, but should actually be avoided.

## INTRODUCTION

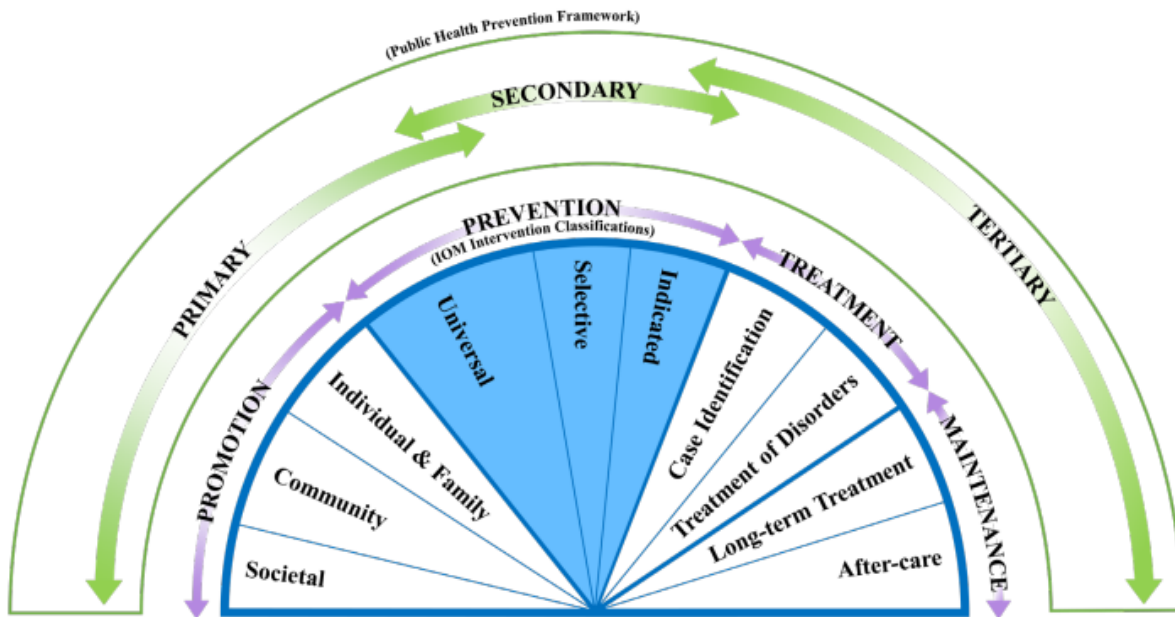
The field of prevention is a science that is constantly evolving. As societal norms and communities change over time, prevention must grow with it. This includes policy development and decision-making practices, family-based prevention, ethics from a multicultural and social justice perspective, as well as a wide variety of other factors, all of which has culminated in the development of the International Standards on Drug Use Prevention<sup>1</sup>. The Healthy Missoula Youth Coalition has broken this down into more digestible pieces of information that will highlight some prevention best practices and the most effective interventions for school-based and family-based settings.

# WHAT DOES & DOESN'T WORK IN PREVENTION

Up until the late 1980s, early prevention approaches were primarily focused on information dissemination and fear arousal, a prime example of which is the “Reefer Madness” campaigns from 1936<sup>2</sup>. While prevention now knows this is an ineffective approach to societal change, throughout the 1980s and 1990s a vast majority of the population still continued down the track of social resistance as prevention. Nancy Reagan’s “Just Say No” advertising campaign as part of the US’s war on drugs is perhaps the most memorable of these campaigns. While this campaign did garner a lot of attention, there are several issues with the approach used here. For example, it exaggerated the prevalence of drug use and overemphasized the influence of peer pressure. It also failed to make the distinction between “casual” use and addiction, which caused the campaign to not only lose credibility but also fed into stereotypes and the development of prejudice.

It wasn’t until the mid-90s to early 2000’s that prevention took on a public health approach and began using elements of the public health prevention model<sup>2</sup>. The Public Health Prevention Framework works in three tiers: Primary Prevention, which focuses on risk and protective factors on an environmental level and intervenes prior to the initiation of substance use; Secondary Prevention, which focuses on early identification of high-risk populations with the goal of slowing down or stopping the progression of substance use; and Tertiary Prevention, which refers to treatment or rehabilitation after the onset of use or diagnosis of a substance use disorder<sup>3</sup>.

# PUBLIC HEALTH PREVENTION FRAMEWORK



As adults and educators it is best to focus on **Primary & Secondary Prevention** tactics for complete prevention on an environmental level. Within this prevention framework exists the continuum of care, in which health promotion and risk prevention strategies are utilized across a spectrum.

- **Universal** prevention measures address an entire population (national, local, community, school, or neighborhood) with messages and programs aimed at preventing or delaying the use of alcohol, tobacco, and other drugs.
- **Selective** prevention refers to strategies that are targeted to subpopulations identified as being at an elevated risk for a disorder.
- **Indicated** prevention programs are designed to prevent the onset of substance abuse in individuals who are already exhibiting problem behaviors.

This change comes slowly though, as it is basic human nature to stick with trends that have been done in the past. To break down some of this information in regards to what prevention best practices are in today's society and how to be effective in this approach, the Healthy Missoula Youth Coalition has selected a few key elements to showcase.

# EFFECTIVE PREVENTION STRATEGIES

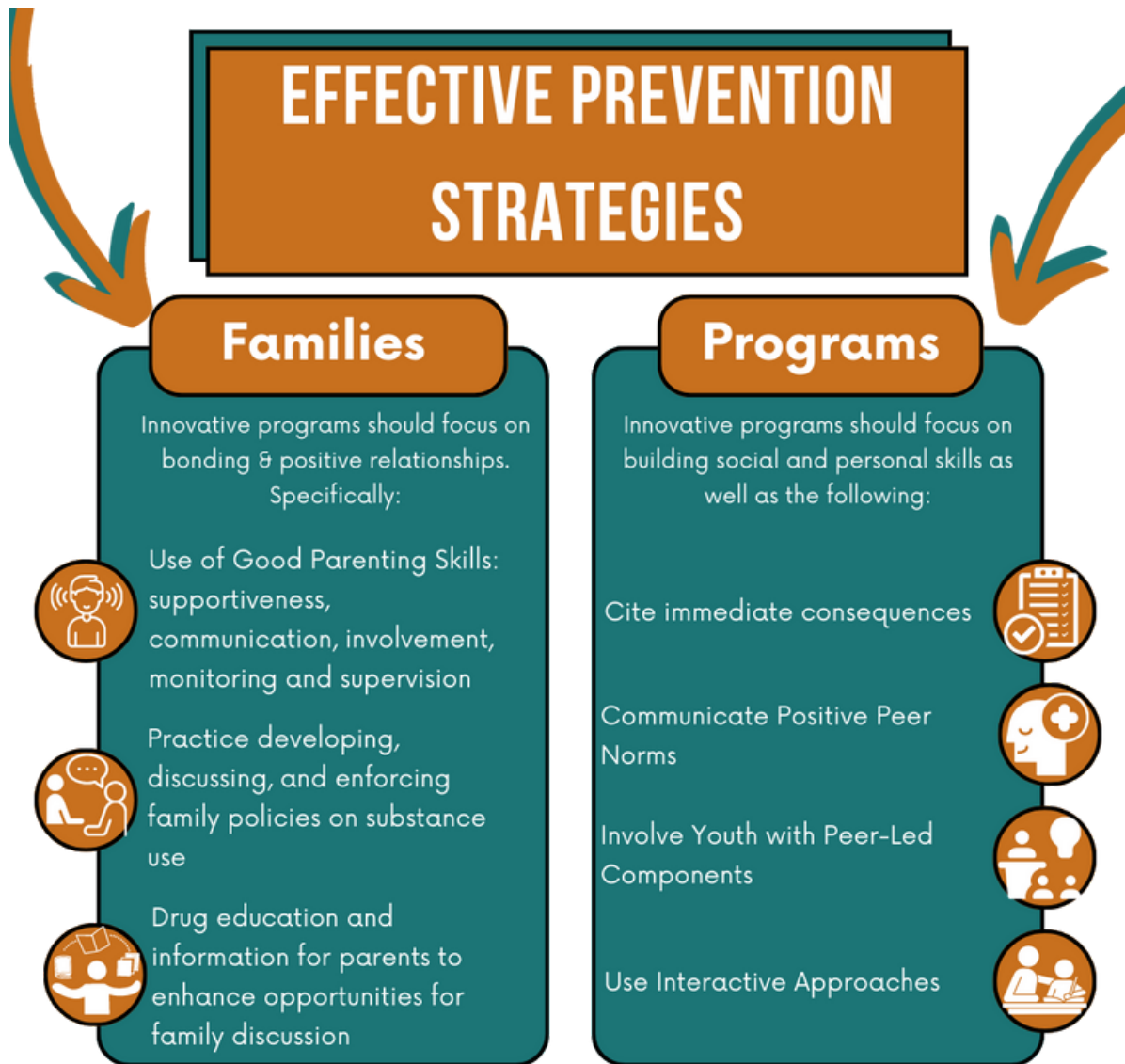


Source: Healthy Missoula Youth Coalition 2023

\*If a school is looking to update curriculum, it is recommended that administration read the Toolkit's section "Evidence-Based Programs," which will assist the school in finding funding and choosing the appropriate program.

These strategies have been confirmed by research to positively impact health behaviors. Some of these skill-building interventions may include information about the negative effects of substance use, but effective programs should not only be age appropriate but should also incorporate a positive cultural framework. This framework presents information in a way that emphasizes the cultural norm that most youth do not use substances and do choose healthy activities. Many of these Effective Prevention Strategies are incorporated into Evidence-Based Programs for families or schools. See the following graphic that contains information on best practices within Evidence-Based Programs.

# EFFECTIVE PREVENTION STRATEGIES



Source: Healthy Missoula Youth Coalition 2023

Take a close look at the prevention interventions being used in schools used within the Missoula community. Are these effective prevention strategies being used? Though often conducted with pure intentions, some ineffective strategies may still be in use. Check out the following summary of common prevention tactics that should be avoided.



# INEFFECTIVE PREVENTION STRATEGIES

Some of the strategies highlighted in this section may seem like a good idea on the surface. However, research has actually shown these to be ineffective. Working in prevention and conducting ethical and effective interventions can be challenging as a result of battling these misconceptions. As a rule of thumb when working with youth, remember that resources are best used to teach positive, healthy behavior, rather than trying to stop dangerous behavior through manipulation or strategies that contradict research.



Interventions that “focus on healthy alternatives to use; enhance connections to, and bonding with, prosocial adults, peers and organizations; use structured interactive approaches that include skill practice; and focus on normative education that portrays true use rates and corrects misperceptions” are best practices<sup>4</sup>.

# BEST PRACTICES IN PREVENTION

## Conclusion

The field of prevention is a science that is constantly evolving. As societal norms and communities change over time, prevention must grow with it. In order to have effective prevention, schools should use best-practice interventions. Use programs that build positive relationships, social competency, self-regulation skills, and communicate positive peer norms.

## Action Items

- **STOP** using ineffective prevention interventions - they may be doing more harm than good.
- **QUESTION** your administration: Does your school use an evidence-based program for substance use or suicide prevention?
- **READ** the "Evidence Based Programs" section of the Toolkit.

## ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

- [International Standards on Drug Use Prevention](#)
- [Preventing Child and Adolescent Problem Behavior: Evidence-based Strategies in Schools, Families, and Communities](#)
- [Promoting Positive Adolescent Health Behaviors and Outcomes](#)
- [What Works in Prevention - Washington DPHHS](#)

1: [Israelashvili & Romano, 2017](#)

2: [Jenson & Bender, 2014](#)

3: [National Academies of Science, Engineering, & Medicine, 2020](#)

4: [Washington State Department of Social and Health Services, 2022](#)

5: [CDCP & Nation et al., 2003](#)





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# SCHOOL POLICIES

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# SCHOOL POLICIES

## Purpose of the Section

- Create a basis of knowledge for prevention best practices in terms of school policies
- Provide In-School Suspension resources
- Recommend policy signage

## What Educators Can Do

- Positively enforce ATOD policies
- Decrease truancy rates
- Increase awareness of campus policy

## Why is this important?

Effective school policies work with students to educate and make positive behavioral changes. This increases commitment to school and lessens the likelihood of recidivism.

Choosing a single policy is likely to have a limited public health impact, if any, unless implemented with fidelity. If the policy is written, but not enforced or part of a comprehensive plan, it will be significantly less effective. Pair school ATOD-free policies with other practices that will create a positive impact on the school environment, such as expanded hours for gymnasium, library or other settings for after school ATOD-free activities.<sup>6</sup>

# SCHOOL POLICIES

## School Policies

The tiered approach to policy enforcement & discipline.

## School Policy Guides & Examples

A variety of student handbooks, policy guides, and code of conduct examples.

## In-School Suspension Programs

Alternative to suspension programs that are easily accessed and/or free for schools to utilize.

## School Policy Signs

Examples of school policy signage throughout Missoula County.

## INTRODUCTION

As an educator, you have the opportunity to play a powerful role in the prevention of underage drinking and drug use among your students<sup>1</sup>. One method of preventing, and perhaps decreasing, substance use in schools is establishing an effective alcohol, tobacco, and other drug (ATOD) policy. The goal of this policy should not be to severely punish the students or 'get them in trouble,' but rather focus on changing student behavior. Effective school policies work with students to educate them about the dangers of ATODs as well as provide them with tools to help overcome their own substance use.

# SCHOOL POLICIES

It is crucial that your school has clear expectations for each violation. Some policies can be ambiguous, stating that consequences can be assigned by administrators (and in severe cases, this is necessary). However, if the goal is to change student behavior, then consistency within the policy is necessary to ensure that each student receives the same education and interventions.

Recently, many schools have shifted their policies to include multi-tiered approaches in discipline in which the first two tiers are focused on education and rehabilitation. For example, if a student is caught vaping for the first time, the first tier is focused on behavior change intervention and education. The first tier can include interventions such as: a meeting with the student, their principal, a school counselor, and the student's parents to discuss a behavior change plan; enforcing a three-visit policy with a school counselor or Licensed Addiction Counselor (LAC); one day of in-school suspension (ISS) that provides the student with online training and education about substance use (this includes quizzes, tests, and an essay); remove special privileges (i.e. if students are allowed to leave during lunch, this student loses their privilege to do so); and discuss utilizing the Youth Diversion Program at Providence in cases where the student has a diagnosed substance use disorder.

