



Bach Harrison, L.L.C.

Survey Research & Evaluation Services

2018 Prevention Needs Assessment Survey

Summary of Profile Report

for:

Niskayuna Central School District

Sponsored By:



116 South 500 East
Salt Lake City, Utah 84102

Phone: (801) 359-2064
Fax: (801) 524-9688

This report presents a brief summary of the Niskayuna Central School District Profile Report compiled from the 2018 administration of the Prevention Needs Assessment (PNA). Readers are strongly encouraged to examine the full Profile Report for more information and a better understanding of the data.

Participants

The Niskayuna PNA included a survey of students in the 6th, 8th, 10th and 12th grades. A total of 1,182 surveys were found to be valid and honest. The male students totaled 50.4% of those surveyed and 49.6% were female. The 6th grade students contributed 27.7% of the utilized surveys, the 8th grade added 23.5%, 10th graders were responsible for 25.1%, and 12th graders contributed 23.7%. Students who identified themselves as White contributed 70.0% of the surveys, Asian had 14.3%, African American students contributed 4.6%, Hispanic students were represented by 2.9% of responses, Native American was 1.2%, Pacific Islander added 0.6%, and Multi-racial students comprised 6.4% of those surveyed. The survey overall had strong participation rates, with 1,182 completed forms out of a sample of 1,251 for a rate of 94.4%. Rates of 60.0% or higher mean the report is a good indicator of the levels of substance abuse, risk, protection, and antisocial behavior.

Alcohol, Tobacco, and Other Drug Use

Alcohol - Lifetime and 30-day Use:

Experimentation with alcohol increases steadily in each grade measured from 5.6% in the 6th grade, to 11.4% in the 8th grade, 38.5% in the 10th grade, and 65.9% of 12th graders reported having tried alcohol at least once in their lives. Lifetime alcohol use is viewed to be a measure of experimental use and past-month use is viewed to be a measure of more regular use. Compared to 2016 survey data, most scores for lifetime alcohol use decreased except for a slight 0.6-point increase in the 6th grade from 5.0% to 5.6% in 2018. Lifetime use scores for Niskayuna were either less than, or, in the case of the 12th grade, only a few points higher than the Monitoring the Future (MTF) scores – a national survey of youth in the United States. The 12th grade's score of 65.9% put it 4.7 points higher than the national average. Overall, the district is heading toward the lowest lifetime alcohol use rates in five years, with use down 12.1% and a lifetime score roughly three quarters of the MTF rate (29.7%, 12.2 points below MTF).

Results for 30-day use show similar movement in regular alcohol consumption among teens in the Niskayuna Central School District (NCSD) with declines in use in all grades except 6th. Overall regular use is down 25.0%, from 19.6% of youth drinking alcohol in the past month in 2016 to 14.7% in the most recent study. High school seniors saw a much more drastic downturn in use, where just two years ago a majority of Niskayuna 12th graders (51.6%) drank regularly, now only 37.9% reported drinking in the month prior to the survey. The 8th and 10th grades' scores fell below the national average, and the overall 30-day alcohol use rate for the district (14.7%) was 5.1 points below MTF.

Alcohol - Binge Drinking:

The same grades that saw a drop in regular drinking (8th-12th) saw a corresponding decrease in the amount of binge drinking behavior as well. In fact, binge drinking fell by more than half in the 8th grade (2.4% in 2016 to 1.1%), by roughly 40.0% in the 10th grade (10.8% in 2016 to 6.4%), and by just over a third in the 12th grade (28.9% in 2016 to 18.4%), although the 12th grade's score still puts it 2.9 points higher than MTF. The reduction in the amount of binge drinking in Niskayuna may be due to students' attitudes about the riskiness of using alcohol to excess. When asked how much someone risks harming themselves by drinking 5 or more drinks in a row once or twice each weekend (e.g. binge drinking at parties), a majority of students in the district (57.5%) thought it put them at "Great risk" along with majorities in grades 6 & 8 and just under the halfway mark in the 12th grade (43.2%). Making students aware and getting them to internalize the dangers associated with binge drinking is an effective way to combat this behavior.

Cigarettes:

Cigarettes continue to wane in popularity among Niskayuna youth, with the only significant movement being downward in both lifetime and 30-day use. While the 12th grade had the highest rates of smoking, it also had the largest declines – down 6.4 points in lifetime use (16.7%) from 2016, putting it 11.6 points below MTF, and down 2.9 points in 30-day use, 4.0 points below MTF. Overall regular cigarette use was just 1.8% and aside from the 12th grade, no grade's score topped 1.0%. Lower numbers of students trying cigarettes or using them regularly is a positive outcome, but as will be discussed in the next section, it may be that students have simply moved from smoking cigarettes to vaping.

