



AGENTS OF CHANGE



COMMUNITY REPORT

It is an exciting time for the Kalamazoo County Substance Abuse Task Force (Task Force). This community report is one of the reasons why. For several years, Prevention Works has been proud to support the Task Force and its strategies for addressing substance abuse within our community. The Task Force is a mosaic of active and dedicated community members who represent every sector of the community. It is an “agent of change” for improving lives. The best change agents build a culture of learning and leadership. The Task Force does just this. It has mobilized community members, leaders and youth around the prevention of substance abuse and the initiative continues to gain momentum.



Within this community report you will experience first-hand the positive change that has occurred within our community in regard to substance abuse. You will also become introduced to the dedication from the partners who are the true change agents for this cause. These members work to develop and implement strategies and practices to address alcohol and substance abuse issues where we all live and work. These strategies limit access to substances, prevent high risk behavior, promote community awareness and develop policies to prevent future use and abuse of drugs.

The members of the Task Force and Prevention Works want the same thing for our community and its residents – a safe passage, hope, high expectations and a fair chance of realizing their dreams. Join the effort. Lean with us into a community-wide harness to pull the county out of apathy’s reach. Remember, it is our voice, our community and our opportunity.

Danielle Sielatycki, BS, CPS  
Executive Director, Prevention Works, Inc.

## Special Thanks to the Continued Support of our Major Funders:



## Sincere Thanks to Our Friends of the Task Force that Generously Gave to the Agents of Change Donation Letter Campaign:

Adam Herringa & Rebecca Clore

Child & Family  
Psychological Services

Dave Campbell

Ed Sackley

JoAnne Willson

Kelly Fox

Royanda Amos

Sarah Baker



Substance Use impacts our community in many ways and in order to combat this effectively, we have to approach it in many different ways. Effective Prevention, Treatment and Recovery Support Programs are needed if we are to create and sustain a healthy community and we can achieve this only through strong partnerships. The Task Force works diligently to connect with the whole of Kalamazoo County on a grass roots level. The Kalamazoo County Substance Abuse Task Force (Task Force) provides the community with a unique platform for all sectors, sub-groups, and key stakeholders to have the opportunity to work towards a

common goal while maintaining their unique identity and point of view (this platform is a very powerful vehicle of community change when sustained properly). As a result, each member and community partner of the Task Force benefits by having a voice and presence at the table and by making a meaningful contribution to carrying out the strategies that support our Task Force’s mission in Kalamazoo County. Southwest Michigan Behavioral Health is proud to support and be a part of the prevention efforts of the Kalamazoo County Substance Abuse Task Force.”

Mindie Smith MA LLP CAADC  
Substance Use Disorder Prevention and Treatment Director  
Southwest Michigan Behavioral Health

**\$ Support the Task Force efforts at [prevention-works.org](http://prevention-works.org)**

## Acknowledgments

The *Agents of Change* Report on Youth Substance Use is dedicated to the Kalamazoo County community *and* to the men and women and organizational partners that make up the Kalamazoo County Substance Abuse Task Force. It is also dedicated to the members of our leadership team, both past and present. Because of your continued support and hard work, collaborative prevention efforts, like the Task Force, continue to make a lasting difference in the greater Kalamazoo area.

On behalf of the Coordinating Council at the Task Force, we would like to thank the following community organizations for your ongoing support and partnership:

Prevention Works, Inc.	Portage Public Schools
Southwest Michigan Behavioral Health	City of Kalamazoo
Kalamazoo Community Mental Health & Substance Abuse Services	City of Portage
Family & Children Services	Gull Lake Community Schools
Elizabeth Upjohn Community Healing Center	Kalamazoo County Sheriff's Office
Department of Human Services	Kalamazoo Department of Public Safety
Kalamazoo County Health & Community Services	City of Portage Public Safety
Child and Family Psychological Services	Ninth Judicial Circuit Court
Western Michigan University School of Health Education	ISAAC
Sindicuse Health Center	Overneath Creative Collective
Health Promotion & Education	Gladstone & Associates Inc.
Western Michigan University Homer Stryker M.D. School of Medicine	Black Lab Five
Kalamazoo Regional Educational Services Agency	Midwest Communications
Kalamazoo Public Schools	Peer Power at Prevention Works, Inc.
	FCCLA at Kalamazoo Central High School
	Jeter's Leaders of the Turn 2 Foundation
	Portage Youth Advisory Committee
	National Honor Society at Hackett Catholic Central

Finally, a special thanks to some very key members of the Task Force Data & Evaluation Team who donated much of their time and professional expertise over the course of the past two years to guide the process of data collection and analysis of local data indicators in a united effort to strengthen and deepen the prevention efforts of the Task Force and to make this information available to the Kalamazoo community.

**Achilles Malta**  
**Annie Wendt, MPH**  
**Catherine Kothari, PhD**  
**Corey Smith**  
**Jenna Gehl Jones, MA, CHES**  
**John Bruski, MPH**  
**Kara Bensley, MSc**  
**Kim Kutzko, MPH**  
**Patrick Hindman, MPH, RN**  
**Robert J. Bensley, PhD**

Each representative of the many agencies involved brought their knowledge and expertise to bear toward the success of this effort. We are very pleased at the level of cooperation and sharing of information, time, funds and effort.

Diane Marquess  
Family & Children Services  
Task Force President

Tonya Collins  
Prevention Works  
Task Force Coordinator

## All About Our Youth



It is an honor and great pleasure to coordinate the efforts of the Kalamazoo County Substance Abuse Task Force Youth Action Team. The youth have brought the coalition so much – raw talent, energy, fresh thinking and perspective. This group has been generating awareness around underage drinking prevention and the importance of living above the influence in Greater Kalamazoo. In just a matter of months they have created billboards, radio PSAs, shared their voices at a town hall meeting, and have collected community data. With their enthusiasm, they have contributed to the largest underage drinking prevention campaign the Task Force has seen yet to date! I look forward to seeing what they will plan for next year!

