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Survey Research & Evaluation Services

2020 Prevention Needs Assessment Survey

Summary of Profile Report

for:

Niskayuna, NY

Sponsored By:



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This report presents a brief summary of the Niskayuna Profile Report compiled from the 2020 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 887 surveys were found to be valid and honest. The male students totaled 48.0% of those surveyed and 52.0% were female. The 6th grade students contributed 28.4% of the utilized surveys, the 8th grade was responsible for 31.3% of responses, the 10th grade added 14.1%, and 12th graders contributed 26.2%. Students who identified themselves as White contributed 67.3% of the surveys, Asian had 14.4%, African American students contributed 5.1%, Hispanic students were represented by 2.6% of responses, Native American students gave 2.1% of the surveys collected, and those who identified as Pacific Islander had 0.8%. Multi-racial students comprised 7.7% of those surveyed. The survey overall had excellent participation rates, with 887 completed forms out of a sample of 960 for a participation rate of 92.3%. Rates of 60.0% or higher mean the report is a good indicator of the levels of substance abuse, risk, protection, and antisocial behavior in this population.

Alcohol, Tobacco, and Other Drug Use

Alcohol - Lifetime and 30-day Use:

Experimentation with alcohol increases steadily in each grade measured from 5.2% in the 6th grade, to 15.5% in the 8th grade, 37.9% in the 10th grade, and 64.3% of 12th graders reporting 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. Scores for Niskayuna high school seniors were significantly higher than those of Monitoring the Future (MTF) – a national survey of youth in the United States in grades 8, 10 and 12. The 8th grade's score was 8.0 points lower than MTF, the 10th grade was 5.1 points below, but the 12th grade was 5.8 points higher than the national rate of 58.5% for that grade. Overall, the region has only a fraction of the lifetime alcohol use rates of students nationwide with a lifetime score of 27.6% - 13.6 points below MTF – which represented a drop of 2.1 points from 2018.

Results for 30-day use showed greater regular alcohol consumption among teens in Niskayuna than in years previous by as much as 24.8% in the 10th grade (22.5%, 5.6 points higher than 2018). High school seniors had the largest disparity when compared to the MTF study with a score 15.3 points higher for the number of students using alcohol in the last month versus the rest of the country (45.5%). Overall, Niskayuna was up 2.1 points from 2018, yet remained 2.1 points lower than the national average. All grades surveyed saw an increase in regular alcohol use, with high schoolers in the 10th and 12th grades exhibiting the greatest uptick in use. While scores were higher than

those in 2018, they were not as high as those in 2016 for the grades covered by the MTF.

Alcohol - Binge Drinking:

Three out of four grades surveyed reported rates of binge drinking (having more than 5 drinks at a time) that either decreased or remained roughly the same. The 12th grade saw the most pronounced results (26.6%, up 8.2 points from 2018) with over half the number of students who drank regularly also admitting to binge drinking behavior. This rate was almost double the MTF mark of 13.8%. Other grades were much lower; from 0.4% in the 6th grade, to 1.9% in the 8th grade, and 4.8% in the 10th grade – a 1.6-point drop from 2018. However, higher rates of use among seniors helped push the overall rate of binge drinking in Niskayuna to 8.1% - a 1.6-point increase from the previous survey and nearly at the nationwide rate of 8.6%.

The degree to which grades participated in binge drinking 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), 60.9% of 6th graders and 50.0% of 8th graders in the district thought it put them at "Great risk," while just 36.9% of 10th graders and 36.5% of 12th graders felt the same. Making students aware of and getting them to internalize the dangers associated with binge drinking can be an effective way to combat this behavior.

Cigarettes:

Regular cigarette use in Niskayuna is virtually nonexistent, with three of the four grades surveyed reporting 0.0% 30-day cigarette use, and the 12th grade was down to 2.5% from 6.5% just two years ago. Overall, the rate of smoking cigarettes during the past month (0.6%) was below one percent and the lowest it has been in the past 5 years. When it comes to students trying smoking, nearly all grades were in a decline (6th grade, 0.0% down 0.7 points; 10th grade, 2.0% down 5.0 points; 12th grade, 9.6% down 7.1 points) but the 8th grade showed a slight increase of 0.4 points. As pointed out above, this did not result in students in this grade picking up the habit. Low 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 many students have simply moved instead to e-cigarettes or vaping.