## EXAMPLES OF MULTI-TIERED APPROACHES

- [Columbia Falls High School: Parent-Student Handbook](#)
- [Winston-Salem/Forsyth County Schools - AR 5131 Code of Student Conduct: Disciplinary Measures](#)

# SCHOOL POLICIES

The Maine Center for Disease Control and Prevention created a School Substance Use Policy Guide that outlines each step in establishing an effective school policy. "This guide is based on current research and best practice strategies to prevent and address substance use among young people."<sup>2</sup> The Healthy Missoula Youth Coalition **highly recommends** using this document as a guide when the school reviews and/or revises substance use policies: [School Substance Use Policy Development Guide](#)

Schools should also consider reviewing and updating extracurricular and co-curricular activity policies on alcohol, tobacco, and other drugs. Participating in extracurricular activities and sports is a privilege, and students must be held accountable when caught using substances. As mentioned, a multi-tiered approach that aligns with each violation may be beneficial. In addition to having a period of time in which the student is ineligible to participate (20 pupil instruction days or 10 pupil instruction days if self-reported, for example), coaches and administrators should work with the student to also provide them with education and behavior change strategies, such as meeting with an LAC or school counselor. During their time of ineligibility, students should still report to practice, but coaches must ensure that the student is not participating.

## EXAMPLES OF POLICIES

- [Billings School District 2 - Policy 2325: Student Drug and Chemical Use](#)
- [Winston-Salem/Forsyth County Schools - School Policy: Student Behavior - Alcohol & Drugs \(highly recommend\)](#)

# SCHOOL POLICIES

What about drug testing?

Due to the increase in substance use among athletes in some schools, schools in Montana and across the nation are implementing a drug testing policy for extracurricular and co-curricular activities. Drug testing students in sports and co-curricular activities is used as a deterrent to prevent students from using substances. Additionally, the use of ATODs may affect a student's cognitive function, coordination, and physical performance which increases the risks of injuries to themselves or others<sup>3</sup>. Again, the aim of this policy is to prevent substance use, injuries, and provide assistance to students who are using a substance regularly. To learn more about drug testing policies, visit the following school's drug testing policies:

## EXAMPLES OF POLICIES

- [Roundup School District: Extracurricular Activities Drug-Testing Program](#)
- [Forsyth Public Schools \(MT\): Extra-curricular Activity Drug/Alcohol Testing Policy](#)



# IN-SCHOOL SUSPENSION

In-School Suspension (ISS), also known as Alternative-To-Suspension (ATS), is a better option for students than an after-school detention, out of school suspension, or expulsion because it keeps youth involved in the educational process. Research has shown that students who are suspended out of school are more likely to fall behind academically, drop out, or become involved with the juvenile justice system<sup>4</sup>. However, in order to be an effective alternative, there needs to be a support system in place for the students who participate. Daniel Losen, director of the Center for Civil Rights Remedies at UCLA's Civil Rights Project, says that "The goal should be to get to the root of the problem and get kids back in class as soon as possible. What's counterproductive is if kids are sent to sit in a room with someone who's just there to babysit and they're not getting any support."<sup>5</sup>

The change of a school's policy to incorporate in-school suspension programs addresses this issue. Implementing an ISS program that specifically targets the risky behavior that caused the infraction in the first place helps mitigate the risk of recidivism and maintains an educationally oriented approach. There are many programs that address substance use infractions in particular, as seen in the following graphic.

## QUICK LINKS TO THE PROGRAMS REFERENCED

- [INDEPTH: An Alternative to Teen Nicotine Suspension or Citation](#)
- [Catch My Breath - Vape Education - Tobacco Youth Prevention](#)
- [Online Marijuana Curriculum: Johnny's Ambassadors \(johnnysambassadors.org\)](#)
- [Marijuana Education Initiative Toolkit: eLearning 20 - MEI \(marijuana-education.com\)](#)
- [Our Healthy Futures | Tobacco Prevention Toolkit | Stanford Medicine](#)
- [MY Healthy Future Course | Tobacco Prevention Toolkit | Stanford Medicine](#)
- [Remote-Learning Curriculum | Cannabis Awareness and Prevention Toolkit | Stanford Medicine](#)

# ATS & ISS PROGRAMS

## INDEPTH

Instead of solely focusing on punitive measures, INDEPTH is an interactive program that teaches students about nicotine dependence, establishing healthy alternatives and how to kick the unhealthy addiction. This is an in-person course that would require an instructor to go through an hour-long training in order to become a facilitator.



American Lung Association

## CATCH My Breath

A youth nicotine vaping prevention program for grades 5-12 that has been proven to reduce students' likelihood of vaping. This has four 35-minute lessons for each grade group. Includes a lesson plan with learner outcomes, detailed directions, and all materials including corresponding PowerPoint presentations. This course can be conducted asynchronously online.



CATCH  
COORDINATED APPROACH TO CHILD HEALTH

## Johnny's Ambassadors

Targeted to middle and early high school students (with a parallel track for parents and concerned adults), the program works to prevent marijuana use, and reduce the gap between the perceived and actual harm of marijuana use. This is an online asynchronous course made up of 8 modules, that last 60-90 minutes total.



## Marijuana Education Initiative

A collection of 45-minute learning modules for kids, parents, coaches, and educators who want to be informed regarding youth marijuana use. MEI's eLearning opportunities offer engaging and interactive certificated online courses that are self-paced and self-directed with quizzes throughout the lesson to assess for understanding.



## OUR Healthy Futures

As part of the Stanford Tobacco Prevention Toolkit, this in-person course is taught using principles of motivational interviewing to encourage cessation and educate about the harms of use. **MY Healthy Future** is the online version, which also contains content on how marginalized folks are targeted by tobacco and vaping companies.



## Stanford Cannabis Toolkit

The Stanford Cannabis Prevention Toolkit features a Remote-Learning Curriculum that can be taught over Zoom as a class or as a self-paced course. The Self-Paced version has student worksheets and a pre and post survey you can access



# SCHOOL POLICY SIGNS

While it is good to have a solid structure for school policies, this is less effective if these policies are not well known or reinforced throughout the school grounds. Posting signage throughout the campus will increase awareness of the policies, and serve as a consistent reinforcement for students and visitors. The purpose of these signs is to remind students and the surrounding adults of the community that youth are not meant to partake in substance use and substance use is not permitted on school grounds, even by adults.

This method of prevention is considered an environmental approach, and is aimed at influencing community conditions and standards that shape behaviors. Prevention best practice in this instance would be to have signs that list the expectations for students and visitors while on campus - list what they should do, rather than what they should not do. Create signs that are designed to have the greatest impact on this specific community by using the school logo and school colors, with the intent to embrace the significance of positive school attachment, a known protective factor. Similar wording should be utilized on all signage to send a cohesive message as well. An example of what this may look like for a main entrance sign is shown below:

## **WELCOME TO CLINTON**

## **SCHOOL DISTRICT #32**

**AS YOU ARE VISITING, PLEASE KEEP IN  
MIND THIS CAMPUS IS**

- ALCOHOL FREE**
- WEAPON FREE**
- DRUG FREE**
- TOBACCO FREE**
- MARIJUANA FREE**
- SMOKE FREE WITHIN 25 FEET OF CAMPUS**



Missoula County Ordinance 3604 restricts smoking tobacco and marijuana within 25 feet of doorways, vents, and other openings.  
Montana State Law 20-1-220 prohibits use of tobacco or vapor products in public school building or on public school property. This includes school playgrounds, school steps, and parking lots.  
Drug Free Schools & Campuses Act 1989 prevents the unlawful possession, use or distribution of illicit drugs and alcohol by students and employees.  
US Federal Law 18 U.S.C. 922 prohibits any person from purposely and knowingly carrying a firearm in a school zone.



# SCHOOL POLICY SIGNS

These policy compliance signs will be distributed throughout the school grounds to bring greater awareness to the safe and healthy school policies in place, and serve as a reminder that youth are not meant to partake in substance use. Use strategic placement in areas of the school that will reach the greatest audience, and target specific areas where substance use occurs:

## **Main Entrance Signs**

This sign should be placed at the main gates of the building, where buses and parents drop off and pick up students. This placement will impact students as they come in the morning and again as they depart for the day. A large size will ensure that students, staff, parents, and visitors to the school will all see it upon arrival. This main gate is also the entrance for visitors, so the detail on it is meant to be a welcoming, but firm reminder that school policies do not just apply to the students attending the school during school hours. This is crucial in the event that a school also hosts after-hours activities and events, such as PTSA meetings, sports events, and graduation ceremonies.

## **WELCOME TO CLINTON SCHOOL DISTRICT #32**

**AS YOU ARE VISITING, PLEASE KEEP IN**

**MIND THIS CAMPUS IS**

**ALCOHOL FREE**

**WEAPON FREE**

**DRUG FREE**

**TOBACCO FREE**

**MARIJUANA FREE**

**SMOKE FREE WITHIN 25 FEET OF CAMPUS**



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# SCHOOL POLICY SIGNS

## **Playground Perimeter Signs**

These signs will be placed intermittently on the perimeter fence of the playground. If the playground is available during after-school activities or to the public for use after school hours, it is important to address the policies for those who do not have access to the school handbook or are unaware of the rules on school grounds. The specific details regarding the laws ensure that visitors know that these policies are enforced on a county, state, and federal level as well, and are not only intended for the students of the district.

## **Safe & Healthy School Policies**

**ALCOHOL FREE**

**WEAPON FREE**

**DRUG FREE**

**TOBACCO FREE**

**MARIJUANA FREE**

**SMOKE FREE WITHIN 25 FEET OF  
CAMPUS**



**Missoula County Ordinance 3604** restricts smoking tobacco and marijuana within 25 feet of doorways, vents, and other openings.

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**US Federal Law 18 U.S.C. 922** prohibits any person from purposely and knowingly carrying a firearm in a school zone.

# SCHOOL POLICY SIGNS



## **Entry Door Signs**

These entryway signs are designed to go on the inside of the door window, facing the exterior of the building. They are intended for placement on the side entrances to the building, so that staff, students, and recurring visitors with access will continuously see the message, even when not using the main building entrance. For example, when the staff and students come back inside from recess, this message will be posted on the door they use to re-enter the building.

# SCHOOL POLICY SIGNS

\*\*Prevention funding can help support the implementation or purchase of policy signs. Contact the Healthy Missoula Youth Coalition for more information at: [info@healthymissoulayouth.org](mailto:info@healthymissoulayouth.org)



**ALCOHOL FREE  
SMOKE FREE  
DRUG FREE  
WEAPON FREE**

\*This includes tobacco, vapor, and marijuana products

**THIS IS A  
ALCOHOL  
DRUG  
TOBACCO  
MARIJUANA  
FREE CAMPUS**



## Student Bathroom Stalls/Mirrors

They will be strategically placed in the school bathrooms so that students will have a continuous reminder, even when adults are not present. This specifically targets an area where there is a greater risk of youth substance use.

# SCHOOL POLICIES

## Conclusion

Effective alcohol, tobacco, and other drug (ATOD) policies focus on education, changing student behavior, and providing access to resources. Tiered discipline systems that utilize in-school suspension or alternative to suspension programs are highly recommended by the Healthy Missoula Youth Coalition. Raise awareness of these policies for both students and staff alike.

## Action Items

- **READ** your school's current policies in the student handbook.
- **THINK** about whether these policies are being enforced.
- **ASSESS** whether these policies are effective.
- **TALK** to administration to gauge capacity and/or need for change.

## ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

Below are free online resources for substance use education:

- [Steered Straight Inc. Learning Center](#)
  - The Steered Straight Learning Center provides three free courses for students: 1) Straight Talk, 2) Vaping Me Crazy, 3) Fentanyl: Fake & Fatal.
- [Johnny's Ambassadors: Online Marijuana Curriculum - Marijuana Suspension Alternative Program](#)
  - Must submit a request form (scroll to the bottom of the page). There are two trainings available: one for teens and one for parents. Be sure to select "Teen Version" when submitting your request form. If parents want a resource, they can also request access to the training.

1: [SAMHSA](#)

2: [Maine Center for Disease Control and Prevention, 2019](#)

3: [Office of Justice Programs, 1998](#)

4: [American Civil Liberties Union: Washington](#)

5: [Jones, 2019](#)

6: [NCDHHS, 2014](#)







**Healthy Missoula Youth**  
Coalition

# MEDIA & OUTREACH

+1 (406) 258-3023



[www.healthymissoulayouth.org](http://www.healthymissoulayouth.org)



[info@healthymissoulayouth.org](mailto:info@healthymissoulayouth.org)



# MEDIA & OUTREACH

## Purpose of the Section

- Guide the development of custom prevention campaigns
- Provide tips to make campaigns more effective for students
- Recommend the use of existing media campaigns

## What Educators Can Do

- Create a campaign that resonates with their students
- Engage youth in the development of a prevention campaign
- Increase awareness of health behaviors

## Why is this important?

Prevention campaigns aim to encourage health behavior change among the general population. They are designed to benefit and protect individual people's health and quality of life by addressing and preventing the root causes of ill health, not just focusing on treatment and cure.

## IMPORTANT DATES TO REMEMBER

Teen Dating Violence Awareness Month: February

Random Acts of Kindness Week: February 14-20

**National Drug and Alcohol Facts Week:** March 20-26

Alcohol Awareness Month: April

Mental Health Month: May

**National Prevention Week:** May 12-18

International Overdose Awareness Day Aug. 31

**National Suicide Prevention Week:** September 10-16

National Substance Abuse Prevention Month: October

**Red Ribbon Week:** October 23-31

Great American Smokeout: November 16

National Impaired Driving Prevention Month: December

# MEDIA & OUTREACH

## Developing Custom Prevention Campaigns

How to make custom prevention campaigns reach a wider audience and be more effective.

## Five Tips for Effective Media

The key concepts to producing a media campaign that will resonate with the community.