E-Cigarettes:

The 2017 version of the PNA form is the first iteration of the survey to measure e-cigarette use, so there is no earlier data to compare with the current numbers, but what we know indicates that e-cigarettes and vaping are popular among young people in Niskayuna CSD. The 12th grade showed the highest rates of experimentation with these types of smoking devices at 36.4%, outpacing MTF by 2.6 points. Overall lifetime use was 16.4%, 10.2 points below the national norm. Regular e-cigarette use was in single digits for 6th and 8th graders, a group that did not smoke cigarettes in great numbers either, who reported using vaping products in the past month at rates of 0.7% and 6.5% respectively. For the older teens, some of which do smoke regularly, vaping is a preferred choice with more than twelve times as many 10th graders (12.1%) and more than four times as many 12th graders (26.9%) saying they use e-cigarettes than their paper predecessors. In the 8th grade, vaping is more popular than any other illicit substance including alcohol and second only to energy drinks in popularity. E-cigarettes are also among the top three most used ATODs in every grade surveyed.

Marijuana:

In many previous surveys in other parts of the United States, marijuana has been the second-most used drug among young people. With the advent of measuring e-cigarette use, it has been bumped to third overall in Niskayuna CSD. While it remains second for lifetime use among 12th grade students, it has dropped to at least 3rd in all other cases for all other grades, and in the case of the 6th grade, fourth or lower. Not only is marijuana comparatively less popular, but both lifetime and 30-day use saw significant decreases overall and across all grades except the 6th grade which only saw upwards movement of less than a point. In the 8th grade, lifetime and 30-day use went down by about half from a rate of 3.8% for lifetime use in 2016 to 1.9% in 2018, and 2.7% for 30-day use in the previous study to 1.1% in the most current one. The 10th grade showed similar waning use of marijuana, with a 3.9-point drop in experimentation (16.8%) putting it 12.9 points below MTF, and an even larger 8.5-point drop in regular use (7.1%) – only half that of national levels. The 12th grade followed the same patterns of marijuana use with a slight drop in lifetime use (39.0%, down 9.6 points) and a more pronounced decrease in past-month consumption at 16.7% (5.8 points below MTF) down from 32.3% in 2016.

When examining reasons for this new slowdown in marijuana use, it may be helpful to focus on student attitudes and the influence of peer pressure. Teens often try drugs like alcohol and marijuana to impress their friends, but when asked how many of their best friends used marijuana, Niskayuna 6th and 8th graders overwhelmingly said none of their friends did (6th- 96.1%, 8th – 92.9%). A majority of 10th graders (63.6%) and almost half of 12th graders (48.7%) said the same. Further supporting the notion that sensitivity to social pressure may be helping to alleviate marijuana use is the students' responses to the question "What are the chances you would be seen as cool if you smoked marijuana?". Very few students in any grade believed doing so would give them a "Very good chance" of impressing their friends – the younger grades (6th & 8th) were between 1.0% and 2.0%, and the older grades (10th & 12th) were at roughly 7.0%. Continuing to combat social acceptance is one way to decrease the attractiveness of this behavior and in turn lessen its use.

Inhalants:

When other illicit substances are harder to come by, some students – especially younger ones – try using inhalants to get high since they are usually available right outside in the garage or inside household cupboards. Experimentation with inhalants is up in the 6th and 10th grades, with the biggest jump in the 6th grade from 2.5% in 2016 to 4.0% in the current study. Past-month use was much lower (no grades topped 3.0%), but the 6th grade again experienced a rise in the number of young people exhibiting this behavior. A close look at the availability of other ATODs helps shed some light on perhaps why this increase is occurring. When asked how easy it would be for them to obtain alcohol, 69.5% of 6th graders said it would be "Very hard" compared to 38.2% in NCSd overall. Even more 6th graders felt the same about getting their hands on marijuana (89.9%) and other illegal drugs (91.5%). Making younger students aware that inhalants cause harmful effects in the same way that these other more difficult to come by substances do, despite their ease of access, may help to lessen their abuse.

