

Community Coalition for Healthy Youth
Creating Community Change – 2004 to 2009
December, 2009

Community Coalition for Healthy Youth www.healthyouth.org
Tompkins County Youth Services Department www.tompkins-co.org/youth
Supported by the U.S. Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration
Drug Free Communities Support Program # H79 SP11382

5 years of mobilizing our community

In the fall of 2004, the Community Coalition for Healthy Youth (CCHY) received a 5-year federal grant for Drug-Free Coalitions, funded under the U.S. Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA). Tompkins County Youth Services Department coordinated the grant of \$100,000 per year to build a stronger Coalition and to reduce substance abuse among youth in the Ithaca City School District. One-to-one matching funds were provided by in-kind services from Cornell Cooperative Extension's Rural Youth Services and TST BOCES' Youth Development Services.

Did the grant make a difference? Yes, it did!

The grant had two main goals:

- 1. To build a drug-free community coalition, uniting representatives from a broad spectrum of the community, including Ithaca City School District and TST BOCES school staff, government, law enforcement, treatment providers, youth-serving agencies, youth, and families to prevent and reduce substance abuse among youth.**

Results: Our Coalition grew significantly in activity and membership during these five years. The level of cohesion, focused activity, breadth and depth of commitment has increased measurably.

- Membership increased from 12 people in 2004 to over 30 members currently engaged.
- The number of regular Board meetings increased from 9/year to 12/year.
- Average attendance at board meetings (counting volunteers only) grew by 18%.
- The number of committees (some on-going, some short-term) increased from 3 to 9, with participating community members now contributing their time and talents, in addition to Board members.

- 2. To reduce substance abuse among ICSD youth by 10-15%.**

Results: In this report, we used data from a 2005 Ithaca District survey as a baseline, where 2400 Ithaca City School District students from 6th through 12th grades self-reported their attitudes and behaviors. We compared that data with the most recent survey given in fall, 2008 to 2300 ICSD students. As our measure of change, we looked at our summary core question, the same one used nationally as the most important indicator for current drug use: How many times in the past 30 days have you used this drug?

