

# Communities That Care Youth Survey: Goals, Results, and Action Plans

This report describes the results of the *Communities That Care Youth Survey*, a nationally recognized survey completed by 1,668 Tewksbury students in grades 7 through 12 as part of the Tewksbury CARES community-wide substance awareness assessment. Implementation and analysis of this survey would not have been possible without a generous grant from the Trefler Foundation.

## SURVEY GOALS

1. Identify the levels of **risk factors** related to problem behaviors (substance use, drop-out, delinquency, violence, and teen pregnancy)
2. Identify the levels of **protective factors** that help guard against those behaviors.
3. Measure the **actual prevalence** of drug use, violence and other antisocial behaviors among surveyed students.

## SURVEY RESULTS

The results of the Communities That Care Youth Survey show both positive and negatives about substance abuse in Tewksbury’s 7<sup>th</sup> through 12<sup>th</sup> graders. The survey focused on risk factors and protective factors. Just as eating a high-fat diet is a risk factor for heart disease, and getting regular exercise is a protective factor for heart disease, there are factors that can help protect youth from – or put them at risk for – drug use and other problem behaviors. Addressing risk factors and building on protective factors have been shown to be effective in increasing healthy decision making, including choosing not to use tobacco, alcohol, or other drugs.

The findings are grouped in three separate sections: 1) risk and protective factors; 2) drug use; and 3) other antisocial behaviors.

### Risk and Protective Factors

Domain	Areas of Concern	Strengths to Build On
<b>Community</b>	Low Religiosity	High Community Opportunities for Prosocial Involvement
		High Community Rewards for Prosocial Involvement
<b>Family</b>	Low Family Rewards for Prosocial Involvement	High Family Attachment
<b>School</b>	Low School Opportunities for Prosocial Involvement	

### **Areas of success in Tewksbury include:**

- Higher or near norm scores for protective factors, including:
  - **Community opportunities for pro-social involvement.** This is the availability of activities or organizations that youth can participate in. These programs promote positive youth development and include sports and theater groups.
  - **Community rewards for pro-social involvement.** This is community and public (e.g. sports coaches, drama coaches, Girl Scout and Boy Scout merit badges) recognition of youth for their involvement in activities and organizations available in the community.
  - **Family attachment.** This means youth feel bonded to family members.
  
- Lower than norm scores for risk factors, including:
  - **Early initiation of drug use.** This is the age at which kids start using alcohol and other drugs. The younger in age a person starts using the more likely he or she is to become addicted later in life. Tewksbury students start using alcohol and drugs later than the norm.
  - **Low perceived risk of drug use.** Having the perception that alcohol and drug use is not risky behavior. Tewksbury students are more aware than the norm of the possible harms from alcohol and drug use.

### **Areas of concerns in Tewksbury include:**

- Higher than norm scores for risk factors, including:
  - **Family conflict.** This refers to the existence of unhealthy behavior, such as yelling, insults and threats between family members.
  - **Lack of commitment to school.** This indicates that students have a generally negative attitude toward school and feel less attached to their classes and school environment.
  - **Rebelliousness.** This encompasses youth who feel that they are not a part of society, are not bound by rules, and who don't have goals to become successful or responsible.
  
- Lower than norm scores for protective factors, including:
  - **Religiosity.** This is the level of connection youth feel to a religious/faith-based organization.
  - **School opportunities for prosocial involvement.** This is giving students opportunities to be involved in important activities that make them feel empowered and having a positive connection to the school.
  - **Family rewards for prosocial involvement.** This is when family members reward children for positive participation in activities, expressing pride and support for their contributions.

NOTE: An interesting note of concern is that on average, Tewksbury's 7<sup>th</sup> grade class consistently had higher risk factor (unhealthy) scores and lower protective factor (healthy) scores than all other grades.

## Alcohol, Tobacco and Other Drug Use

Drug	Have used in lifetime	Compared to norm*	Have used in past 30 days	Compared to norm
Alcohol	52%	lower	28%	higher
Marijuana	23%	comparable	14%	higher
Cigarettes	23%	lower	9%	lower
Smokeless Tobacco	12%	lower	7%	higher
Inhalants	12%	lower	3%	comparable
Heroin	Less than 1%	lower	Less than 1%	comparable
Ecstasy	4%	higher	1%	higher
Methamphetamine	Less than 1%	lower	Less than 1%	comparable
Cocaine	2%	lower	Less than 1%	lower
LSD/Psychedelic	3%	lower	Less than 1%	lower

Tewksbury students recorded the highest lifetime prevalence-of-use rates for:

- Alcohol (52%)
- Marijuana (23%)
- Cigarettes (23%)
- Smokeless tobacco (12%)
- Inhalants (12%).

Other lifetime prevalence rates ranged from less than 1% for heroin to 4% for Ecstasy. The rate of illicit drug use, excluding marijuana, is 15%.

Tewksbury students reported the highest past-30-day prevalence-of-use rates for:

- Alcohol (28%)
- Binge drinking (17%)
- Marijuana (14%)
- Cigarettes (9%)
- Smokeless tobacco (7%).

Other past-30-day prevalence rates ranged from less than 1% for methamphetamine and heroin to 3% for inhalants. Overall, 4% reported past-30-day use of any illicit drug other than marijuana.