Katie MacDonald  
Youth Action Team  
Coordinator, Task Force

**“I live above the influence because I see the potential of the youth in our community and I know that giving into negative influences can greatly hinder our chances of achieving all that I know we can achieve.”**

Kyra Hudson  
Kalamazoo Central High School  
PEER Power

**“I live above the influence because I it keeps me and my community safe while also showing leadership skills.”**

Khalil Adams  
Kalamazoo Central High School, FCCLA

**“I love helping my community and helping others”**

Guiliana Bresnahan,  
Hackett Catholic Central NHS

**“When I see a problem in the community, I want to find a solution”**

Simone Miller  
Jeter's Leaders

**“Helping out in the community makes me feel good, not only for me, but for the community as well.”**

Jaxson Schrock  
Kalamazoo Central High School, FCCLA

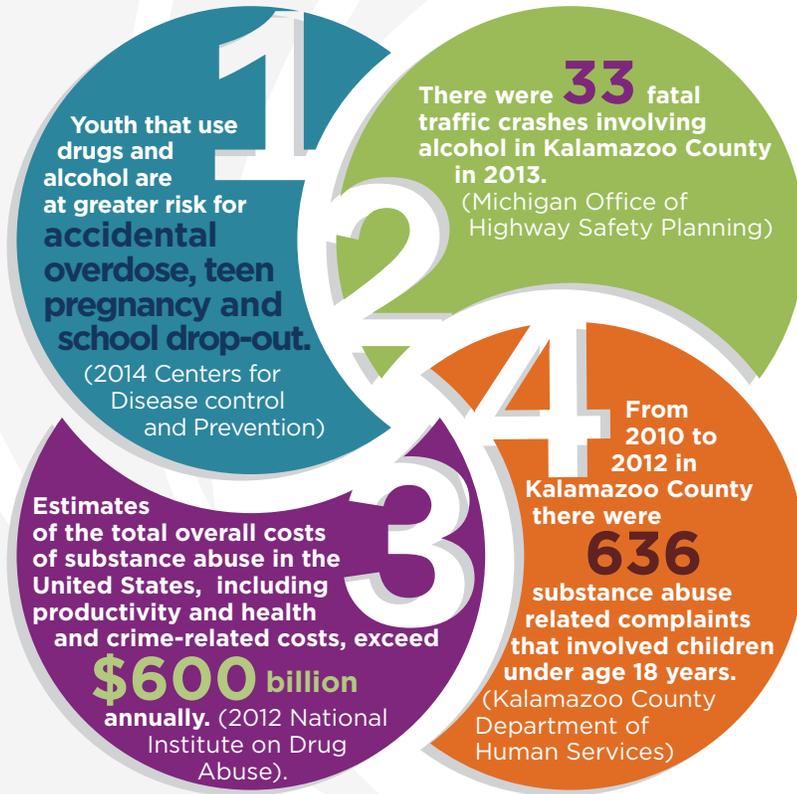
**“I contribute to causes that I feel are important.”**

Kita Komya  
Portage Youth Advisory Committee

## What's Going On?

Substance abuse can be an overwhelming obstacle to children's ability to succeed and a major barrier to the future prosperity of our community . . .

### EFFECTS OF SUBSTANCE ABUSE ON A COMMUNITY



Research shows that most adults that suffer from addiction to alcohol and illicit drugs, began regular use/misuse of substances during adolescence. That is why the primary focus of Task Force youth substance abuse prevention efforts target underage drinking, youth marijuana use, medication misuse/abuse and youth tobacco use.

## Prevention 101: Risk and Protective Factors

Reducing the "risk factors" in the environments of children that increase the odds they will become involved in high-risk behavior, like substance use, while increasing the "protective factors" that buffer children from the full impact of risk factors and other life dangers should be the goal of every family, school, and youth-serving community organization.

#### Examples of Youth Substance Use **RISK FACTORS**

- Alcohol and other drugs are readily available
- Community laws and norms are favorable toward drug use
- Parents use drugs, involve youth in their use ("get me a beer, would you?") or tolerate use by youth
- Students lack commitment or sense of belonging to school.
- Young person thinks most friends use
- Person begins using at a young age

#### Examples of Youth Substance Use **PROTECTIVE FACTORS**

- Strong bonds exist between youth and adults
- Youth gain the skills necessary for becoming a mature adult
- There are opportunities for youth to have meaningful involvement in the community
- Youth achievements are recognized
- Healthy beliefs and clear standards are communicated and modeled



Kalamazoo County is fortunate to have the Task Force at Prevention Works shining a spotlight on the issue of drug use by teenagers. Over the years, I have seen so many kids get into a vicious cycle that involves drug use, low levels of academic achievement, and failure to fulfill the dreams they often had when they were young. Kids often experiment with drugs as a way to fit in with a peer group, as they may not have found ways to connect with peer groups who were heading in a more positive direction. Teenagers are now confronted with mixed messages about the dangers of drugs such as marijuana, which tend to be de-motivators. At a time when schools in our state and nation are often rightfully being compared with top performing countries such as Canada, Finland, and South Korea it seems that we should be sending our teens a more consistent message. We know that hard work, motivation and focus on achieving goals are assets that can help young people find life-long fulfillment. However, parts of our culture seem to be glamorizing the very behaviors that lead to broken relationships, destroyed dreams, and poverty. Kids need a place to belong in order to build an identity and most people desire to be accepted by others.

Dave Campbell, Superintendent  
Kalamazoo Regional Educational  
Services Agency

## How Do We Know? A word about the data

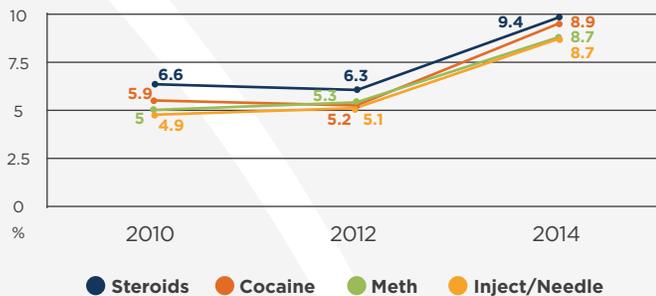
This brief report is a compilation of indicators collected from various sources- the largest of these sources being the Michigan Profile for Healthy Youth Survey (MiPHY). For the past three MiPHY survey cycles, Kalamazoo County public school districts have willingly participated in the MiPHY, with each survey cycle providing a generous sample of student data representative of the overall student population in Kalamazoo County.

In addition to the MiPHY, six Kalamazoo County public school districts, including the two largest school districts in the county, also partnered with the Task Force to conduct the 2013 Substance Abuse Core Measure Survey with 8th and 10th grade students.