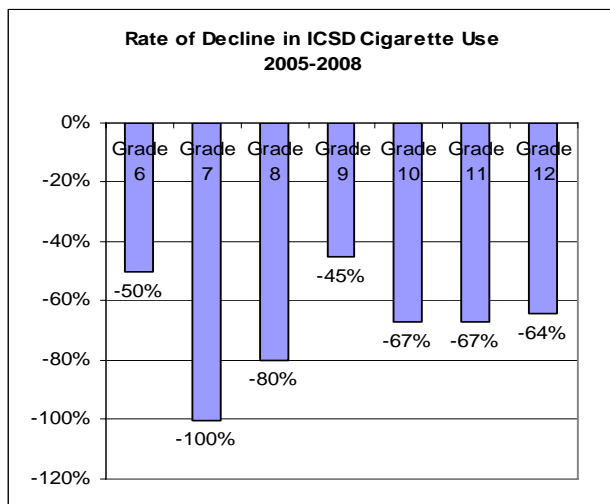
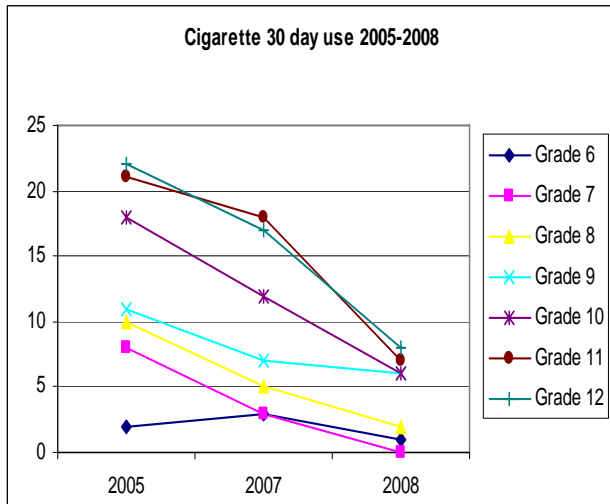
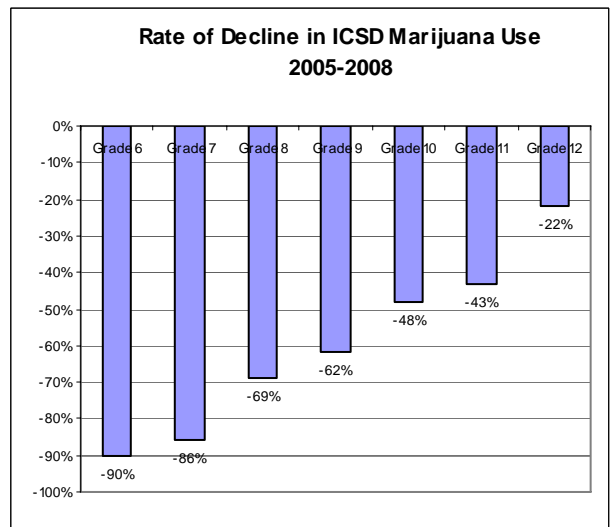
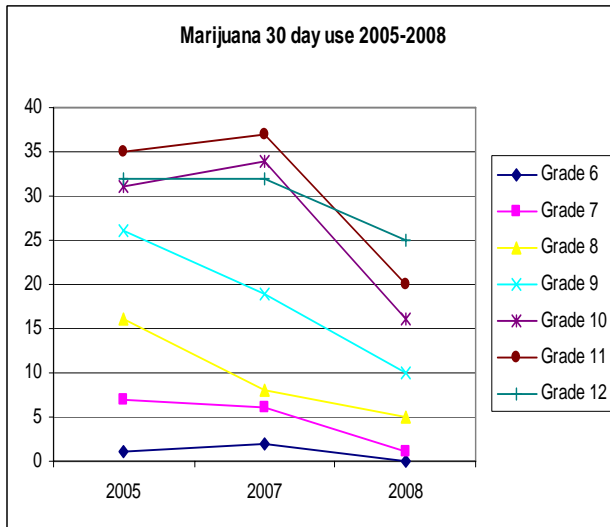
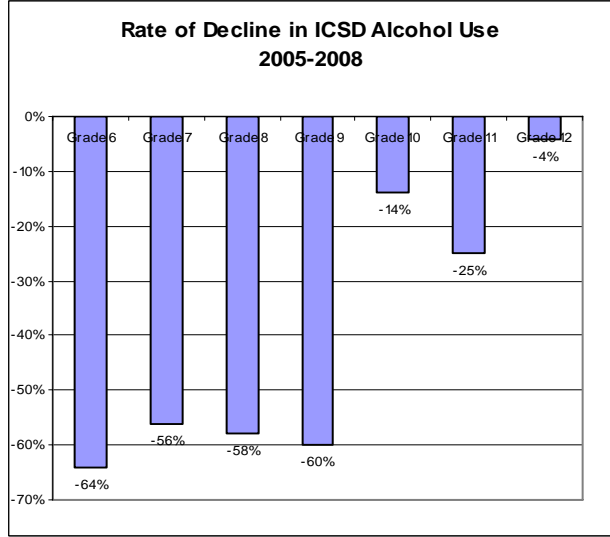
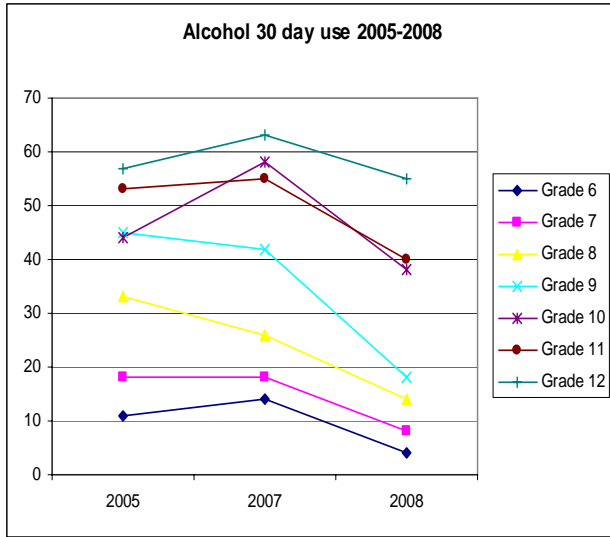
As the graphs on the next page shows, the data illustrate a clear pattern of declining use over the 3 year period. For all but one of the grade levels, the decline was far greater than our 5-year goal of 10-15%. In comparing years, we note that the 2008 survey was given in the fall, while the previous surveys were given in the spring; this difference has the effect of underestimating the drug use in 2008, because we would expect to see an increase in use during those 6 months as students age. Therefore, our results are somewhat exaggerated, but not by an amount that would change the patterns.

