

Addressing a Crisis:

Cross-Sector Strategies to Prevent Adolescent Substance Use and Suicide



Trust for America's Health (TFAH) is a nonprofit, nonpartisan public health policy, research and advocacy organization that promotes optimal health for every person and community and makes the prevention of illness and injury a national priority.

Well Being Trust (WBT) is a national foundation dedicated to advancing the mental, social and spiritual health of the nation. Created to include participation from organizations across sectors and perspectives, Well Being Trust is committed to innovating and addressing the most critical mental health challenges facing America and to transforming individual and community well-being.



The good news...

Progress has been made in reducing some risky behaviors.

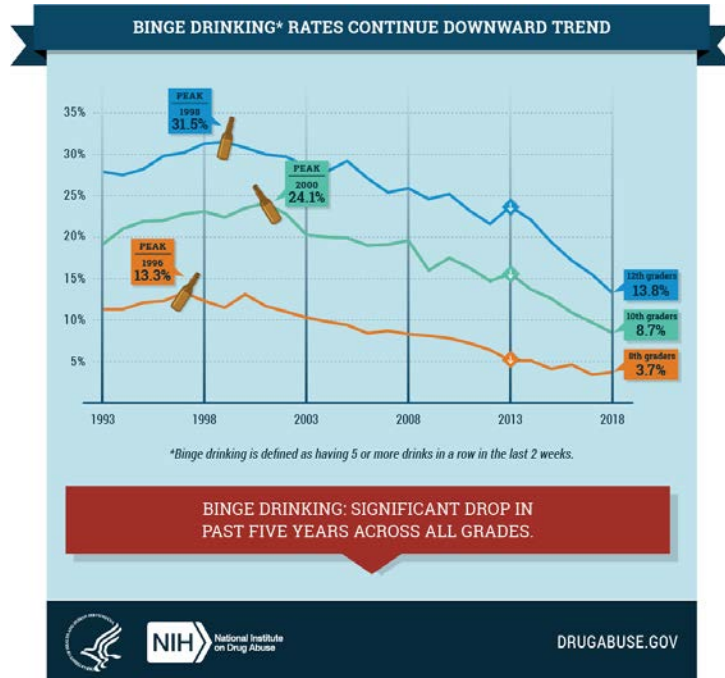
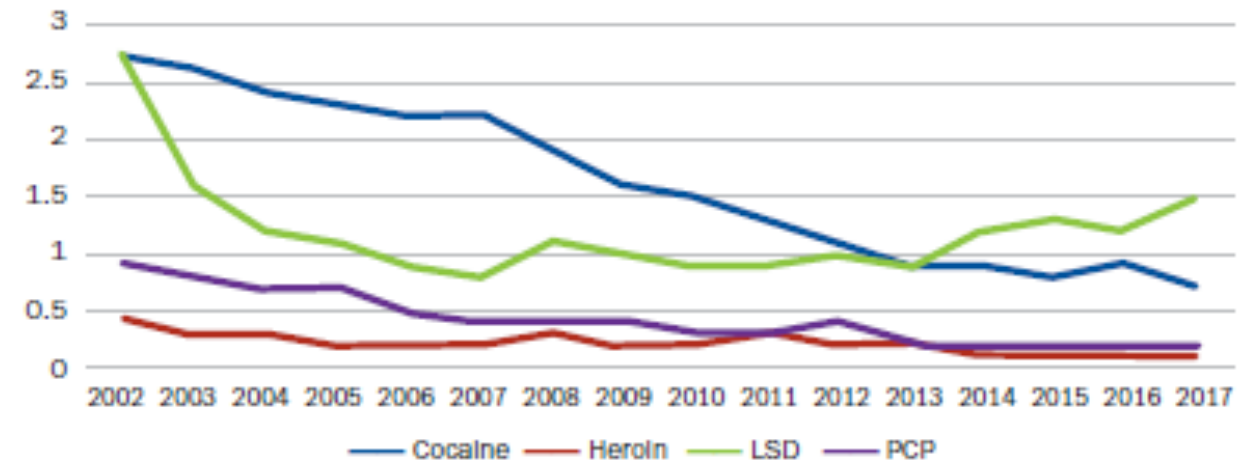


Figure 1: Selected types of lifetime illicit drug use in among 12- to 17-year-olds, 2002–2017 (National Survey on Drug Use and Health)⁴⁰



The bad news...

Adolescent suicide deaths have spiked over the last decade and substance misuse is exacting a heavy toll on teens.