E-Cigarettes:

E-cigarettes and vaping are still prevalent among young people in Niskayuna, yet the popularity of these substances and devices is on the decline in all grades, and the region falls well below the national average for vaping as well. E-cigarettes even fell to the third-most popular ATOD behind marijuana after being listed as number two in 2016. The 12th grade showed the highest rates of experimentation with these types of smoking devices at 31.0% and was also the highest for 30-day use at 13.8%. Overall, lifetime vaping (12.0%) is down 26.8% from the last survey, and past-month use (5.4%) was down 51.7% from 2016.

Niskayuna stands in sharp contrast to the nation as a whole, with its vaping numbers far below those for students in other areas. The measure for lifetime vaping is less than half that of MTF (12.0%, MTF 33.4%), and the 30-day use score of 5.4% is more than three times less than the national average of 19.3%.

For teens in this region, rates of regular vaping make up for low cigarette use, with more than six times as many young people saying they used e-cigarettes than those who reported using cigarettes in the past month.

Marijuana:

While vaping is on the decline, regular marijuana use in Niskayuna is on the rise, and the substance has reclaimed its position and the second most-popular illegal substance among young people in the region. Experimentation with the drug is mostly down, by 0.3 points in the 6th grade (0.0%), by 3.2 points in the 10th grade (13.6%), and by 2.1 points in the 12th grade (36.9%). The 8th grade increased slightly to 3.8%, back to its 2016 level. Of the students who try marijuana, however, a fair percentage continue to use regularly. In the 8th grade, 71% of students who had tried marijuana also used it during the past month, in the 10th grade it was 49.6%, and in the 12th grade, 59.0% went on to use regularly once they had tried marijuana.

When examining reasons for marijuana use, it may be helpful to focus on its accessibility to young people. A majority of 12th graders in Niskayuna (64.2%) believed it would be “Sort of easy” or “Very easy” to get their hands on the drug. Some of this may be due to close proximity to others who use marijuana. When asked about their friends’ behavior, 30.9% of 10th graders, and 58.4% of 12th graders said that they had at least one best friend who used marijuana and over a third of 12th (40.9%) grade students had a sibling who smoked pot. Preventing access to marijuana – especially from those in young people’s circle of influence – could be a way of potentially decreasing its use.

Inhalants:

Using chemicals and solvents in order to get high is on the decline in Niskayuna as a whole, but two grades saw an increase in experimentation with these substances. The 8th grade rose 1.1 points from 2018 and the 12th grade went from 1.5 in 2018 to 4.5 in this latest survey placing students in this grade just over the national average. Regular use also more than doubled in the 8th (1.1%) and 10th (1.0%) grades, though the total percentage remains quite low. While a notable rise in use is something of concern, it seems likely that much of the use of inhalants is limited with 82.7% of respondents who admitted to using them saying that they only did so on “1-2 Occasions”.

Other Drugs:

In Niskayuna, the 12th grade experienced the greatest number of top scores in lifetime use of other substances with higher rates of use of Hallucinogens (2.5%), Cocaine (1.5%), Amphetamines (3.0%), Tranquilizers (3.0%), Ecstasy (1.0%), and Synthetic Marijuana (2.5%). On a positive note, with the exception of Synthetic Marijuana, all lifetime use rates for the 12th grade for these substances were down by about half. They were also well below the MTF rates for these ATODs. The 10th grade had the highest rates for the most substances in 30-day use – particularly in Hallucinogens (1.0%) and Methamphetamines (2.0%) where there were statistically significant increases of a percentage point or more. Overall, the region saw lower-than-average scores in these other substances; only 30-day use of Methamphetamine (0.3%) was higher than the national norm. The low use of these substances is a positive outcome and allows prevention efforts to more closely focus on the other substances that present a greater challenge among Niskayuna youth.

Energy Drinks:

Energy drinks reach their peak popularity in the 12th grade in Niskayuna, where 27.2% of students say they consume them regularly (Lifetime use for energy drinks is not measured.) They are less popular among other students from 13.0% in the 6th grade, to 16.8% in the 10th grade, and 20.6% in the 8th grade. All these rates represent an increase over 2018 data. 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

All measured antisocial behaviors in Niskayuna are reported at rates 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 – in some cases, far below. All but two overall measures showed increased instances of this behavior over 2018, the largest being a 1.7-point rise in Attacked Someone with the Idea of Seriously Hurting Them.