Across the country, rates of alcohol, marijuana and cigarette use have also been dropping for many years so we have to ask ourselves if our rate of decline was the same or different from the national rate. The answer is, Ithaca's rate of decline is much steeper, with 2 exceptions: alcohol use in grades 10 and 12.

Rate of Decline in Drug Use in the last 30 days between 2005 and 2008

	<u>National Average</u>	<u>Ithaca District</u>
<u>Alcohol</u>		
Grade 8	-7%	-56%
Grade 10	-13%	-14%
Grade 12	-8%	-4%
<u>Marijuana</u>		
Grade 8	-12%	-69%
Grade 10	-9%	-48%
Grade 12	-2%	-22%
<u>Cigarettes</u>		
Grade 8	-27%	-80%
Grade 10	-17%	-67%
Grade 12	-12%	-64%

Before congratulating ourselves too much, a closer look shows challenges for our community. The level of alcohol and marijuana use by Ithaca 12th grade students in 2008 was is 6-8 percentage points higher than the national average. (National data are from the Monitoring the Future Survey, given nationally each year to students in grades 8, 10, and 12.)



Lessons learned: What worked and what didn't?

Successful strategies:

Our school partnerships are among our strongest, working with TST BOCES' Youth Development staff, school superintendents and principals on the student surveys and "Safe Celebrations" mass mailing, the DeWitt Social Norms program, have all been very popular.

We have used existing networks that are concerned with youth issues to develop, collect and analyze data, and to implement programs. Program examples include Rural Youth Services to provide drug-free local youth activities, and Reality Check and Tobacco Free Tompkins to reduce tobacco use by youth.

Dozens of presentations each year (mostly by Kris Bennett) using power point and "clickers" on self-reported student drug use, attitudes, family, school and community risks and protective factors have proven to be excellent organizing tools. They have created an interest and concern that turns into new collaborative partnerships, especially with schools, and volunteer action.

DeWitt Middle School's 5-year Social Norms Project involved a committed team of teachers and administrators, trained by social norms expert Alan Berkowitz, who volunteered their time to make the project happen. Over the 5 years, 21 posters with messages about positive student behaviors (commitment to academics, disapproval of drug use, etc.) were released and other school-based activities took place. Dr. H. Wesley Perkins from Hobart William Smith Colleges assessed the impact of the campaign and found that over 5 years, DeWitt students had statistically significant reductions in tobacco and marijuana use and increases in commitment to academics and taking positive steps to intervene when observing hurtful behavior at school as compared with other ICSD middle schoolers who were not exposed to the campaign. Key DeWitt teachers are continuing the project this year although CCHY support for the project ended in June, 2008. Wes Perkins and Kris Bennett are planning to write an article about the project for publication in a social norms journal.

Media campaigns, including hundreds of paid and earned media impressions over the years.