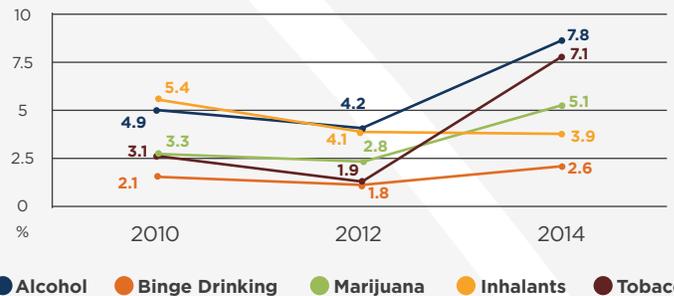
Additional sources for data used in this report include the following: Emergency Room Admission Data from both Bronson and Borgess Hospitals; Kalamazoo County Department of Human Services; Kalamazoo County Prosecutor's Office; 8th District Court; Medicolegal Death Investigation Database, Kalamazoo County Medical Examiner Cases; Michigan Office of Highway Safety and Planning

## A Snapshot of Youth Substance Use Trends in Kalamazoo County

**Kalamazoo County Middle School Students Report an Increased Rate of Ever Using Illicit Drugs**



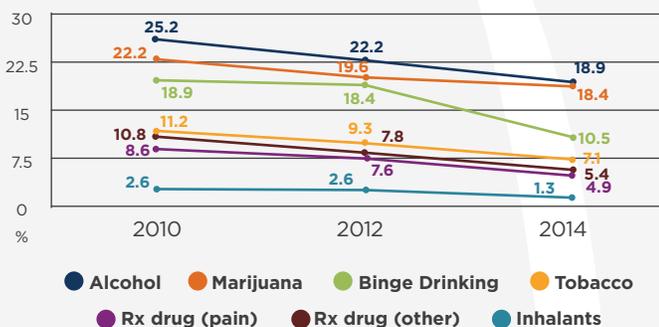
**Kalamazoo County Middle School Substance Use on the Rise**



The information revealed in this data set is alarming. Note the increased lifetime use across the board reported by 7th grade students in 2014. The Task Force has not historically targeted our efforts around illicit drug use, but rather known *gateway drugs* like alcohol, tobacco, marijuana, and prescription drugs. Our members are hard at work researching evidence-based practices to reach youth at an earlier age with prevention strategies as well as investigating *why* we are seeing this spike in experimentation with these types of substances at such early ages.

30-use increased in every substance category with the exception of inhalants. With the marijuana more easily accessed and used by adults in our community, we are not surprised to see an increase in 7th grade marijuana use. However, the fact that we are seeing a spike in both alcohol and tobacco use indicates that our community needs to identify and support a comprehensive plan to begin substance abuse prevention programming at earlier ages than in past years. Historically, community prevention efforts have been focused on middle school ages and older.

**30-day Use Reported by Kalamazoo County High School Students Shows Steady Decline**



It is encouraging to see the general downward trend in 30-use trends as reported by Kalamazoo County high school students. We are relieved to see that proactive efforts by the community, targeting this age group are paying off! While alcohol remains the preferred substance abuse of choice, and marijuana use is holding steady at a rate of 18.4%, the Task Force is concerned about the prescription (Rx) drug misuse/abuse issue. When the use rates of Rx drug (pain) and Rx drug (other) are added together we see a total Rx use rate of 10.3% in 2014, easily rivaling the binge drinking rate at 10.5% in 2014.



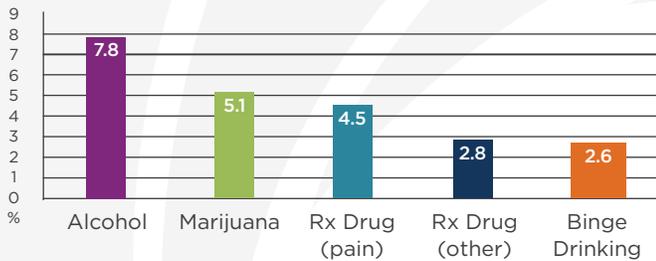
This year, Task Force members and community partners volunteered over **2000** hours

and drove more than **750** miles to help make our community a healthy and safe place to live.



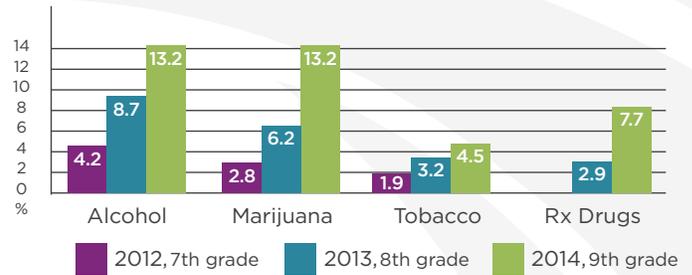
## Prevalence of Student Reported Substance Use - continued

**Alcohol is Still the #1 Drug of Choice for Kalamazoo County Middle School Students**



Alcohol is still the most commonly used substance for this age group, but the two Rx drug categories are still an issue of concern given the advanced addictive risks associated with Rx medication.

**Same Cohort Data  
Class of 2018**  
**Reported 30-day Use Rates Increase with Age**

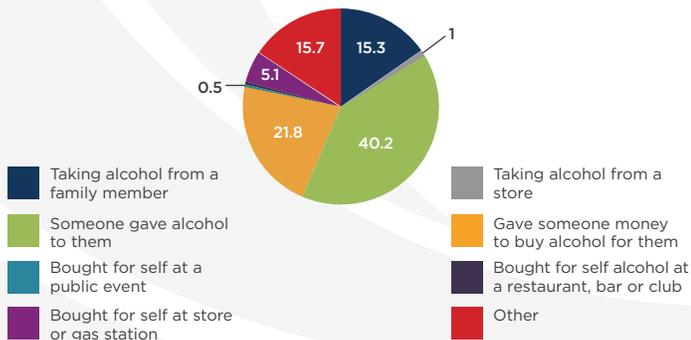


What a difference a year can make! It is no surprise that use rates tend to increase with age. This data from the same cohort of students (Kalamazoo County class of 2018) indicate that there is work to be done in building upon and strengthening prevention efforts each year of adolescent development.