Being Drunk or High at School

It is possible that higher-than-average rates of regular alcohol use, especially among high school-aged students, have carried over into students' behavior at school, with 5.0% of students overall reporting being drunk or high in class; Niskayuna remains at less than half the national rate of 10.4%. In the 12th grade, just over one in ten students (12.7%) admitted to coming to school under the influence – 0.4 points lower than in 2018, and 2.5 points lower than students the same age nationwide. In the 10th grade, rates of coming to school under the influence almost doubled from 4.9% in 2018 to 8.9% in 2020. When asked how many times in the past year students had come to school drunk or high, 4.1% of 12th graders said they had only done so between 1 and 5 times, but only 0.5% made it more of a habit, admitting to doing so at least 5 times in the last 12 months.

Younger grades surveyed were very unlikely to use while at school; no 6th graders at all reported the behavior and only 1.8% of 8th graders had done so in the past year.

Suspended from School

School suspensions were at their highest in the 10th grade at 4.5%, followed by the 8th grade at 3.7%, and the 6th grade at 3.0%, but there was a sharp drop-off for 12th graders surveyed with only 0.9% of students reporting being suspended. The 6th grade's rate was almost double the suspension rates in past surveys (2016 – 1.8%, 2018 – 1.6%), the 8th and 10th grades saw only slight increases, and the 12th grade saw its school suspensions drop by more than half.

Selling Illegal Drugs

The rate of drug distribution by peers in the 2020 study was at its highest in the 12th grade at 4.2%, but no grades in Niskayuna surpassed the BH Norm. The region overall

(1.7%) was well below the BH Norm of 4.5%. When students were asked to share whether any of their best friends sold drugs, 4.0% of students overall – and 5.4% of 10th graders, 9.4% of 12th graders – said at least one of their four closest friends were involved in that activity. Preventing use also means preventing supply, and efforts to reduce the sale and distribution of drugs among peers can be a powerful aid in stopping the spread of ATODs.

Attacking Others

Violence scores for this population were much lower than the national average, the overall rate of 4.2% falling well below the BH Norm of 8.0%. Unlike some other antisocial behaviors, the highest marks for attacking others were in the younger grades (6th – 4.2%, 8th – 5.5%), which also saw a significant increase in this behavior. When asked, 21.9% of Niskayuna students said it was only “A Little Bit Wrong” or “Not Wrong at All” to pick a fight. Changing attitudes with groups of students who don’t feel fighting is wrong may play a part in lessening violent incidents in school.

Carried a Handgun

The overall score for this behavior (1.3%) was significantly lower than the BH Norm with no grades exceeding the national average (7.0%). This score remains roughly unchanged from previous year’s surveys and only the 6th grade saw any real increase from 1.6% in 2018 to 2.5% 2020. All other grades fell below 1.0%. Fortunately, these instances of possessing a firearm haven’t bled into the schools with the overall rate of bringing a handgun to school remaining only 0.2%. Only high school seniors reported this happening at all, at a rate of 0.9% - 0.7 points below the BH Norm.

Gambling

Instances of gambling in Niskayuna were relatively low with most overall scores barely approaching the BH Norm, and many much lower. The overall percentage of students who gambled in any form during the past year was 24.1% down 2.1 points from 2018. Students in the 12th grade reported the highest rate of gambling at 29.3%. The three most popular forms of gambling were playing the lottery (12.4%), betting on sports (8.4%), and betting on horses at 6.9%.

Risk Factors

This administration of the PNA Survey showed a wide range of categories scoring more students as at risk from the previous survey in 2018. Only three overall scores outpaced the national average, however. The 12th grade had the highest percentage of youth scoring as at-risk scores in 11 of the 20 scales measured; the 6th grade was next with 6. The widest differences exceeding the BH Norm when compared to Niskayuna overall were in “Attitudes Favorable to Antisocial Behavior” in the Peer-Individual Domain at 38.1% (5.0 points above BH Norm) and “Depressive Symptoms” also in the Peer-Individual Domain at 43.4% (2.6 points above BH Norm).

Community Domain:

Both scales in this domain deal with attitudes toward drug use. “Laws and Norms Favor Drug Use” scored highest among 10th (27.7%) and 12th graders (40.1%), but no scores in this scale exceeded the BH Norm. The scores for “Perceived Availability of Drugs”

were the higher of the two scales among younger students, with the 6th grade's (37.5%) and 8th grade's (20.2%) scores climbing slightly from those in 2020, and the 6th grade's score putting it 1.7 points above the BH Norm. A closer examination of which substances young people find particularly difficult to obtain shows that certain ATODs are helping to keep this score low while others are viewed as more readily available. When asked "If you wanted to get some marijuana, how easy would it be for you to get some?" 40.0% of 10th graders and 64.2% of 12th graders said it would be "Sort of easy" or "Very easy" for them to get it. Contrast this with rates of 7.0% and 16.1% for those same grades when asked about LSD, cocaine, amphetamines, or other drugs.

