

2014 Communities that Care® Youth Survey
 Summary of Highlights · Tompkins County
 Spring, 2015



Community Coalition for Healthy Youth www.healthyyouth.org
 Tompkins County Youth Services Dept. www.tompkinscountyny.gov/youth

How Well Do You Know Tompkins County Youth?

In fall, 2014, 3,911 students in grades 7-12 in fifteen Tompkins County Schools completed the Communities that Care® Youth Survey. This represents a response rate of 77.5%. For most schools, this was the fourth time their students participated in the biannual survey, allowing for time-trend analysis since 2008.

There is much good news in terms of how well our young people are doing. But there is room for improvement. We invite you to read this summary report and talk with your school and community about what you can do to help make Tompkins County a place where all youth thrive.

84% of Tompkins County youth feel safe in their neighborhood	43% of Tompkins County youth have lots of adults in their neighborhood they could talk to about something important
83% of Tompkins County youth participated in extracurricular activities at school or in the community in the past year	31% of Tompkins County young people report being depressed or sad most days
83% of Tompkins County youth could ask their mom or dad for help with a personal problem	26% of Tompkins County high school students are current alcohol users
60% reduction in likelihood that local youth will use marijuana if their parents tell them they disapprove	25% of Tompkins County students were verbally bullied at school in the past month
47% of Tompkins County students like school most of the time or always	13.8 years old is the average age when Tompkins County youth try marijuana for the first time

This report compares responses of Tompkins County students with those of national peers when national data are available. Survey results are used in each district and at the County level to guide school and community efforts to prevent and reduce the use and abuse of alcohol and other drugs, to improve student connections to school and school safety, and to identify steps our community can take to improve students' long-term success. See Notes on p. 5 for definitions.

The 2014 Tompkins County Survey Report lists all questions and the combined responses of all students. The Report is on file with Tompkins County Youth Services Department and TST BOCES. Each school superintendent and building principal has a copy of their district/building results.

The survey was a joint effort of Community Coalition for Healthy Youth, TST BOCES, Alcohol & Drug Council, Tompkins County Youth Services Department, and Trumansburg, Newfield, Lansing, Ithaca, Groton, Dryden School Districts and New Roots Charter School.

Everyone involved in this project extend our thanks to the principals and superintendents who chose to participate in this survey, and to the teachers and school staff who supported this effort. But, most importantly, we would like to thank the students who took the time and effort to share their experiences with us.

Risk and Protective Factor Framework		Problem behaviors				
		Substance abuse	Delinquency	Teen pregnancy	School drop-out	Violence
TOMPKINS YOUTH RISK FACTORS to watch (shaded) and the problem behaviors that can result (✓) .						
School (p. 2)	Early & persistent antisocial behavior	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
	Academic failure in elementary school	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
	Lack of commitment to school	✓	✓	✓	✓	
Family (p. 3)	Family history of high risk behavior	✓	✓	✓	✓	
	Family management problems	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
	Family conflict	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Community (p. 3)	Favorable parental attitudes & involvement in the problem behavior	✓	✓			✓
	Availability of drugs & firearms	✓				✓
	Community norms & laws favorable toward drug use and firearms	✓				
	Transitions & mobility	✓	✓		✓	
	Low neighborhood attachment	✓	✓			✓
	Community disorganization	✓	✓			✓
Individual/peer (p. 4)	Extreme economic & social deprivation	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
	Alienation & rebelliousness	✓	✓		✓	
	Friends who engage in a problem behavior	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
	Favorable attitudes toward the problem behavior	✓	✓	✓	✓	
	Early initiation of the problem behavior	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓

To prevent a problem from happening, we need to identify the factors that increase the risk of that problem developing and then find ways to reduce the risks. 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 characteristics of the community, school, family, peer groups and individual youth that can help protect youth (protective factors), or put them at risk (risk factors) for drug use and other problem behaviors including delinquency, teen pregnancy, violence, and school drop-out.

The table at right lists risk factors by domains (community, family, school, individual/peer) and the problem behaviors that can result from high risk scores in each area. A checkmark (✓) indicates that at least two national studies have found that the risk factor predicts the problem behavior. (Research by Hawkins and Catalano, Social Development Research Group, University of Washington) Darkly shaded rows are those risk areas in Tompkins County that were the highest in our 2014 survey and are also worse than the national norm. Lightly shaded rows were higher (worse) by 5% or more in 2014 than 2012. More details, including clarification on the risk factors at right, are found inside this report and at www.healthyyouth.org.

