

Safe Harbor Cohasset Coalition

Comprehensive Evaluation Report

Introduction

Prevention Solutions@EDC has provided consultation to the Safe Harbor Cohasset Coalition Abuse (SHCC) to support the implementation of SHCC's DFC grant evaluation plan since September 2020. This past year, Cohasset continued implementing their DFC evaluation design including identifying process and outcome evaluation measures and corresponding data collection tools and approaches, identifying gaps in program process and outcome data and strategies to collect that data, and developing and administering data collection tools.

Methods

This evaluation report summarizes available process and outcome data that SHCC has collected since 2017, including, SHCC's 2021 Partnership Survey, Youth Member Evaluation (18 and under), focus group and key informant data, Youth Risk Behavior Survey data for middle and high school students from 2017 and 2019 and results of the 2019 Community Survey about Youth Substance Use.

Partnership Survey

In June 2021, SHCC conducted a partnership survey to assess the level of awareness, interest and involvement in the coalition's efforts. Individuals from 19 partner organizations (or various other roles) within the community responded representing several community sectors: faith community, education, municipal government, social service organizations, health care and the coalition itself.

89.5%

Lived in Cohasset



Representing a variety of organizational partners

- Second Congregational Church
- Cohasset School Committee
- Social Service League of Cohasset
- Cohasset Democratic Town Committee
- South Shore Health
- Inly School
- SHCC

Ninety-five percent of participants indicated they were somewhat or very aware of SHCC's mission and goals. Respondents described their involvement with the coalition in open-ended terms, with about one-third characterizing themselves as "observers" with minimal to almost no involvement in the coalition. Another third of the respondents

described themselves as “actively involved” supporters, with the remaining third indicating that they were tangentially involved, as parents of Youth Ambassadors or occasional participants in SHCC events.

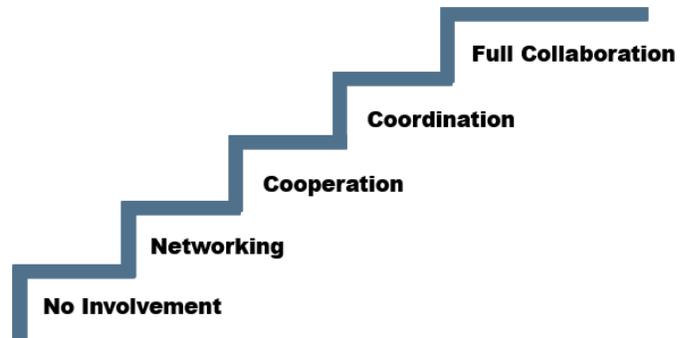
When asked about their current involvement, participants selected one of the “levels of involvement” (defined below) that best described their participation level.

- **I network with the coalition:**
Partners share information and talk with one another for their mutual benefit.

- **I cooperate with the coalition:** Partners support one another’s activities.

- **I coordinate with the coalition:** Partners are engaged in mutual projects and initiatives.

- **I collaborate with the coalition:** Partners have formal agreements in place and work toward to achieving a shared vision.



Most (68%) rated themselves as having either no involvement (37%) or participating as “networkers” or “cooperators” (32%). Just under one-third rated themselves on the higher end of the scale as “coordinators” or “collaborators”. Seventy four percent of respondents indicated they would like to be more involved in the coalition.

Partners ranked their preference among several ways to be more involved in the coalition:

- Volunteering at events (11%)
- Attending and providing input at coalition meetings (16%)
- **Making donations (26%)**
- Take part in developing the strategic action planning and implementation (21%)
- **Supporting coalition fundraising activities (42%)**
- Collecting substance misuse-related data (16%)
- **‘Liking’ and sharing coalition social media posts (53%)**

The top three response options are bolded above. Three respondents selected 'other' and shared additional thoughts relating to their involvement.

“My time is split between a million little things and I try to maximize the small tidbits I can share with each of my areas of involvement.”

“I would like to be involved in more creative pursuits within.”