Amphetamines:

While use of amphetamines is lessening and is low compared to other substances, it bears mentioning because this substance was one of only three in which Niskayuna's overall 30-day use exceeded the national MTF rate (the other two being e-cigarettes and synthetic marijuana). Only about 1.0% of students in grades 10 and 12 said they had used amphetamines in the past month, and no 6th or 8th graders said they had used them in that timeframe. This put the district at 0.6%, double the MTF rate of 0.3%. On a positive note, the 12th grade experienced a 68.0% drop in the amount of regular amphetamine use.

Other Drugs:

Overall in Niskayuna, lifetime use rates for nearly all ATODs decreased, with only e-cigarettes (16.4%) and tranquilizers (2.3%) showing any development. The 12th grade exhibited the highest lifetime use scores for all substances except inhalants, where the 10th grade had the highest score with 4.2%. Past-month use rates for other drugs were almost all below MTF with just the 12th grade's scores for heroin (0.4%, 0.2 points over MTF) and synthetic marijuana (0.4%, 0.4 points over MTF) exceeding national levels. Seniors also reported the highest 30-day use levels for all drugs not already discussed in this report with the exception of sedatives in which the 8th grade had the highest percentage of students using those types of medications (0.8%).

Energy Drinks:

Energy drinks reach their peak popularity in the 10th grade in Niskayuna, where 13.5% of students say they consume them regularly (lifetime use for energy drinks is not measured.) They are only slightly less popular among other students from 8.3% in the 6th grade to 12.2% in the 12th grade. These beverages are mostly unregulated and contain high amounts of caffeine and other stimulants. It is worthwhile to examine their use among youth, who according to the American Academy of Pediatrics, should not consume energy drinks because they are linked to harmful effects in children's developing neurological and cardiovascular systems. Warnings on the labels for these beverages themselves describe them as "not for children."

Antisocial Behavior

In all cases, antisocial behaviors in Niskayuna are reported at rates significantly below national norms. While this is a positive result, two overall scores and ten separate grade scores for various categories increased from 2016. The areas that increased overall were gains in school suspensions and bringing handguns to school that were each less than 1.0 point. The largest improvement was a 2.5-point drop in the number of students reporting being drunk or high at school (4.6%), which follows since there were decreases in use of ATODs among Niskayuna students in general. The 6th grade saw the fewest instances of antisocial behavior, with none above 3.0%, and the highest, "Attacked Someone with the Idea of Seriously Hurting Them" at 2.6% was still 7.6 points below the Bach-Harrison Norm (BH Norm) - an aggregate, weighted measure from eight

statewide surveys and five large regional surveys representing youth across the United States.

Carrying a Handgun

Niskayuna youth reported a low rate of carrying handguns, with 1.1% of students overall saying they have carried a handgun in the past year. A shift occurred from the previous study in which older students now have the lowest rates of carrying a handgun and both the 10th and 12th grade saw their scores decline. Conversely, the 6th (1.6%) and 8th (1.9%) grades had an uptick in reported instances of bringing a firearm to school. While young people carrying guns is certainly not ideal, a positive takeaway is that no students in the 6th grade and fewer than 1.0% of students in grades 8-12 reported bringing a gun to school in the past year. With gun violence in schools taking a larger place in the national discussion, the district's results in this category point to Niskayuna schools being a safe place for young people to get an education.

Suspended from School

High school suspensions were on the rise in both the 10th (4.2%) and 12th (2.2%) grades and overall by just 0.4 points. Middle school students experienced a decrease in the number of suspensions, the most drastic being the 8th grade in which school suspensions went down by roughly half (from 4.7% in 2016, to 2.6%). Even though some rates of suspension went up, no grade was above 5.0% and Niskayuna's rate of suspensions overall was roughly a quarter of the national average. The largest increase belonged to the 12th grade which went from no reported suspensions from school in 2016 to 2.2% in the 2018 survey.

Selling Illegal Drugs

As with the fewer incidences of being drunk or high at school, less selling of drugs is an ancillary effect of decreased drug use. No 6th graders reported selling drugs, the 8th grade had only 0.4% (2.7 points below BH Norm), the 10th grade saw a 1.0-point drop to 2.1% (5.1 points below BH Norm), and the 12th grade's drug selling fell by more than 50.0% from 7.8% in 2016 to 3.4% in 2018 (5.2 points below BH Norm). When Niskayuna CSD students were asked to share whether any of their best friends sold drugs, 93.4% of students said none of their friends were involved in that activity. Preventing use also means preventing supply, and keeping the sale and distribution of drugs on its downward trajectory will be a powerful aid in stopping the spread of ATODs.

