

***Fairfield County  
Youth Behavior Survey  
2010  
Executive Summary***

The 2010 Fairfield County Youth Behavior Survey was conducted as a continuing effort to monitor behaviors of the county's youth. This report contains findings from the survey in the priority areas of substance abuse, mental health, sexual behavior, and risk and protective factors

In 2004, in an effort to obtain a statistically reliable and a current perspective of Fairfield County youth, the Fairfield County ADAMH Board, Prevention Works for a Drug-Free Fairfield County and the Fairfield County Family, Adult and Children First Council sponsored and conducted the first bi-annual Youth Behavior Survey in all but one public school in Fairfield County. Results of the survey are used to help plan focused prevention and intervention, targeted in-school programs, evaluate program effectiveness over time, identify trends and obtain funding to support needed services. Subsequent surveys in 2006 and 2008 were completed in all public schools.

A total of 2, 533 students in grades 10 and 12 participated in the 2010 survey through their respective school districts. The 2010 survey is particularly historic, as it marks the first time that every high school (10<sup>th</sup> and 12<sup>th</sup> grades) participated in the survey, including parochial schools. The results of the surveys provide a benchmark for alcohol, tobacco and other drug (ATOD) use as well as an indication of negative and problematic behavior among our youth. These behaviors are self-reported. Concurrently, the survey also assesses the risk factors that are related to these behaviors and the protective factors that guard against them.

## Key Findings of 2010 Youth Behavior Survey

Results of the study suggest that after a period of declining use reported in 2008, frequent drug use among Fairfield County twelfth graders is beginning to trend upward for alcohol and marijuana, but trending down for tobacco and illegal prescription drugs.

- The study shows that frequent alcohol use (30 day) among twelfth graders has increased from a low of 31.2% in 2008 to 34.7% in 2010.
- Frequent marijuana use has also increased in 2010, up to 20.3% from 15.8% in 2008.
- Frequent use of all tobacco products has decreased to an all-time low of 22.5%.
- Frequent illegal use of prescription drugs continued to decline in 2010 to a new low of 5.7%. However, additional factors have emerged related to prescription drug use and heroin that continue to elevate concern in this area.

<b>Frequent Use (30 day use) of - %</b>	<b>2004</b>	<b>2006</b>	<b>2008</b>	<b>2010</b>
<b>Selected Substances</b>				
Alcohol	37.4	35.6	31.2	34.7
Cigarettes	24.1	23.0	23.4	22.5
Marijuana	18.8	15.1	15.8	20.3
Other People's Prescriptions	9.4	8.5	7.2	5.7

### ***Age of Onset***

The 2010 data also revealed a troubling finding in the area of *age of onset*. The age at which Fairfield County youth are initiating the use of alcohol, tobacco, marijuana and prescription drugs is now younger in every area but tobacco use. This trend is important to monitor because the longer use is delayed, the less likely the individual is to become harmfully involved with substances as they grow older.

<b>Average age of first use</b>	<b>2004</b>	<b>2006</b>	<b>2008</b>	<b>2010</b>
Alcohol	14.31	14.41	14.58	14.05
Cigarettes	13.78	13.94	14.34	14.01
Marijuana	14.63	14.60	14.89	14.65
Illegal Prescription (Rx) Drugs	14.85	14.59	15.60	14.84

### ***Ease of Access***

The 2010 Fairfield County Youth Behavior Survey disclosed that access to alcohol and prescription drugs has either decreased or stayed the same, respectively. Access to tobacco and marijuana showed dramatic increases, as did access to heroin.

<b>Ease of Access</b>	<b>2004</b>	<b>2006</b>	<b>2008</b>	<b>2010</b>
<b>Very Easy and Somewhat Easy - % Seniors</b>				
Alcohol	85	84.2	84.2	83.3
Tobacco	85.5	84.7	75.3	84.3
Marijuana	69	67.3	66.2	73.1
Illegal Prescription (Rx) Drugs	49	49	45.3	45.7
Heroin	15.6	16.2	15.9	30.4

The issues of binge drinking and attendance at parties where parents have allowed alcohol were included in the survey for the first time in 2008. Results of the 2010 survey indicated that 54.7% of seniors reported that they have been to a party where parents have allowed alcohol. In regard to binge drinking, of the high school seniors who report drinking, 52.6% reported that they had consumed 5 or more glasses of any alcoholic beverage within a few hours.