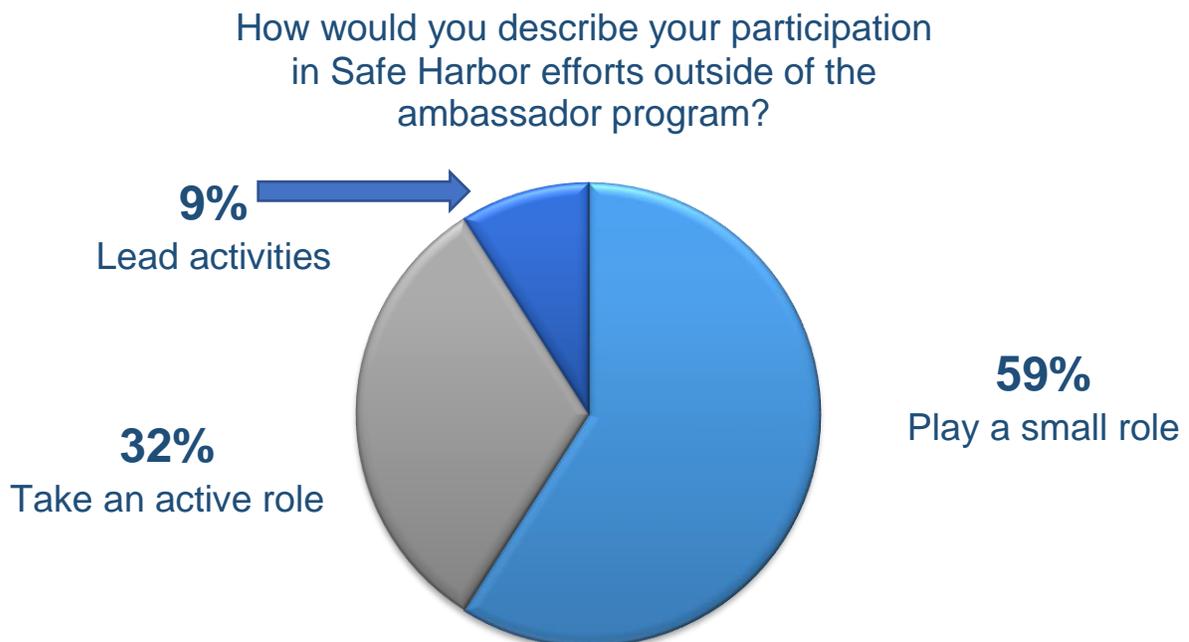
“I want to be more involved! Just stretched very thin... 🤔”

2021 Youth Safe Harbor Member Evaluation (18 and under)

In June 2021, 21 members of SHCC under the age of 18 responded to a youth member evaluation survey. Of this group, all but one (94%) were participants in the Youth Ambassador (YA) program. Questions on the survey covered topics, including: Youth’s level of involvement in coalition efforts, capacity building needs and opportunities, and satisfaction with their participation in the program.

Youth involvement

Asked about the type of role they play in SHCC activities, 59% indicated playing a small role in activities that other people lead. About 1/3 take an active role in activities or projects other people lead, with the remaining 9% leading activities themselves



Youth ambassadors participated in group meetings via Zoom during the 2020-2021 school year (September 2020-April 2021), with most (90%) attending between 75%-100% of meetings.

About one quarter indicated they were deterred from attending meetings because they were held virtually. Attendance remained high after April 2021, when Ambassador meetings were held in person, with all respondents indicating they attended almost all or

86% of respondents said that other extracurricular activities interfered with their attendance “fairly often”.

most meetings in person. 86% of respondents indicated that other extracurricular activities interfered with their meeting attendance at least fairly often, with nearly 25% stating that other commitments interfered “almost always” or “always”.

In terms of their own level of commitment, youth surveyed agree/strongly agree that:

- They put forth their best effort at every meeting **(76%)**
- They are completely focused on whatever task the group is working on **(90%)**
- Other members of the group value their opinion **(81%)**

Respondents also reflected on their relationship with Youth Leaders (YLS) and Youth Leaders in Training (YLIT).

- **80%** reported that they had one YL/YLIT they felt comfortable reaching out to if issues arose
- **95%** indicated that YLS were approachable
- **100%** agreed that YLS provide useful feedback when necessary

Capacity building needs and opportunities

All youth surveyed indicated that their participation in SHCC helped them to increase their knowledge of prevention approaches, personal refusal skills and confidence in refusing alcohol and drugs “somewhat” or to “a great extent”. Ninety-five percent indicated their participation in the coalition positively impacted their ability to communicate to their peers about substance misuse. Youth members also gained skills in the following competency areas:

- Public speaking **(55%)**
- Advocacy **(75%)**
- Team work **(80%)**
- Developing a presentation **(40%)**
- Critical thinking **(55%)**
- Leadership **(50%)**
- Self-confidence **(60%)**

The top three areas that youth noted they'd like additional capacity building on were public speaking (72%), leadership (44%) and advocacy (29%). There were several additional areas identified for skill- and knowledge-building, including:

Healthy ways to manage stress and anxiety



Creating prevention-related messages or content for social media

Public policy advocacy skills



Among youth planning to return to the program next year, 79% would like additional support on developing 'life skills' like resume building, 58% would like more training on topics like public speaking, advocacy and public health, and 47% want additional opportunities to present to or teach other students.