Family Domain:

Conflict in the home, a lack of clear rules governing substance abuse and antisocial behavior, and older siblings or relatives setting less-than-positive examples can all contribute to a teen's participating in negative behaviors. Two scales, "Family Conflict" (37.7%, up 3.3 points) and "Parent Attitudes Favor Antisocial Behavior" (30.2%, up 0.7 points) had higher overall scores by at least 1.0 point than those in 2018. "Family Conflict" was the only scale to score higher than the BH Norm overall at 37.7% (1.7 points over BH Norm) and this was true for grades 8-12 also. The scale with the highest percentage of students at risk was "Parent Attitudes Favor Antisocial Behavior" at 43.2% overall and reached as high as 47.4% in the 12th grade. Home environments that are fraught with conflict often have a way of bleeding into other aspects of young people's lives. When asked, more than a third (34.0%) of Niskayuna students said that their families had serious arguments, 37.2% said that those arguments were something that happened repeatedly, and 29.1% said that those arguments often devolved into insulting or yelling at each other. Helping families discover more positive ways of communicating and dealing with difficulties respectfully in ways that resolve problems could help to decrease these risk scores.

School Domain:

Data in the 2020 Niskayuna study show lower risk scores for "Academic Failure" than "Low Commitment to School" – the only two scales in this domain – with the second measure having the third-highest overall risk score (46.4%) out of all scales and domains.

The 6th grade had the highest score for "Low Commitment to School" (53.7%) with a majority of students scoring as at-risk, 6.7 points higher than their peers nationwide. The 8th grade's score of 30.2% for "Academic Failure" put it as the grade most at risk in this scale and 0.6 points over the BH Norm. "Low Commitment to School" measures 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 8.7% of students said they thought their school courses were "Very interesting and stimulating," and 23.1% said they "Often" or "Almost Always" hated 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 might 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 scale that scored the highest: “Perceived Risk of Drug Use” (55.2%). 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 nearly half of all students (43.0%) at risk in the 6th grade and 47.9% in the 8th grade and continue to rise with the other grades – 10th (65.4%), and 12th (66.2%) – both showing a majority of students at risk. The 10th and 12th grade students’ scores surpassed the BH Norm, the largest difference being among high school seniors who were 7.6 points higher than the national average.

Not all substances are viewed as equally dangerous by Niskayuna youth. According to the crosstab results, 64.2% of students said there was “Great Risk” from smoking one or more packs of cigarettes a day, but only 46.2% said smoking marijuana regularly put them at a similarly high level of risk, and that number diminishes to 16.9% of students believing that trying marijuana once or twice has the same adverse effects.

Students found alcohol to be even more dangerous than marijuana, with 40.3% of kids believing regular alcohol use (1-2 drinks nearly every day) put them at “Great Risk” of negative outcomes or health problems; and only slightly more agreed for binge drinking (5 or more drinks once or twice each weekend) with a score of 48.0%. Altering students’ perception that ATODs, particularly marijuana, are safe and consequence-free might be necessary in any attempt to persuade young people in Niskayuna to avoid their use.

The second-highest scores in the Peer/Individual Domain were in the “Depressive Symptoms” scale. In much the same fashion as “Perceived Risk of Drug Use,” scores were at their lowest in the 6th grade at 39.7% and the 8th grade at 42.0%, and increased to 43.4% in the 10th grade, and the 12th grade had 49.5% of students scoring as at-risk. These scale scores all represent the highest number of students at risk in this category since 2016, and Niskayuna’s overall score of 43.4% outpaced the national average by 2.6 points.

A positive area in this domain was the relatively low scores for “Early Initiation of Drug Use,” at just 12.3% overall. Two grades (6th – 4.3%, and 10th – 9.3%) showed declines and all scores were below the BH Norm by at least 12.6 points.

Protective Factors

When it came to protective factors, Niskayuna experienced a decrease in the percentage of students receiving protection in two domains: Family and Peer-Individual, but saw more students with protection in the Community and School domains. Even some scales that scored a bit lower than in the past still surpassed the BH Norm. In fact, 6 out of the 11 scales had Niskayuna youth receiving more protection than their peers nationwide. The biggest differences overall were in “Prosocial Involvement” in the Peer-Individual Domain (71.3% - 15.4 points higher than the BH Norm) and “Opportunity for

Prosocial Involvement” in the School Domain (78.7% - 11.1 points higher than the BH Norm). The 12th grade struggled the most out of any age group with the lowest scores in 5 out of the 11 scales measured. Conversely, the 8th grade reported the highest protection in 4 scales, the most out of any grade. Looking at scores across all grades, Niskayuna youth had a majority of students reporting protection in 75.0% of the categories measured in the survey.

