

PREVENTION COALITION OF THE UNITED WAY OF INDIANA COUNTY

# COMMUNITY ASSESSMENT REPORT

YOUTH RISK AND PROTECTIVE FACTORS



**2023**  
REPORT



United Way  
of Indiana County

## Introduction to the Community Assessment Report:

This report will highlight the Risk and Protective Factor Assessment completed as part of Indiana County's Communities That Care efforts. The assessment was completed using the PA Youth Survey (PAYS) and publicly available data. The PAYS was administered to students in grades 6, 8, 10, and 12 in all districts in Indiana County in the spring of 2021. All seven school districts participated with an 86% student participation rate. To get the most complete picture of our community, the Risk and Protective Factor Assessment Work Group from the Prevention Coalition of Indiana County also collected data from public records to measure risk factors and problem behaviors not covered by the survey.



## The PA Youth Survey (PAYS)

PAYS is a primary tool in Pennsylvania's prevention approach of using data to drive decision-making. By not looking at just rates of problem behaviors but also at the root causes of those behaviors, PAYS allows schools and communities to address reasons (such as a lack of commitment to school) rather than only looking at the symptoms after the fact (like poor grades). This approach has been repeatedly shown in national research studies to be very effective in helping youth develop into healthy, productive members of their society.

Questions on the survey covered four domains - community, school, family, and peer/individual. These domains help determine where the strengths of a community are, and which can be promoted to assist students. They also help determine where potential problems may exist inside and outside of school that can have an impact on a student's readiness to learn when they arrive at their school each morning.

## Public Data Sources

Other data resources utilized to prepare this report include the IRMC Community Needs Assessment, the Department of Human Services Needs Assessment, the United Way of Indiana County Community Needs Assessment, the Juvenile Justice Report from the Indiana County Probation Office and DA Manzi, United Way Alice Report, statistics from the Alice Paul House, Indiana County demographics and community needs, information from the CARE Center and more.

## Youth Feedback

The workgroup also hosted a meeting for students in 7th, 9th, and 11th grade from schools in our county. Fifty students from Indiana Area, Homer-Center, Penns Manor, Purchase Line, Adelphoi, and United Schools participated in the open discussion around the PAYS and other topics.

## How is This Data Helpful?

The findings in this report will help to formulate the coalition's priorities so that we can create an empowered community that promotes holistic well-being through accessible resources and opportunities, collective responsibility, and meaningful engagement for all!

## Social and Emotional Health

The leading cause of death in 10 to 24-year-olds is by accidental means, followed by suicide as the second leading cause. Of our nation's depressed and suicidal youth, less than 1 in 5 are receiving help and there are large gaps between the start of symptoms and treatment. Of youth ages 6 to 17, 17% experience a mental health disorder, and 50% of all lifetime mental illness begins by age 14, increasing to 75% by age 24.

34.8%

of students in our county report,  
"at times I think I am no good at  
all"

36.7%

of students reported that they felt sad or  
depressed most days in the past 12  
months

17.4%

of students had seriously  
considered attempting suicide

*The number of students saying, "All in all, I am inclined to think I am a failure" increased by almost 4% from 2017 to 2019. Almost 1 in 4 of our children report feeling this way.*

## What Students Wish Parents or Adults Knew:

How much anxiety we are faced with

That we try our best

How stressful school is

How much we struggle

We get super overwhelmed with  
school and clubs - just because we  
don't have a job doesn't mean we  
aren't exhausted

How bad I want it to be summer

Reluctantly supporting someone is  
so much more influential than  
hating them for their decision

My sexuality

How I really feel

More of what we do in school

How much I cried  
when my dog died

How to read the signs of  
depression and call for  
help

Not everything is  
my phone's fault



## The Link Between Mental Health and Substance Abuse

The substance use rate of youth who reported depressive symptoms is much greater than those with a more positive outlook. Youth in the state of Pennsylvania with high depressive symptoms indicate 30-day alcohol use rates that are four times higher than non-depressed students. Thirty-day use reflects usage in the last 30 days and lifetime use indicates trying a substance at least once in their lifetime. Statewide, depressed students showed use rates that are seven times higher for 30-day cigarette use and three times higher for 30-day marijuana use in comparison to non-depressed students. Of the young people in our county who report high depressive symptoms, 30% said they had used alcohol in the last 30 days and 60% reported using it in their lifetime.



## Availability of Prescription Drugs and Alcohol

Perceived availability of substances, even when unwarranted, is associated with increased drug use. The perceived availability of prescription drugs is of particular concern, because their availability may be independent of usual illicit avenues of obtaining substances.

41.5%



Students reported that they "took them from a family member living in my home" as their most frequent source/method of obtaining prescription drugs compared to 47.8% at the state level.

39%

"A friend or family member gave them to me," was the next frequently reported source, compared to 40.8% at the state level.

4.4%

Indiana County students reported that they have "been drunk or high at school" in the last 12 months compared to 4.4% at the state level.

31.8%



Students reported that they "took alcohol without permission from their home, friend's home, store, etc." compared to 31.3% at the state level.

14.2%



Of students in Indiana County do not know what they are smoking compared to 11.6% in 2019.

*Instead of just flavoring, the use of nicotine, marijuana or hash oil, and unknown substances in vapes has increased compared to 2019!*

## What Students are Saying:

Youth are vaping all day, every day - no place is off limits

Eliminate judgement when people need help

Suspensions are not effective for vaping - we need resources on coping skills and how to stop

Adults have given up

Need to understand the damages and effects by people who have lived, experienced it

Vaping because of peers and wanting to feel better

Put brochures and materials for help in common areas, not in offices



*School suspensions are higher than the state rate at 6.6% compared to 5.2%*

## School

**Overall decreases** related to commitment to school, feel school is going to be important later in life, feel assigned schoolwork is meaningful and important; enjoyed being in school during the past year.