## Existing Prevention Media Campaigns

Pre-made and easily accessible prevention campaigns that lift the burden of development from schools.

## INTRODUCTION

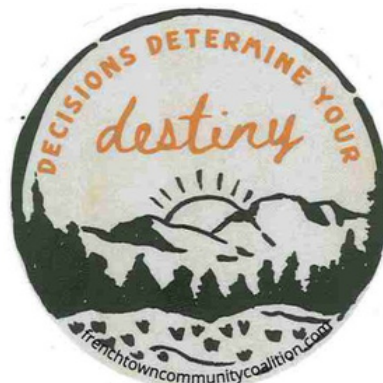
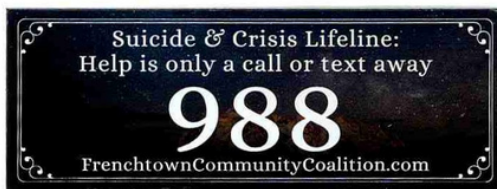
While policy compliance signs are good at spreading awareness of the rules in place, schools should also use supplementary resources to increase the likelihood of the policies being followed. Media and outreach campaigns can be one of the best ways to achieve this, by reaching a wide-spread audience and acting as prevention's voice in the school community. Whether this be utilizing a pre-existing campaign or designing one that is customized to best fit the school district, there are a few effective messaging tactics that are essential to incorporate when dealing with youth.

# DEVELOPING CUSTOM PREVENTION CAMPAIGNS

Regardless of the substance that prevention campaigns address, all will incorporate a few key strategies that result in a greater impact. The most effective campaigns communicate through a multi-sensory approach, which means that providing the opportunity for youth to engage and interact with some aspect of the campaign is crucial as well. According to the Frameworks Institute, one of the leading researchers on messaging around many public health issues including underage substance use, these interactive portions of the campaign should not only spread awareness of policies regarding substance use and healthy behavioral norms, but should also strive to:

- Advocate to build widespread support for protective factors
- Break down barriers and pre-existing assumptions
- Steer the conversation around obstacles to increase understanding of the science of prevention.

This could be accomplished by a call to action, but it could also be something that is done within the school as part of a school assembly, or as an in-class activity or group discussion. For example, the Frenchtown Community Coalition's youth committee has developed their own sticker shock campaign. Youth within the committee designed and produced several prevention-oriented stickers that could be given to other students and school staff within their district. Not only did this get youth involved in the campaign, but it also served as advertising of the message of prevention.



# FIVE TIPS FOR EFFECTIVE MEDIA

Following these five tips for media and outreach campaigns will produce the greatest impact on the audience, as well as following prevention best-practice.



## FIVE TIPS FOR Effective Media

Source: Healthy Missoula Youth Coalition 2023

# FIVE TIPS FOR EFFECTIVE MEDIA

## VISUAL BRANDING

As the old adage goes, “A picture is worth a thousand words.” But choosing the right picture or image to include can be challenging. When choosing the images associated with the campaign, as well as design, logo, and campaign name, it is best to consider what will resonate the most with the audience.

Be thoughtful with design choices, presenting imagery, colors, fonts, and style to enhance the message, and be mindful of using language with racial equity awareness. This can be particularly crucial when presenting data. Steer away from using photographs of people or youth who live in the community – circumstances may change in the future and someone who once was a representative for the campaign may no longer be appropriate. Instead, the use of graphics, like charts and diagrams, can be helpful in communicating data and may be more effective in communicating information to youth.

Remember that there should be a balance between the information and the “white space” on the page. This blank space is used around the sections of information and allows the page to breathe, which also helps the audience interpret information and lessens the likelihood of them becoming overwhelmed.

For more information on visual branding, check out the CDC’s [Visual Communication Resource](#) page, which provides information on choosing effective resources the audience will understand. The National Library of Medicine has compiled examples of health promotion and prevention campaigns throughout history, which can be seen [here](#).

# FIVE TIPS FOR EFFECTIVE MEDIA

## TELL COMPLETE STORIES

Advocates for prevention can improve the effectiveness of their media efforts by utilizing stories to frame the prevention message. It is important to note that this is different from people with life experience giving testimony, or campaigns that use moral appeals to evoke emotion in their audience, which do not work towards long-term or sustainable change. A complete story doesn't need to be long, but it will prevent the audience from creating their own negative or stereotyped ending.

When using stories to frame the message of prevention consider if the communication does the following<sup>1</sup>:

- Explains why adolescent substance use is a problem from a developmental perspective.
- Explicitly states why addressing the issue is important for all Americans, and what is at stake if action is not taken.
- Explains risk factors and protective factors.
- Describes the developmental effects of substance use and how those effects impact everyone, not just those immediately involved.
- Provides concrete and public solutions and explains how they result in improved outcomes for adolescents.

# FIVE TIPS FOR EFFECTIVE MEDIA

## POSITIVE CULTURAL FRAMEWORK

Utilizing a positive cultural framework when creating the messaging for a prevention campaign is crucial.

“Experts repeatedly emphasized the role of cultural context in promoting and preventing adolescent substance use. They argued that, in order to achieve meaningful reductions in adolescent substance use, cultural norms must shift so that substance use is no longer viewed as a “rite of passage” for all young people but instead as a health issue that requires early and sustained intervention [...]”<sup>2</sup>

Youth’s perception of the “norm” for their community greatly influences what actions they take. By promoting the message that most youth don’t use substances, prevention campaigns can begin to shift this ideology. Integrate phrases that promote a message of sustainable health and safety like:

- “\_\_\_% of teens in Missoula County don’t use marijuana.”
- “\_\_\_ out of 10 MCPS students choose to respect drinking laws by NOT consuming alcohol.”
- “Most Missoula teens won’t ride with an impaired driver.”
- “I know how to resist negative peer pressure.”



# FIVE TIPS FOR EFFECTIVE MEDIA

## INCLUDE A CALL TO ACTION

A call to action is a brief statement that encourages the audience to take a specific action. The inclusion of this in a prevention campaign is important because it asks youth to engage with the message and become involved. Not only does this interaction help spread the message, but it increases the likelihood of the audience remembering the content. Call to Action Statements may look different depending on the method of media dispersal.

### GENERAL EXAMPLES

- "Like and Share the Message"
- "Click or Call for More Information"
- "Contact the Healthy Missoula Youth Coalition to Join Today"
- "Talk to Your Family Today"

### WELL KNOWN EXAMPLES

- Drive Safe Missoula's: "Buckle Up Montana"
- US Forest Service's Smokey Bear Campaign: "Only You Can Prevent Wildfires"
- Netflix: "See What's Next"
- Allstate Insurance: "So, get Allstate. You can save money and be better protected from mayhem like me!"

# FIVE TIPS FOR EFFECTIVE MEDIA

## BE CREDIBLE

All messaging that relates to data, research, or facts should be supported by the appropriate citations and resources. Use data that relates to the school or community in which the audience participates. Specific information will increase the likelihood of audience buy-in and the use of trustworthy sources adds value and integrity to the campaign.

For more resources on effective messaging tactics and guidance on how to develop a customized campaign for your school, check out:

- [PTTC's Cannabis Conversations: A Toolkit](#)
- [PPTC Prevention Practitioners Guide to Social Media](#)
- [Reframing Adolescent Substance Use Playbook 2018](#)
- [FrameWorks Institute: Telling Stories that Explain](#)
- [Mapping the Gaps on Adolescent Substance Use](#)
- [Turning Down the Heat - New Frames for Adolescent Substance Use](#)

# EXISTING PREVENTION MEDIA CAMPAIGNS

While using a customized campaign for the school district may create more buy-in and produce better results, there are also some well developed pre-existing campaigns that can help ease the burden on schools to send a message. The majority of these ready-to-use campaigns are available free for schools to use as well. A variety of campaign examples are:

- HIDTA's [Mind the Message](#) campaign
- SAMHSA's [Talk. They Hear You](#) campaign against underage drinking
- SAMHSA's [Mental Health Awareness Month](#) campaign
- PG Creative's "[No Joke](#)" alcohol, tobacco, and marijuana prevention campaign for teens
- [Natural High](#) substance use prevention campaign for adolescents and athletes
- [Red Ribbon's Drug Prevention Campaign](#)
- World Health Organization's [World No Tobacco Day](#).

# MEDIA & OUTREACH

## Conclusion

Utilizing a prevention media campaign in school is one quick and easy way to reach a broad level of students. There are existing campaigns available for schools to utilize, but involving students in the creation of a custom campaign may be more effective in creating a message that will resonate stronger with youth.

## Action Items

- **PLAN** campaigns well in advance of the highlighted event or time period. Be aware of important dates or national prevention weeks.
- **INVOLVE** your administration and student voices.
- **CONTACT** the Healthy Missoula Youth Coalition for assistance or recommendations.

## ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

- [HIDTA's Mind the Message campaign](#)
- [SAMHSA's Talk. They Hear You campaign against underage drinking](#)
- [SAMHSA's Mental Health Awareness Month campaign](#)

1: [O'Niel et al., 2016](#)  
2: [Volmert et al., 2016](#)





**Healthy Missoula Youth**  
Coalition

# TEACHER RESOURCES

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# TEACHER RESOURCES

## Purpose of the Section

- Provide a variety of credible lesson plans for substance use prevention
- Generate ideas for brief prevention activities to use in the classroom
- Recommend conversation guidelines

## What Educators Can Do

- Use pre-made lesson plans about substance
- Educate youth about substance use with brief activities throughout the day
- Initiate conversations in a respectful and culturally competent way

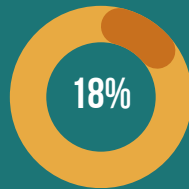
## Why is this important?

Continuous small conversations about substance use are more effective than only hosting one long lesson.

The resources in this section will not only save planning time, but are also continuously updated with new research.



of teachers listed "Lack of Time" as the biggest barrier to implementing substance use prevention strategies in their school.<sup>7</sup>



of teachers listed "Lack of Updated Curriculum" as the biggest barrier to implementing substance use prevention strategies in their school.<sup>7</sup>

# TEACHER RESOURCES

## Classroom Lesson Plans

A variety of pre-made credible lesson plans for health classes and coaches, and a series of mini lessons that can supplement the current curriculum.

## Prevention Activities

Brief activities that will engage students in learning about substance use.

## How to Initiate Conversations & What to Avoid

Guidelines for discussions about substance use that avoid stigmatizing language.

## INTRODUCTION

As an educator, you have the opportunity to play a powerful role in the prevention of underage drinking and drug use among your students. While using an Evidence-Based Program is certainly best practice in prevention work, the time and financial commitment to these programs can sometimes be challenging. When possible, the Healthy Missoula Youth Coalition **strongly recommends** using an evidence-based program before turning to other prevention interventions in the classroom. However, if acquiring these programs for the school isn't possible at the time, there are other options and resources available to help supplement and support a curriculum that is already in place.

# CLASSROOM LESSON PLANS

These lesson plans for health classes are intended to be conducted in their entirety and are not designed to have individual lessons pulled from the curriculum. It is important to utilize the full set of lessons in each curriculum, so that it remains educational and teaches youth how to identify when they may be at risk, rather than lapsing into scare tactics.

## Lesson Plans for Health Classes



### Marijuana Education Initiative

MEI's wide range of curricula is designed to empower educators, coaches and youth service providers to be the expert in youth marijuana education and to deliver effective and impactful lessons leading to an increase youth's awareness and perception of risk around marijuana use at a young age. All classroom-based curricula can be taught remotely using Zoom or Google Hangout screen share options.



### You & Me Together Vape Free

This curriculum includes a middle and high school program that are 6 lessons, approximately 50 minutes each. It also includes a two-lesson elementary school version, approximately 50 minutes each. Every lesson provides activities, online quiz games, and worksheets in addition to presentations, resources, and other materials aimed at addressing key factors associated with youth e-cigarette use, including changing adolescents' attitudes towards and misperceptions about e-cigarettes; increasing their refusal skills to pulls of flavors, marketing, and social media; reducing stress and depression which have been linked to e-cigarette initiation and use; improving coping; and decreasing intentions and actual use of all e-cigarette products.



### Smart Talk Cannabis Curriculum

The Smart Talk: Cannabis Prevention & Awareness Curriculum includes 5 lessons, each providing activities, online quiz games, and worksheets in addition to presentations, resources, and other materials aimed at addressing key factors associated with youth cannabis use, including changing adolescents' attitudes towards and misperceptions about cannabis; increasing their refusal skills to pulls of marketing and social media; reducing stress and depression which have been linked to cannabis initiation and use; improving coping skills; and decreasing intentions and actual use of all cannabis products. The curriculum includes a middle school program; a high school & elementary school version of the curriculum is forthcoming.

## QUICK LINKS

- [Marijuana Education Initiative Curriculum - MEI \(marijuana-education.com\)](https://marijuana-education.com)
- [You and Me, Together Vape-Free Curriculum | Tobacco Prevention Toolkit | Stanford Medicine](#)
- [Smart Talk Curriculum | Cannabis Awareness and Prevention Toolkit | Stanford Medicine](#)



# MINI LESSON PLANS

Though one-time assemblies and one-day lesson plans are not considered best practice, these resources can provide a starting point for education on substances that aren't as well known. When using these mini lesson plans educators should present this substance specific information in tandem with another unit on substance use. The remainder of this unit could discuss advertising messages from a substance industry that target youth or address community influences through a Pay Close Attention activity. The idea of a Pay Close Attention activity is to have students watch their favorite show or listen to a favorite song and record the number of references to alcohol or drugs they find. Conduct a classroom discussion on how they think this could potentially impact one's thinking.

These lessons could also include discussions on how to deal with peer pressure, healthy decision-making processes, and alternatives to use. A youth-led project such as the creation of a sticker shock campaign for the school or a Dear Future-Self activity, wherein the students write letters to their future selves about their goals and discuss how drug and alcohol abuse could interfere with the realization of those aspirations, will help students to understand how drugs could harm their chances of a successful future.

# MINI LESSON PLANS

## Mini Lesson Plans



### Marijuana Education Initiative - Youth & Vaping

Providing a wide range of information around vaping, this lesson is about 45 minutes and covers Big Tobacco's promotion of e-cigarette use, the dangerous and addictive chemicals found in vaping devices and the health and educational impacts of vaping.



