

Substance Use: *Youth in Arizona*

The 2017 Youth Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System* indicated a significantly higher percentage of Arizona high school students, compared to youth nationally, have ever tried an electronic vapor product.



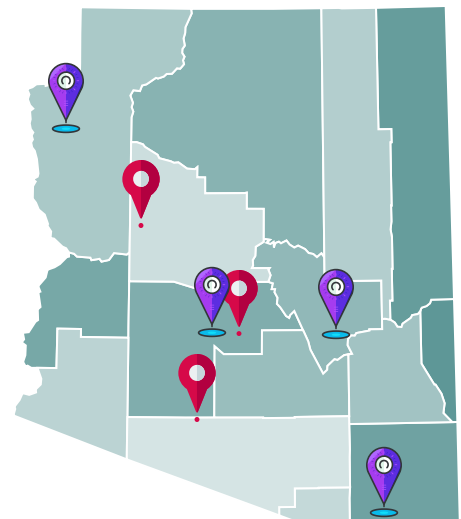
1 in 5 Arizona high School Students used marijuana in the past month



1 in 7 Arizona high school students have at one time misused pain relievers

The prevalence of **illicit drug use disorder** was significantly higher for Arizona youth aged 12-17 (4.7%) that nationally (3.3%).

As part of the **2018 Arizona Statewide Substance Use Prevention Needs Assessment**, 3 focus groups were conducted with youth in Phoenix, the city of Maricopa and Prescott. Four focus groups were conducted with adults that serve youth (educators, parents, etc.) in sierra Vista, Phoenix, Kingman and Globe. Both groups were asked about what current and most harmful substance issues existed for youth, what they thought caused substance use/and or misuse for youth, and what would be effective prevention programming to combat these issues. A number of key informant interviews were also conducted with adults that work with youth.



* Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. (2017). High School Youth Risk Behavior Survey Data.

Causes of Substance Use and/or Misuse: Thoughts from Youth and Those Serving Youth

1

Youth are self-medicating with substances due to mental health issues/trauma and a lack of or inability to access mental health services.

2

Due to a lack of healthy, affordable, fun activities for youth, they engage in substance use and/or misuse.

3

Youth today currently lack coping skills or the social/emotional tools to deal with life's challenges which leads them to substance use and/or misuse.

4

Peer pressure leads to substance use and/or misuse.

5

The use of substances has been normalized by popular culture, social media, marketing, peers and the legalization of marijuana which is leading to substance use and/or misuse.

6

A lack of family values and lack of family supervision of youth (or a stable adult for youth) to turn to leads to substance use and/or misuse.

7

Due to inadequate funding and resources given to schools, and the demands of Arizona's core competencies, there is not enough time or resources for effective prevention programming in schools which leads to substance use and/or misuse.



Substance Use Prevention Recommendations from Youth & Those Serving Youth:

Make sure youth have someone to talk to, someone to turn to for support and help

Start programming in lower grades

Teach children healthy coping skills so they don't turn to drugs

Give schools enough support so they can go beyond the core curricula and spend time on prevention and community-school partnerships

Involve parents in prevention efforts and offer meaningful incentives to promote parent engagement

Don't use scare tactics. Don't say, "Don't do drugs". Just provide the facts and build positive relationships

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