## Youth Access to Substances

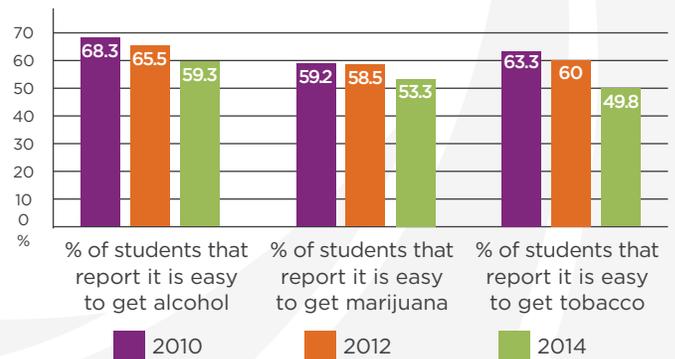
If we can reduce access we can reduce use . . .

**Kalamazoo County High School Students Report that the Most Common Way Alcohol is Accessed is by Someone Giving it to Them (frequency measure in %)**



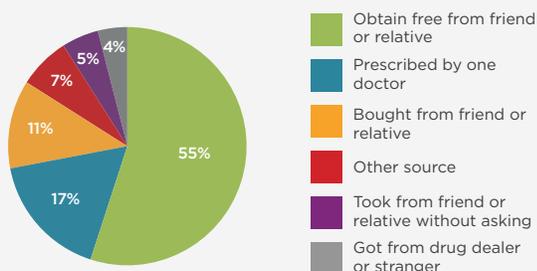
By far the most common way that Kalamazoo County high school students access alcohol is by someone giving it to them. The Task Force Alcohol, Tobacco & Other Drugs Action Team is eager to find out more information about that "other" source that isn't very well defined by the MiPHY survey. Follow-up data is still needed to dig deeper here. In the meantime, we are hard at work looking for ways to build on our current underage drinking prevention strategies and introducing additional evidence-based prevention practices as well.

**Kalamazoo County High School Students Report a Decrease in the Belief that Substances are "Easy" to Access**



We are encouraged to see that over the past four years, the belief that alcohol, marijuana, and tobacco are easy to access in Kalamazoo has shown signs of decrease each year.

**Nationally, Youth Reported Accessing Rx Drugs Free from Friends or Relatives Far More than Any Other Source**



2012 Centers for Disease Control and Prevention

# 19.1%

**of Kalamazoo County High School Students reported that they were offered, sold, or given an illegal drug on school property in the past 12 months, in 2014.**

## Youth Beliefs and Attitudes About Substance Use

One reason that we see a gradual increase in use as youth get older has to do with ones' perception or beliefs about the use of substances. The prevalence of youth substance use increases as their perception of harm around the use of substances decreases. Significant data and research suggests that youth substance use increases as the perception of parental and/or peer disapproval decreases.

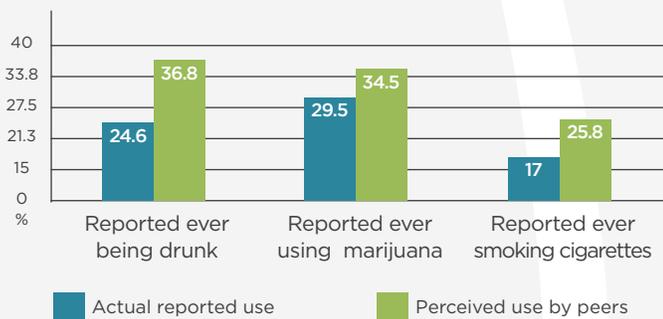


## The Prevention Science Behind Social Norming

A skewed social norm is the belief that most people, or at least more people than what is actually accurate, are engaging in a particular behavior. Therefore, the skewed belief is that, “most people are doing it,” so the behavior must not be risky.

In the following local student reported data, we can see this phenomena at work in Kalamazoo County. . .

**Kalamazoo County High School Students Report a Lower Use Rate than What They Perceive Their Peers Rate of Use to Be**



We can see that there is an obvious gap between actual reported use and the rate at which youth believe/perceive their peers are using. **Prevention strategy:** if we can correct the “misperceptions” that exist, over the course of time behavior should reflect the more accurate (and healthier) norm.

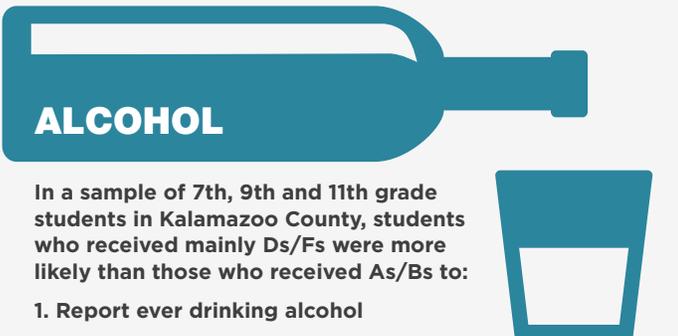


An average of **146** prescription strength pain medication units (pills), were prescribed, per Kalamazoo County household, in 2013. (Michigan Automated Prescription System).

## Educational Impact of Youth Substance Use

Students who use alcohol and drugs persistently face an array of possible consequences such as a lowered commitment to education, declining grades, absenteeism from school and related activities, increased potential for dropping out, and higher truancy rates are linked to adolescent substance abuse.<sup>1</sup>

In Kalamazoo County, students who reported receiving grades of mainly Ds/Fs were more likely to report current alcohol and marijuana use, and binge drinking within the past 30 days. Additionally, they were more likely to report age of first use for alcohol and marijuana before age 13.



**ALCOHOL**

In a sample of 7th, 9th and 11th grade students in Kalamazoo County, students who received mainly Ds/Fs were more likely than those who received As/Bs to:

1. Report ever drinking alcohol
2. Have their first drink of alcohol (other than a sip) before age 13 years
3. Have had at least one drink of alcohol in the past 30 days
4. Binge drink in the past 30 days (5 or more drinks in a row in a few hours)

## MARIJUANA

- 
- In a sample of 7th, 9th and 11th grade students in Kalamazoo County, students who received mainly Ds/Fs were more likely than those who received As/Bs to:
1. Report ever using marijuana
  2. Experiment with marijuana before age 13
  3. Have used marijuana in the past 30 days

These same trends are seen nationally and statewide (we are unable to do a direct comparison of percentages since the other areas adjust the data for race, sex and grade level).