### Marijuana Education Initiative - Marijuana Mini-Lesson

This dynamic 45-minute lesson covers marijuana's impact on the developing brain and body as well as incorporates information on THC and CBD and concludes with a review of the laws around recreational and medicinal cannabis use as it pertains to youth. This lesson is appropriate for middle and high school aged students and can easily be dropped into a life skills, health or science class.



### Stanford Tobacco Prevention Toolkit - Smokeless Tobacco 101 Curriculum

1 lesson providing activities, online quiz games, worksheets and discussion guides. The material is aimed at addressing key factors associated with smokeless tobacco. Understand the risks and learn about the history of smokeless tobacco use.



### Stanford Tobacco Prevention Toolkit - Hookah 101 Curriculum

1 lesson providing activities, online quiz games, worksheets and discussion guides. The material is aimed at addressing key factors associated with hookah use. Understand the risks and learn about parts of a waterpipe.

## QUICK LINKS

- [Youth and Vaping - MEI \(marijuana-education.com\)](https://marijuana-education.com)
- [Marijuana Mini Lesson - MEI \(marijuana-education.com\)](https://marijuana-education.com)
- [Smokeless | Tobacco Prevention Toolkit | Stanford Medicine](https://stanfordmedicine.org)
- [Hookah | Tobacco Prevention Toolkit | Stanford Medicine](https://stanfordmedicine.org)

# LESSON PLANS FOR ATHLETES

Teachers aren't the only ones that can educate about substance use though - coaches and athletic trainers also have a responsibility to help guide students on their health journey.

These lesson plans are ones that have elements that have been specifically designed to impact young athletes or youth in a Physical Education class. Educating these youth about substance use is particularly important now, as the National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA) has recently been reevaluating which substances, primarily marijuana, are included on the banned list for student athlete use. While this is still in the process of evaluation during the summer of 2023, it sends a message that youth use of this substance is acceptable and not harmful, which science has shown is not the case. Marijuana is particularly dangerous for youth and their still-developing brains.

While sports have often been touted as one of the healthiest alternatives to substance use, student athletes are still at risk. "Athletic life may lead to drug abuse for a number of reasons, including for performance enhancement, to self-treat otherwise untreated mental illness, and to deal with stressors, such as pressure to perform, injuries, physical pain, and retirement from sport"<sup>1</sup>. Prioritize the health and safety of student athletes by initiating preventative measures through education at an early age.

# LESSON PLANS FOR ATHLETES

## Lesson Plans for Athletes



### Marijuana Education Initiative - Athlete Awareness

Developed at the request of coaches, this curriculum is designed for middle- and high-school students to increase athletes' awareness of how marijuana use affects their athletic performance, mental capacity and stock as an athlete. The lesson can be completed in approximately 45 minutes, and is intended to be facilitated in an academic or youth services setting by a coach or instructor who has been trained by an MEI facilitator.



### Resilient Movements Lessons

This Physical Education/Health curriculum guide is for middle school students to grow strength & resilience through purposeful movement and healthy relationships with peers & adults. Deliver this power pack of 10 lessons in a PE/Health class in a school or use them in a youth fitness program outside of school. The lessons integrate Brightways Learning's research-based Full-Color Webs of Support™ framework, using purposeful movement practices to instill those key concepts while strengthening fitness. Crafted for middle school students, these lessons can easily be used as-is or adapted for high school students or sports-specific athletes.



### Natural High

Natural High is a drug abuse prevention nonprofit with the mission to inspire and empower youth to find their natural "high" and develop the skills and courage to live life well. They provide free, research informed curriculum for 4th-12th graders. This is an online video-based prevention, drug education, and life skills teaching program with a flexible curriculum. Each lesson in the activity library contains videos, discussion questions, and drug education worksheets that can be used to meet a variety of needs, from brief 10-15-minute discussions to project-based work that takes place across multiple days or class periods. All activities are aligned to Common Core Standards and The National Health Education Standards and are written directly to a student audience.

## QUICK LINKS

- [Marijuana Education Initiative - Athlete Awareness - MEI \(marijuana-education.com\)](http://marijuana-education.com)
- [Resilient Movements Lessons — Brightways Learning](#)
- [Natural High - Activities Library](#)

# PREVENTION ACTIVITIES

There is a wide variety of ways to make lessons about substance use interactive and engaging for students. Check out the following ideas on how to incorporate brief prevention-oriented activities in the classroom throughout the day.

## PAY CLOSE ATTENTION

This activity takes a look at subtle advertising techniques that substance use industries utilize, and the subliminal messaging included in the media youth are exposed to. The idea of a Pay Close Attention activity is to have students watch their favorite show or listen to a popular song and record the number of references to alcohol or drugs they find. Conduct a classroom discussion on how they think this could potentially impact one's thinking.

The Dear Future-Self activity is one that encourages youth to think about their future and how the choices they make now could have an impact 10 years down the line. In this activity, students write letters to their future selves about their goals as part of a time capsule project. Tell students to include a brief description of who they are now and what their main interests are. Once students are done writing, help moderate a discussion on how drug and alcohol misuse could interfere with the realization of those aspirations. This will help students understand how drugs could harm their chances of a successful future. Conclude this discussion with the option for students to make a written commitment to not use illicit substances and enclose that in their time capsule as well.

## DEAR FUTURE SELF



# PREVENTION ACTIVITIES

## STICKER SHOCK



A youth-led project such as the creation of a Sticker Shock campaign is designed to support and encourage community activism and deter people from engaging in unhealthy risk behaviors like underage drinking. This activity encourages team-building and cooperative skills, while also providing an artistic outlet and provoking conversation about societal issues. Teachers designate several groups in the classroom and have each group choose a separate theme (ex: underage drinking, suicide prevention, mental health, etc). Each group will then research and design their own sticker, which could then be printed and hung throughout the school or community. An example from the Frenchtown Community Coalition is shown on the left. For more guidance on how to enact this project check out the [Sticker Shock Handbook](#), or contact the Healthy Missoula Youth Coalition at [info@healthymissoulayouth.org](mailto:info@healthymissoulayouth.org) for recommendations and funding.

Create an Information Scavenger Hunt in your classroom. The idea behind this activity is to pick 8-10 substances that are important for students to know the effects of, and have them instigate the learning themselves. Create QR codes with a link to educational sites like the [DEA Drug Use and Misuse](#) website. Students will research each drug and its effects as they find the codes. The first group to find all the codes and record the information wins. Alternatively, assign each group one substance to research and have them create a presentation on what they learned. The DEA created a [website](#) that can be used for this activity.

## INFORMATION SCAVENGER HUNT

# PREVENTION ACTIVITIES

## THROW & KNOW

This activity utilizes a beach ball that is covered with information from a variety of health topics. Using the Throw & Know activity balls is easy and allows facilitators to modify play to accommodate group size and the specific needs of their players. Two or more players simply toss one of the balls to each other. Players who catch the ball answer the question underneath or closest to their right thumb. There are seven different inflatable activity balls to choose from, each of which comes with its own detailed activity guide and answer key.

- Drugs and Alcohol Throw & Know Activity Ball (item #78036)
- Tobacco and E-Cigarettes Throw & Know Activity Ball (item #78828)
- Nutrition Throw & Know Activity Ball (item #78806)
- Kids Nutrition Throw & Know Activity Ball (item #78807)
- Boys Puberty Throw & Know Activity Ball (item #78833)
- Girls Puberty Throw & Know Activity Ball (item #78834)
- Social and Emotional Health Throw & Know Activity Ball (item #78008)



# HOW TO INITIATE CONVERSATIONS & WHAT TO AVOID

The younger an individual starts using substances, the more likely they are to develop a substance use disorder, so “starting at age 8, talking often and consistently about your clear rules and expectations about no alcohol use until after 21 is critical. It’s not a one time “big talk”; it’s frequent conversations”<sup>2</sup>. This same idea applies to all substances.

These conversations about substance use should begin early, which may seem like a daunting task due to the young age. However, when giving the idea a little more thought, most can see that it isn’t out of the question. Youth are being exposed to substances at younger and younger ages due to its prevalence in social media, television, and the news. Taking into consideration the fact that youth are exposed through these modalities as well as through peers, family members, and the community, it isn’t difficult to see that youth know more than what adults may initially think. Add to that fact with the information that 43.8% of youth in Missoula County (grades 8, 10, and 12) say they have someone in their family that has had a severe alcohol or drug problem, and there is a very clear answer: These conversations need to happen<sup>3</sup>.



# HOW TO INITIATE CONVERSATIONS & WHAT TO AVOID

Adults have a big influence in how youth learn and perceive the world around them. Modeling healthy behaviors and promoting a positive message for youth can set them up for success later in life. There are a variety of ways this can be done to help prepare adolescents with information, coping strategies, and responsible decision-making skills. But how exactly does this work?

Prevention has come a long way in its evolution, and what is considered best practice now is vastly different from what had been done in the past. For example, scare tactics, used fairly consistently from the 1930s to early 2000s, have largely been proven ineffective. The message of fear and the dramatization of the negative effects of substance use through mock car crashes, or the appeal to one's morals from survivor and recovery stories, does not have a long-lasting effect. In fact, research has shown that the use of this appeal to fear can create a sense of mistrust and a tendency to tune the information out completely<sup>4</sup>. "This one-sided, negative kind of teaching, which runs contrary to the experience of a majority of older social drinkers, substantially reduces the believability of all our teaching"<sup>5</sup>.

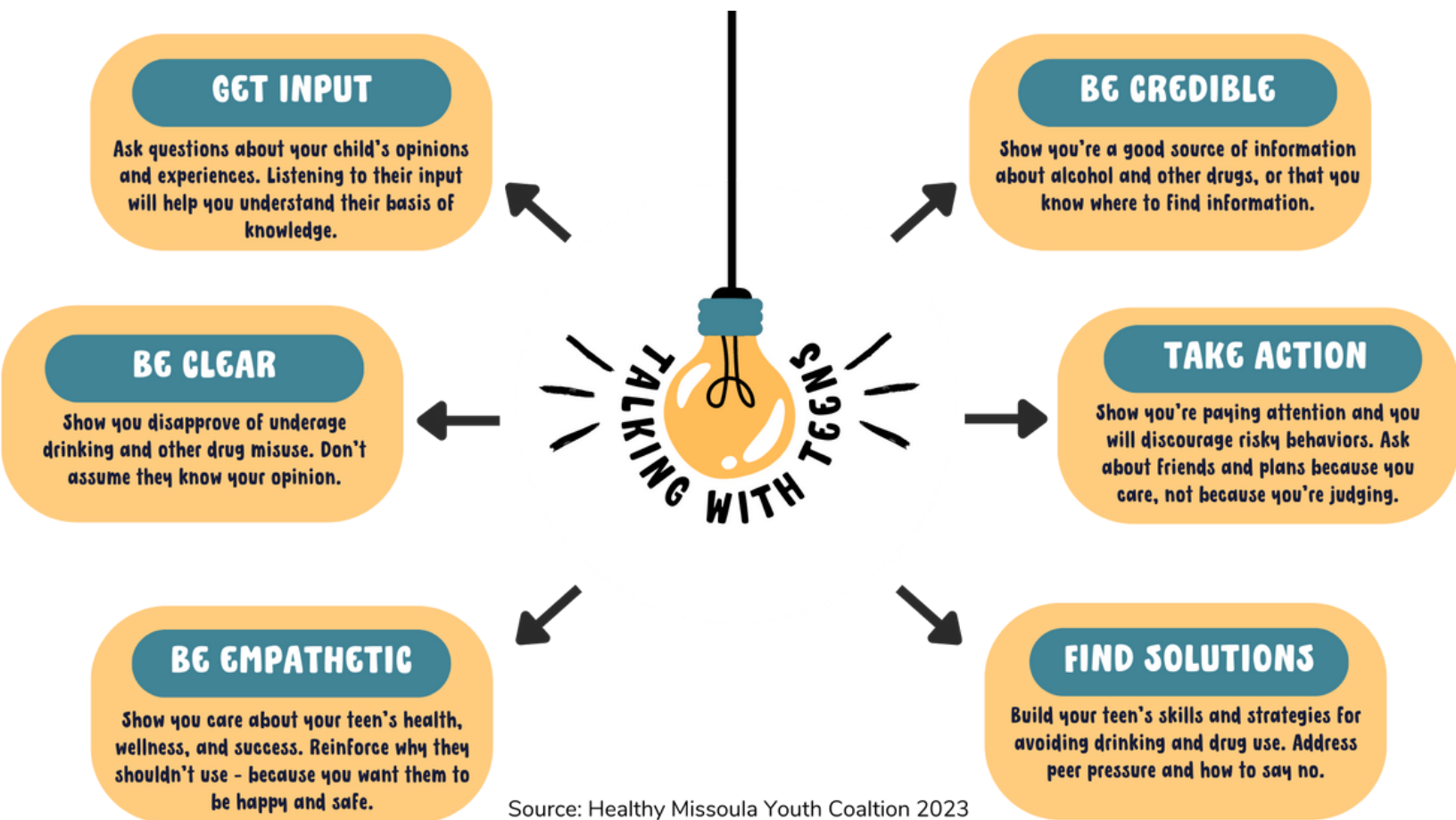
Much has been learned since the days prevention used themes like "Reefer Madness" or the "D.A.R.E." program. Prevention has evolved and specialists now know proper terminology, how to take ethical concerns into consideration, and how to utilize a call to action when talking about substances with youth. For more information on this evolution, check out the section titled "What Does and Doesn't Work in Prevention." This following section highlights some of the biggest conversational "Do's" and "Don'ts" when it comes to talking with youth about substance use.

# DO: TALK TO YOUTH ABOUT SUBSTANCES

When having these conversations it is important to keep in mind these 6 Talking with Teens Tips:

- **Get Input** from students before beginning the conversation. An easy way to initiate this is to start by mentioning something you know they may have seen in a movie or tv show, or have heard about in current events, and ask them about it to gauge their opinion.
- **Be Clear** about your own opinions on youth use. Remember that they may have questions about whether you have used drugs before - be honest with them, but make it clear that now you know why something was the healthy/unhealthy choice.
- **Be Empathetic** if they disagree with you, and try not to cast blame or shame them. Express the reason why you feel this way and always bring it back to your care for their health and wellbeing.
- **Be Credible** when talking about drugs, use resources like the CDC or SAMHSA to educate yourself and students. The Center for Public Health Practice out of Colorado has developed an [online cannabis education seminar](#) for adults to educate themselves.
- **Take Action** by establishing rules, and show that you pay attention to their choices.
- **Find Solutions** by offering to continue the conversation with them, or offering help/practice in how to say no.