Satisfaction with the Program

All respondents agreed or strongly agreed that they were satisfied with the Youth Ambassador program, and 95% were satisfied with the different projects that they worked on.

86%

Agreed or strongly agreed that they had become more involved in their community through the program.

90%

Indicated that they planned to join the YA program again next year.

“I think safe harbor is great because it actively helps our school system, our town, and our community in general so why wouldn't I do it [for] all four years [of high school]?”

Sixty-six percent of respondents said the different projects that they worked on were personally interesting, while 81% said that the projects they worked on allowed them to learn or improve different skills. The **best-liked** projects were:

- Spring Into action **(55%)**
- Sticker Shock Campaign **(50%)**
- Community-wide pumpkin contest **(45%)**

Projects that were **least liked** include:

- Anti-vaping campaign **(25%)**
- Community-wide pumpkin contest **(25%)**
- Athlete committed **(19%)**
- Interface referral service sticker **(19%)**

In terms of the group’s functioning, youth surveyed reported that:

- The weekly meetings were useful **(81%)**
- There is good communication between members of this group **(100%)**
- They had a good working relationships with other YAs **(96%)**

In terms of preferred communication method, text messaging more endorsed (81%), followed by email (38%) and the Remind App (33%).

Respondents provided qualitative feedback on the YLs performance during the year, which was uniformly positive. They praised the YLs for being “Very organized, thorough and passionate”, “very enthusiastic and inclusive”, and celebrated the “great” and “amazing” job they did this year.

Feedback on Youth Leaders’ Performance This Year



Youth reported feeling listened to and finding the meetings enjoyable, fun and “extremely productive”. One piece of constructive feedback was that one participant thought the group meetings, “should only be every other week”, while another participants suggested YL’s “[call] on people more” but this individual recognized that facilitating group conversations via Zoom might have made that difficult.

Areas of program improvements included:

- Better playlists
- More events and activities
- More “hands-on” opportunities for taking action as opposed to planning
- More [opportunities to be] in person and more public speaking

- More leadership opportunities for non-youth leaders
- More 'life skills' development opportunities
- More promotion about the program among other students

Finally, when asked what would make them want to continue participating in Safe Harbor as long as they were able to (for example, through all four years of high school and beyond if possible), youth responded:

- [Improving] scheduling, particularly for student athletes with conflicts
- Maintaining a safe space “to discuss topics that are effecting you and your society”
- Offering additional activities, including:
 - “projects going to younger grades”
 - “...a lot of hands on projects like Spring into Action”
 - “some more activities or even some fundraisers for good causes”
 - “spread awareness and learn more about society”

“Safe Harbor is a space unlike anything run through the school system where it is an open space to discuss topics that are effecting you and your society. It allows me to feel as an active part of this town and is very welcoming.”

2021 Middle and High School Youth Focus Group

In 2021, middle and high school-aged youth in Cohasset participated in a focus group as part of South Shore Health’s community health needs assessment process. Students were asked to reflect on a variety of questions relating to their physical, mental and emotional health, their substance use behaviors, and resources available to support them when in need.

Students noted a variety of challenges they face including physical health issues relating to diet and exercise, mental health issues relating to anxiety, self-esteem, and body image and the effects of COVID on mental health and social ability.

Regarding substance use, participants noted **that the transition from middle to high school** represents a culture shift toward using alcohol, as modeled by older peers. Several respondents also mentioned the “town-wide” culture relating to drinking and alcohol use among student

Several focus group participants indicated that **they would not feel comfortable seeking out trusted adults within their school community** if they needed help.

athletes as areas of concern. One participant also mentioned the impact of COVID-19 on underage alcohol use, stating that students may be drinking more because they are isolated and have less to do. Another participant described the subtle but significant impact of peer pressure in an environment where substance use is pervasive.

Participants mentioned marijuana use as widely accepted, positively received by peers and seen as “casual” and “trendy”. Participants also characterized youth use of marijuana as a coping strategy for emotional issues (e.g., stress, trauma). Two participants mentioned routinely seeing pro-marijuana posts on social media, and others mentioned misperceptions among peers as to the risks of using marijuana.

In terms of substance-related education, students identified opportunities to enhance the information provided. One participant noted receiving most of the information they learn about substance use from presentations by fellow students, while another mentioned that they knew a lot about harder drugs but less about substances commonly used by youth. Participants also talked about adults talking “at” them and providing resources that were of “no use”.

“It’s not like someone is coming up to you with a beer bottle telling you, ‘drink this or we won’t be friends’. It’s more that you’re around people and they’re all partaking and you’re like - I’m alone and I’m the only one not drunk right now. It’s inherently peer pressure, but it isn’t someone [forcing you to do it]. In a way, it’s more subtle. Sometimes, it can make you feel more lonely because you’re completely on your own.”