It is important to note that these associations do not prove causation, however there is definitely a prominent relationship between youth substance abuse and academic struggle.

In addition to the association between substance use and low grades, twelfth grade aged youths who had dropped out of

school were more likely than similarly aged youths who were still in school to engage in current cigarette use, alcohol use, binge alcohol use, marijuana use, non-medical use of psychotherapeutic drugs, and use of any illicit drugs.<sup>2</sup>

**Table 1. Past Month Substance Use among 12th Grade Aged Youths, Dropout Status: 2002-2010**

SUBSTANCE	DROPOUTS	IN SCHOOL
Cigarettes	56.8%	22.4%
Alcohol	41.6%	35.3%
Binge Alcohol	32.3%	23.8%
Any Illicit Drug	31.4%	18.2%
Marijuana	27.3%	15.3%
Nonmedical Use of Prescription-Type Drugs	9.5%	5.1%

*The Task Force thanks Kim Kutzko, MPH for her analysis of local data regarding youth use trends and the educational impact.*

## Criminal Justice Impact of Youth Substance Use

The link between involvement with the criminal justice system and reduced academic achievement among youth is a widely studied issue.<sup>3,4</sup> In Kalamazoo marijuana has become, and continues to be an issue amongst youth and their involvement in the criminal justice system. Additionally, it is a substance which continues to show increased use among youth in Kalamazoo county (MiPHY).

### Key Points

Marijuana charges are the biggest charge category for youth ages 11-16, accounting for nearly half of all drug related charges for minors (49.5%, 344 of 694 requests during the period 2010 to 2012).

**Table 2. Drug Related Charges Against 11-16 Year Olds, 2010-2012, Kalamazoo County**

	2010	2011	2012	TOTAL
Drunk Driving	7	5	6	18
Minors in Possession	97	85	107	289
Marijuana	110	126	108	344
Other Substances	7	6	3	16
Prescription Drugs	8	12	8	28
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>229</b>	<b>234</b>	<b>232</b>	<b>695</b>

Minor in possession charges account for over half (52%) of substance related criminal charges for youth 11 to 20 years old.

As might be expected, from the age 11 to 16, with each year comes increasing number of charges (Kothari report, 2014):

- 4 charges (0.6% of all 695 charges) against 11 year olds
- 13 charges (1.9%) against 12 year olds
- 31 charges (4.5%) against 13 year olds
- 88 charges (12.7%) against 14 year olds
- 196 charges (28.2%) against 15 year olds
- 363 charges (52.2%) against 16 year olds

Drug related charges against youth have been decreasing over the past five years, mostly due to sharp decreases among 17-20 year olds.

**Table 3. Total Drug Related Charges Against 17-20 Year Olds 2009-2013, Kalamazoo County**

2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	TOTAL
1499	1481	1233	1188	855	6256



**Kalamazoo County is ranked #5 in the state for Alcohol Related Traffic Crashes involving drivers between the ages of 16 and 20.**  
(2013 Michigan Office of Highway Safety and Planning).

*The Task Force thanks Corey Smith and Catherine Kothari, PhD for their analysis of local data on drug related criminal charges involving minors and the criminal justice impact.*



As an Attorney-Referee with the Kalamazoo County Circuit Court, Family Division, I deal with our youth daily. What is troublesome, is that use, in particular the use of marijuana and alcohol, is so widely accepted. For some youth, it is even expected.

“What’s the big deal?” I was asked in Court one day. “It’s just marijuana!”

“My mom knows I drink. She drinks with me!” another youth reported.

Juveniles appear in court high on marijuana because they know they are going to get “locked up.” Domestic violence occurs in home when youth are confronted by their parents. Juveniles face suspension of their driver’s licenses before they even have one. Often times, their freedom is compromised and they are detained in the Juvenile Home until they can provide a clean drug screen. For some youth, having been detained improves their status amongst their peers!

If we cannot change the mentality of our youth, change is not likely. Be an agent for change!

Tiffany A. Ankley  
Attorney-Referee  
Kalamazoo County Circuit Court, Family Division

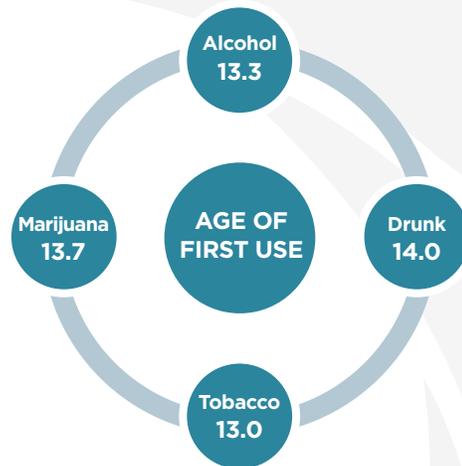
# Health Impact of Youth Substance Use

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention reports that *alcohol and other drug use among our nation's youth remains a major public health problem* at the national level (2013). Local data shows that there is also reason for concern around youth substance abuse in Kalamazoo County.

Youth substance use can increase the risk for injuries, violence, mental illness, infection and disease, not to mention accidental overdose and death--but the long-term health effects are also alarming. According to a study released by The National Center on Addiction and Substance Abuse at Columbia University, 9 out of 10 Americans who meet the medical criteria for addiction started smoking, drinking, or using other drugs before age 18 (2009).

Research also shows that youth who start drinking before the age of 15 are **FIVE** times more likely to develop a dependence on, or abuse alcohol later in life.

According to the 2014 Michigan Profile for Healthy Youth (MiPHY) Survey, Kalamazoo County students are reporting early ages of "first use." See diagram below:



## Time Trends

Local emergency room data provided by Borgess Medical Center and Bronson Methodist Hospital revealed that alcohol and opioid abuse ER visits, among minors, dropped in 2011 and has remained steady at this lower level to date (see Figure A). This trend is consistent with self-reported 30-day use data, by youth, collected in the 2014 Kalamazoo County Michigan Profile for Healthy Youth Survey (MiPHY), as shown in Figure B.