This report examines data in each domain to see where Tompkins youth are doing well and where there is room for improvement.

School

Strong Tompkins protective factors: Tompkins students say they have opportunities to be a part of important activities at school and that they are rewarded for their contributions.

Tompkins risk factors to watch: The risk factor that showed the greatest increase (worsening) since 2012 was students' commitment to school. A concerning number of students report that they do not like school, spend time on homework, or see the relevance of their coursework.

Tompkins Students' School Life

All risk factors in this domain are below (better) the national norm and all protective factors are above (better). When young people like school, participate meaningfully in school activities, and are recognized for their contributions, they are less likely to become involved in problem behaviors.

We noted these **positives...**

- 88%** of students say they have many chances to be a part of class discussions
- 86%** say they feel safe at school
- 84%** say they have lots of chances to talk one-on-one with teachers
- 83%** say they usually try to do their best work at school
- 47%** say there is an adult at school who can help them with problems

... and areas of concern

- 39%** report that the school lets them know when they've done something well
- 25%** were verbally bullied in the past month at school
- 25%** say they often or almost always hate being in school
- 19%** report cutting school at least once in the past month
- 14%** of high schoolers report they have been drunk or high at school in the past year

Family

Strong Tompkins protective factors: Tompkins students report that they are a valued part of their family. They say they have chances to participate in family responsibilities and activities and are encouraged by their parents.

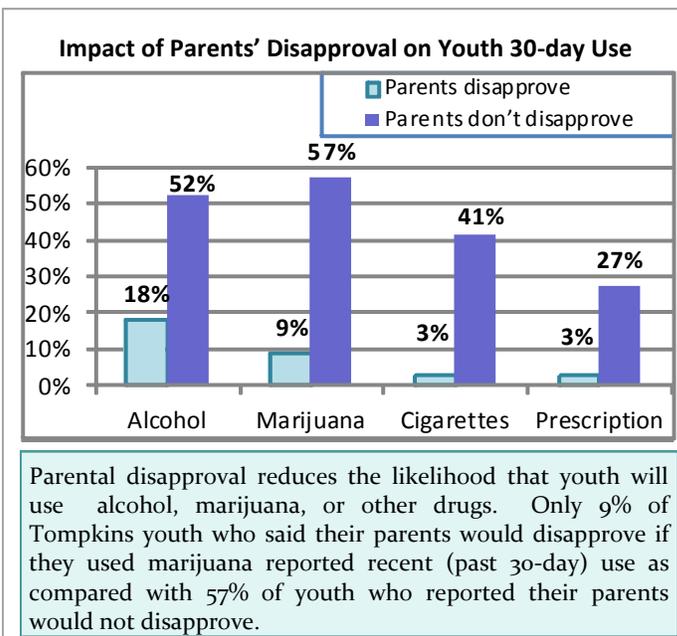
Tompkins risk factors to watch: While all Family risk factors are below (better than) the national norm, two showed small increases (worsening) since 2012. Students reported worse parental monitoring of their behavior and increased tolerance by their parents of problem behaviors such as drug use, fighting, and stealing.

Tompkins Students and their Families

Good news! All the Tompkins County risk factor scores for the Family domain are below (better than) the national norm and all the protective scores are above. Tompkins parents provide opportunities for their children to participate in family activities and praise their children for their successes. Youth feel connected to their parents and say they could go to one of their parents if they had a problem or needed help. However, students in grades 10-12 are above the national norm for poor family supervision and family management (failing to provide clear expectations and monitoring their children's behavior and whereabouts) and parent attitudes that are tolerant toward problem behaviors.

Research shows that if parents involve children in their own alcohol or drug using behavior - for example, asking the child to light a parent's cigarette or get the parent a beer from the refrigerator - this increases the risk of the children becoming alcohol or drug abusers during adolescence.

While it is natural for young people to have more independence as they get older, it is important for caregivers to continue to set clear expectations for their children's behavior and to know where they are and who they are with.



Community

Strong Tompkins protective factors: Area youth report that there are many activities available in their communities.

Tompkins risk factors to watch: Four of the five Community risk factors are higher (worse) in Tompkins County than the national norm. Youth report fights, crime, and physical deterioration in their neighborhoods.