Students reported wanting the following **health-related resources**:

- Mentorship
- Safe, anonymous spaces to talk about things
 - Ice breakers [to help students talk to one another and get to know one another]
 - Peer groups focused on physical and mental health at school
 - Nature walks

Key Informant Interviews

In 2020, SHCC conducted a series of interviews with a variety of key stakeholders and community leaders about youth substance use in the community as part of its larger assessment

efforts. The interview protocol included questions aimed to gauge: the extent and seriousness of underage drinking and other substance use in Cohasset; Risk factors and causes for this problem; Current efforts to address the problem; Barriers/obstacles to progress in Cohasset; Strengths and assets to combat the problem in Cohasset; Recommendations/suggestions to address the problem; and Any additional comments/observations regarding these. Fourteen people were interviewed representing several community sectors, including:

- Business owners;

- Civic leaders;
- Elected government officials;
- Healthcare providers;
- Parents;
- Schools;
- Substance use providers;
- Youth serving organizations; and
- High school age youth.

Problems identified included **alcohol and marijuana use and youth vaping**. Several participants mentioned the **community norms** (e.g., the ‘party culture’ present in the town that involves drinking) and **favorable parental attitudes** toward youth drinking. **Social expectations** around alcohol use and ‘**peer pressure**’ were also mentioned as potential root causes. At parties, on local beaches and on boats were named as some of the places where underage alcohol use occurs. Participants report that youth access alcohol and other drugs through social sources like older siblings, friends and from parents. Some respondents noted that it is older, popular kids that use alcohol most, but others felt that alcohol and drugs are used by a broad range of kids, by athletes and quiet kids alike. Respondents noted that the effects of covid-19 might have lessened drinking due to fewer parties, though some felt that the pandemic might have led to an increase in drinking for some youth.

Who:	Youth
What:	Underage drinking
Where/when:	On boats, at parties and at local beaches
How:	Older siblings, friends and parents
Why:	Community norms, parental attitudes favorable toward drinking, social expectations, peer pressure

Participants cited the **widespread acceptance of underage substance use** by parents and other community members as primary obstacles to reducing teen substance misuse. They also identified **the need for more drug prevention education**, boredom in a small town with not much else to do besides drink or use drugs, and stigma relating acknowledging youth substance use as a problem as other barriers. Respondents also offered a number of helpful factors relating to addressing teen substance use, including: **the coalition itself** and the **community-wide support for prevention efforts** that the community enjoys, as well as the **coordination and collaboration between the coalition and multiple key sectors of the community** (e.g., schools, police, town government, teen center, local business, etc.)

Recommendations from key informants included more education for parents about adolescent brain development and the importance of addressing youth substance use, engaging more youth and student leaders (athletes in particular) in prevention efforts

and conducting prevention activities targeting elementary and middle school-aged youth.

2017 and 2019 Youth Risk Behavior Survey

Cohasset has implemented versions of the Youth Risk Behavior Survey for middle and high school-aged students in the communities during the 2014-2015, 2016-2017 and 2018-2019 school years. The survey addresses several key questions:

- What do the findings from the survey tell us about the challenges facing youth in our community?
- To what extent are there differences among sub-groups of students, such as by gender or grade?
- How do survey findings in the Cohasset schools compare to findings in the past and elsewhere?

SHCC's previous evaluator, J. Richard Woy, prepared preliminary reports on findings for each administration of the survey and this report summarizes many of his key findings from the most recent report, submitted to SHCC in May 2019.

Key Findings from Middle School YRBS Results

Protective Factors

- 65%** Of respondents reported that there is **at least one adult at school** to talk with about a problem.
- 69%** Reported that **teachers at school really care** and give encouragement and support.

Risk Factors

- 10%** Reported **riding with a driver who had been drinking**, but only 3% reported riding with a driver who had been **using marijuana**.

When those who reported riding with a drinking driver were asked their relationship to the driver who had been drinking, about half reported riding with a parent/guardian (52%).

- 18%** Reported **being bullied** at school in the past year. More than 1 in 10 respondents (13%) reported being bullied electronically.
- 43%** Reported **being stressed at school** fairly or very often.

26% Reported **being stressed outside school** fairly often or very often.

When asked to rate various sources of stress, high percentages of students identified various school related variables as significant sources of stress, including:

- Grades (**72%**)
- Amount of school (**64%**)
- Balancing schoolwork with outside activities (**56%**)

More than half the respondents also identified two other sources of stress: not meeting your own expectations (54%) and not meeting others' expectations (52%).

