

PREVENTION COALITION OF INDIANA COUNTY

# COMMUNITY ASSESSMENT REPORT

YOUTH RISK AND PROTECTIVE FACTORS



# 2023

REPORT

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United Way  
of Indiana County

## What is the Prevention Coalition of Indiana County?

The Prevention Coalition of Indiana County is a community collaboration developed to support the youth in our community. Through a grant funded by the PA Commission on Crime and Delinquency (PCCD), the United Way of Indiana County received funds to bring the Communities That Care model to Indiana County. Communities That Care (CTC) is an "operating system" that takes communities through a well-defined and structured process to reduce adolescent problem behaviors and promote positive youth development. The Prevention Coalition of Indiana County was established through CTC and uses prevention science to address risk and need in our community and to determine what we as a community can do to address the issue or to support evidence-based services already in place. Prevention science focuses on the development of evidence-based strategies that reduce risk factors and enhance protective factors to improve the health and well-being of individuals, families, and communities.



## 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

Adults have given up

Eliminate judgement when people need help

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

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

Vaping because of peers and wanting to feel better

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



## 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%).



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%).

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

## 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:

No great outlet to report bullying

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

Bullying is worse in junior high

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

Most drama occurs in text messages or online

Need boundaries regarding "joking" with peers

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

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!*

## Prevention Coalition of Indiana County Board Members

Kami Anderson - AICDAC  
Patricia Berezansky - United School District  
Whitney Carmichael - Alice Paul House  
Judy Christian - Penns Manor School District  
Jess Clark - The CARE Center  
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Regina Horwat - Marion Center School District  
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Morgan Livingston - Keystone Family Alliance  
District Attorney Robert Manzi - District Attorney's Office  
Megan Miller - The Open Door  
Melanie Mock - IRMC Physician Group Social Services  
Kathy Monko - River Valley School District  
Eric Neal - YMCA of Indiana County  
Jill Northey - Armstrong-Indiana-Clarion Drug & Alcohol Commission  
Kalani Palmer - IUP  
Justin Schake - Indiana Gazette  
Sarah Schroth - ARIN IU 28  
Eric Slovinsky - Indiana Borough Police Department  
Lisa Snyder - JusticeWorks YouthCare, Inc.  
Lisa Spencer - Indiana County Department of Human Services  
Jason Stepp - Indiana Gazette  
Emily Versace - Community Supporter  
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## Prevention Coalition of Indiana County Key Leaders

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Jess Cunningham - InFirst Bank	Chief Schawl - Indiana Borough Police
Mike Drew - The Reschini Group	Charles Spadafora Jr. - Colonial Motor Mart
Jennifer Eckels - WCCC	Lisa Spencer - Department of Human Services
Sheriff Robert Fyock - Indiana County Courthouse	Jason Stepp - Indiana Gazette
Robin Gorman - Indiana County Commissioner	Jim Struzzi - State Representative
Sherene Hess - Indiana County Commissioner	Glenn Thompson - Congressman
Mark Hilliard - Indiana County Chamber of Commerce	Dr. Christian Vaccaro - IUP
Robert Heinrich - Indiana Area School District	Mike Vuckovich - Indiana Area School District
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