# DO: TALK TO YOUTH ABOUT SUBSTANCES



For more information and specific examples of scenarios where these conversations may be successful, take a look at [How to Talk to Your Kids About Drugs - Partnership to End Addiction](#).

# DON'T: USE STIGMATIZING LANGUAGE

People perceive their environments in different ways based on their life experiences. The brain naturally tries to seek patterns, so as this exposure increases, the human brain tends to make associations and generalizations based on the information it receives. This can lead to what is known as **implicit bias**, the unconscious association, belief, or attitude toward any social group. While this is natural and unintentional, there are certain steps that can be taken to decrease the likelihood of this turning into active stereotyping and prejudice.

When talking about substances, keep in mind that you may not know everything others have seen or experienced. Approach the conversation with an open mind and use an objective lens when thinking about how you would have appreciated the conversation to go if you were in their shoes. Person-first language and allowing an open space for youth to speak will create a greater opening for the conversation to continue in the future. When a child feels judged or condemned, they may be less receptive to the message and less willing to seek help or support when they need it.

# DON'T: USE STIGMATIZING LANGUAGE

## LANGUAGE MATTERS: TERMS TO USE OR AVOID

### USE

**Open Body Language:** Uncrossed legs, relaxed posture, eye contact, and orienting the body to face the person you speak with



**Open-Ended Questions & Prompts:** acknowledges youth's perspective & opinions (ex: "What do you think about vaping?")



**Person-First Language:** focus on people as a whole, not their individual actions (ex: person with a substance use disorder)



**Positive & Uplifting Statements:** highlight healthy choices a person is already making, rather than only focusing on the unhealthy



### AVOID

**Closed Body Language:** Finger pointing, crossed arms or hands in pockets, clenched jaw or tensed muscles, excessive fidgeting

**Closed Statements & Questions:** prompt one-word answers and isolate or reject another's opinion. Can be seen as accusatory

**Negative Labels & Stereotypes:** create a sense of blame and decrease hope for change (ex: addict, junkie, habitual user)

**Isolating Verbiage:** statements like "You did \_\_\_\_" cast blame and shame, without acknowledging any positive efforts or actions

Source: Healthy Missoula Youth Coalition 2023

For examples of person-first language, check out Shatterproof's video: [Words Matter](#). For more resources on what language to use, visit the National Institute on Drug Abuse: [Preferred Language for Talking About Addiction](#) and [Terms to Use and Avoid When Talking About Addiction](#).



# DO: SET CLEAR RULES ABOUT SUBSTANCE USE

This is a resource that can be shared with parents when classes enter a unit on substance use.

When talking with youth about substance use, it is important to help them set healthy boundaries while still allowing for independence and freedom for individual growth. As the most important influence in a child's life, be sure to set some clear rules and boundaries about substances. Be as understanding as possible, while remaining firm on the guidelines in place. Talk with your child about the negative impacts of drug use, and explain the "why" aspect. This will help grow their own investment in following the rules, rather than the age-old justification of "I said so." Knowing what the laws are can help provide a starting point

for discussion, and including values for family health and safety can increase that safety net. Be sure to model that healthy and positive behavior around them whenever possible, but be honest if you are asked if you yourself have ever broken the rule and explain why you wouldn't make that choice again.

Knowing what the laws are can help provide a starting point for discussion.

Have a "codeword" with an escape plan.

Plan ways for youth to manage peer pressure situations. Practice conversations and refusal training.

## SET CLEAR RULES ABOUT SUBSTANCES

Teach them to only accept a beverage when they know exactly what is in it.

Tell an adult where you are going, and let the same adult know when you arrived.

Establish a curfew or guidelines for activities if an adult is not present.

Help your children avoid dangerous situations such as riding in a car driven by someone who was drinking.

For more specific examples and conversational scenarios, check out: [Prevention Tips for Every Age - Partnership to End Addiction.](#)

Source: Healthy Missoula Youth Coalition 2023

# DO: USE EVIDENCE-BASED CURRICULUM

Evidence-Based Programs are specific techniques and intervention models that have been scientifically shown to have positive effects on outcomes through rigorous evaluations. These are grounded in research and are strongly based on the principles and theories of child development.

“There are many strategies confirmed by research that are shown to positively impact the health behaviors and choices of young people. These research-validated strategies are known as evidence-based programs and have been proven effective over time using the most rigorous evaluation methods. Although proven to work in numerous settings and with diverse populations, even the best designed programs can be rendered ineffective if communities add or subtract from their scope and sequence. Evidence-based strategies depend on your commitment to implementing them with fidelity to the intended design of the program.” - Washington State Department of Social and Health Services, 2022

There are a multitude of resources available that host dashboards of evidence-based programs, which have been vetted and sufficiently researched. These programs are marked as effective, innovative, or promising, depending on the level of supporting data.

- **The Montana Department of Health and Human Services (MT DPHHS)** hosts an [Evidence Based Program Dashboard](#) which has links directly to curriculum sites that have already been screened by the State of Montana.
- **The Montana Department of Health and Human Services (MT DPHHS)** hosts a [Substance Abuse Prevention Guide for Montana Tribal Communities](#) which specifically features culturally-informed programs to reduce substance misuse and promote mental health in American Indian Populations.
- **The U.S. Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA)** maintains a listing of evidence-based programs on the [National Registry of Evidence-based Programs and Practices](#).
- **The University of Colorado at Boulder** maintains the [Blueprints for Healthy Youth Development](#) registry of evidence-based programs.

# TEACHER RESOURCES

## Conclusion

There are many different ways classrooms can incorporate prevention. Lesson plans, short activities, or serving as a moderator in a classroom discussion can all serve as protective factors. These conversations can take place in more than just health classes - for example: English classes could teach media literacy about substance use advertisements.<sup>6</sup> More conversations will increase the likelihood of youth choosing health behaviors.

## Action Items

- **REVIEW** current lesson plans and gauge the need or capacity to add more prevention.
- **ENCOURAGE** your students to be engaged by using appropriate language, scenarios and examples that they can easily understand or relate to.
- **READ** the "Evidence Based Programs" section of the Toolkit.

## ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

- [How to Talk to Kids About Drugs](#)
- [Sticker Shock Handbook](#)
- [Middle School & High School Media Literacy Curriculum](#)

1: [Reardon & Creado, 2014](#)

2: [ParentingMontana.org](#)

3: [Missoula County Prevention Needs Assessment, 2022](#)

4: [Hastings & Stead, 2004](#)

5: [Gordon & McAlister, 1982](#)

6: [Kupersmidt JB, Scull TM, Austin EW., 2010](#)

7: 2022 Healthy Missoula Youth School Survey







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# EVIDENCE-BASED PROGRAMS

+1 (406) 258-3023



[www.healthymissoulayouth.org](http://www.healthymissoulayouth.org)



[info@healthymissoulayouth.org](mailto:info@healthymissoulayouth.org)



# EVIDENCE-BASED PROGRAMS

## Purpose of the Section

- Explain the benefits of evidence-based programs
- Provide access to funding resources for evidence-based programs
- Address early intervention programs

## What Educators Can Do

- Use evidence-based programs to decrease risk factors
- Influence student health behaviors
- Decrease truancy rates

## Why is this important?

Effective school curriculum through the use of evidence-based programs have an impact on student results that is substantially higher than typical strategies!

Underage substance use, delinquency, school-drop out, depression and anxiety, violence, and teen pregnancy are only a portion of the risk factors that evidence-based programs can address.

# EVIDENCE-BASED PROGRAMS

## Evidence-Based Programs

Why evidence-based programs are more effective and how schools can find funding support for them.

## Evidence-Based Interventions for Youth Aged 0-10

Examples of evidence-based programs for elementary school.

## Evidence-Based Interventions for Youth Aged 10-18

Examples of evidence-based programs for middle school and high school students.

## Early Intervention Programs

Early intervention programs, school resources, and signs of substance use.

## WHAT IS AN EVIDENCE BASED PROGRAM?

Evidence-based practices (EBPs) refer to the specific instructional programs and practices supported as effective by credible research. The curriculum focuses on specific behaviors such as suicide prevention, delinquency, substance use prevention, depression, anxiety, school drop-out, etc. These have been rigorously tested and proven effective in:

- positively effecting the health of participants
- decreasing risk factors
- increasing sustainability
- reducing the variability of education students receive.

# EVIDENCE-BASED PROGRAMS

Within Missoula County, there are several evidence-based programs already being implemented, such as the PAX Good Behavior Game, Character Strong, Love and Logic, Project Success, Project Northland, and Youth Aware of Mental Health (YAM). The wonderful thing about evidence-based programs such as these, is that they address more than one risk factor. Underage substance use, delinquency, school-drop out, depression and anxiety, violence, and teen pregnancy are only a portion of the risk factors that evidence-based programs like this can address.

As such, because these are largely approved by the state, there are many opportunities for schools to seek additional funding to help provide these programs. Prevention Specialists who work under the Substance Abuse Prevention Block Grant, Partnership for Success Grant, or Communities That Care Grant have the potential to partner with schools in helping to fund state-approved programs. The Missoula City-County Health Department, in partnership with the Healthy Missoula Youth Coalition, will be able to connect schools to the appropriate resources.

There are also organizations that host grant applications to provide schools with additional funding, or will provide the curriculum free of cost:

- The **Montana Tobacco Use Prevention Program**, in partnership with the Office of Public Instruction, offers a grant for Utilizing Restorative Discipline Practices. Information, instructions, and application can be found here: <https://opi.mt.gov/Families-Students/Family-Student-Support/Tobacco-Use-Prevention/Tobacco-Use-Prevention-Grant>
- The **American Lung Association** offers a variety of grants based on the year and season, all of which are updated regularly and can be found here on their website: <https://www.lung.org/research/awards-and-grants-opportunities>

# EVIDENCE-BASED INTERVENTIONS FOR YOUTH AGED 0-10

To highlight a few of these evidence based programs, an excerpt from the Surgeon General's Prevention Programs and Policies Handbook is included below<sup>2</sup>.

## THE GOOD BEHAVIOR GAME & CLASSROOM CENTERED INTERVENTION

One universal elementary school-based prevention program has shown long-term preventive effects on substance use among a high-risk subgroup, males with high levels of aggression. The Good Behavior Game is a classroom behavior management program that rewards children for acting appropriately during instructional times through a team-based award system. Implemented by Grade 1 and 2 teachers, this program significantly lowered rates of alcohol, other substance use, and substance use disorders when the children reached the ages of 19 to 21. The Classroom-Centered Intervention, which combined the Good Behavior Game with additional models of teacher instruction, also reduced rates of cocaine and heroin use in middle and high school, but it had no preventive effects on alcohol or marijuana initiation.

# EVIDENCE-BASED INTERVENTIONS FOR YOUTH AGED 0-10

## RAISING HEALTHY CHILDREN

A number of multicomponent, universal, elementary school programs involving both schools and parents are effective in preventing substance misuse. One example is the Raising Healthy Children program (also known as Seattle Social Development Project) which targets Grades 1 through 6 and combines social and emotional learning, classroom instruction and management training for teachers, and training for parents conducted by school-home coordinators, who work with the children in school and the parents at home, focusing on in-home problem solving and similar workshops. Studies of this program showed reductions in heavy drinking at age 18 (6 years after the intervention) and in rates of alcohol and marijuana use.

## THE FAST TRACK PROGRAM

Two multicomponent selective and universal prevention programs were effective. An example is the Fast Track Program, an intensive 10-year intervention that was implemented in four United States locations for children with high rates of aggression in Grade 1. The program includes universal and selective components to improve social competence at school, early reading tutoring, and home visits as well as parenting support groups through Grade 10. Follow-up at age 25 showed that individuals who received the intervention as adolescents decreased alcohol and other substance misuse, with the exception of marijuana use.

# EVIDENCE-BASED INTERVENTIONS FOR YOUTH AGED 10-18

A variety of universal interventions focused on youth aged 10 to 18 have been shown to affect either the initiation or escalation of substance use. In general, school-based programs share a focus on building social, emotional, cognitive, and substance refusal skills and provide children accurate information on rates and amounts of peer substance use.

## LIFE SKILLS TRAINING

One well-researched and widely used program is LifeSkills Training, a school-based program delivered over 3 years. Research has shown that this training delayed early use of alcohol, tobacco, and other substances and reduced rates of use of all substances up to 5 years after the intervention ended.

## KEEPIN' IT REAL

A multicultural model, keepin'it REAL, uses student-developed videos and narratives and has shown positive effects on substance use among Mexican American youth in the Southwestern United States.