Note: Figure B also shows that in the 2014 MiPHY, alcohol is still the substance of choice for most Kalamazoo County high school students at an 18.9% 30-day use rate, with marijuana rates holding steady, but still a close second to alcohol, at 18.4%. That said, marijuana abuse related ER visits, for minors, more than doubled in 2011 and has stayed consistently higher than alcohol and opioid related ER admissions since that time.

Additionally, tobacco is indicated in more ER visits for minors than any other substance, by a factor of **10**, although it is likely a co-occurring health risk issue rather than the primary reason for the ER visit.

Figure A.

# of Emergency Room Visits with Diagnosis Codes for:\*

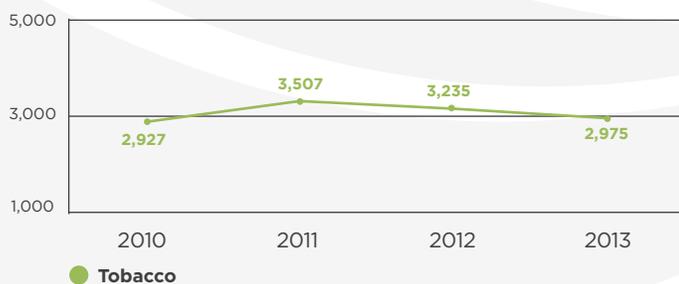
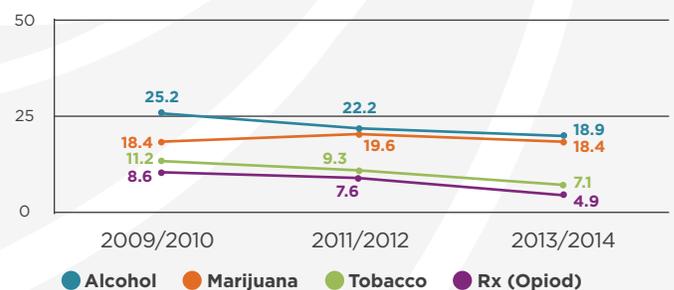
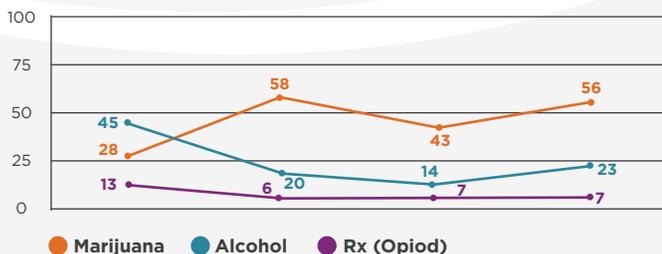


Figure B.

% of High School Students Reporting Use in Past 30 Days\*



\* Based upon MiPHY Survey Results



\* Based upon Emergency Room data from Borgess Medical Center and Bronson Methodist Hospital

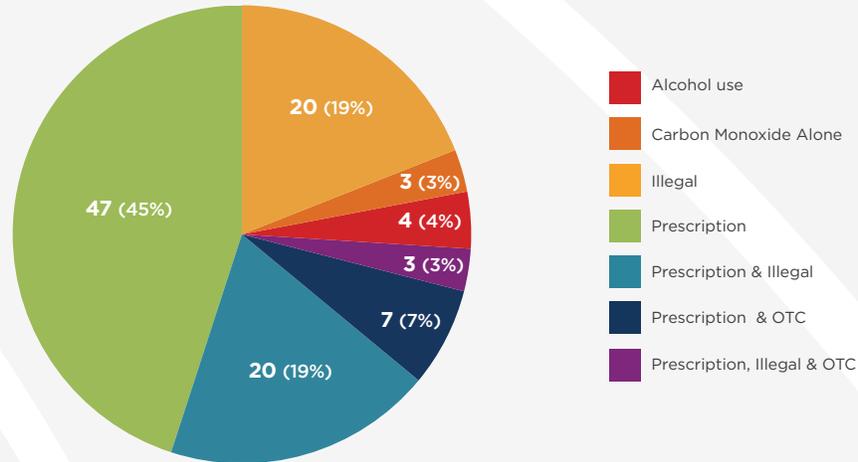
**Additional significant findings related to ER visits by local minors:**

1. Tobacco use jumps at age 13 and doubles each year of high school.
2. Tobacco use is higher by females compared to males.
3. Tobacco use is highest among black youth.

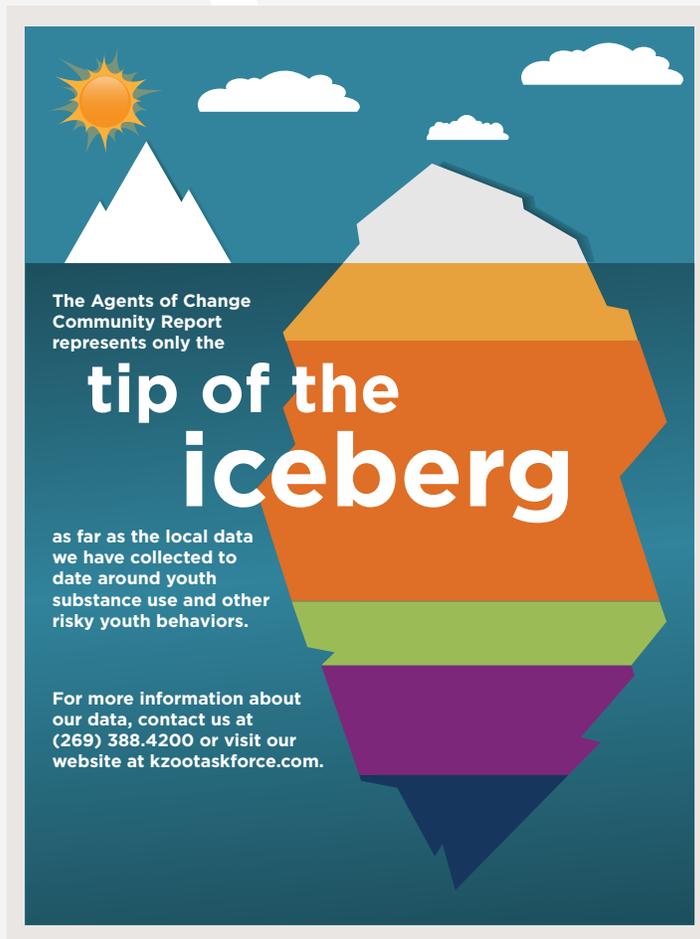
## Lethality

The pie chart below depicts the categories of drugs in which overdose to the point of death occurred in Kalamazoo County from January 1, 2011 through June 30, 2014. It is important to note that:

- Prescription medications were involved in 74% of the overdose deaths recorded
- Many overdose deaths involved a combination of different substances
- There were 20 (19%) overdose deaths in which alcohol was involved
- There was not a single overdose death among minors (those under the age of 21)



The Task Force thanks Patrick Hindman, MPH for his analysis of Kalamazoo County drug overdose records.