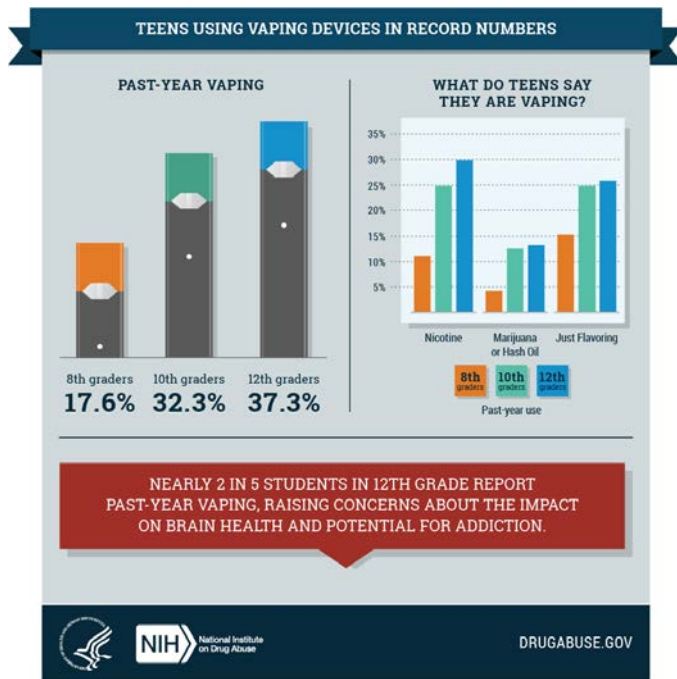
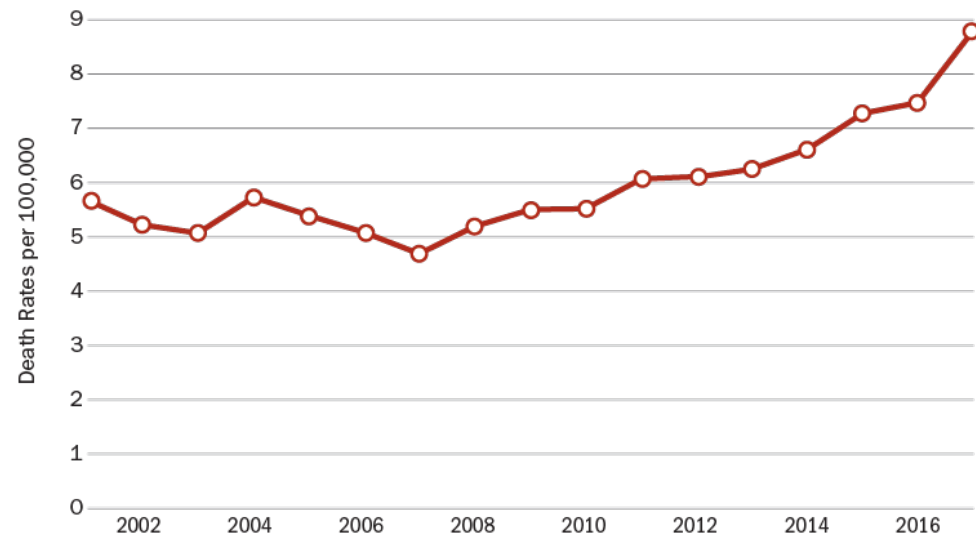


Figure 4: Suicides among 12- to 19-year-olds (death rate per 100,000)
(National Vital Statistics Reports, 2017)



Data reveal staggering disparities in substance misuse and suicide rates

Figure 8: Suicide rate per 100,000 by race/ethnicity
(Youth Risk Behavior Survey, 2016)