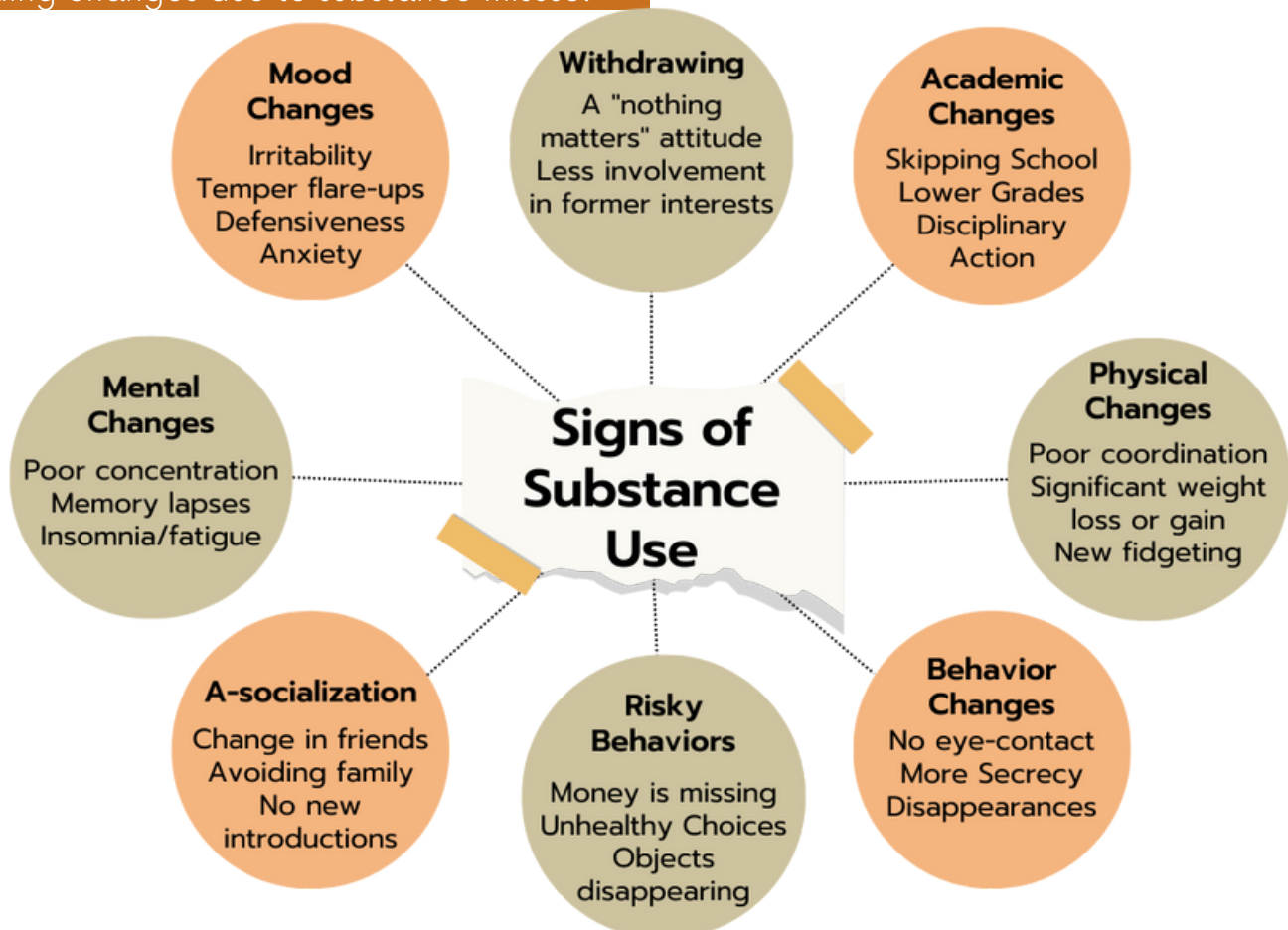
## PROJECT TOWARDS NO DRUG ABUSE

Another example is Project Toward No Drug Abuse, which focuses on youth who are at high risk for drug use and violence. It is designed for youth who are attending alternative high schools but can be delivered in traditional high schools as well. The twelve 40-minute interactive sessions have shown positive effects on alcohol and drug misuse.

# EARLY INTERVENTION PROGRAMS

While most Montana youth are abstaining from substance use there is risk of developing a substance use disorder to those youth who do engage in substance use. Early intervention is key to help increase the chance of deterring the often detrimental consequences of substance abuse into adulthood and protecting the health of the youth. Due to the number of hours school staff are engaged with students they are often able to notice changes in their students, including changes due to substance misuse.

Many youths may show behaviors in adolescence that are suggestive of substance misuse, but they also can be considered normal behaviors for adolescents. It is important to recognize if there are several of these behaviors happening at the same time, if there is a sudden onset of the behaviors, and if the behaviors are extreme. The following behaviors in a youth might signal drug or alcohol abuse<sup>3</sup>.



Source: Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education 2023



# EARLY INTERVENTION PROGRAMS

As an educator, there are a variety of school-based supports available in Missoula for staff, students, and families that can begin to address these concerns around student substance misuse:

- **Project Success:** A confidential and free resource for students located in Missoula area high schools. The program is designed to provide school-based services to inform, assist and support high school students and their families. Project SUCCESS offers substance use prevention education, outreach, referrals, individual/group counseling, and support to students living in a home where substances are used.
- **School Resource Officers (SRO):** Help navigate, educate, and enforce the legal consequences of underage substance use.
- **Student Support Services** (School Counselors, School Social Workers, School Psychologists, CSCT): Have knowledge of referrals, resources, and can act as a family liaison.
- **School Nurse:** Can assess any medical concerns and make referrals for further services if needed.
- **Practitioners** can use substance screeners, such as CRAFFT and SBIRT, to assess the level of risk and suggested course of treatment needed.

# EARLY INTERVENTION PROGRAMS

**If a parent expresses concerns about substance misuse in their child, these resources may help:**

The Missoula City-County Health Department has the "You Matter" Mental Health and Substance Use Resource Guide that is available for parents and educators. This guide presents a wide variety of resources local to Missoula that address tertiary interventions (emergency needs) and secondary interventions for more intermediary care.



SAMHSA's National Helpline, 1-800-662-HELP (4357) (also known as the Treatment Referral Routing Service), or TTY: 1-800-487-4889 is a confidential, free, 24-hour-a-day, 365-day-a-year, information service, in English and Spanish, for individuals and family members facing mental and/or substance use disorders. This service provides referrals to local treatment facilities, support groups, and community-based organizations.

For a wider reach, parents can look at [FindTreatment.gov](http://FindTreatment.gov), a tool designed to locate treatment to address substance misuse across the nation.

# EVIDENCE-BASED PROGRAMS

## Conclusion

The use of evidence-based programs in schools have been shown to positively affect the health of students, decrease risk factors, increase sustainability, and reduce the variability of education students receive. Additional funding resources exist to support making this transition.

## Action Items

- **QUESTION** your administration: Does your school use an evidence-based program for substance use or suicide prevention?
- **DISCUSS** different options for evidence-based programs.
- **ASSESS** whether or not switching curriculum would be beneficial.

## ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

- [DPHHS Evidence Based Program Dashboard](#)
- [Blueprints for Healthy Youth Development Dashboard](#)
- [Signs of Drug Use in Teens](#)
- [How to Spot Drug Use in Adolescents](#)

1: [Dr. Kiser, 2021](#)

2: [U.S. Department of Health & Human Services, 2016](#)

3: [Graham, 2023](#)





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# PARENT RESOURCES

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# PARENT RESOURCES

## Purpose of the Section

- Provide basic resources for teachers to give to parents if asked for assistance

## What Educators Can Do

- Become aware of local, easily accessible resources for parents
- Reference these resources at parent-teacher conferences or when asked for assistance
- Host resources in the Family Resource Center at schools

## Why is this important?

Parents may not know about resources, and as someone who has lots of interaction with youth educators may be able to provide assistance in locating them.

**YOUTH OF PARENTS WHO TALK TO THEIR KIDS ABOUT THE DANGERS OF SUBSTANCES EARLY AND OFTEN ARE 50% LESS LIKELY TO USE DRUGS THAN THOSE WHO DO NOT RECEIVE THESE CRITICAL MESSAGES AT HOME.<sup>1</sup>**

# PARENT RESOURCES

## ParentingMontana.org

An online resource that offers tools to parents and those in a parenting role to help them raise healthy, successful children.

## Parent Programs

Information on how/why parent involvement is important and beneficial, as well as examples of local programs.

## Refusal Training

Local and national resources for refusal training, for both students, parents, and staff.

### **Parents Have a Significant Influence in Their Children's Decisions to Experiment With Alcohol and Other Drugs**

One of the most influential factors during a child's adolescence is maintaining a strong, open relationship with a parent.<sup>2</sup> When parents talk with their children early and often about alcohol and other drugs, they can protect their children from many of the high-risk behaviors associated with using these drugs.



ParentingMontana.org is an online resource that offers tools to Montana parents and those in a parenting role to help them raise healthy, successful children. The tools grow social and emotional skills by addressing common parenting challenges like confidence, chores, routines, and homework.

We know that each person develops physically, mentally, socially, and emotionally throughout their life, and that supporting healthy development is important. ParentingMontana.org recognizes that sometimes we don't pay enough attention to growing social and emotional skills.

Stress management, self-motivation, communication, teamwork, problem-solving, and ethical responsibility are social and emotional skills. Social and emotional skills are essential for people's success in school, work, and relationships. These skills are associated with better behavior, lower emotional stress, and positive wellbeing.

ParentingMontana.org emphasizes that parents and those in a parenting role have a significant influence on their children and can create environments to help their children develop social and emotional skills in everyday life. ParentingMontana.org provides ways for parents and those in a parenting role to teach and practice the skills with their children.

In Montana, we have many things to be proud of, and it's the best place to live and raise a family. ParentingMontana.org provides parenting tools to build the skills our kids need to be successful.

For more information on social and emotional development, visit "I Want to Know More" on ParentingMontana.org. This section is an excellent resource for parents who would also like to learn about intentional ways to grow a healthy parenting relationship, healthy risk taking, discipline for skill building, logical consequences, why teens shouldn't drink alcohol, what to do if your child is drinking, and other valuable information.

The tools were created by the Montana Department of Public Health and Human Services in partnership with Montana State University's Center for Health and Safety Culture.

# PARENT PROGRAMS

The Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration reports that strong, open relationships with parents are one of the most influential factors in preventing substance use during adolescence<sup>3</sup>. Youth make better decisions when their parents or guardians provide nurturing and supportive environments<sup>3</sup>. Young people who have open and frequent conversations with their parents about the dangers of alcohol and drugs and receive clear rules, expectations, and consequences from their parents about substance use are 50% less likely to use alcohol or drugs compared to youth who do not receive this instruction at home<sup>4</sup>.

"A majority of substance-free adolescents credit their parents for their decision not to use illegal substances. Even if you're not a parent, you can still play a significant role in a youth's life. Grandparents, aunts, uncles, older siblings, mentors, volunteers, teachers, and coaches can all help guide youth toward healthy choices at every stage of life. Caring adults can take action by having frequent conversations with the youth in their lives about the dangers of substance use. Let youth know YOU are a resource<sup>4</sup>."

There is a myriad of misinformation all around us, and youth might not know or understand the dangers of substance use. It is imperative that parents learn about these dangers and convey their concerns and expectations to their child(ren). Though it may not seem like it, youth DO listen!

## LOCAL RESOURCES

[Missoula Dads](#)  
[Zero to Five Missoula](#)  
[406 Families](#)  
[Bright by Text](#)

[Missoula Healthy Families](#)  
[Healthy Start Missoula](#)  
[The Parenting Place](#)



# PARENT PROGRAMS

The home or family environment is the single most profound influence on every aspect of child development. The family nurtures and keeps children safe. Parents instill social and emotional regulatory skills, and teach children the importance of sharing and the skills and opportunities to engage in reciprocal relationships. They generally reinforce accepted norms, values, and prosocial behaviors. Parents and family serve a vital role through adolescence guiding and supporting their children as they become more autonomous and have more opportunities to engage in risky behaviors.<sup>5</sup>

## PROGRAM HIGHLIGHT

**Positive Indian Parenting** (PIP) classes are 8-10 weeks in length and teach effective communication and discipline techniques for raising healthy children by drawing on the strengths of traditional Indigenous child-rearing practices. These classes empower parents to raise children with respect, empathy, and discipline through a culturally-centered curriculum including storytelling, cradleboard making, harmony teachings, lessons of nature, traditional behavior management, and the use of praise. These classes also address the impact of intergenerational trauma and help Indigenous families reclaim their right to their heritage to be positive parents. For more information and to find local PIP classes, please reach out to the National Indian Child Welfare Association (NICWA) at (503) 222-4044 or [info@nicwa.org](mailto:info@nicwa.org)



All Nations Health Center also has resources to help Indigenous parents find resources as they navigate parenthood.

# REFUSAL TRAINING

Refusal Training is an easy and effective way to teach youth how to say no while under pressure. While refusal training is generally focused on refusing alcohol, tobacco, and other drugs (ATOD), it can also be utilized to teach students how to say no in any uncomfortable situation. Additionally, though adults can facilitate the training, refusal training is most effective when it's taught by students' peers. This provides a more comfortable space for students. For example, in the Frenchtown School District, the Youth Leadership Committee facilitates Refusal Training. Before diving into the training, they play a game with the class, present the Line of Addiction, then present the four steps of refusal skills: Refuse, Explain, Avoid, and Leave. After presenting this information, the Youth Leadership Committee students will split students up into groups to practice their refusal skills in two scenarios.

## REFUSE

Teach students to say "no" and be firm and confident while doing so. Remind them of reasons to say no: ask them what their dreams and aspirations are and how substance use could impact them.

## EXPLAIN

Provide students with examples of explanations - they can be honest or made up: "We have school tomorrow, I need to be sober," "I can't vape because my parents drug test me," "My cousin had a bad reaction to dabbing," or "I don't want to get in trouble."

## AVOID

Avoid situations that are hotspots for ATOD-use, including parties or bonfires. Talk with students about situations where ATOD may be present.

## LEAVE

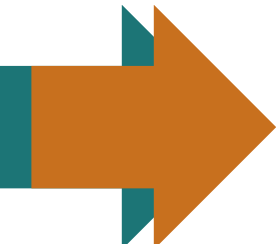
If students attend a party or social gathering where ATODs are present, they need to leave immediately to avoid peer pressure, injury, or legal consequences.

# REFUSAL TRAINING

## ESTABLISH A CODEWORD

If the student has a car, then leaving may be simple. For younger students, or those who do not have a car or license yet, this may become an uncomfortable situation. Therefore, it is important to teach students to establish a **CODEWORD** with their parent(s) or guardian(s).

A **CODEWORD** is any word or phrase between the student and their parent/guardian that indicates "I'm uncomfortable and need you to come get me." An example of a CODEWORD is "pink pajamas." If a student is in an uncomfortable situation, they can text or call their parent/guardian stating, "I need you to bring my pink pajamas." The parent/guardian then knows they need to get their child immediately, no questions asked until the child is picked up.