Gambling

Instances of gambling in Niskayuna were relatively low with most overall scores barely approaching the BH Norm, and many much lower. There was one area in particular, horse racing, which saw much higher-than-average participation rates – likely due to the close proximity to tracks like Saratoga Race Course. Overall 10.3% of students said they had bet on horses in the past year, roughly double the BH Norm, and it was in the top three gambling options for all four grades surveyed. Horse betting was higher than national rates for all grades, with the largest margin being the 10th grade (13.6%, 8.1

points over BH Norm). Most popular overall were betting on sports at 12.8% and playing the lottery at 11.7%.

Attacking Others

Violence scores for this population are a great deal lower than the national average in every grade surveyed, especially the 10th grade (1.8%) which fell 10.0 points below the BH Norm. The district continued its downward trend toward fewer fights from 4.0% in 2014, to 2.8% in 2016, and finally to 2.5% in 2018. Lower scores in this area are encouraging, but it should be noted that “Attacked Someone with the Idea of Seriously Hurting Them” was among the top three antisocial behaviors in the study. When asked, 2.4% of students said it was “Not Wrong at All” to pick a fight, about the same percentage as those carrying out attacks on other students. Changing attitudes with this small group of students who don’t feel fighting is wrong will be key in getting these types of instances as close to 0.0 as possible.

Risk Factors

This administration of the PNA Survey showed a blend of upward and downward trending risk scores, with the 8th grade nearly all on the rise while the 12th grade saw lessened risk in almost all scales. Niskayuna CSD exhibited less risk than the national norm in all but one area: “Perceived Risk of Drug Use,” (46.5%) which was just 0.9 points over the BH Norm. The 12th grade had the most students score as “high risk,” meaning they have 7 or more of the risk factors from the report operating in their lives, and students in the 12th grade scored as the most at risk in 10 out of the 20 scales measured.

Community Domain:

Both scales in this domain deal with attitudes toward drug use. “Perceived Availability of Drugs” was the highest scoring scale for the 6th (33.3%) grade, while “Laws and Norms Favor Drug Use” scored higher among 12th graders (44.9%). No risk score for either scale surpassed the BH Norm; the closest margin was 3.2 points for “Laws and Norms Favor Drug Use” in the 12th grade. While that was the highest risk score for this domain, it dropped significantly from 2016’s rate of 60.2%. With the 6th grade having the largest number of students score as at-risk in the “Perceived Availability of Drugs” scale, it’s worth looking at how easily kids in this grade feel it is to obtain illicit substances. When asked how difficult it would be to get cigarettes, 7.3% of 6th grade students said it would be “Sort of easy” or “Very easy.” For alcohol, 16.6% felt the same, for prescription drugs it was 7.0%, marijuana 5.4%, and for harder drugs like cocaine or amphetamines that rate was 3.5%. Having ample opportunity to secure alcohol or other drugs can make trying them that much more tempting. These rates climb dramatically as students get older, so prevention and law enforcement efforts to make access to ATODs scarcer will be an important part of managing that consumption.

Family Domain:

Conflict in the home, a lack of clear rules governing substance abuse and antisocial behavior, and older siblings setting less-than-positive examples can all contribute to a teen's participating in negative behaviors. In this domain, overall scale scores all fell below the BH Norm, but the score for "Family Conflict" (34.4%) came the closest at only 3.5 points under. Scores for this scale were in the top two highest risk areas for the 6th grade (32.9%), 8th grade (34.3%), and the 10th grade (36.9%) as well as overall. The scale that presented the biggest problem as far as the most students at risk was "Parent Attitudes Favor Antisocial Behavior" both overall and for all grades except 6th, where it was the second-highest scoring risk scale. Scores for this scale surpassed 40.0% in the 8th (43.1%), 10th (45.8%), and 12th (46.0%) grades pushing it to 41.7% for Niskayuna overall. This is in contrast with much lower scores for "Parent Attitudes Favor Drug Use." Students learn first at home about what behaviors are acceptable; working with parents to set clear expectations about staying away from things like fighting, theft and vandalism – they same as they would drugs or alcohol – can help alleviate the risk in this area.