Tompkins Students and their Community

In 2014, the four highest (worst) Tompkins County risk factors, all higher than the national norm, were in the Community domain. While many students report that there are opportunities to be involved in community activities, they also say they do not feel connected to their communities, in part because of frequent moves and transitions. Youth who feel supported in their communities are less likely to engage in negative behaviors such as drug use or fighting.

86% of students report that extracurricular activities are available in their community.

84% of students say they feel safe in their neighborhoods.

78% of students like their neighborhood.

71% would miss their neighborhood if they had to move.

43% have lots of adults in their neighborhood they could talk to about something important.

43% of youth have people in their neighborhood who are proud of them.

40% said it would be easy to get marijuana if they wanted and 38% said alcohol would be easy to obtain.

32% state that if a kid smoked marijuana in their neighborhood, they would be caught by the police.

26% said neighbors notice when they are doing a good job and let them know.

19% say community adults don't disapprove of kids' using marijuana. 22% say adults don't disapprove of underage drinking.

Peer/Individual

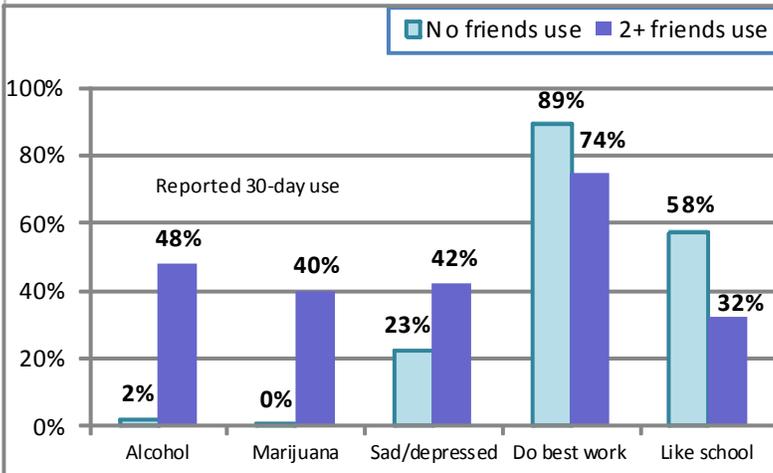
Strong Tompkins protective factors: Most Tompkins youth have strong beliefs in what is right or wrong. Most are socially competent and have positive relationships with their peers. The highest (best) protective scores in Tompkins County are for the peer/individual domain.

Tompkins risk factors to watch: A high number of Tompkins youth are accepting of antisocial behaviors for themselves and their peers, including drug use, rebelliousness, stealing, fighting, and skipping school.

Tompkins Students and their Peers

For the most part, youth in Tompkins County show lower risk scores and higher protective scores than national rates for the Individual/Peer domain. As youth get older, peers become more influential on behaviors and choices. Bonds with positive peers—friends who care about school, know right from wrong, volunteer in the community, follow rules, and have negative attitudes toward drug use, fighting, and crime—help protect youth from many negative behaviors. 53% of local youth who used alcohol obtained it from friends.

Impact of Substance Use by Peers on Own Use of Alcohol or Marijuana, Mental Health, Connection to School



Hanging out with substance-using peers increases the likelihood of drug use and depression and decreases student connection to school.

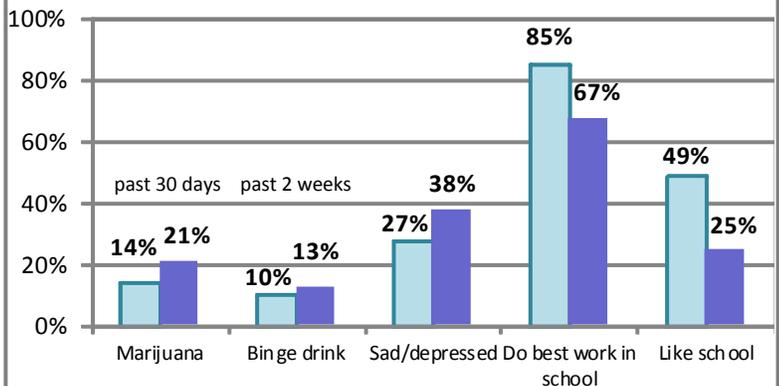
Substance Use Alcohol remains the most commonly used substance by Tompkins County youth with 26% of high school students reporting use in the past 30 days (down from 29% in 2012). 13% reported binge drinking (5 or more drinks in a row) in the past 2 weeks, a decrease from 17% in 2012. Marijuana is the second most commonly used substance and while use rates have leveled off for most grades, use by local youth is higher than national rates. Although heroin use has increased in the adult population, use by local youth is below 1%. Non-medical use of prescription drugs has dropped for most grades. Tobacco use, cigarettes and smokeless products, is lower among Tompkins youth than national peers. (details, pp. 5-6)

Extracurricular Activities While parents may worry that their children are overextended, some involvement in extra curricular activities has a positive influence on youth outcomes.