If you have any specific questions or would like training on how to start a peer-led refusal training program, please contact Reagan Mecham at: [ReaganMecham@ftbroncs.org](mailto:ReaganMecham@ftbroncs.org)

## ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

- [What Are Drug Refusal Skills?](#)
- [Health and Opioid Prevention Education \(HOPE\) - 8th Grade Refusal Skills Lesson](#)
- [Building Youth Resistance Strategies and Skills](#)
- [Stanford Medicine: Refusal Skills Activities](#)

# PARENT RESOURCES

## Conclusion

As the #1 influence in their child's life, it is crucial that parents are educated about substances and discuss it frequently with their kids. However, parents may not know where to look for these resources or support. As an educator you have the opportunity to point them in the right direction, or provide guidance and recommendations as to what resources are available.

## Action Items

- **CHECK** if your school has a list of recommendations regarding substance use in the Family Resource Center or counselor's office.
- **QUESTION** your administration: Does your school have partnerships with mental health facilities like Western Montana Mental Health Center or Partnership Health Center?

## ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

- [Why You Should Talk With Your Child About Alcohol and Other Drugs](#)
- [ParentingMontana.org](#)
- [A Parents Role in Substance Use Prevention: Tips for Talking to Youth of All Ages](#)
- [Help teens say no to drug and alcohol with these 10 practical refusal strategies](#)

1: [NCADD, 2015](#)  
2: [SAMHSA](#)

3: [SAMHSA, 2022](#)  
4: [Scott et al, 2019](#)

5: [HealtheKnowledge](#)





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# AFTER SCHOOL ACTIVITIES

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# AFTER SCHOOL ACTIVITIES

## Purpose of the Section

- Explain the benefits of after school programs
- Review several after school programs available in Missoula
- Review several youth serving organizations available in Missoula

## What Educators Can Do

- Encourage youth to become involved in after school programs
- Raise awareness of the benefits these programs have when speaking with parents
- Become involved in after school programs with youth

## Why is this important?

After school programs provide a wide variety of benefits for youth, such as leadership skills and teamwork.

**“YOUNG PEOPLE ARE NOT JUST THE LEADERS OF TOMORROW  
— THEY HAVE A GREAT UNTAPPED POTENTIAL FOR  
RESPONSIBLE LEADERSHIP TODAY.”**

**- BRENTRO, BROKENLEG AND VAN BROCKERN, 1990**

# AFTER SCHOOL ACTIVITIES

## Benefits of After School Programs

Why after school programs are beneficial for youth and how it can impact lifelong outcomes.

## After School Programs Offered in Missoula

A brief overview of programs offered in Missoula.

## Youth Serving Organizations in Missoula

A variety of youth serving organizations in Missoula that are easily accessed and have known benefits and protective factors.

## INTRODUCTION

Prevention interventions can be implemented in a variety of situations, not just during school hours. It is crucial to address the time between 3pm and 6pm, as these are some of the unsupervised hours when youth are most likely to participate in risky behaviors<sup>1</sup>. The safe and semi-structured environment that afterschool programs provide for students allows for positive prosocial involvement, and helps to reduce the chances of students becoming involved in unhealthy risk taking. Not only does this give parents and guardians peace of mind as they are at work, but it plays a crucial role in the development and well-being of students.

# BENEFITS OF AFTER SCHOOL PROGRAMS

Many of these programs address positive youth development models, which incorporate the six life domains of work, education, relationships, community, health, and creativity<sup>2</sup>. These programs offer a range of benefits that can have a positive impact on students' academic and personal growth. They serve a wide variety of purposes, ranging from homework support to teaching students skills outside of their academic repertoire. This can help students further develop their social-emotional skills, build relationships, and learn to collaborate with others<sup>3</sup>.

As social skills develop and youth become more involved with their after school community, these students are given the unique opportunity to develop leadership skills, decision-making abilities, and participate in group projects. Research has shown that these experiences push students to develop their self-esteem and confidence, preparing them for future success in both their academic and personal lives<sup>4</sup>.

After school programs provide students with additional educational opportunities, allowing them to find their spark and further their learning in a subject that has meaning to them. Not only do these programs give youth a safe and supportive space to learn, but many after school programs include physical activities, sports, and games, which can help students stay active and healthy. Many after school programs are designed to incorporate cultural aspects and emotional wellness, as well as diversity, equity, and inclusion, which helps students become well-rounded.

**After school programs are an essential part of students' development. They provide students with the opportunity to continue learning, stay safe and active, socialize, and grow as individuals.**



# AFTER SCHOOL PROGRAMS IN MISSOULA

**Disclaimer:** Missoula County has a plethora of youth serving organizations and after school programs. The 2020 Missoula County Prevention Needs Assessment showed that the two highest protective factor scores in the overall sample of students were reported as **Community Opportunities for Prosocial Involvement** and **School Opportunities for Prosocial Involvement**. As such, the following is not intended to be an all-inclusive list of programs offered in Missoula. It is only intended to provide several examples of the existing options for after school programs, and does not necessarily reflect an endorsement of the program by the Healthy Missoula Youth Coalition.

## Elementary

PROGRAM	FREE	FEE	TRANSPORTATION
CAMPFIRE WESTERN MT		YES	NO
DISCOVERY CORP CAMP		YES	YES
YMCA		YES	YES
MT TAEKWONDO ACADEMY		YES	YES

## Middle School

PROGRAM	FREE	FEE	TRANSPORTATION
ALL NATIONS - PROJECT VENTURE	YES		YES
MT TAEKWONDO ACADEMY		YES	YES
EMPOWERMT - EPIC	YES		NO
EMPOWERMT - BE YOU	YES		NO

# AFTER SCHOOL PROGRAMS IN MISSOULA

**Disclaimer:** Missoula County has a plethora of youth serving organizations and after school programs. The 2020 Missoula County Prevention Needs Assessment showed that the two highest protective factor scores in the overall sample of students were reported as **Community Opportunities for Prosocial Involvement** and **School Opportunities for Prosocial Involvement**. As such, the following is not intended to be an all-inclusive list of programs offered in Missoula. It is only intended to provide several examples of the existing options for after school programs, and does not necessarily reflect an endorsement of the program by the Healthy Missoula Youth Coalition.

## High School

PROGRAM	FREE	FEE	TRANSPORTATION
ALL NATIONS NATIVE YOUTH COUNCIL	YES		YES
EMPOWERMT - YOUTH FORWARD	YES		NO

## ALL AGES

PROGRAM	FREE	FEE	TRANSPORTATION
BIG SKY BLACK BELT ACADEMY		YES	YES
BOYS & GIRLS CLUB		YES	YES
EMPOWERMT - ABY (BIPOC)	YES		NO
MSLA PARKS & REC		YES	NO

# YOUTH SERVING ORGANIZATIONS IN MISSOULA

## BOYS & GIRLS CLUB OF MISSOULA COUNTY

BGCM provides after school programs, full day programs on days school is out, and summer programming. At BGCM students are provided snacks, mentorship, high quality programming, and a safe place. At the Boys & Girls Club members learn about DEI, STEM, art, emotional wellness, healthy habits, and culture. Part of the programming also includes Power Hour which is a time carved out for students to receive academic support. The club is passionate about serving the Missoula Community.

Camp Fire is a Missoula based program that provides after school care in Missoula Elementary schools, Summer Day Camps and manages Camp Watanopa Rentals. Campfire after school care takes place on the school-site and provides snacks, games, crafts, and homework help.

## CAMP FIRE

## PARKS & REC

Kids in grades K-5 at participating Missoula Elementary schools will be outdoors and active year-round in an after school program. With a heavy emphasis on adventure recreation, Parks and Rec has programs afternoons and no-school days with students. They provide after school transportation, a healthy snack and active, outdoor fun. Programs are free at Lowell elementary and scholarships are available at other sites.

"The Y After School program provides healthy snacks, aerobic activity, and a variety of enriching activities including STEM, arts and crafts, and vocabulary. All Y After School programs are led by trained Y counselors and offer fun, safe, and supportive environments" and take place on-site at participating schools.

## MISSOULA YMCA

# MISSOULA PROGRAM

## HIGHLIGHT

### ALL NATIONS HEALTH CENTER

ANHC is committed to providing sustainable healthy lives for our Native people and the surrounding community through culturally based, holistic care. Included under the umbrella of All Nation's Behavioral Health department is Youth Prevention Services, which aim to develop and serve Missoula Native youth with culturally relevant, trauma-informed prevention services and opportunities. Youth Prevention Services and the Youth Center are located at 1515 S Russell Street.



### PROJECT VENTURE

Middle school youth are offered Project Venture which is an evidence-based outdoor recreation program that takes a strengths-based approach to guiding AI/AN youth on their journey to adulthood. The year-long model includes afterschool, weekend, and activities for school breaks. The program focuses on building youth strengths and connection to nature, culture, peers, and community via weekly 90-minute after school meetings along with a monthly outing. The monthly outing and summer trips allow the youth to apply the skill sets they learn in programming with outdoor activities like snowshoeing, cross-country skiing, hiking, and disk golfing. The school break events include day and multi-day outings that engage youth physically, mentally, socially, and emotionally.

# MISSOULA PROGRAM

## HIGHLIGHT

### ALL NATIONS HEALTH CENTER

For all programs youth are picked up after school in front of each school site via All Nations transportation and parents are asked to pick up youth after programming is finished.

High School youth are offered two separate after school programs/curriculum that complement one another:

### NATIVE YOUTH COUNCIL

The Native Youth Council (NYC) engages and empowers Missoula's Indigenous youth in their community-based goals. NYC's mission is to encourage AI/AN youth's self-determination through values related to Indigenous worldview, resilience, and community wellbeing. NYC members meet at the Youth Center once a month during the first week of the month for 90 minutes.

### YOUTH ENGAGED IN LEADERSHIP & LEARNING

Youth Engaged in Leadership and Learning (YELL) is a youth-led action research program that fosters youth leadership. Youth follow a curriculum that promotes leadership on a multifaceted approach: voice, participation, civic engagement, decision-making, and empowerment. Youth are encouraged to look at leadership in context and identify the steps they can take to create meaningful change. This curriculum includes research opportunities that will teach youth to assess the perceived barriers and facilitators to a healthy school environment and community. YELL meet at the Youth Center on the second, third, and fourth week of the month for 90 minutes.

# AFTER SCHOOL ACTIVITIES

## Conclusion

After school hours are a good opportunity to engage youth in positive activities. The safe and semi-structured environment that afterschool programs provide for students allows for positive prosocial involvement and helps to reduce the chances of students becoming involved in unhealthy risk taking. Missoula already offers a wide variety of programs, so ensuring that youth become connected and invested in them is crucial.

## Action Items

- **CONNECT** students to existing programs for your school.
- **QUESTION** your students: Are the programs meeting their needs and interests?
- **READ** the "Concept to Classroom" section of the Toolkit to learn about developing a new youth-led program for your school.

## ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

- [Monthly Free & Low-Cost Activity Calendar](#) from 5210 Let's Move! Missoula
- Missoula [YMCA](#) and [YMCA After-School Care](#)
- [Boys & Girls Club](#) of Missoula County
- [Empower MT After School Clubs](#)

1: [Sickmund & Puzanchera, 2014](#)

2: [Interagency Working Group on Youth Programs](#)

3: [Butts et al., 2010](#)

4: [David-Ferdon et al., 2016](#)





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# **TAKING IT FROM CONCEPT TO CLASSROOM: DEVELOPING YOUTH LED PROGRAMS**

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# CONCEPT TO CLASSROOM

## Purpose of the Section

- Explain the development of youth-led programs, their needs, and educational standards
- Direct educators towards facilitators guides and ideas for recruitment and funding
- Key tips for group cohesion and development, as well as planning guides

## What Educators Can Do

- Provide a safe space for youth to practice leadership skills
- Assist in developing or finding funding for the program
- Encourage youth to become actively engaged in the school community

## Why is this important?

After school programs provide a wide variety of benefits for youth, such as leadership skills and teamwork.

While there are a plethora of opportunities and after-school programs available in the heart of Missoula, some of the more rural communities within the County may not have access to these. As such, the Healthy Missoula Youth Coalition would like to provide some guidance on how to bring this concept to life in the classroom when there are no pre-existing programs for the school.



# CONCEPT TO CLASSROOM

## What is a Youth-Led Program?

A brief description of a what a youth-led program is, it's needs, and how to incorporate education.

## Program Facilitator's Guide

Key mindfulness aspects that encourage youth participation, how to find funding, youth recruitment, and sustainability.

## Group Cohesion & Development

The theory of 5 stages of group development.

## Planning Guides

Various resources that provide a more in-depth look at event and budget planning.

## INTRODUCTION

Youth-led programs prioritize authentic youth engagement, giving young people a voice and an active role in decision-making processes. By actively involving youth in all stages of planning, from setting goals to developing activities, these programs create a sense of ownership and investment among participants. This approach recognizes that young individuals have unique insights and lived experiences, which can contribute to the program's design and implementation. The engagement fosters a sense of belonging, self-esteem, and motivation to actively participate.

# YOUTH-LED PROGRAMS

## WHAT IS A YOUTH-LED PROGRAM?

After-school programs serve as vital spaces for students to continue their learning, explore new interests, and develop essential life skills. An emerging focus in this field is the establishment of prevention-oriented after-school programs that aim to address various challenges faced by students. These programs can play a crucial role in promoting mental health, preventing substance abuse, and fostering positive relationships.

To this effect, the development of a youth-led program or coalition has become increasingly recognized as a best practice in after-school programming. They empower young individuals to take charge, make decisions, and create positive change in their communities. By placing youth at the forefront, these initiatives foster a sense of ownership, promote leadership skills, and ensure that the program's objectives are tailored to meet the specific needs and interests of the participants.

Youth-led programs are designed to address the specific needs and interests of the participants. By empowering youth to shape the program's content, activities, and objectives, the resulting programming becomes more relevant, engaging, and responsive. Young people have firsthand knowledge of the challenges they face, making them best suited to identify areas where support and intervention are required. This approach ensures that the program aligns with the participants' aspirations, promotes personal growth, and fosters a sense of accomplishment.

One of the key benefits of youth-led programs is the opportunity for leadership development. By entrusting young individuals with decision-making responsibilities, these programs cultivate essential skills such as communication, problem-solving, teamwork, and critical thinking. Participants learn to articulate their ideas, negotiate with peers, and navigate challenges, which strengthens their ability to become effective leaders. Through experiential learning, youth-led programs promote self-confidence, resilience, and a sense of agency, preparing young individuals for future leadership roles in their communities.