Community Domain:

In the sole scale for this domain, “Rewards for Prosocial Involvement,” the 6th grade had the highest score at 43.9% and the lowest score belonged to the 12th grade at 35.2%. Only the 6th grade’s mark was above the score of their peers in other parts of the country. Overall, Niskayuna was 1.1 points below the BH Norm of 41.2%. All but one grade (8th) showed an increase in the percentage of students receiving protection from 2016. 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 may help to raise this score.

Family Domain:

A strong area to foster prevention in Niskayuna is the family unit. In every grade and in every scale, most students receive protection in this domain. Family Attachment was the scale with the highest overall score (68.4%) and the highest scores for each grade, led by the 6th grade at 70.0%. The 6th grade also scored highest in “Rewards for Prosocial Involvement” at 65.6%. The 8th grade’s protection score of 71.8% in “Opportunity for Prosocial Involvement” put it at the top of that scale. While these high scores are something to be pleased with – and nearly all were a good deal above the BH Norm – many did decline from previous year’s surveys. Positive family bonds and open communication at home can provide a good place for prevention efforts to begin, especially if there exists opportunities and incentives within that framework.

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 8th grade was the highest on the “Opportunity for Prosocial Involvement” scale with 80.1%, and the 10th grade’s score of 78.6% in “Rewards for Prosocial Involvement” put it on top for that scale. All overall scores were above 60.0% and while “Opportunity for Prosocial Involvement” surpassed the BH Norm by 11.1 points, “Rewards for Prosocial Involvement” was below the BH Norm by 13.0 points. Almost all students (96.8%) were happy with the amount of activities outside of class that were available to them, and 77.5% said that their teachers noticed and let them know when they are doing well. An opportunity exists to reinforce school accomplishments at home because only a little over a third (37.8%) said that the school passed on news of academic or behavioral accomplishments to their parents.

Peer-Individual Domain:

The Peer-Individual Domain exhibited some major drops in the rate of protection for students in all grades with only a couple exceptions. However, high scores in “Belief in the Moral Order” (64.4%) and “Prosocial Involvement” (71.3%) had a strong majority of students receiving protection, and though many scores were lower than in the past, they nevertheless represented most students receiving protection in nearly every category measured.

Prosocial Involvement was above 65.0% in every grade; this scale looks at the amount of time students spend participating in extracurricular activities, volunteer work and service opportunities both in and out of school. An impressive amount of Niskayuna students (83.4%) said they participated in school clubs and organizations at least once or twice in the past year and almost a third of students (30.4%) said they did so more than 40 times. Overall, 82.7% of students had done extra schoolwork on their own and two-thirds (66.1%) had done at least some type of service in their communities.

An opportunity exists to use this widespread participation in constructive activities to increase protection in another area in the Peer-Individual Domain, “Rewards for Prosocial Involvement”. As it stands now, only 48.2% of students are receiving protection in this scale, which looks at how students feel they will be perceived when they participate in positive endeavors. Only 13.6% of students felt that there was a “very good chance” they would be “seen as cool” if they worked hard at school, and only 10.9% thought the same if it were known they regularly volunteered to do community service. This is despite that fact that so many of their peers are already participating in these activities. Letting students see that almost everyone they know at school is taking part in these types of activities may help them to recognize the benefit they bring to both themselves and others.

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: “I got it at a party” topped the list at 38.2% overall and was among the most popular sources among every age of Niskayuna students (12th – 50.8%, 10th – 33.3%, 8th – 18.2%, 6th – 22.2%); “I got it from home with my parents’ permission” was second at 35.4%. It’s interesting to note that for students in the 8th grade, two popular sources were “I got it from home with my parents’ permission” (27.3%) and “I got it from home without my parents’ permission” (18.2%). Working with parents to talk to their teens and ensure that there will not be alcohol at the parties they attend and educating them on the dangers of establishing a permissive attitude towards alcohol consumption in the home and keeping alcohol at home controlled and away from kids, even if they believe their children are safer when supervised, can be effective steps in prevention efforts.

