

Youth Focus Group

OCTOBER 28, 2020

Major Themes

- Mental Health is a major concern for youth
- Youth cope with mental health problems through substance use
- Covid has made mental health worse for youth
- With covid, more solo-use going on
- Vaping (tobacco or marijuana) and drinking are the most often used substances
- Substance use is not limited to a certain youth demographic – it is widespread and normalized

Substances

Alcohol

- Get it directly from parents (“cool” parents) or steal from parents
- Older siblings or friends buy it for them

Marijuana

- Marijuana is extremely easy to get. Easier to get than vape.
- People share vapes when someone doesn’t have one.

Prescription Drugs

- Hear about some kids doing it, but not super common.

Consequences

- Youth don't see much being done at school to prevent substance use. Half-hearted attempts; feel teachers have given up
- Youth aren't particularly scared of getting caught. Athletes may be more so, but coaches sometimes give them more leniency.
- It's not hard to get away with substance use, especially outside of school.

Influence & Peer Pressure

- Peers, friends
- Entertainment, shows, music encourage you to have the best time you can possible have. Don't let any moment of your life "go to waste," so that's why kids do stuff – "sieve the day"
- Older siblings are influencers, especially if they are popular in school.

Prevention

- Presentations at school don't make a difference
- Parents should explain WHY, not just “don't do this”
- Parents should be kept in the loop – would be shocked if they knew everything that was going on.
- Go to the source – no one ever gets caught selling
- Even if there is better in school prevention, kids will just do it outside of school
- Substance use prevention needs to start with mental health. If you improve mental health, substance use will improve. Kids need adults they can talk to without fear of consequences.
- Need a “person-first” mentality.