School Domain:

Data in the 2017 Niskayuna study show risk scores for "Academic Failure" and "Low Commitment to School" mostly on the rise from those in 2016, with overall scores up 1.6 points and 3.7 points respectively. Only one score associated with this domain surpassed the BH Norm; the 6th grade's mark for "Low Commitment to School" (48.1%) was 5.3 points higher than the national average. All grades but 12th had an increase in the percentage of students at risk in this scale, with the largest being 10.8 points in the 8th grade. This scale looks at things like how important students feel their schoolwork is, whether they find class time interesting and whether they enjoy being in school in general. Only 13.4% of students said they thought what they were learning in school was "Almost Always" meaningful and important, and roughly the same amount (13.1%) said they "Almost Always" enjoyed being in school. When students are engaged in their academic life and see it benefitting them later on, they are less likely to take part in behaviors that might jeopardize the payoff for all that hard work. Prevention efforts should look for ways to help students see the value in an education and the path it provides to a successful future.

Peer-Individual Domain:

The Peer-Individual domain uses 10 separate scales to construct a picture of how student introduction to delinquency and association with friends who use drugs and engage in problem behaviors puts them at risk of engaging in those same types of actions themselves. When looking at this picture, it is hard to miss the one scale that overall scored higher than the BH Norm: "Perceived Risk of Drug Use" (46.5%, 0.7 points over). This scale was the highest or second-highest in every grade, presenting a strong pattern of being at risk no matter what the age group. When students don't

believe they will suffer any physical harm or consequences if they take ATODs, then they are much more likely to do so. “Perceived Risk of Drug Use” deals with students’ beliefs on how likely they are to harm themselves physically, or in other ways, if they use drugs and alcohol. Scores for this scale start at 36.7% in the 8th grade and rise slightly to 37.5% in the 6th grade, but the other two grades - 10th (56.6%) and 12th (56.0%) had a majority of students at risk. Sophomores’ and Seniors’ scores also surpassed the BH Norm by at least 4.0 points. Not all substances are viewed as equally dangerous by Niskayuna youth. According to the crosstab results, 77.4% of students said there was “Great Risk” from smoking one or more packs of cigarettes a day, but only 50.9% said smoking marijuana regularly put them at a similarly high level of risk, and that number diminishes to 23.8% of students believing that trying marijuana once or twice has the same adverse effects. Similarly, only a slight majority of kids surveyed (51.1%) believed regular alcohol use (1-2 drinks nearly every day) put them at “Great Risk” of negative outcomes or health problems; the same for binge drinking (5 or more drinks once or twice each weekend) with a score of 57.5%. Altering students’ perception that ATODs, particularly alcohol and marijuana, are safe and consequence-free will be necessary in any attempt to persuade young people in Niskayuna CSD to avoid their use.

“Rewards for Antisocial Behavior” was the second-highest scoring scale with 39.1% of students overall scoring as at-risk. This was fueled mostly by high scores among high school students with more than half of 10th graders (57.2%) and 12th graders (59.4%) exhibiting risk, while the 8th grade (27.3%) and 6th grade (15.0%) were much lower. High school is a time where teens are especially aware of their social standing and how what they choose to do or partake of affects how they are seen by their peers. This scale asks students to assess how “cool” they might appear to be to their friends if they started using cigarettes, alcohol and marijuana. Looking at the responses for each of these three substances individually helps shine a light on exactly what kids are doing to try and become more popular. Just 3.3% of Niskayuna high school aged youth thought smoking would give them a “Pretty good chance” or “Very good chance” of being seen as cool, but this jumps to 20.8% for alcohol and rises yet again to 22.9% when it comes to marijuana. Altering the perceptions surrounding ATOD use – especially marijuana – will be an integral part of dissuading young people from trying them to impress their friends.

Protective Factors

The percentage of High Protection Youth (students having 3 or more protective factors operating in their lives in the 6th and 7th grade, and 4 or more in the 8th-12th grades) in all grades exceeded that of the BH Norm, with Niskayuna’s overall score of 75.6% being 29.5 points higher than average. However, all grades’ numbers of High Protection Youth dropped slightly – by an average of 3.3 points. Protection scores fell in 68.1% of all scales across all grades, but especially in the 8th grade where almost all scores were less than those in 2016, and the two scales that did not drop had gains that were less than a point, typically viewed as insignificant, statistically speaking. The Family Domain was a bright spot, where two out of three overall scores were on the rise and all three exceeded the national norm.