## References

- 1 Schulenberg, J., Maggs, J. L. (2001). A Developmental Perspective on Alcohol and Other Drug Use During Adolescence and the Transition to Young Adulthood. Institute for Social Research, University of Michigan, Ann Arbor.
- 2 SAMHSA.gov, 2014
- 3 Chung, I.J., Hill, K. G., Hawkins, J. D., Gilchrist, L. D., & Nagin, D. S. 2002. Childhood predictors of offense trajectories. *Journal of Research in Crime and Delinquency*, 39(1): 60-90.
- 4 Mayer, S. (2005). Educating Chicago's Court-Involved Youth: Mission and Policy in Conflict. *Chapin Hall Center for Children*.

The Task Force thanks Catherine Kothari, PhD for her analysis of the community health impact regarding local emergency room visit trends involving minors.



As a doctor I have seen countless lives destroyed and lost in Kalamazoo due to substance abuse. Although there is effective treatment for those that opt for it, there is no cure or quick fix. Prevention is vital. The young brain is developing patterns and routines that will follow children throughout their lives. This is a key time to develop survival skills: planning, logic, routines, and healthy habits. Substance abuse from tobacco and marijuana to prescription drugs and heroin hijack the brain's reward pathways. It damages the brain that has already developed and prevents the brain and the person from achieving their true potential. Research is showing that a culture of keeping children away from drugs, alcohol and tobacco, at least into their twenties, significantly decreases their chances of becoming addicted.

Susan Faragher Bannon, MD, FACP  
Associate Professor  
Western Michigan University  
Homer Stryker MD  
School of Medicine  
Department of  
Internal Medicine

## What Is Being Done?

### Strengths to Build On

- ✓ Partnerships between schools, health care, businesses, and beyond — building on the success of mobilizing our community for collective impact around the prevention of youth substance use.
- ✓ Effective awareness and education around risk and protective factors that lead to unhealthy behaviors such as youth substance use.
- ✓ Continued data-driven, evidence-based strategies of providing information, enhancing skills, reducing barriers to services, and advocating for preventative health policies.

### Opportunities for Improvement

- ✓ Address gaps in prevention programming services for younger elementary age students.
- ✓ Address marijuana use concerns. Student reported use in Kalamazoo County is higher than state and national data trends. Marijuana use is also responsible for the increasingly second highest number of ER visits by minors and accounts for nearly half of all youth-related criminal charges.
- ✓ Drill deeper and continue to investigate local conditions that provide easy access to alcohol and other substances of abuse to minors.

## Prevention strategies and services provided by the Task Force

### Putting Data to Use

Local data trends, analysis and best-practice prevention recommendations available for schools and youth-serving organizations, *as well as* the use of data indicators for the development of Task Force prevention efforts.



### Advocacy for Health Prevention Policies

The Task Force works with key stakeholders at the local, state and national levels to advocate for policies that reduce youth access to substances, enforcement of laws that



protect from risk factors associated with youth substance abuse, and provides for continued funding for the research and development of evidence-based substance abuse prevention efforts and that improve long-term health outcomes.



### Professional Trainings for Schools, Youth-Serving Organizations, Healthcare Professionals & Local Businesses

Trainings designed to recognize signs and symptoms of youth substance abuse and what best-practice policies and guidelines for prevention/intervention are. In addition, the Task Force provides educational visits for pharmacies, healthcare clinics, alcohol and tobacco retailers.



## Community Awareness

The promotion of information and tips for community members on local substance abuse trends and how local residents, from every sector, can help to prevent youth substance abuse.



Drug addiction is a pediatric disease that becomes chronic and extends into adulthood. Studies have backed what I have seen personally in my years as a physician specializing in addiction medicine—most individuals that suffer from addiction to substances begin using and/or abusing substances as an adolescent. Research has shown that prevention, treatment, and recovery programs involving families, schools, communities, and the media are effective in reducing drug abuse and addiction. However, there are many barriers to utilization of these strategies. Our governments spend 99 times more on cleaning up the messes that drugs create in our society than they do for the combination of prevention, treatment, and research on substance use disorders. Meanwhile, getting help can be delayed by personal and family denial that it is a serious problem, difficulties getting authorization from health insurance companies, and waiting lists and rationing of treatment. The biology of substance use disorders includes parts of the brain that are logical but immature in youth, and parts of the brain that are instinctual and do not respond to talk, logic, rules, promises, or goals. And stress, emotional trauma, and peer pressure can side-track a person who is struggling to avoid starting or to stop using psychoactive chemicals. The most effective treatment and recovery strategy involves a comprehensive approach over an extended time interval involving the family and spiritual/fellowship support and expert clinical support from addiction informed doctors and therapists. We challenge our community to care about this issue and to join with us in making Southwest Michigan a healthy and safe place to call home.

Michael R. Liepman, MD  
 Professor of Psychiatry  
 WMU Homer Stryker MD School  
 of Medicine



Since 2011 the Red Med Box has collected over 15,535 lbs. of unused, unwanted medication. There are five Red Med Box collection sites in Kalamazoo County. Visit [redmedbox.com](http://redmedbox.com) for locations and more information.

## Collective Impact Networking

The Task Force has a track record of success when it comes to convening many different groups and subgroups of people, organizations, and key stakeholders to come together and work collectively on a common goal. Our members represent over 12 different sectors of our community and we are diligent about organizing this work so that youth substance abuse prevention efforts are tailored to meet the array of needs represented in this great community of Kalamazoo County.



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## Why Sustain this Work?

Reducing youth substance use/abuse and underage drinking requires community-based efforts to monitor the activities of youth, decrease youth access to drugs and alcohol, change community norms and attitudes around substance abuse and addiction, and spread awareness about the long-term consequences of youth substance use on communities.