Problems encountered:

Some strategies did not pan out, example: Our plan to add school resource officers at Ithaca High School was scrapped due to funding cuts to the Ithaca police department. We shifted gears in year 3 to get a successful 9th grade transition support project, Link Crew, off the ground instead.

Engaging youth in the policy and decision making aspects of the Coalition was a challenge that we did not meet during these 5 years. During this time, we gave minimal support to some youth who worked in youth programs to increase healthy choices, such as Link Crew, Reality Check (anti-tobacco), Alcohol & Drug Council's peer educators, and we gave mini-grants to many groups to promote drug-free activities. In the last year of the grant, we engaged over 100 youth in a survey and focus groups to hear what they thought were the best strategies for drug prevention. However, the fact remains that very few youth attended our Board meetings or had a voice in selecting initiatives or forming our budgets.

On-going challenges from the demographics of our community:

College students who use alcohol and other drugs constitute a sizable, visible and influential presence for younger students in Ithaca. 73% of Cornell students and 82% of Ithaca College students report current use of alcohol. Demand for alcohol also leads to a higher-than-regional prevalence of alcohol outlets. Cornell University and Ithaca College, along with Ithaca Police, have taken effective measures to curb excessive abuse, especially during end-of-semester parties.

Easy access and parental acceptance of drinking: 80% of 12th graders report it would be easy to get alcohol, primarily from home and friends. 55% of adults in a community survey said that occasional youth alcohol use is acceptable, and 30% said it is okay for youth to smoke marijuana.

New issues emerging

An emerging drug threat to youth, locally and nationally, is pharmaceutical abuse, both over-the-counter and prescriptions. Local use in the 2008 student survey of 5 school districts showed nearly 100 Tompkins County students in 11th and 12th grades have abused pharmaceuticals more than 5 times in their lives. While the percentage of youth experimenting with these drugs is small, the consequences can be fatal. Several years ago, a young man from Dryden died from abusing cough medicine, and more recently, a local 19 year-old died from abusing pain killers.

A national movement to make medical marijuana legal began on the West Coast and is now spreading to the eastern half of the U.S., including pending legislation in New York. As of this writing, 13 states have effective medical marijuana laws, and 15 more have pending legislative or ballot measures. We need to understand how medical marijuana influences accessibility and likelihood of increasing teen use.

Publications

CCHY Brochure

2005 Annual Report

Summary of Highlights, 2005 Student Life and Culture Survey

Summary of Highlights, 2007 Student Life and Culture Survey

Summary of Highlights, 2008 NY State Youth Development Survey

Pharmaceutical Abuse by Tompkins County Youth in 5 School Districts, 2009

Website: www.healthyyouth.org

Poster series for DeWitt Social Norms Program, 2005 - 2009

Poster series for Ithaca High School Social Norms Program, 2005

Billboard "Connect. Give teens your time, not your beer." 2008-09

Media print and bus ads, "Teen Drinking: Parents Make a Difference", 2008-09

Current Board Members (12/09)

Alcohol & Drug Council, Stacy Cangelosi

Catholic Charities, Tommy Miller

Cayuga Addiction Recovery Services, Stephanie Gumaer

Cayuga Heights Police Department, Sgt. Jim Steinmetz

Clarity Connect, Chuck Bartosch

Community Dispute Resolution Center, Tammy Baker

Community volunteers, Gale Smith, Monty Berman

Cornell Cooperative Extension Tompkins County, Nancy Potter, Linda Schoffel

Ithaca City School District, Ron Acerra, Lesli Myers, Nan Brown

Mental Health Association in Tompkins County, Beth Jenkins

Tompkins County Family Court, Judge John Rowley

Tompkins County Health Department, Ted Schiele

TST BOCES, Amanda Verba

Z95.5 Radio, Margaret Tollner, Sonya Kelley

Coalition Staff (12/09)

Kris Bennett

Sara Hess

Nancy Zahler