

Fairfield County
Youth Behavior Survey
2008
Executive Summary

Background

In 2004, in an effort to obtain a statistically reliable and current overview of Fairfield County youth, the Fairfield County ADAMH Board, Prevention Works for a Drug-Free Fairfield County and the Fairfield County Family, Adult and Children First Council sponsored and conducted the first bi-annual Youth Behavior Survey in all but one public school in Fairfield County. Results of the survey are used to help plan targeted in-school programs, evaluate program effectiveness over time, identify trends and obtain grants to support needed services. Subsequent surveys in 2006 and 2008 were completed in all public schools. A total of 2,645 students in grades 10 and 12 participated in the 2008 survey through their respective school districts. The results of the surveys provide a benchmark for alcohol, tobacco and other drug (ATOD) use as well as a snapshot of antisocial and delinquent behavior among our youth. These behaviors are self-reported. Concurrently, the survey also assesses the risk factors that are related to these behaviors and the protective factors that guard against them.

Key Findings of 2008 Youth Behavior Survey

Results of the study suggest that frequent drug use among Fairfield County twelfth graders has declined since 2004. The study shows that frequent alcohol use among twelfth graders declined from 37.9% in 2004 to 35.6% in 2006 to 31.2% in 2008.

- While frequent marijuana use has declined since 2004 there was a modest increase from 2006 to 2008.
- Frequent use of all tobacco products have increased since 2006.
- Frequent illegal use of prescription drugs declined in 2006 and 2008.

The 2008 data also reveal another important positive fact. Fairfield County youth initiating the use of alcohol, tobacco, marijuana and prescription drugs are now older than ever before. This trend is important since the longer use is delayed, the less likely the individual is to become harmfully involved with substances as they grow older.

Average age of first use	2004	2006	2008
Alcohol	14.31	14.41	14.58
Cigarettes	13.78	13.94	14.34
Marijuana	14.63	14.60	14.89
Other People's Prescriptions	14.85	14.59	15.60

Frequent Use (30 day use) of Mood Altering Substances - %	2004	2006	2008
Selected Substances			
Alcohol	37.4	35.6	31.2
Cigarettes	24.1	23.0	23.4
Marijuana	18.8	15.1	15.8
Other People's Prescriptions	9.4	8.5	7.2

The Fairfield County Youth Behavior Survey further disclosed that alcohol and marijuana in particular are easily obtained by local high school students with 64.2 percent of twelfth graders reporting that alcohol was very easy to obtain and 46 percent reporting that marijuana was very easy to obtain.

The issues of binge drinking and attendance at parties where parents have allowed alcohol were included in the survey for the first time in 2008. Results indicated that 54.7% of seniors reported that they have been to a party where parents have allowed alcohol. In regard to binge drinking, 53.2% of seniors reported that they had consumed 5 or more glasses of any alcoholic beverage within a few hours.

Risk and Protective Factors

Just as there are both risk factors and protective factors associated with many human diseases, there are factors that can help protect youth from, or put them at risk for, drug use and other problem behaviors. The 2008 Fairfield County Youth Behavior Survey measures a variety of protective and risk factors. Unlike behaviors (alcohol use, drug use, etc.) that are quantitatively measured as a result of a direct student response to an individual question, these factors are measured by “factor analysis” or “structural equation modeling” to provide profiles of pathways to specific risky behaviors.

Protective factors, also called assets, are conditions that buffer children and youth from exposure to risk either by reducing the impact of risks or changing the way that young people respond to risks. These are characteristics that are known to decrease the likelihood that a student will engage in problem behaviors.

Protective Factors - %	2004	2006	2008
Participation in school activities	55	55.6	58.7
Participation in organized school sports	42	43.5	47.2
Good grades	86	85.9	81.6
Parents/guardians set clear rules	78	81.7	76.7
Parents/guardians enforce rules	75	76	76.7
Parents/guardians talk about harmful effects of drugs and alcohol	59	54.6	53.9
Parents involved in education (homework, school activities, conferences, etc.	59	64	60.7
Trusted adult at home	84	89.6	85.9
Trusted adult at school	66	71.1	68.8

Behavioral Issues

In addition to alcohol, drug and tobacco use behavior, the 2008 Fairfield County Youth Behavior Survey also measures other problem behaviors.

Behavior	2004	2006	2008
Engaging in sexual activity	71	69.7	71.3
Forced to engage in sexual activity	13	9	12
Thoughts of killing themselves	12	11.3	10.4
Tried to kill themselves	5.3	4.3	3
Self-mutilate	9.3	9.1	7

The 2008 Fairfield County Youth Behavior Survey illustrate that a collaborative approach to prevention works and that an increasing majority of our young people are not using drugs and alcohol. No one sector of the community can single-handedly address adolescent drug and alcohol use or problem behaviors. The reality is parents, schools, businesses, law enforcement, faith-based organizations, human services and other sectors working together can and do have a significant, long term impact in preventing adolescent substance abuse and related behaviors. Fairfield County is beginning to see the results of this type of collaboration with the data collected for 2008.

* The 2008 Fairfield County Youth Behavior Survey data can be found at www.fair-mha.org, the website of the Fairfield County ADAMH Board, after September 2, 2008.