Extracurricular Involvement	M.S.	H.S.
There are many chances for student involvement in sports/clubs/activities	96%	94%
In past year, participated in extracurricular activities (school/community)	81%	84%
In past year, participated on sports teams (school/community)	84%	74%

Mental Health	M.S.	H.S.
Sometimes I think life isn't worth it	21%	27%
At times I think I'm no good at all	31%	36%
I think I'm a failure	18%	20%
In the past year I felt sad or depressed most days	30%	32%

Impact of Participation in Sports or Extracurricular Activities

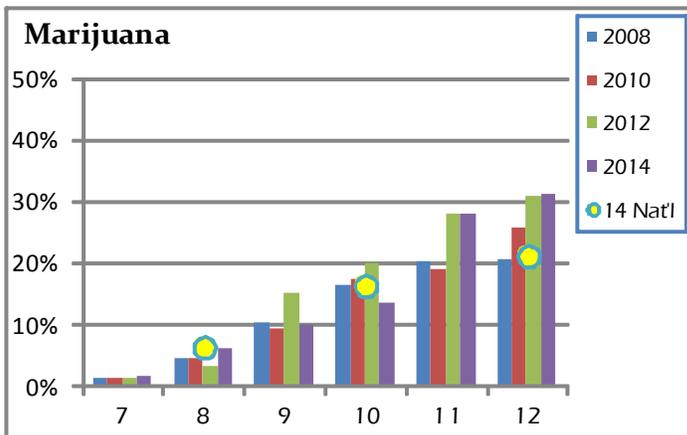
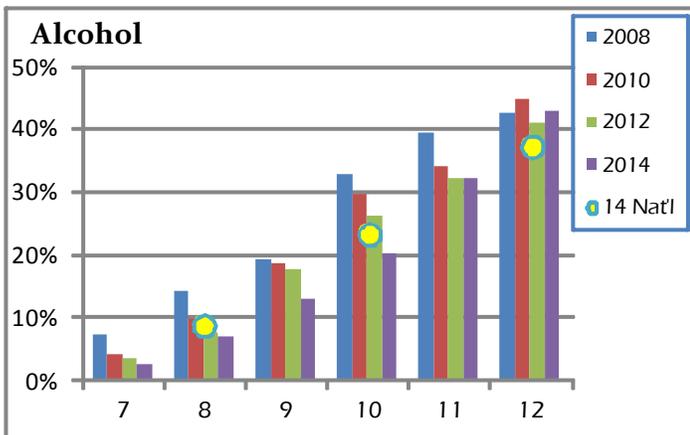


Youth who participate in extracurriculars are less likely to use marijuana or binge drink, less likely to be depressed, and more engaged in school.

Mental Health All mental health markers are higher (worse) than they were in 2012. Nationally, 29% of high school students report feeling sad or hopeless. Tompkins rates are slightly higher than this.

