

Mercer Island

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Discoveries

Substance Use Outcomes

SUBSTANCE	GRADE 6	GRADE 8	GRADE 10	GRADE 12
Smoked cigarettes in past 30 days	0%	3.3%	3.2%	3.7%
Drank alcohol in past 30 days	0.6%	9.1%	28.5%	46.5%
Used marijuana in past 30 days	0%	4%	15%	23.9%
Binge drinking in past two weeks	0.3%	3.3%	14.6%	30.7%

Source: Healthy Youth Survey 2018 – Mercer Island.

Mental Health Outcomes

Depression

Youth reporting “feeling sad or hopeless almost every day for two weeks or more in a row” - 2018

20% 8th Grade

21% 10th Grade

Considered Suicide

Youth reporting “in the past 12 months seriously considered attempting suicide” - 2018

14% 8th Grade

16% 10th Grade

Attempted Suicide

Youth reporting “in the past 12 months attempted suicide” - 2018

4% 8th Grade

6% 10th Grade

Source: Community Needs Assessment Databook, Mercer Island, WA State Division of Behavior Health and Recovery, April 2020.



The Root Cause

Favorable Parental and Youth Attitudes

- 16.8%** of 10th graders report their parents feel it would “not be wrong at all or be a little bit wrong to drink regularly”
- 5.7%** of 10th graders report their parents feel it would “not be wrong at all or be a little bit wrong to use marijuana”
- 16.1%** of 10th graders report it would be “no risk or slight risk to drink nearly every day”
- 16.1%** of 10th graders report it would be “no risk or slight risk to use marijuana regularly”

Source: 2018 HY Survey



Local Conditions

Favorable Parental and Youth Attitudes

Work Hard / Play Hard Attitudes

- Community norm held by adults but not mentioned by youth as a norm for them
- 12th graders allowed to drink as a “rite of passage” into adulthood
- Youth entitlement – if you achieve you can party

Parental Attitudes and Parenting Practices

- Parents know of harms – allow drinking for multiple reasons
- Parents have difficulty setting boundaries
- Parents do talk about ATOD – not proactively and with inconsistent, or harm-reduction, messages (e.g., “don’t drink and drive”)

Youth Behaviors Associated With Low Perception of Harm From Alcohol and Marijuana

- Mixed understanding / low fear of the physical harms of use
- Youth perception of limited consequences of use
- Alcohol use associated with events – afterparties and on weekends – much like a fraternity / sorority culture



Local Conditions

Mental Health and Stress

*Source: Mercer Island Assessment:
Various data including multiple
focus groups and interviews with
youth, parents, counselors, law
enforcement and educators.*

Pressure to Perform:

- Success is being perfect, getting good grades and getting into an elite school – not perceived by some youth and parents as unrealistic expectations (62% of students achieve an “A” average)
- Pressure starts in middle school – parents, teachers and community reinforce high expectations for success
- Coping mechanisms include ATOD use (perceived as acceptable)

Anxiety and Depression:

- 75.0% of 10th graders report feeling nervous, anxious or on edge several days or more in a two week period
- Pressure, bullying, sexual harassment and social media add to mental health issues
- Mental health concerns for youth: in directed study, of color, LGBTQ+, new to the island, with low parental support and 18-25 years old
- Lack of time for fun and outlets for decompressing

Stigma Around Help-Seeking Behaviors:

- Low stigma around talking about mental health issues, however, the talk doesn’t always lead to action
- Mixed perception about availability and effectiveness of mental health resources
- Need more mental health resources and skills for youth, parents and community

Mercer Island

***** Key Findings



Objectives



Long-Term Objectives

Decrease in 10th Graders Reporting:

Long- and intermediate-term objectives will be established as part of the overall MIHYI community strategies to address and prevent substance use and mental health issues. The Limerent-based campaigns and strategies will contribute to these long- and intermediate-term changes.

- * Drinking alcohol within the last 30 days by __% from 28.5% in 2018 to __% in 202_ as measured by the Healthy Youth Survey.
- * Binge drinking of alcohol within the past two weeks by __% from 14.6% in 2018 to __% in 202_ as measured by the Healthy Youth Survey.
- * Using marijuana within the last 30 days by __% from 15.5% in 2018 to __% in 202_ as measured by the Healthy Youth Survey.