26% Reported feeling **significant depression** at some point during the previous 12 months. About 6% reported seriously considering suicide; 3% reported making a plan to commit suicide; 1% reported actually attempting suicide; and 1% reported injuring themselves in a suicide attempt. In addition, 9% of respondents reported self-inflicted injury to relieve tension.

Substance misuse related behaviors

Students responded to a number of questions relating to their behaviors and perceptions relating to substance use behaviors perceptions.

Tobacco

Use of cigarettes and smokeless tobacco products was virtually non-existent in 2019.

Alcohol

Reported lifetime and past 30-day rates of alcohol drinking were 5% and 2% respectively, and 4% of respondents reported drinking before age 13 years. Virtually no students reported frequent drinking, binge drinking, or drinking alcohol on school property.

Marijuana

Reported lifetime and past 30-day rates of marijuana use were 2% and 1% respectively. Only 1% of respondents reported marijuana use before age 13 years while virtually none reported current frequent marijuana use. The rate of current use of synthetic marijuana was negligible (1%) as was the rate of use of marijuana on school property (1%).

Electronic Vapor Products

Reported lifetime and past 30-day rates of use of electronic vapor products were 3% and 1% respectively. Virtually no students reported frequent vaping, vaping on school property, use of a vaping device before age 13 years, or vaping leading to tobacco use.

Rx Drugs

The reported past 30-day rate for use of prescription drugs without a prescription was negligible; and the reported lifetime rate for use of prescription stimulants without a prescription was 3%.

The survey also asks about students' own perceptions toward substance use, their perceptions of their parents' and peers' attitudes toward using different substances, as well as their perceptions about how many of their peers engage in use behaviors and how often. The tables below reflect their responses to those questions.

Self-perception, parental and peer attitudes toward substance use

% of students who...	Smoke tobacco	Drink alcohol	Use marijuana	Use Rx drugs without a prescription
Believe [doing this] involves moderate or great harm.	92% (smoking one or more packs of cigarettes per day)	79% (daily drinking) 85% (binge drinking)	79% (once or twice a week)	89%
Believe their parents think it would be wrong or very wrong for them to...	98%	92% (moderately once or twice a month)	96%	95%
Believe their friends think it would be wrong or very wrong to...	93%	85% (moderately once or twice a month)	91%	95%

Misperceptions relating to social norms toward use

% of students who believe...	That...	When the actual percent of students doing this is...
8%	40% or more of Cohasset Middle school students had drunk alcohol in the previous month	2%
3%	30% or more of Cohasset Middle school students had been binge drinking in the previous month	0%
20%	30% or more of Cohasset middle school students had used marijuana in the previous month.	1%
50%	10% or more of Cohasset middle school students had used a prescription drug without a prescription in the previous month.	0%

Other areas of note

Only 26% of respondents report believing drinking alcohol once or twice a month is bad and, among the 2% of students who had drunk alcohol in the past 30 days, all had obtained the alcohol from their parents. About one of four respondents reported talking with a parent about underage drinking (28%) or rules for drinking (27%) in the previous month. Only 15% reported that parents lock up alcohol in their homes. When asked about limits parents other than their own place on teen alcohol use at home, most (87%) reported that other parents allowed no teen alcohol use at home; and most of the remainder reported that parents allowed teen drinking only with parents present.

Key Findings from High School YRBS Results

Risk Behaviors

4% Of students reported **driving when they had been drinking.**

12% Reported **riding with a driver who had been drinking.**

23% Reported **riding with a driver who had been using marijuana.**

59% Of those who reported driving **reported texting** while driving. When those who reported riding with a drinking driver were asked their relationship to the driver who had been drinking, about half reported riding with a parent/guardian (54%) and/or an acquaintance under 21 (50%).

Risk Factors

25% Reported feeling **significant depression** at some point during the previous 12 months. About 13% reported seriously considered suicide; 6% reported making a plan to commit suicide; 3% reported actually attempting suicide; and 2% reported injuring themselves in a suicide attempt. Twelve percent of respondents reported self-inflicted injury to relieve tension. Only 9% of respondents reported ever telling someone that they were considering suicide, but almost one-third of respondents (31%) reported being told by someone else that they were considering suicide. Responses to being told by another about possible suicide differed, with some respondents keeping the information to themselves (10%), some telling a friend (8%), others telling a trusted adult (13%), and some responding in other ways (10%).

60% Reported being **stressed at school** fairly often or very often.

39% Reported being **stressed outside school** fairly often or very often.

When asked to rate various sources of stress, very high percentages of students identified various school related variables as significant sources of stress, including:

- Grades (**90%**)
- Amount of school work (**83%**)
- Balancing schoolwork with outside activities (**81%**)

More than half the respondents also identified several other sources of stress, including: (1) not meeting your own expectations (69%); (2) life after high school (69%); and (3) not meeting other's expectations (57%).