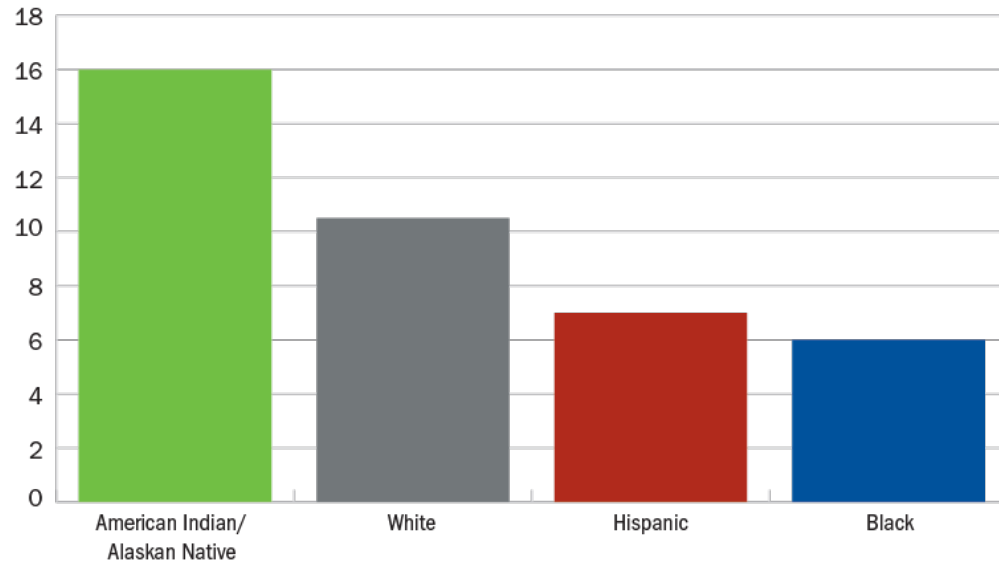
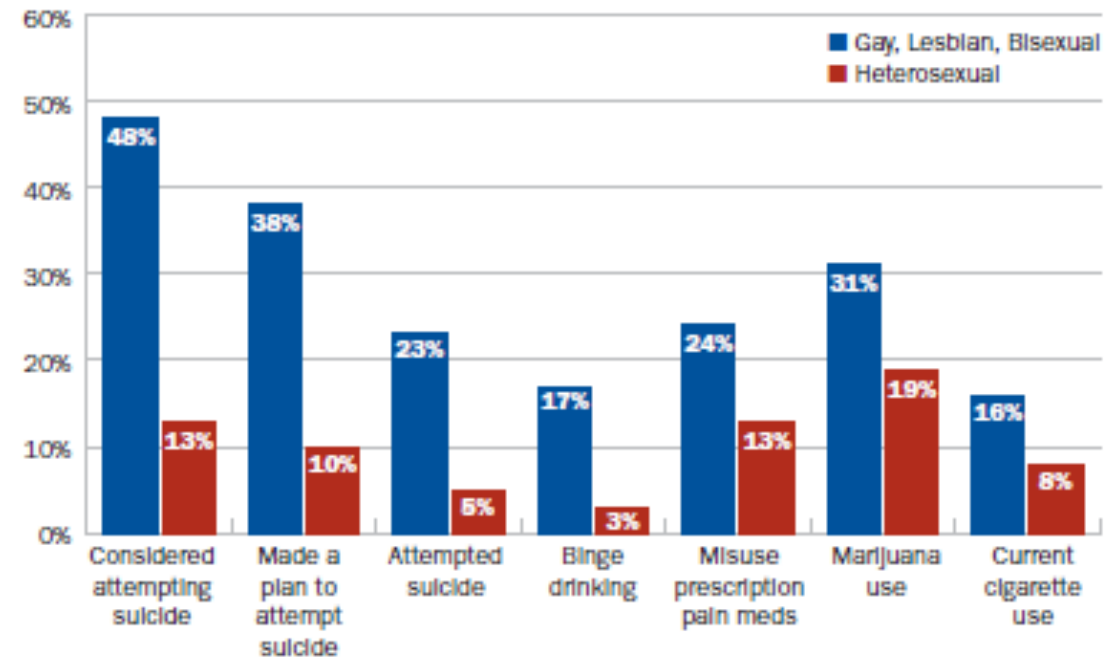
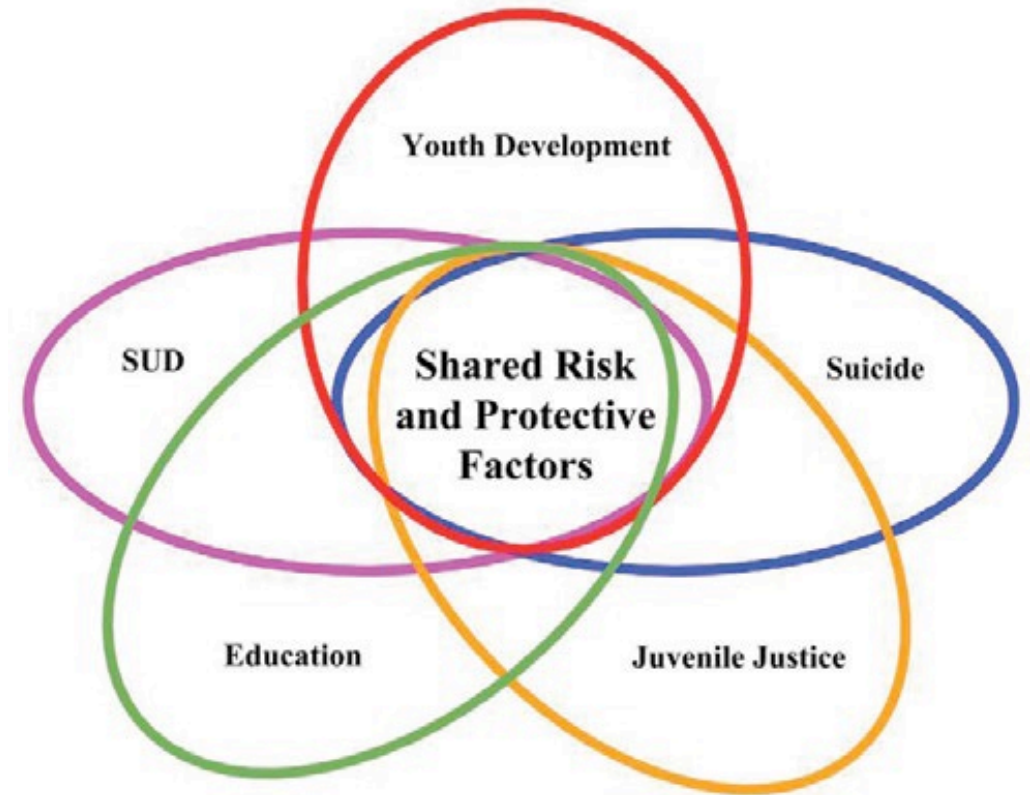