A majority of Niskayuna students (59.5%) had had a talk with either of their parents about the dangers of underage drinking – but keeping those lines of communications open and making sure parents follow up on those discussions with clear expectations can be an important first step. When it comes to using the alcohol they find, students in Niskayuna are primarily drinking at their home or someone else’s home without any parent permission (47.8%) or at home with their parent’s permission (46.9%).

Consequences and Perceived Risk of Alcohol Use and Binge Drinking

When young people drink, it can be difficult for them to do so responsibly, and as might be expected with a higher-than-average binge drinking rate among seniors, some students experienced the negative effects of using alcohol to excess. 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 (26.7% who used alcohol had this happen once, 19.9% had it happen at least twice) or feeling sick to one's stomach or throwing up after drinking (19.8% had this happen once, 7.2% had it happen at least twice.) Other grades which had lower rates of binge drinking did not show the same negative effects; the 6th grade reported no incidents of negative effects of alcohol, the 8th grade's were around 1.0% or fewer, and the 10th grade only approached 6.0% in the two areas mentioned above with the rest much lower or 0.0%.

Additionally, there were social repercussions to older students drinking with some notable numbers being: 4.1% of 12th graders came to school or work drunk, and 8.2% of seniors got into a conflict with friends due to alcohol use. Another troubling result of high school students getting drunk is the number of unintended sexual encounters that occurred; 2.0% of 10th graders and 4.7% of 12th graders 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 having one or two drinks of alcohol nearly every day, a great many – as high as 98.7% of 6th graders, and 85.1% overall – students in Niskayuna thought their friends would feel it was “Wrong” or “Very wrong” to do so. No grade's response was below 60.0%, indicating that most students felt this was a behavior their friends would look down upon. Although numbers were lower – especially among older students (10th grade – 78.2%, 12th grade 53.5%) – when asked about marijuana (83.1% overall), 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 young people 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 students who hold the misconception 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 three most commonly abused substances: alcohol, marijuana, and e-cigarettes, we see this borne out, especially among older teens. Students in the 6th and 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, marijuana, and vaping often. Recall that the rate of 10th grade alcohol use in the past month was 22.5%, but 33.5% of students in that grade thought the majority of their peers drank, and while only 6.9% had used marijuana regularly, 27.9% thought it must more common than not among their classmates. A fair amount of 12th graders (45.5%) had drank alcohol in the past month, but 48.7% in that grade thought that half or more of their peers drank. The 30-day marijuana use rate for the 12th grade was 21.8%, but 34.5% of those students thought it was half or more of their classmates who were smoking marijuana. Similarly, 13.8% of 12th graders had used e-cigarettes in the past 30 days, but 57.3% thought that the majority of their classmates were vaping regularly. 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 School District Prevention Needs Assessment Profile Report, 2020. 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.
<i>Rewards for Prosocial Involvement</i>	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.
<i>School Domain Risk Factors</i>	
<i>Academic Failure</i>	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.
<i>Low Commitment to School</i>	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.
<i>School Domain Protective Factors</i>	
<i>Opportunities for Prosocial Involvement</i>	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.
<i>Rewards for Prosocial Involvement</i>	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
<i>Peer-Individual Risk Factors</i>	
<i>Early Initiation of Antisocial Behavior and Drug Use</i>	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.
<i>Attitudes Favorable Toward Antisocial Behavior and Drug Use</i>	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.
<i>Friends' Use of Drugs</i>	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.
<i>Interaction with Antisocial Peers</i>	Young people who associate with peers who engage in problem behaviors are at higher risk for engaging in antisocial behavior themselves.
<i>Perceived Risk of Drug Use</i>	Young people who do not perceive drug use to be risky are far more likely to engage in drug use.
<i>Rewards for Antisocial Behavior</i>	Young people who receive rewards for their antisocial behavior are at higher risk for engaging further in antisocial behavior and substance use.
<i>Rebelliousness</i>	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.
<i>Depressive Symptoms</i>	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.
<i>Gang Involvement</i>	Youth who belong to gangs are more at risk for antisocial behavior and drug use.
<i>Peer-Individual Protective Factors</i>	
<i>Religiosity</i>	Young people who regularly attend religious services are less likely to engage in problem behaviors.
<i>Social Skills</i>	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.
<i>Belief in the Moral Order</i>	Young people who have a belief in what is "right" or "wrong" are less likely to use drugs.

<i>Prosocial Involvement</i>	Participation in positive school and community activities helps provide protection for youth.
<i>Rewards for Prosocial</i>	Young people who view working hard in school and the community as rewarding are less likely to engage in problem behavior.