Protective Factors

74% Reported that there is at least **one adult at school to talk with** about a problem.

71% Reported that **teachers at school really care** and give encouragement and support.

Substance misuse related behaviors

Students responded to a number of questions relating to their behaviors and perceptions relating to substance use behaviors perceptions. The survey also asks about students' own perceptions toward substance use, their perceptions of their parents' and peers' attitudes toward using different substances, as well as their perceptions about how many of their peers engage in use behaviors and how often. The information summarized and in tables below reflects their responses.

Alcohol

Reported lifetime and past 30 day rates of alcohol drinking were 44% and 29% respectively, and 17% of respondents reported binge drinking in the previous month. Five percent reported drinking before age 13 years. The number of students reporting drinking frequently (20 or more days per month) or drinking on school property were negligible.

More than a third of respondents (36%) reporting current drinking said that a friend gave them the alcohol while another 15% reported that they gave money to a family member or friend over 21 to buy it for them. Another 8% reported their parents provided the alcohol to them while 6% reported taking the alcohol from home. The remainder obtained alcohol in various other ways.

Electronic Vapor Products

Reported lifetime and past 30 day rates of use of electronic vapor products were 40% and 26% respectively, and 7% of respondents reported vaping more than 20 days per month. Among those that currently vape, 19% reported having trouble stopping vaping; and 7% of respondents reported vaping on school property in the previous month. Students reported using various substances in their vaping devices, including nicotine (59%) THC (22%) and flavoring only (14%).

Tobacco

Nine percent reported lifetime cigarette smoking, and 3% reported current cigarette smoking, use of chewing tobacco, snuff, or dip. Very few students (<1%) reported first smoking cigarettes before age 13, smoking more than 10 cigarettes per day, or smoking on school property (1%).

Marijuana

Reported lifetime and past 30-day rates of marijuana use were 28% and 20% respectively. 6% reported current frequent marijuana use. The rate of current use of synthetic marijuana was 4%, and 5% of respondents reported use of marijuana on school property in the previous 30 days.

Rx Drugs

Past 30-day use of prescription drugs without a prescriptions was negligible (2%); and reported lifetime rates for use of various specific prescription drugs without a prescription were all 6% or below, including: stimulants (6%); painkillers (4%); steroids (1%); and other drugs (2%).

Other substances

Reported lifetime rates of use of inhalants and of illegal drug injection were 5% and 1%, respectively.

Self-perception, parental and peer attitudes toward substance use

% of students who...	Smoke tobacco	Drink alcohol	Use marijuana	Use Rx drugs without a prescription
Believe [doing this] involves moderate or great harm.	92% (smoking one or more packs of cigarettes per day)	73% (daily drinking) 79% (binge drinking)	73% (once or twice a week)	91%
Believe their parents think it would be wrong or very wrong for them to...	96%	66% (moderately once or twice a month)	86%	96%
Believe their friends think it would be wrong or very wrong to...	78%	37% (moderately once or twice a month)	47%	88%

Misperceptions relating to social norms toward use

% of students who...	Believe that...	When the actual percent of students doing this is...
75%	40% or more of Cohasset high school students had drunk alcohol in the previous month	29%
53%	30% or more of Cohasset high school students had been binge drinking in the previous month	17%
70%	30% or more of Cohasset high school students had used marijuana in the previous month	19%
75%	10% or more of Cohasset high school students had used a prescription drug without a prescription in the previous month	2%

Other areas of note

Only 28% of respondents report believing drinking alcohol once or twice a month is bad, and only 47% report that any drinking by teens their age is not good. About 40% of respondents reported talking with a parent about underage drinking or rules for drinking (39%) in the previous month. About 31% reported that their parents allowed them to drink alcohol, with 20% reporting parents limited them to one drink and the remaining 11% reporting parents allowed them to have multiple drinks. Only 9% reported that parents lock up alcohol in their homes.