Community Domain:

In the sole scale for this domain, “Rewards for Prosocial Involvement,” the 8th grade had the highest score at 47.8%, a slight 0.4-point improvement over 2016, other grades experienced a downturn of at least a point or more. The community domain is a measure of how connected young people feel to their neighborhood, and this scale specifically asks them to reflect on whether their neighbors notice when they are doing well and care about their problems and well-being. Prevention is a community effort, and expanding beyond students to those they interact with can help to raise this score.

Family Domain:

One of the stronger domains of protection for young people in Niskayuna CSD, the Family Domain continues to exhibit scores of over 60.0% in a majority of scales, many of these improving over 2016’s Prevention Needs Assessment. Two of the highest scores belonged to the 6th grade in the “Rewards for Prosocial Involvement” (63.5%) and “Family Attachment” (71.5%) scales. The 8th grade had the most students with protection for the “Opportunity for Prosocial Involvement” scale at 73.6%. Overall, Niskayuna scored 68.4% in “Family Attachment” (12.5 points over BH Norm), 68.1% in “Opportunity for Prosocial Involvement” (10.0 points over BH Norm), and 61.6% in “Rewards for Prosocial Involvement” (9.2 points over BH Norm). Only the 8th grade scored lower across the board in all three of the Family Domain scales. Positive family bonds and open communication at home can provide a good place for prevention efforts to begin; working to ameliorate the risk factors discussed earlier in the Family Domain should have increased effectiveness because of these relationships.

School Domain:

A majority of students in Niskayuna see school as a place with a variety of fun activities where they receive praise and positive reinforcement. When this is the case, it can provide motivation for teens to become good citizens of their school rather than engage in antisocial behaviors. The 11th grade was the highest on both scales with 81.9% in “Opportunity for Prosocial Involvement” and 65.7% in “Rewards for Prosocial Involvement.” No scores in any grade were under 45.0% and for the older grades (10th & 12th), scores remained above 60.0%. Overall, the district scored higher than the BH Norm for “Opportunity for Prosocial Involvement” (75.2%) by 11.8 points but was below average for “Rewards for Prosocial Involvement” (56.7%, 8.0 points lower than the BH Norm).

Peer-Individual Domain:

The Peer-Individual Domain saw the most downward momentum out of all the protection categories with all but one overall score dropping from those in 2016 and three (Religiosity 36.7%, Interaction with Prosocial Peers 56.8%, and Rewards for Prosocial Involvement 52.9%) at their lowest marks in the past five years. Students in the 8th grade had the highest levels of protection out of all grades surveyed in 4 out of the 5 domain scales but were also the only group to see all scores decline since 2016. Even so, the 8th grade’s scores for “Belief in the Moral Order” (81.6%) and “Prosocial Involvement” (82.0%) were some of the highest protection scores out of any domain in any grade. Two areas emerged as having the most consistent levels of protection across all grades “Belief in the Moral Order” (74.1% overall) and “Prosocial Involvement” (74.0% overall), with scores well above the BH Norm for all grades.

Sources and Places of Student Alcohol Use

To prevent underage drinking, it is important to understand how kids are getting their alcohol and where they are using it. Two different sources emerge from the data as the most likely places teens obtain alcohol depending on their age: “At a party” topped the list at 52.2% overall and was the most popular choice for 10th and 12th graders, and “I got it at home with my parents’ permission” was the most popular for 6th (76.9%) and 8th (58.1%) graders. When it comes to using the alcohol they find, students are drinking at their home or someone else’s home without any parent permission (55.0%) or at home with their parent’s permission (53.1%).

Consequences and Perceived Risk of Alcohol Use and Binge Drinking

When young people drink, it can be difficult for them to do so responsibly, as evidenced by the rate of binge drinking and the reported instances of negative consequences when doing so. Niskayuna high school students especially reported the most occurrences of physical problems due to their use of alcohol. The most common negative result of 12th graders’ alcohol use was feeling hung over (30.5% had this happen once, 19.7% had it happen at least twice) or feeling sick to one’s stomach or throwing up after drinking (20.3% had this happen once, 7.8% had it happen at least twice.) The same was true of the 11th grade, with 12.4% reporting being hung over once, and 6.7% saying it had happened to them at least twice. Fewer became ill from their drinking with 6.1% reporting being sick once and only 3.3% having it happen two or more times.

Additionally, there were social repercussions to students drinking with some notable numbers being: 5.1% of 12th graders came to school or work drunk, and 6.2% of seniors as well as 3.3% of juniors found themselves at least once in sexual situations they regretted because they had been impaired by alcohol.