# YOUTH-LED PROGRAMS

## WHAT IS A YOUTH-LED PROGRAM?

Youth-led programs foster a supportive peer network where participants can learn from and inspire one another. By working collaboratively, young people build connections, develop empathy, and enhance their social skills. The program serves as a platform for peer-to-peer influence, allowing participants to share knowledge, exchange perspectives, and develop a sense of camaraderie. Older participants in the program can also serve as mentors to younger participants, providing guidance, support, and positive role modeling.

Youth-led programs extend their influence beyond the program itself by engaging with the wider community. Participants are encouraged to identify community issues, initiate service projects, and advocate for positive change. Through their active involvement, young individuals develop a sense of civic responsibility and become agents of community development. This community engagement not only benefits the program participants but also contributes to the well-being and growth of the broader community.

Youth-led programs represent a best practice in after-school programming due to their focus on authentic youth engagement, relevant programming, leadership development, peer-to-peer influence, and community impact. By empowering young individuals to take the lead, these programs foster a sense of ownership, promote personal growth, and cultivate future leaders. As we strive to create supportive and empowering environments for young people, it is crucial to recognize and implement the power of youth leadership in after-school programs.

# YOUTH-LED PROGRAMS

## YOUTH-LED PROGRAM NEEDS

Successful after-school programming goes beyond providing a safe and supervised environment for students. It encompasses elements that enhance engagement, empowerment, and personal growth. There are four key elements of successful after-school programming: consistent facilitators, food, autonomy/choices, and leadership. These elements contribute to creating a positive and impactful experience for program participants.

## CONSISTENT FACILITATORS

Consistency in facilitators is crucial for successful after-school programming. When participants have consistent and familiar faces leading the program, it builds trust, rapport, and a sense of belonging. Consistent facilitators understand the needs and strengths of the participants, enabling them to tailor activities and support accordingly. The presence of consistent facilitators allows for meaningful relationships to develop, providing a supportive and nurturing environment for students to thrive.

The provision of food plays a significant role in successful after-school programming. A nutritious snack or meal not only meets the basic needs of students but also enhances their overall well-being. Proper nourishment improves focus, concentration, and cognitive abilities, enabling participants to fully engage in activities and learning experiences. Moreover, shared meals foster a sense of community and promote social interaction among participants, creating a positive and inclusive atmosphere.

## FOOD PROVISION

# YOUTH-LED PROGRAMS

## YOUTH-LED PROGRAM NEEDS

Successful after-school programming incorporates key elements that go beyond the traditional notions of supervision and academic support. Consistent facilitators establish trusting relationships, while the provision of food nourishes and enhances overall well-being. Empowering students with autonomy and choices promotes engagement and personal growth, and leadership opportunities contribute to the development of essential life skills. By integrating these elements into after-school programs, we create environments that foster empowerment, growth, and meaningful experiences for participants.

## AUTONOMY & CHOICES

Empowering students with autonomy and choices is essential in successful after-school programming. Allowing participants to have a say in activity selection, project design, and goal setting fosters a sense of ownership and responsibility. When students have a voice in decision-making processes, they become more invested in the program, leading to increased engagement and enthusiasm. Autonomy and choices also promote the development of critical thinking skills, problem-solving abilities, and self-confidence among participants.

Leadership opportunities within after-school programs contribute to the overall success and growth of participants. Offering leadership roles and responsibilities allows students to develop and refine their leadership skills. Whether through mentoring younger participants, organizing events, or leading group projects, students gain valuable experiences that enhance their communication, collaboration, and decision-making abilities. Leadership opportunities also promote self-esteem, foster a sense of purpose, and prepare participants for future leadership roles in various aspects of life.

## YOUTH LEADERSHIP

# YOUTH-LED EDUCATION

## HOW CAN WE MAKE THIS EDUCATIONAL?

After-school programs have the potential to play a significant role in educating students about substance use and problem behaviors. These programs can provide a safe and supportive environment for open discussions and educational activities on these important topics. By incorporating evidence-based curricula and interactive workshops, after-school programs can educate students about the risks and consequences of substance abuse, as well as the development of healthy coping strategies and decision-making skills. Moreover, these programs can invite guest speakers, such as counselors, prevention specialists, or recovered individuals, to share their experiences and provide real-life perspectives on the impact of substance use. By addressing these issues proactively and equipping students with knowledge and skills, after-school programs can help prevent substance abuse and problem behaviors, promoting a healthier and more informed youth population.

An adult can facilitate a program while still allowing youth to lead the group by using Hart's Ladder\*\* to empower them. This is achieved by allowing the students to participate in decision-making and then moving up the "ladder" towards the desired goal. This would reflect in the youth's ability to move from manipulation to tokenism, to informed and consulted, to shared decision-making, and finally to delegated power.

\*\*See "Schools of Thought" Section for more.

# PROGRAM FACILITATOR'S GUIDE

## WHEN LEADING A STUDENT GROUP, BE MINDFUL OF:



### ACCESSIBILITY

**Accessibility** is considered for location/placement of programming which helps ensure that all youth have the opportunity to participate and benefit from the program regardless of their abilities, socioeconomic status, and other factors. This could be reflected as on-site programming afterschool, gas vouchers and/or transportation to programming off campus.

**Inclusivity** is important because it allows all youth to feel welcome, valued, and included. This can help to build a sense of community, promote understanding and acceptance of diversity, and create a positive and supportive environment for all youth. This can be achieved via the same goals of accessibility and using inclusive language and imagery that represents all youth, regardless of race, gender, etc. in advertisement of youth programming.



### INCLUSIVITY



### CONSTRUCTIVE CHAOS

**Constructive Chaos** is important as it stimulates creative thinking and meet the needs of students by allowing them to engage in hands-on, collaborative learning experiences that encourage experimentation, exploration, and problem-solving. It can also help students develop important social and emotional skills, such as communication, teamwork, and self-regulation. This can be achieved by breaking into small groups for the same or different activities or tasks.

# PROGRAM FACILITATOR'S GUIDE

## LEARNING STYLES

**Familiarity with Learning Styles** is important to help facilitators increase engagement and allow for better retention of information for students. Three main learning styles are:

- Visual: graphs, PowerPoints, videos, and pictures.
- Auditory: podcasts, group discussions, and videos.
- Kinesthetic: Hands-on activities, role-playing, and note-taking.

Tailoring activities and material to meet visual, auditory, and kinesthetic needs helps ensure that all students can learn effectively, regardless of their individual learning style. It's also important to avoid jargon as using simple, clear language helps ensure that all students can access and engage with content. Using accessible language styles also helps build trust and rapport with students by making facilitators more approachable and relatable.

**Cultural understanding** is important to youth programming as Missoula schools have diverse students with diverse needs. Culturally sensitive and responsive youth programming helps to create a safe and inclusive environment for all youth, regardless of their cultural background. By promoting cultural understanding, youth can learn to appreciate and respect different cultures, which can help to build empathy, reduce prejudice, and promote social justice.

Additionally, by incorporating diverse cultural perspectives into youth programming, youth can gain a broader understanding of the world around them, which can help to prepare them for life in an increasingly diverse society.

## CULTURAL UNDERSTANDING



# PROGRAM FACILITATOR'S GUIDE

## TRANSITION TIME

**Transition Time** is a great opportunity for peer connection. Facilitators may want to entertain longer break times for the sake of student networking because it gives students more opportunities to socialize and build relationships with their peers.

Creating realistic goals, expectations, and rules for youth programming is important because it can help to create a clear and structured environment that promotes positive youth development. With these safeguards, youth can gain a sense of direction and purpose, which can help promote engagement and investment in the program. Additionally, by following best practices, youth programming can be designed in a way that is evidence-based, effective, and safe which promotes positive outcomes.

**Realistic goals may include:** improving academic performance, increasing students engagement and motivation, developing social and emotional skills, promoting physical health and wellness, and fostering a sense of community and belonging among students. These goals can be achieved through a variety of activities and interventions such as homework help, tutoring, mentoring, sports, recreation, arts and crafts, and community service projects.

## REALISTIC GOALS

## REALISTIC EXPECTATIONS

**Realistic expectations may include:** actively participating in activities and projects, respecting the rights and feelings of others, following directions and rules, completing homework and assignments, demonstrating positive behavior and attitudes, and showing improvement in academic and personal skills over time. These expectations can be communicated clearly to students and parents with official policy material and/or an introduction day. Expectations are reinforced through positive feedback, recognition, and rewards/incentives.

# PROGRAM FACILITATOR'S GUIDE

## FUNDING

Good news! There are several ways to fund an afterschool program, including seeking grants, partnering with local businesses and community organizations, hosting fundraising events such as auctions or bake sales, applying for government funding or subsidies, and collaborating with local stakeholders such as parents, alumni, and community supporters for donations. It can be helpful to develop a clear and compelling mission statement to demonstrate the impact and value of the program through data and testimonials from students, parents, and other stakeholders. Other ways to obtain additional funding is by hosting fundraising events and applying for grants aligned with the program initiatives.

One great resource is [Montana ReACT Mini-Grants: \(mtreact.com\)](http://mtreact.com)

ReACT mini-grants are funds offered to Montana students 12-18 years old to promote tobacco advocacy, education, and prevention at the community level.

### **How do we gain interest and keep engagement?**

Partnering with local schools and community organizations to advertise programming, creating flyers or brochures to distribute to students and families, hosting an open house or information session to showcase the program and answer questions, using social media or other online platforms to promote the program and engage with potential participants, and offering incentives (ex: shirts) for referrals or early sign-ups.

Important considerations for advertising the program is the development of a clear and compelling message that highlights the benefits and unique opportunities such as academic support, field trips, social and emotional learning, letters of recommendation, resume building skills, and enrichment activities.

One example is putting up a booth which is flexible and doubles as outreach. A booth can happen during lunch, school clubs, school games, freshman orientation, etc.

# PROGRAM FACILITATOR'S GUIDE

## RETENTION

Keeping youth engaged can be challenging at the best of times, but it is still possible! Creating an interactive environment that fosters learning through hands-on activities and games can be helpful in this endeavor. Ensure participants feel that it is a safe and inclusive environment where youth are valued and respected by providing activities that are tailored to the interests and needs of youth/age group. It's also important to establish positive relationships with the youth and their families, keeping in mind to communicate regularly about the program goals and outcomes.

To help create a sustainable afterschool program, it's important to establish clear goals and objectives, and to regularly assess and evaluate the program's effectiveness. It's also crucial to secure adequate funding and resources to support the program and to build strong partnerships with community organizations and stakeholders. Lastly, it's important to cultivate a culture of continuous improvement, and to encourage ongoing learning and professional development among program staff and volunteers.

## SUSTAINABILITY

Consider Hampton's Youth Engagement Model

### PROJECT LEVEL

Stakeholders are informed about the project and its goals. Stakeholders include program staff, parents, community leaders, local businesses, and of course, the youth themselves.

### INPUT LEVEL

Stakeholders are consulted and given the opportunity to provide feedback and suggestions.

### LEADER LEVEL

Stakeholders are actively involved in the decision-making process and share responsibility for the projects' success. They have become a part of the shared leadership.

# GROUP COHESION & DEVELOPMENT

To create a safe and welcoming environment that is culturally understanding, it's important to establish clear expectations and guidelines for behavior, and to encourage open communication and mutual respect among participants. This can be achieved through team-building activities and icebreakers, which can help build trust and foster positive relationships among group members. To incorporate healthy life skills into the activities, you can incorporate things like healthy activities that promote healthy habits and behaviors, such as exercise, healthy eating, and stress reduction techniques.

## FORMING

In the Forming stage, team members are getting to know one another, and understand the team's purpose and their roles.

## STORMING

In the Storming stage, politeness begins to wear off and dissension occurs over the basic mission and operating procedures.

## NORMING

When team members recognize their differences and have dealt with them, they move to Norming, the stage when they ask, "How are we going to accomplish our work?"

## PERFORMING

When team members recognize their differences and have dealt with them, they move to Norming, the stage when they ask, "How are we going to accomplish our work?"

## ADJOURNING

As a project ends or a team member leaves, the team moves into the Adjourning stage. This is not a developmental stage. It is the stage of closure.

The **Five Stages of Group Development Theory**<sup>1</sup> suggests that groups progress through five stages: forming, storming, norming, performing, and adjourning. Knowing these stages can help in creating a supportive and inclusive environment, thus empowering youth to make positive choices and achieve their goals.

# PLANNING GUIDES

## MODEL PROGRAMS GUIDE



The Model Programs Guide (MPG) comes from the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention and is designed to assist practitioners and communities in implementing evidence-based prevention and intervention programs that can make a difference in the lives of children and communities. The MPG database of evidence-based programs covers the entire continuum of youth services from prevention through sanctions to reentry. The MPG is a tool that offers a database of scientifically-proven programs that address a range of issues, including substance abuse, mental health, and education programs.

## SAMHSA BUDGET PLANNING

### USER GUIDE

## SAMHSA EVENT PLANNING

### TOOLKIT

## STRATEGIC PREVENTION FRAMEWORK

### PLANNING MODEL

This is meant to serve as a reference to several other in-depth planning guide resources. For additional questions or assistance please contact [info@healthymissoulayouth.org](mailto:info@healthymissoulayouth.org)

# CONCEPT TO CLASSROOM

## Conclusion

Some communities may not have access to pre-existing after-school programs. The Healthy Missoula Youth Coalition recommends building a youth-led program to supplement this need, and has provided a variety of resources regarding funding, sustainability, and planning guides within this section. After-school programs serve as vital spaces for students to continue their learning, explore new interests, and develop essential life skills.

## Action Items

- **ASSESS** whether your school has a need for a youth-led program. What student interests are not yet being met?
- **GAUGE CAPACITY:** Does your school have the appropriate resources and/or time to build one?
- **INVOLVE** students and administration in the development of the program.

## ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

- [NHS Facilitators Guide Toolkit](#)
- [Summer Learning Toolkit](#)
- [ReACT Coalition Development Guide](#)

1: [Mendonca & Thorman, 2019](#)