Figure 6: Suicide and substance misuse behaviors among adolescents by sexual orientation (National Youth Risk Behavior Survey, 2017)⁸¹



What Works...

Reducing adolescent substance misuse, suicide and other negative outcomes will require an integrated, **multi-sector** approach grounded in **prevention**.



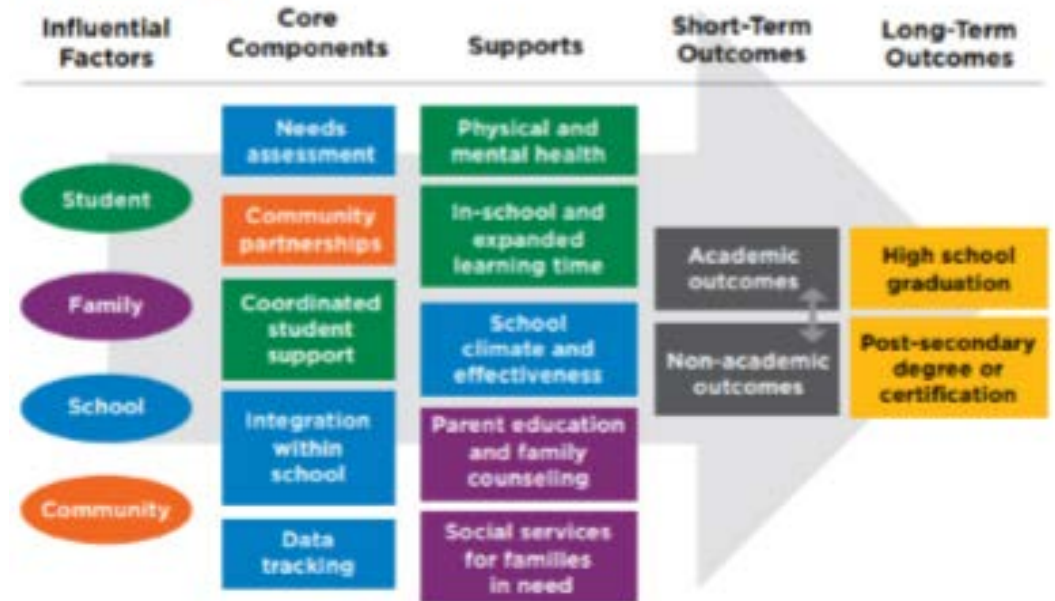
Recommendations

1. Support and Nurture Families
2. Promote Positive Pathways to Educational and Life Success
3. Create Community Environments that Promote Mental and Physical Health
4. Build Infrastructure to Align Work Across Sectors
5. Increase Funding for Prevention