Disapproval of Alcohol and Substance Use

An opportunity exists to combat the influences of peer pressure to engage in substance abuse by asking students to consider how they might appear to the rest of their friends if they start using drugs or alcohol regularly - particularly if they start experiencing the physical and social problems reported by some students when doing so discussed earlier in this report. When asked to estimate how their friends would react to their use of alcohol regularly, nearly all (98.7% of 6th graders, and 98.1% of 8th graders) students in the younger grades thought their friends would feel it was “Wrong” or “Very wrong” to

do so. A strong majority (more than 80.0% of students in grades 10 & 12) of high schoolers felt the same. Although numbers were lower, especially among older students when asked about marijuana, they were nevertheless significant. Posing the question to students, “How will you look to your friends?” could be a powerful influencer judging by their responses in this portion of the data.

Perception of Use vs. Actual Use

While the approach of asking children to consider how they will appear to their friends is useful when they believe a majority of their peers disapprove of drug or alcohol use, it can have the opposite effect to those few students who perceive that everyone they know is taking part. What repeated surveying has shown is that many young people overestimate how much substance abuse is actually taking place among their classmates.

If we look at the two most commonly abused substances, alcohol and marijuana, we see this borne out, especially among older teens. Students in the 6th & 8th grades had a strong grasp on whether or not kids their age were using ATODs with most assuming correctly that very few of their peers were involved in that behavior. Each progressive grade had a more difficult time discerning how many of their peers were using alcohol and marijuana often. 10th grade alcohol use in the past month was 16.9%, but 34.8% of students in that grade thought the majority of their peers drank, and while only 7.1% had used marijuana regularly, 26.1% thought it must more common than not among their classmates.

Just over a third of 12th graders (37.9%) had drank alcohol in the past month, but 46.9% of students in that grade thought a majority of their peers drank. The 30-day marijuana use rate for the 12th grade was 16.7%, but 36.2% of those students thought it was at least 50.0%. Making young people aware of how low the actual rate of use is for these substances can help to dispel the myth that “everyone is doing it,” and make declining to do so that much easier.

Reference: Niskayuna Prevention Needs Assessment Profile Report, 2018. Bach Harrison, LLC.

Table 1. Risk & Protective Factor Scale Definitions

<i>Community Domain Risk Factors</i>	
<i>Community Disorganization</i>	Research has shown that neighborhoods with high population density, lack of natural surveillance of public places, physical deterioration, and high rates of adult crime also have higher rates of juvenile crime and drug selling.
<i>Low Neighborhood Attachment</i>	A low level of bonding to the neighborhood is related to higher levels of juvenile crime and drug selling.
<i>Laws and Norms Favorable Toward Drug Use</i>	Research has shown that legal restrictions on alcohol and tobacco use, such as raising the legal drinking age, restricting smoking in public places, and increased taxation have been followed by decreases in consumption. Moreover, national surveys of high school seniors have shown that shifts in normative attitudes toward drug use have preceded changes in prevalence of use.
<i>Perceived Availability of Drugs</i>	The availability of cigarettes, alcohol, marijuana, and other illegal drugs has been related to the use of these substances by adolescents.
<i>Community Domain Protective Factors</i>	
<i>Opportunities for Positive Involvement</i>	When opportunities are available in a community for positive participation, children are less likely to engage in substance use and other problem behaviors.
<i>Rewards for Positive Involvement</i>	Rewards for positive participation in activities helps children bond to the community, thus lowering their risk for substance use.
<i>Family Domain Risk Factors</i>	
<i>Exposure to Adult Antisocial Behavior</i>	When children are raised in a family or are around adults with a history of problem behaviors (e.g., violence or ATOD use), the children are more likely to engage in these behaviors.
<i>Sibling Drug Use</i>	Youth who are raised in a family where their siblings use drugs are more likely to use drugs themselves.
<i>Family Conflict</i>	Children raised in families high in conflict, whether or not the child is directly involved in the conflict, appear at risk for both delinquency and drug use.
<i>Parental Attitudes Favorable Toward Antisocial Behavior & Drugs</i>	In families where parents use illegal drugs, are heavy users of alcohol, or are tolerant of children's use, children are more likely to become drug abusers during adolescence. The risk is further increased if parents involve children in their own drug (or alcohol) using behavior, for example, asking the child to light the parent's cigarette or get the parent a beer from the refrigerator.
<i>Poor Family Management</i>	Parents' use of inconsistent and/or unusually harsh or severe punishment with their children places them at higher risk for substance use and other problem behaviors. Also, parents' failure to provide clear expectations and to monitor their children's behavior makes it more likely that they will engage in drug abuse whether or not there are family drug problems
<i>Family Domain Protective Factors</i>	
<i>Family Attachment</i>	Young people who feel that they are a valued part of their family are less likely to engage in substance use and other problem behaviors.
<i>Opportunities for Prosocial Involvement</i>	Young people who are exposed to more opportunities to participate meaningfully in the responsibilities and activities of the family are less likely to engage in drug use and other problem behaviors.