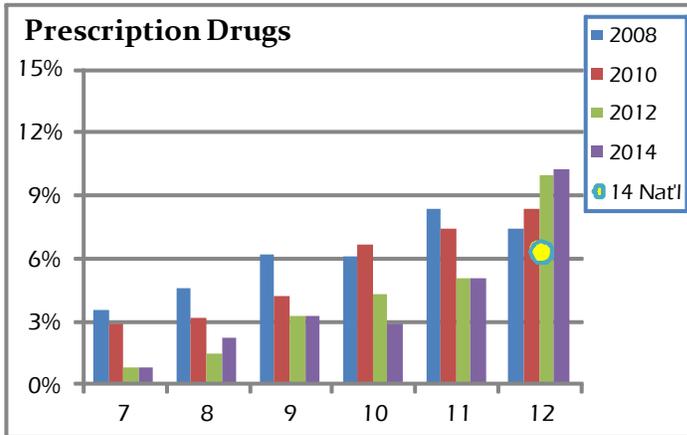
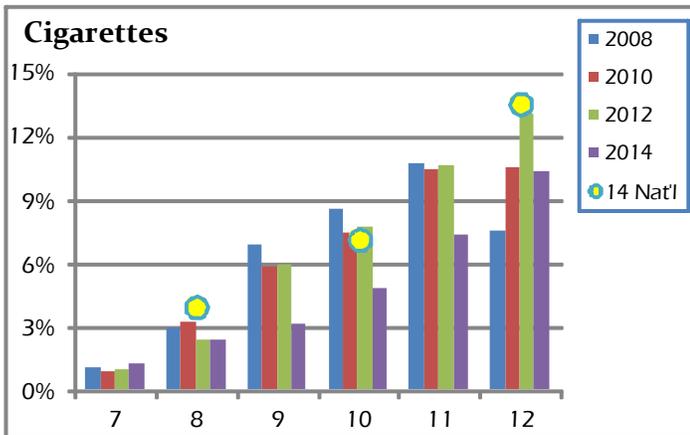
APPENDIX

Tompkins County Time Trends: Current (past 30-day) Substance Use by Grade



Tompkins County **alcohol** use continues to trend down for most grades, mirroring the national trend. Use by local 12th graders is higher than national peers but rates for other grades are lower.

After increasing significantly in 2012, **marijuana** use has leveled off or dropped for most grades. However, rates by local 12th graders remain significantly higher than rates of national peers.



Cigarette use by Tompkins County youth dropped for most grades and is well below the rate of national peers.

Non-medical use of **prescription drugs** has dropped for most grades except 12th. 12th grade use exceeds national rates.

Tompkins County Time Trends: Age of First Use (grades 7-12)

	2008	2010	2012	2014
Alcohol	13.0	13.3	13.1	13.3
Marijuana	13.8	13.9	13.8	13.8
Cigarettes	12.7	13.0	13.1	12.9

The earlier the onset of any drug use, the greater the involvement in other drug use and the greater frequency of use. Onset of drug use before age 15 is a consistent predictor of drug abuse, and a later age of first drug use has been shown to predict lower drug involvement.

Notes:

National (Nat'l): Refers to the Monitoring the Future survey given annually to a national sample of 50,000 students in grades 8, 10, and 12. Exception: national youth depression comparison is from the Youth Risk Behavior Surveillance System, a survey of students in grades 9-12, conducted annually by the U.S. Centers for Disease Control.

Current Use: Use within the past 30 days.

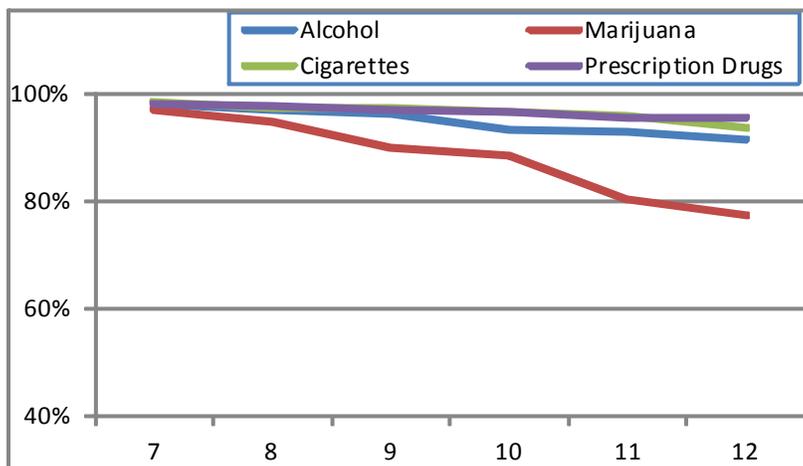
Regular Use: Cigarettes: smoke one or more packs per week; Alcohol: one or more alcoholic drinks nearly every day; Marijuana: not specified.

Prescription Drugs: Use of prescription pain killers, sedatives, tranquilizers, and/or stimulants without a doctor's instructions to take them.

Participating Schools: Dryden Middle and High School; Groton Middle and High School; Ithaca's Boynton and DeWitt Middle Schools, Lehman Alternative Community School and Ithaca High School; Lansing Middle and High School; Newfield Middle and High School; Trumansburg Middle and High School; New Roots Charter School. MS refers to students in grades 7 and 8; HS refers to students in grades 9-12.