Support and Nurture Families

- Scale up economic assistance programs - Earned Income Tax Credit, SNAP, housing subsidies
- Provide health & mental health services in schools
- Implement parenting programs
- Provide student supports – Communities in Schools

Figure 24: Logic model of the five core components of integrated student support³⁴⁵



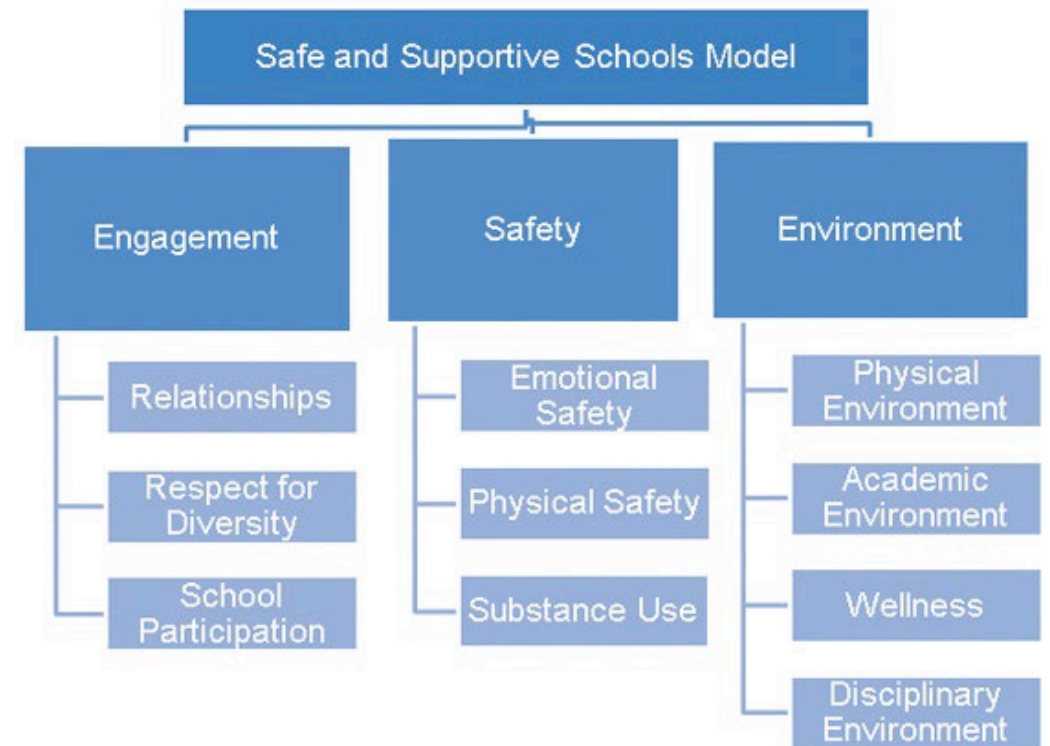
Promote Positive Pathways to Educational and Life Success

- Increase investments to promote positive school climates – ED, CDC DASH & STRYVE, SAMSHA Project Aware, anti-bullying, positive discipline approaches, trauma-informed
- Adopt less punitive approaches in juvenile justice to treat behavioral health issues
- Engage youth voice



Create Community Environments that Promote Mental and Physical Health

- Promote safe and supportive school environments
- Combat racism – investment in areas most impacted, eliminate discriminatory education practices, implement implicit bias training
- Professional training for child-serving Professionals (trauma-informed, cultural competence)
- Youth Mental Health First Aid
- Increase gay-straight alliances



Build Infrastructure to Align Work Across Sectors

- Incentivize strategies that address common risk/protective factors across sectors – mentoring, social emotional learning
- Leverage cross-agency coordinating bodies
- Develop multi-sector, multi-agency evidence registry
- Promote braiding and blending of funding streams to address “wrong pocket” problem
- Build multi-sector coalitions



Increase Funding for Prevention

- Increase federal investments in substance misuse and suicide *prevention* programming (vs. treatment and recovery)
- Increase investment in Garret Lee Smith Suicide Prevention program, CDC Injury Center, Drug-Free Communities, SAPT block grants
- Increase funding for National Suicide Prevention Lifeline



Healing the Nation: Advancing Mental Health and Addiction Policy

- New framework and action guide
- Focused on multiple angles for engagement
- For more information visit healingthenation.wellbeingtrust.org



Well Being Working Group

- Cross-Sector Coalition
- Focused on upstream strategies to address suicide, SUD, and mental distress
- For more information contact Jonah Cunningham
jcunningham@tfah.org



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