Rewards for Prosocial Involvement	When parents, siblings, and other family members praise, encourage, and attend to things done well by their child, children are less likely to engage in substance use and problem behaviors.
School Domain Risk Factors	
Academic Failure	Beginning in the late elementary grades (grades 4-6) academic failure increases the risk of both drug abuse and delinquency. It appears that the experience of failure itself, for whatever reasons, increases the risk of problem behaviors.
Low Commitment to School	Surveys of high school seniors have shown that the use of hallucinogens, cocaine, heroin, stimulants, and sedatives or non-medically prescribed tranquilizers is significantly lower among students who expect to attend college than among those who do not. Factors such as liking school, spending time on homework, and perceiving the coursework as relevant are also negatively related to drug use.
School Domain Protective Factors	
Opportunities for Prosocial Involvement	When young people are given more opportunities to participate meaningfully in important activities at school, they are less likely to engage in drug use and other problem behaviors.
Rewards for Prosocial Involvement	When young people are recognized and rewarded for their contributions at school, they are less likely to be involved in substance use and other problem behaviors
Peer-Individual Risk Factors	
Early Initiation of Antisocial Behavior and Drug Use	Early onset of drug use predicts misuse of drugs. The earlier the onset of any drug use, the greater the involvement in other drug use and the greater frequency of use. Onset of drug use prior to the age of 15 is a consistent predictor of drug abuse, and a later age of onset of drug use has been shown to predict lower drug involvement and a greater probability of discontinuation of use.
Attitudes Favorable Toward Antisocial Behavior and Drug Use	During the elementary school years, most children express anti-drug, anti-crime, and pro-social attitudes and have difficulty imagining why people use drugs or engage in antisocial behaviors. However, in middle school, as more youth are exposed to others who use drugs and engage in antisocial behavior, their attitudes often shift toward greater acceptance of these behaviors. Youth who express positive attitudes toward drug use and antisocial behavior are more likely to engage in a variety of problem behaviors, including drug use.
Friends' Use of Drugs	Young people who associate with peers who engage in alcohol or substance abuse are much more likely to engage in the same behavior. Peer drug use has consistently been found to be among the strongest predictors of substance use among youth. Even when young people come from well-managed families and do not experience other risk factors, spending time with friends who use drugs greatly increases the risk of that problem developing.
Interaction with Antisocial Peers	Young people who associate with peers who engage in problem behaviors are at higher risk for engaging in antisocial behavior themselves.
Perceived Risk of Drug Use	Young people who do not perceive drug use to be risky are far more likely to engage in drug use.
Rewards for Antisocial Behavior	Young people who receive rewards for their antisocial behavior are at higher risk for engaging further in antisocial behavior and substance use.
Rebelliousness	Young people who do not feel part of society, are not bound by rules, don't believe in trying to be successful or responsible, or who take an active rebellious stance toward society, are at higher risk of abusing drugs. In addition, high tolerance for deviance, a strong need for independence and normlessness have all been linked with drug use.
Depressive Symptoms	Young people who are depressed are overrepresented in the criminal justice system and are more likely to use drugs. Survey research and other studies have shown a link between depression and other youth problem behaviors.
Gang Involvement	Youth who belong to gangs are more at risk for antisocial behavior and drug use.
Peer-Individual Protective Factors	
Religiosity	Young people who regularly attend religious services are less likely to engage in problem behaviors.
Social Skills	Young people who are socially competent and engage in positive interpersonal relations with their peers are less likely to use drugs and engage in other problem behaviors.
Belief in the Moral Order	Young people who have a belief in what is "right" or "wrong" are less likely to use drugs.
Prosocial Involvement	Participation in positive school and community activities helps provide protection for youth.
Rewards for Prosocial	Young people who view working hard in school and the community as rewarding are less likely to engage in problem behavior.