Research references are drawn from Pride Surveys, Communities that Care®, Monitoring the Future, and Youth Risk Behavior Surveillance System.

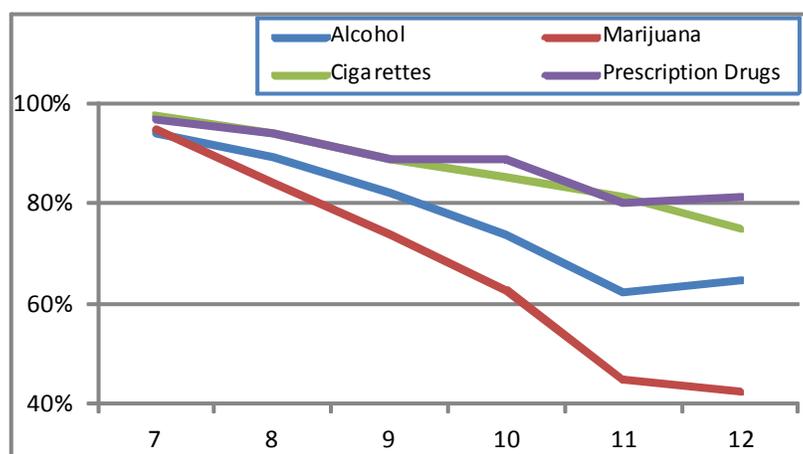
Tompkins Students' Perception of Parental Disapproval of Substance Use by Grade



Most Tompkins County youth of all grades report that their parents would disapprove if they used any of the listed substances. Perceived parental disapproval for marijuana is lower than for alcohol, cigarettes, or prescription drugs.

In families where parents are tolerant of their children's use of substances, children are more likely to become drug users during adolescence. Youth are at increased risk of using these substances unless they perceive that their parents would consider it very wrong for them to do so.

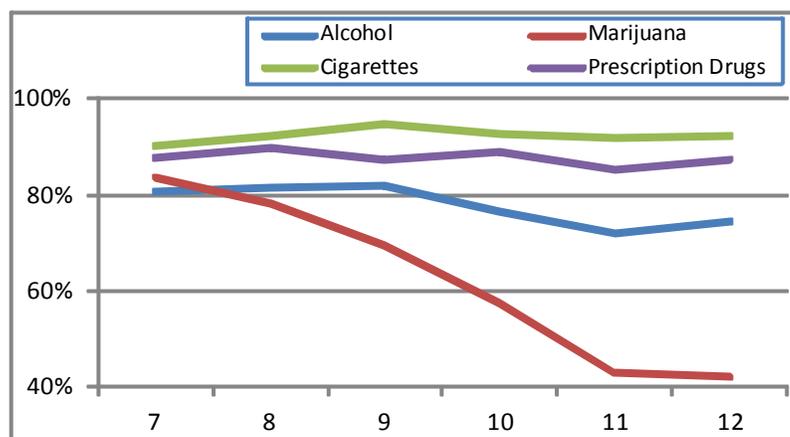
Tompkins Students' Perception of Friends' Disapproval of Substance Use by Grade



By 11th grade, fewer than half of Tompkins youth say their friends would disapprove if they used marijuana.

Social norms, the written and unwritten rules and expectations about acceptable and desirable behavior, help shape youth's choices about drug use. Expectations of how one's peer group might react have an especially strong impact on whether young people choose to use drugs.

Tompkins Students' Perception of Harm* from Regular Substance Use by Grade



*Moderate or great harm from regular use.

Students in all grades rate cigarette use as the most harmful and this remains true through 12th grade. Perception of harm for alcohol and prescription drugs also remains high.

In contrast, by late high school, perceived harm from marijuana use is half what it was in 7th grade with less than 50% of students believing regular marijuana use is harmful.

Perception of risk or harm is an important factor in the decision-making process young people go through when deciding whether or not to use alcohol and other drugs. When the perceived risk of harm is high, reported frequency of use is low. When drugs are perceived as less harmful, the probability of use increases.

For more information contact the Community Coalition for Healthy Youth

c/o Tompkins County Youth Services Dept., 320 W. ML King Jr. (State) St., Ithaca (607) 274-5310 or www.healthyouth.org