



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.⁷



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

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"¹. 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 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”². 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 happen³.

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 completely⁴. "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"⁵.

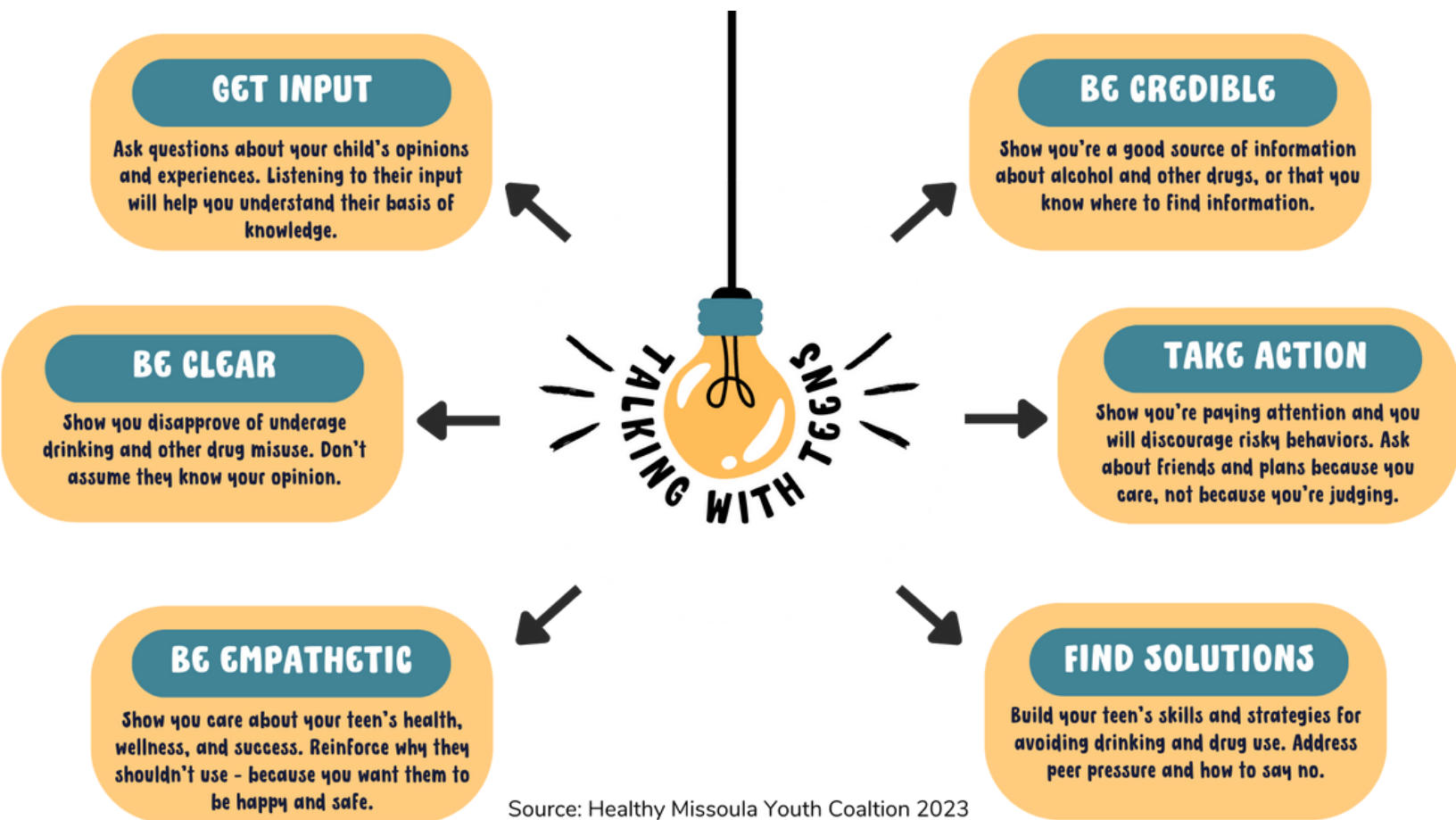
Much has been learned since the days prevention used themes like "Reefer Madness" or the "D.A.R.E." program. Prevention has evolved and specialists now know proper terminology, how to take ethical concerns into consideration, and how to utilize a call to action when talking about substances with youth. 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.⁶ 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