Intermediate-Term Objectives

Decrease in 10th Graders Reporting:

Long- and intermediate-term objectives will be established as part of the overall MIHYI community strategies to address and prevent substance use and mental health issues. The Limerent-based campaigns and strategies will contribute to these long- and intermediate-term changes.

- * Their parents feel it would, “not be wrong or be a little bit wrong to drink regularly,” by __% from 16.8% in 2018 to __% in 202_ as measured by the Healthy Youth Survey.
- * Their parents feel it would, “not be wrong or be a little bit wrong to use marijuana,” by __% from 5.7% in 2018 to __% in 202_ as measured by the Healthy Youth Survey.
- * “No risk or slight risk to drink nearly every day,” by __% from 16.1% in 2018 to __% in 202_ as measured by the Healthy Youth Survey.
- * “No risk or slight risk to use marijuana regularly,” by __% from 16.1% in 2018 to __% in 202_ as measured by the Healthy Youth Survey.
- * “Feeling sad or hopeless almost every day for two weeks in a row,” by __% from 21% in 2020 to __% in 202_ in the Community Needs Assessment Databook.



Short-Term Objectives

The MIHYI teams reviewed the logic model presented in Appendix B and established two local conditions as priorities for the campaign:*

- * Pressure to Perform
- * Youth Behaviors Associated with Low Perception of Harm From Alcohol and Marijuana

Based on these priorities, the short-term objectives will be to increase, improve or decrease the behaviors, attitudes and perceptions associated with the local conditions.

Measurement:

After the completion of the campaign, the short-term objectives will be measured by reviewing the most recent survey results for Mercer Island Youth and conducting key informant interviews and focus groups with youth and key stakeholders on Mercer Island.

Short-Term Objectives

Increase, Improve or Decrease:

Pressure to Perform:

- * Decrease in the perception that ATOD use is a valid coping mechanism for high pressure, stress and anxiety
- * Increase in ability to identify and address pressure to perform from parents, teachers and the community
- * Increase in the belief that it is “okay” to be who you are
- * Increase in the ability to set realistic expectations for performance and well-being
- * Increase in substance use and mental health services available to youth: in directed study, of color, new to the island, with low parental support and 18-25 years old
- * Increase in youth reporting time for fun and outlets available for alcohol-free decompressing

Youth Behaviors Associated with Low Perception of Harm:

- * Decrease in the perception by youth, parents and the Mercer Island community that drinking alcohol is a way to reward oneself for dealing with pressure and stress
- * Increase in parental knowledge of the harms of alcohol and marijuana use
- * Increase in parental ability to set boundaries and consequences around youth alcohol and marijuana use
- * Increase in youth understanding of the physical harms and consequences of alcohol and marijuana use
- * Decrease in the perception that alcohol must be associated with events – afterparties and on weekends

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Recommendations



Recommendations

1 Address the need for perfection and the associated pressure to perform and succeed.

The campaign will:

- Highlight how the need for perfection and success impacts Mercer Island youth in unhealthy ways.
- Establish the need to focus on “healthy” striving for success and on ways to manage the experience of failure (or the lack of perfection).
- Address how parents, schools and the community create and reinforce the pressure to succeed.
- Address how the youth deal with their self-generated pressures to perform and succeed.



Recommendations

2 Change the low perception of harm from alcohol and marijuana use.

The campaign will:

- Emphasize the impact of alcohol and marijuana on the teen brain and how drugs impact one's ability to perform and succeed to one's greatest potential.
- Target both youth and parents' perceptions that it is "okay" to reward one's hard work in the "Mercer Island way," where alcohol use is the "normal" way to celebrate.
- Promote that it is acceptable for parents to establish and communicate healthy expectations for their children's behavior.
- Identify strategies for parents and youth to communicate to establish healthy expectations for behaviors.



Recommendations

3 Create a balance between the need for success and establishing a healthy sense of well-being.

The campaign will:

- Define what is meant by a “healthy sense of well-being.”
- Establish for youth and parents the notion that achieving a healthy sense of well-being is important to performing at one’s highest potential.
- Identify strategies for youth and parents to establish a healthy sense of well-being in ways that support successful outcomes.

4 Address the unique pressures and stress experienced by populations of focus.

The campaign will:

- Ensure the messages reach, and are appropriate for, typically underserved populations including youth: in directed study, of color, LGBTQ+, new to the island, with low parental support and 18-25 years old living on the island.