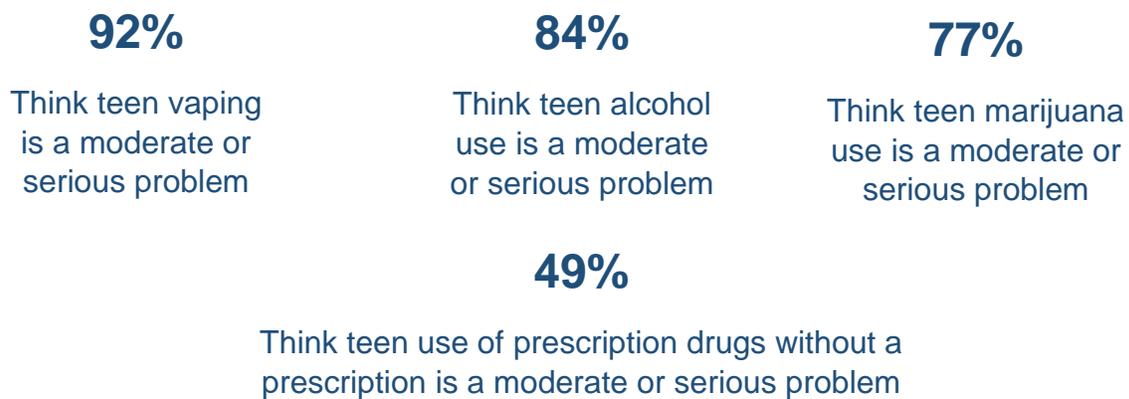
When asked about limits parents other than their own place on teen alcohol use at home, almost half (47%) reported that other parents allowed no teen alcohol use at home; and most of the remainder reported that parents allowed teen drinking only with parents present.

More than 1 in 5 respondents (22%) reported being offered, sold, or given an illegal drug on school property in the previous year. This rate is about the same as the statewide rate in 2017 (22%), but is more than double the reported rate in Cohasset in 2017 (22% vs 8%). most of the reported exchange of substances on school property involved offering, selling, or giving of Juul pods (19%) and marijuana (8%).

2019 Cohasset Community Survey of Youth Substance Use

The survey was developed by a Data Committee of the Safe Harbor Cohasset Coalition. Survey development occurred during the spring and early summer of 2019. The survey was administered in paper and pencil form to adult residents of Cohasset in the fall of 2019. 284 respondents, 97% of whom were Cohasset residents, completed the survey. Fifty nine percent were parents of high school students, 53% were parents of middle school students and 10% were parents of a child who attends private school. Results shared below are paraphrased from the Preliminary Report of Findings developed by JRW Associates in February 2020.

Respondents were asked their perspectives on teen substance use in Cohasset.



Participants were also asked their opinions about changes in youth substance use rates over time. Ninety-one percent reported that vaping by youth had increased in the last five years. About 47% reported that marijuana use had increased while 50% reported marijuana use by youth staying about the same. Seventy percent reported alcohol drinking by youth as staying about the same, with 24% reporting an increase in youth drinking. Finally, 40% of respondents reported increased teen use of prescription drugs without a prescription while 52% reported that teen use of prescription drugs without a prescription remained about the same in the last five years.

Participants reported high levels of disapproval toward youth substance use of all kinds, with more than nine out of ten respondents reporting that teen alcohol, marijuana, electronic vapor product and prescription drug use were wrong or very wrong. 9 out of 10 respondents also reported that all of these behaviors involved moderate or great risk of harm, with vaping, binge drinking and prescription drug use identified as particularly high risk for youth. Middle and high school students reported their own use of substances involving moderate or great risk

More than 90% reported that all four types of substance use by teens were wrong or very wrong.

of harm at far lower rates than their parents or guardians did on the YRBS survey. When asked about talking to their teenage children about substance use:



- **68%** reported talking with their teenagers about drinking alcohol in the past month
- **79%** reported talking with them about vaping during the same timeframe
- **52%** reported talking about marijuana
- **35%** reported talking about using prescription drugs not prescribed to them.

Comparatively, only 28% of middle school and 40% of high school students reported that their parents talked to them about alcohol use in the past month on the YRBS.

In terms of access to substances, respondents most frequently report having alcohol (93%) and prescription drugs (68%) in their homes. Among these, about 60% report monitoring the amounts of the substance(s) in the home. 25% and 26% respectively reported securing their marijuana and prescription drugs, 22% reported locking up their vaping products while only 14% reported securing their alcoholic beverages. Students also reported low rates of parents' locking up alcohol at home to prevent access to it. Virtually all respondents identifying as parents or guardians indicated that they never knowingly allowed their child(ren) to drink alcohol at home with their friends, and 70% indicated they were aware of and understood Massachusetts' social host law.

Recommendations:

Based on the findings and discussion above, PS@EDC offers the following recommendations for consideration. These recommendations are based in our understanding and interpretation of the collective evaluation findings across all data collection tools and methods described in this report, and our team's collective experience and expertise in implementing a data-informed strategic prevention planning process. Because some of the data included in this report was collected and analyzed several years ago, these recommendations may include suggested actions that the coalition has already put into motion.

Based on findings from the 2021 Partnership Survey, consider:

- Engaging supporters in the coalition's social media activities and fundraising activities, as most respondents indicated they would like to be involved in the coalition's efforts in those ways.