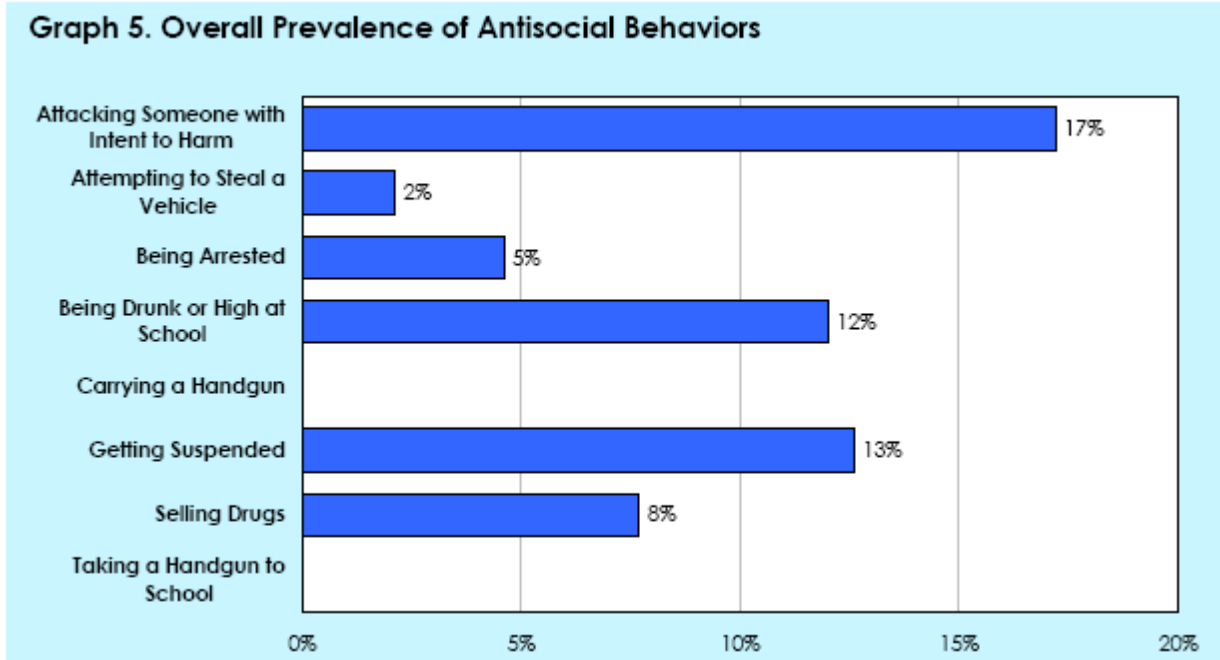
### Compared to their national counterparts

Tewksbury students reported lower average levels of lifetime cigarette, inhalant, methamphetamine, cocaine, alcohol and LSD/Psychedelic use. Cigarette use was much lower than the national norms. Although alcohol and marijuana prevalence-of-use rates, among Tewksbury's 8<sup>th</sup> and 10<sup>th</sup> grades was lower than the national rates, usage for both drugs was higher among Tewksbury 12<sup>th</sup> graders compared to 12<sup>th</sup> graders nationally.

For past-30-day use, Tewksbury 8<sup>th</sup> graders reported higher rates of smokeless tobacco use, Tewksbury 10<sup>th</sup> graders reported higher marijuana and inhalant use, and Tewksbury 12<sup>th</sup> graders reported higher alcohol, binge drinking, smokeless tobacco, and marijuana use than national counterparts.

\* Normative comparison based on grades 8, 10, and 12 only.

## Other Antisocial Behaviors



Tewksbury's antisocial behavior profiles do not show any marked deviation from national grade level patterns. The annual prevalence rates recorded for the eight other problems, or antisocial, behaviors cover a broad range.

- 17% of students reported *Attacking Someone with Intent to Harm* in the past year, making it the most prevalent of the eight anti-social behaviors.
- *Getting Suspended* is the second most prevalent antisocial behavior, with 13% of Tewksbury having been suspended in the past year.
- Students in Tewksbury reported very low levels of *Being Arrested* and *Attempting to Steal a Vehicle*.

## ACTION PLAN

Based on its mission and the findings of this survey, Tewksbury CARES has set ambitious goals over the next two years to have a measurable impact on substance use, risk factors, and positive influences:

1. Reduce the following risk factors by 10% (by 2008, as measured by repeat survey): Family conflict and lack of commitment to school.
2. Increase the following protective factors by 10% (by 2008, as measured by repeat survey): School opportunities for prosocial involvement, and family rewards for prosocial involvement.
3. Reduce alcohol and marijuana use in past 30 days by 10% (by 2008, as measured by repeat survey).
4. Increase community participation/membership of Tewksbury CARES by 300%, including solid representation of our community's youth, as well as school, public safety, spiritual, parental, and recreational organizations.
5. Sponsor at least one event/forum each month to provide a positive recreational or educational component for our youth or adults (examples: youth dances at recreation center, substance abuse information forums for parents).
6. Set a goal of getting 500 "Safe Homes" pledges signed by middle and high school parents by 2008. (Safe Homes program is where parents pledge to not serve alcohol to minors and let their kids go only to the houses of other families who have pledged to not serve alcohol).