Recent publications by the Surgeon General and the Institute of Medicine outlined many prevention strategies that will require actions on the national, state, and local levels, such as enforcement of minimum legal drinking age laws, national media campaigns

targeting youth and adults, reducing youth exposure to alcohol advertising, and the development of comprehensive community-based programs. These efforts will require continued research and evaluation to determine their success and to improve their effectiveness.

From 2010 to 2014, the Task Force has been pleased to observe a steady downward trend in the reported 30-day use of most substances by Kalamazoo County High School students and we know that this is in part due to the on-going commitment of our community to improve health outcomes for our kids by investing in collaborative prevention efforts like those implemented by the Task Force. However, our work is not done.

**Substance abuse underlies a host of other community problems such as homelessness, poverty, unemployment, crime, teen pregnancy and juvenile delinquency.**

**Without the work of the Task Force, our community would be lacking a unified organization of diverse community members (representing each sector) who partner, collaborate, and work as a team to develop strategies, connect/provide resources, initiate prevention programs and practices that address alcohol and substance abuse issues where we all live, work and raise families.**

## We Are All Agents Of Change...

Youth substance use and underage drinking can harm the community in many ways. It interferes with one's health, academic and workplace performance, and relationships with friends and family. Research proves that high percentages of accidental overdose, suicide, teen pregnancy and school drop-out rates can be linked to substance abuse.

But there is hope! We can all do *something* to prevent the harmful outcomes of risky youth behaviors such as substance abuse . . .

## ...We All Play A Role in Prevention

### PARENTS

- Set Boundaries
- Monitor Activities
- Stay Connected
- Talk to your kids about dangers of using drugs and alcohol

### ALCOHOL & TOBACCO RETAILERS

- Do not sell to minors
- Train and monitor your staff on the responsible sale of alcohol and tobacco

### EDUCATORS & COACHES

- Keep an open dialog with your students
- Learn the signs and symptoms of substance use and abuse
- Find out resources for youth substance abuse referral in Kalamazoo County
- Know your school's substance abuse policies and be prepared to help enforce them

### YOUTH

- Talk to your parents or a trusted adult about the risks of using alcohol and drugs.
- Make a plan; be prepared to stay above the influence of alcohol and drugs
- Get involved in your community

### LAW ENFORCEMENT

- Team up with youth serving agencies to help prevent substance abuse early
- Participate and support in positive youth development activities

### HEALTHCARE PROFESSIONAL

- Implement substance abuse screening mechanisms for patients
- Institute and enforce organizational systems and guidelines for prescribing opiates and other controlled substances
- Partner with local prevention agencies to promote Recovery Oriented Systems of Care

**Together, we can help our youth live above the influence**

## Get Involved...

Join a Task Force Action Team. There are many opportunities for community members and organizations to use their skills and talents to actively help research, plan and implement community-level preventative strategies:



**ALL ARE WELCOME!** For more information on how to get involved in the preventative work of the Task Force visit [www.kzootaskforce.com](http://www.kzootaskforce.com) or call 269.388.4200.

## Donate...

Studies have shown that for every dollar invested into substance abuse prevention \$15 is saved in future treatment costs—not to mention the cost of broken dreams and unrealized potential. Show your commitment to improving health outcomes for kids in Kalamazoo County by making a cash donation. Your contribution will be put to good use helping to off-set costs of educational materials, trainings, awareness messaging using local media outlets, and the development of resources to connect youth and adults with treatment services.

**Your help today will ensure a healthier Kalamazoo County tomorrow.**

Prevention Works, Inc. is the legal fiduciary agent of the Kalamazoo County Substance Abuse Task Force. Donate online at: [www.prevention-works.org](http://www.prevention-works.org) or make all cash donations payable to:

Prevention Works  
611 Whitcomb, Suite A  
Kalamazoo, MI 49008



## Agents of Change . . .

**Our mission:** to proactively reduce youth substance abuse and build a healthy and safe community in the greater Kalamazoo area. The Kalamazoo County Substance Abuse Task Force (Task Force) is celebrating our seventh year of organized service to this community. Many of our agents of change (members and partnering organizations) have been working together with the Task Force since the beginning stages back in 2008, when together we answered a call to action following a tragic string of opiate related overdose deaths involving local young people all under the age of 22 years old. It was then that we pulled together — working to create lasting community-level changes to decrease risk factors that lead to unhealthy behaviors like youth substance abuse and increasing protective factors that contribute to young people's ability to avoid risky health behaviors.



At the Task Force, our main goal is to decrease and prevent youth substance abuse by addressing the issue in the following ways:

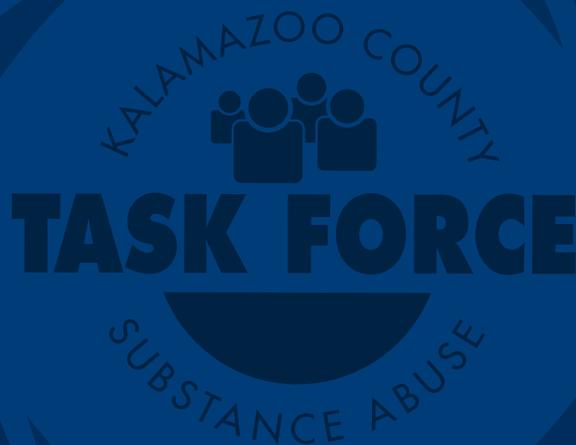


The members and community partners of the Task Force want all of those who love Kalamazoo County to know that we follow a strategic process for organizing community change around youth substance abuse including: assessment of community-level data to get a clear picture of the most pressing and specific problems that need to be addressed; the continual building of our capacity to address the problems; the planning, development and implementation of evidence-based strategies--targeting specific community conditions contributing to the issue; and the evaluation and communication of how we've addressed the problem.

Congratulations to the outstanding members and community partners of the Task Force.

I consider it a great privilege to work alongside such knowledgeable and creative individuals that sincerely care about the youth and future wellbeing of this great community. Here's to all of YOUR hard work and steadfast support for this effort. YOU are true agents of change.

Tonya Collins, BS, CPS  
Coordinator, Kalamazoo County Substance Abuse Task Force



## AGENTS OF CHANGE

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