**A feeling of safety** was reported by 82% of students (state rate: 82%).



**PRaise** 52.8% of students reported that **teachers praise them when they work hard in school** (state rate: 51.8%).



**Schoolwork was viewed as meaningful and important** by 36.6% of students (compared to 32.4% at the state level) and 35.6% **enjoyed being in school during the past year** (state rate: 37.6%). This is down 4% from 2019.



52.7% of students in Indiana County viewed the things they are learning in school as going to be important later in life (compared to 58.2% at the state level). This is down 5% compared to 2019.



75.7% of students reported **opportunities to talk with a teacher one-on-one** (state rate: 78.5%) and 84.8% reported **chances to be part of class discussions or activities** (state rate 86.5%).

## Social Activities

**83.1%**

Reported participating in at least one pro-social activity.

**42%**

Family-supported activities or hobbies

**55%**

Students participated in school-sponsored activities

**24.9%**

other activities

*When students are not home, 94.3% of students stated their parents know where they are and who they are with.*

## What Students are Saying:

We want to learn real life skills

Actually take what we say seriously and make change around it

Everything is always due at the same time

We want to be able to go to the bathroom without people vaping in it

More opportunities for clubs, etc

We would stay longer in school for a longer lunch or more time to visit with friends

School is stressful and teachers don't help

More socialization

More free time

School and lessons need to be more fun

We need time to ask for help and have a check-in with our teachers

We want to be able to walk down the hallway without worry



# Violence and Bullying at School

Overall, 72.3% of students in Indiana County indicated not experiencing bullying in the past 12 months compared to 76.8% at the state level.



**8.4%** Reported that they were attacked at school compared to 6.6% at the state level.



Students reported the most frequent reasons for bullying as

1. "the way I look (clothing, hairstyle, etc.)" **42.7%**
2. "some other reason" **40.3%**
3. "my size(height, weight, etc.)" **39.4%**



Bullying through texting or social media is up **2.1%** since 2019.



## What the Students Are Saying:

Some older students felt like bullying is not an issue

Bullying is a societal issue not a school issue

Cyber bullying happens more than in-person

Not so much bullying as there is racism and attacks on LGBTQ

No great outlet to report bullying

Emotional bullying is the hardest to stop and it stays with you the longest

Bullying is worse in junior high

The best way to address a bully is to stand up to them

Most drama occurs in text messages or online

Need boundaries regarding "joking" with peers

**The PAYS data show a strong relationship between being bullied and depression and suicidal behaviors.**

The questions were scored on a scale of 1 to 4 (NO!, no, yes, YES!). <b>Individuals that reported being bullied showed a significant increase in the following mental health concerns compared to those that did not report being bullied.</b>	Bullied through texting/social media in the past year?				Skipping school due to bullying fears in the past year?			
	NO!/no		YES!/yes		NO!/no		YES!/yes	
	County 2021	State 2021	County 2021	State 2021	County 2021	State 2021	County 2021	State 2021
Felt so sad or hopeless almost every day for at least 2 weeks in the past year that stopped doing usual activities	23%	25.8%	57.1%	61.2%	26.4%	29.1%	63.5%	73.9%
Seriously considered suicide	13.1%	14.7%	40.5%	41.5%	15.6%	17.1%	45.9%	53.1%
Made suicide plan in past year	10.3%	11.5%	33.7%	33.8%	12.4%	13.5%	40.5%	43.5%
Attempted suicide one or more times in the past year	6.0%	7.6%	30.6%	30.1%	8.3%	9.5%	37.2%	42%

# Coalition Priorities & Next Steps

The goal of the Risk & Protective Factor workgroup of the Prevention Coalition of Indiana County is to use a collaborative effort to identify risks and needs that the youth in our county face. Collecting and analyzing the PAYS and public data will provide a foundation to engage local stakeholders in data-driven discussions and implementation of county-wide, evidence-based programs to address the problem areas facing our communities.



## 1. Priority Recommendations

The data revealed that young people in Indiana County reported high levels of family involvement and attachment and that they are motivated to follow society's expectations and standards. Indiana County should work on continuing to build upon these strengths while also focusing on **increasing opportunities for prosocial involvement**.

We recommend that the Prevention Coalition of Indiana County give particular attention to implementing strategies or programs to address **students' psychological, emotional, physical, and social well-being** including internet safety, vaping education, commitment to school, and opportunities for prosocial involvement.



## 2. Community Assessment

The Assessing Community Resources workgroup will research what other evidence-based programs, policies, and practices exist in our communities to address the priority risks or build on protection. They will determine where there are gaps or we could support existing services and make recommendations on evidence-based programming.

## 3. Community Action Plan

A Community Action Plan will be created and implemented to address the risk and needs of the youth in our county. Programs will be evaluated and assessed on a regular basis.

## A Special Thank You

Thank you to the members of the Risk & Protective Factor Workgroup for reviewing the data and making the recommendations: Patricia Berezansky, Jim Decker, Jessica Dinger, Rena Enterline, Kayla Marshall, Kalani Palmer, Eric Slovinsky, Lisa Spencer, James Wagner, Jennifer Van Wieren and Justin Zahorchak.

The Prevention Coalition of Indiana County is committed to improving the health and well-being of the youth in our community!

*Healthy Children are our Future!*



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