- Engaging current low involvement respondents that have interest in doing more virtually, as in-person participation was not as highly endorsed.
- Stratifying the data by current level of involvement, if possible. Seventy nine percent of respondents reported not currently operating at the level of 'coordination' or 'collaboration'. Are there any among those individuals who you need to be doing more? Be strategic in offering more intensive opportunities for involvement to those that would like to become more involved and currently reporting lower levels of involvement.

Based on findings from the 2021 Youth Safe Harbor Member Evaluation, consider:

- Canvassing the youth members about their personal interests and passions, and try to align the group's efforts and activities with those, whenever possible.
- Focusing on skill-building this year around managing stress and anxiety, creating prevention messages for social media, and public policy advocacy. Generate additional opportunities to educate law and decision makers about substance use virtually (for example, using the 'Stance' app) or to participate in legislative advocacy events, if possible.
- Creating opportunities for youth members and youth leaders to connect and forge relationships to increase the number of youth members that report feeling comfortable approaching youth leaders for help. (Currently, 20% of youth members reported not having a youth leader they felt comfortable reaching out to if issues arose.)
- Providing additional capacity building in public speaking skills, leadership development and advocacy to youth members. Conduct one-on-one conversations with youth members to determine if there are specific areas of each competency that they would like additional skill building on.
- Supporting the development of peer-led groups focusing on health that provide students opportunities to interact together, get to know each other, discuss stressors and explore their identities, passions and senses of purpose.
- Taking an active role in or supporting the creation of mentoring opportunities, particularly focused on helping students form their identity and develop social emotional competencies like self-management and awareness, social awareness, relationship skills and healthy decision-making skills.
- Increasing school culture- and climate-related efforts to increase the sense of trust and safety between faculty and students.
- Implementing additional strategies to support students in managing their anxiety.
- Targeting future strategies toward youth transitioning from middle to high school.

Based on findings from the 2021 Middle and High School Youth Focus Group, consider:

- Focusing future prevention efforts on risk factors including community norms, community, parental and peer attitudes favorable toward use, and social access to alcohol and other substances. Focus on the protective factor of providing prosocial, “alternative” opportunities for involvement.
- Taking a non-accusatory, collaborative approach with parents. Give them the tools to communicate effectively with their children and the perspective to question the legitimacy of underage substance use and to set clear expectations and consistent consequences,
- Creating opportunities to celebrate all youth—not just those involved in sports or the academically successful—through school climate and/or social norms campaigns aimed at celebrating individuality and the diverse contributions of all students to the school community.
- Promoting school climate initiatives that ensure each student has at least one trusted adult within the school community to connect with so that no student with underlying social-emotional issues fall through the cracks.

Based on findings from the 2017 and 2019 Middle and High School Youth Risk Behavior Survey, consider:

- Conducting a marijuana-focused social norms campaign for middle and high school youth to address the misperception among a substantial majority of students who believe that substantially more marijuana use by students is occurring than is actually taking place according to survey findings.
- Conducting alcohol- and prescription drug-focused social norms campaigns for high school youth to address the misperception among a substantial majority of high school students who believe more drinking and use of prescription drugs without a prescription by high school students is occurring than is actually taking place according to survey findings.
- Providing education to high school students regarding the risks of underage alcohol use and marijuana use to address the low perception of risk of harm reported relating to both (only 73% reported moderate or great harm relating to daily drinking and marijuana use 1-2 times per week) and the low level of peer disapproval toward marijuana use (only about half (47%) reported that their friends think it would be wrong or very wrong for them to use marijuana 1-2 times per week).
- Working with the high school administration to address the increase in students reporting being offered, sold, or given an illegal drug on school property. Consider additional surveillance and physical design strategies to limit opportunities for youth to engage in this type of transactions. Hold key informant interviews with youth to learn how this is playing out so far with the return to in-person learning during the current academic year.

Based on findings from the 2019 Community Survey of Youth Substance Use, consider:

- Conducting community-wide education campaigns to address the belief that most respondents reported relating to youth drinking and marijuana use as ‘moderate’ (as opposed to ‘serious’) problems. Include messages detailing the severity of consequences relating to these behaviors, including but not limited to the impacts on adolescent brain development.
- Including information about changes in Cohasset’s youth substance use rates over time in all communications, presentations and information disseminated to the general public. Conducting a focus group with parents of private school students to explore differences between their teen substance use-related beliefs and behaviors as compared to those of parents of public school students. Specifically, probe for explanations as to why they believe teen drinking, marijuana and prescription drug use are more serious problems than their counterparts do, and why they report talking to their teenage child(ren) about substance use at higher rates.
- Educating parents of middle school kids about importance about starting early talking to their child(ren) about substance use.
- Providing information and skill-building opportunities to parents regarding monitoring and safe storage of substances in the home.