### **Risk and Protective Factors**

Just as there are both risk factors and protective factors associated with many human diseases, there are factors that can help protect youth from, or put them

at risk for, drug use and other problem behaviors. A youth's behavior is influenced by a complexity of experiences and influences. The 2010 Fairfield County Youth Behavior Survey measures a variety of protective and risk factors. Protective factors, also called assets, are conditions that buffer children and youth from exposure to risk either by reducing the impact of risks or changing the way that young people respond to risks. These are characteristics that are known to decrease the likelihood that a student will engage in problem behaviors.

<b>Protective Factors - %</b>	<b>2004</b>	<b>2006</b>	<b>2008</b>	<b>2010</b>
Participation in school activities	55	55.6	58.7	56.7
Participation in organized school sports	42	43.5	47.2	47.5
Good grades	86	85.9	81.6	86.4
Parents/guardians set clear rules	78	81.7	76.7	79
Parents/guardians enforce rules	75	76	76.7	74.2
Parents/guardians talk about harmful effects of drugs and alcohol	59	54.6	53.9	51.7
Parents involved in education (homework, school activities, conferences, etc.)	59	64	60.7	59.1
Trusted adult at home	84	89.6	85.9	87.6
Trusted adult at school	66	71.1	68.8	67.8

### **Behavioral Issues**

In addition to alcohol, drug and tobacco use behavior, the 2010 Fairfield County Youth Behavior Survey also measures other problem behaviors.

<b>Behavior - % Seniors</b>	<b>2004</b>	<b>2006</b>	<b>2008</b>	<b>2010</b>
Engaging in sexual activity - Ever	71	69.7	71.3	72
Forced to engage in sexual activity - Ever	13	9	12	9.7
Thoughts of killing themselves in past month	12	11.3	10.4	9.5
Tried to kill themselves - Lifetime	5.3	4.3	13	15
Self-mutilate - Lifetime	20	20.6	20.6	20.4

## Key Points

### ☒ Alcohol and Marijuana

Fairfield County youth are beginning to use alcohol and marijuana at a younger age. Frequent use of both substances has increased as well. The 2010 survey revealed that our youth's perception of harm for alcohol and marijuana is down as well, meaning that they consider these substances as less harmful as in years past. Marijuana was considered equally as harmful as alcohol.

Given these statistics, the data related to ease of access for marijuana is troubling. Seventy-three percent (73%) of the seniors in the 2010 survey reported that access to marijuana was very easy and somewhat easy. This is an increase from 66.2% in 2008.

Data related to attendance at parties where parents allow alcohol (54.7%) and binge drinking (52.6%) all add to this emerging issue.

### ☒ Prescription Drug Use and Heroin

There is good and bad news in this focus area. The good news is that frequent (30 day) and lifetime use for illegal prescription drugs is down from 2008. The perception of harm for illegal prescription drugs is up.

The bad news is that youth are using at a younger age. Youth who use prescription drugs illegally report that they get the drugs by a friend giving it to them (36.3%) or from stealing them from parents, family or friends (22.2%). Because of the strong link between prescription drug and heroin use, additional bad news regarding heroin was revealed in the 2010 survey.

Access to heroin as reported by Fairfield County seniors in the 2010 survey is almost double than that of 2008. In the 2010 survey 30.4% of seniors reported that heroin was very easy and somewhat easy to access, compared to 15.9% in 2008. The 2010 lifetime use rates for Fairfield county seniors are slightly more than three times greater than the National rate.

*The 2010 Fairfield County Youth Behavior Survey illustrate that a collaborative approach to prevention works and is needed now more than ever. No one sector of the community can single-handedly address adolescent drug and alcohol use or problem behaviors. The reality is parents, schools, businesses, law enforcement, faith-based organizations, human services and other sectors working together can and do have a significant, long term impact in preventing adolescent substance abuse and related behaviors.*

\*\* The 2010 Fairfield County Youth Behavior Survey data can be found at [www.fair-mha.org](http://www.fair-mha.org), the website of the Fairfield County ADAMH Board and the Family, Adult and Children First Council, [www.facfc.org](http://www.facfc.org) , after September 1, 2010.