

The Exchange

Winter
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A Publication of the
Chester County
Department of
Drug and Alcohol
Services

Kim P. Bowman

MESSAGE FROM THE DIRECTOR

Message from the Director

I have had the opportunity over the years to speak with many of our youth about various substance abuse issues. Following these discussions I became aware of the fact that our youth feel alcohol, marijuana and tobacco use among their peers is “normal”. I realized that their perception is – “EVERYONE USES”.

This common misconception of substance use among their peers increases the likelihood that they, themselves, will experiment with alcohol and other drugs. Research has identified “favorable attitudes towards alcohol, tobacco, and other drug use” as a factor that puts kids at higher risk for use of substances. Even though it is not true, our kids are taking this mistaken belief and thinking, “if all the kids are drinking, smoking cigarettes and using drugs then it must be an okay thing to do”.

I am happy to report that our youth’s perception of their peers drug use is wrong! Results from our 2003 Chester County Youth Survey show the following:

Lifetime Alcohol, Marijuana and Tobacco Use (Best Measure of Experimentation)

Over 44% of Chester County youth in grades 6, 8, 10 and 12 have never tried alcohol in their lifetime.

Over 81% of Chester County youth in grades 6, 8, 10 and 12 have never tried marijuana.

Over 75% of Chester County youth in grades 6, 8, 10 and 12 have never smoked cigarettes.

Director’s Message Continued on page two

CHESTER COUNTY YOUTH SURVEY* 2003/2004

In the fall of 2003 all twelve Chester County school districts and the Brandywine Center for Arts and Technology participated in the Chester County Youth Survey. A total of 16,725 students in grades 6, 8, 10 and 12 participated, resulting in 16,067 valid surveys. The Youth Survey, conducted every two years, provides information that helps target alcohol, tobacco and other drug prevention and intervention activities in our County. The survey also provides a benchmark for measuring change in unhealthy behaviors such as: Getting Suspended; Selling Drugs; Being Arrested, etc.

In addition, the survey measures risk and protective factors related to substance abuse. Protective factors, such as school and family opportunities for prosocial involvement, are defined as characteristics that are known to decrease the likelihood that a youth will engage in problem behaviors. Risk factors are those characteristics in the community, family, school, and individual’s environment that are known to increase the likelihood that a youth will engage in one or more problem behaviors. Examples of risk factors include: favorable parental attitudes toward drug use and poor academic performance.

The survey instrument used in Chester County is the same one used for the Pennsylvania Youth Survey. This allows us to look at the Chester County specific data in comparison with the statewide data. Additionally, Chester County has utilized the same survey since 1999 giving us six years of data and allowing us to begin identifying trends.

***Survey funded by the Chester County Commissioners, PA Department of Health and the PA Commission on Crime and Delinquency (PCCD), sponsored by the Chester County Department of Drug and Alcohol Services and coordinated by The Coad Group.**

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Past 30 Day Use of Alcohol, Cigarettes and Marijuana
(Best Measure of Current Use)

Over 75% of Chester County youth in grades 6, 8, 10 and 12 have not consumed alcohol in the past 30 days.

Over 89% of Chester County youth in grades 6, 8, 10 and 12 have not smoked a cigarette in the past 30 days.

Over 89% Chester County youth in grades 6, 8, 10 and 12 have not smoked marijuana in the past 30 days.

There's good news and bad news...

Although our numbers for Past 30 Day Use of Alcohol, Marijuana and Cigarettes show declines from school year (SY) 1999/00 through SY 2003/04 there is still cause for concern. As the charts on page 3 depict, there are large increases in substance use rates as our children transition from middle school to high school (grade 8 to grade 12). For example, 15.4% of Chester County 8th graders have used alcohol in the past 30 days and by 10th grade this figure jumps to 36.5%. There are also significant increases in substance use between grades 10 and 12.

Binge drinking, defined as five or more drinks in a row in the past two weeks, is an area of concern for our youth. Survey results show that slightly over one third (37.2%) of our 12th grade students are binge drinking compared with the statewide average of 31.4%. Another area of concern is marijuana use; more than one quarter (25.7%) of our 12th grade students have smoked marijuana in the past 30 days.

Hallucinogens, Inhalants, Cocaine and Heroin...past 30-day use of these drugs have shown an increase in the past six years among our youth. Although the numbers are small, the trends we are witnessing cause some concern:

10th graders self-reported heroin use increased from one third of one percent (.3%) in SY 2001/02 to one percent (1%) in SY 2003/04

12th graders self-reported cocaine use increased from less than 2% (1.6%) in SY 2001/02 to 3% in SY 2003/04.

Where Do We Go From Here?

The Chester County Youth Survey provides us with a wealth of information about substance abuse trends, unhealthy (anti-social) behaviors and risk and protective factors. This data is used by our office to help plan and prioritize countywide ATOD prevention efforts. Survey results identify age groups where prevention activities need to be targeted; risk and protective factor scores reported in the survey assist us in matching the most appropriate ATOD prevention programs to prioritized risk and protective factors and data taken from the Chester County Youth Survey is used to measure and evaluate the effectiveness of our prevention efforts. The survey also provides us with a tool to help educate the community on general substance abuse issues as well as provide them with specific information on what is happening in their own backyard.

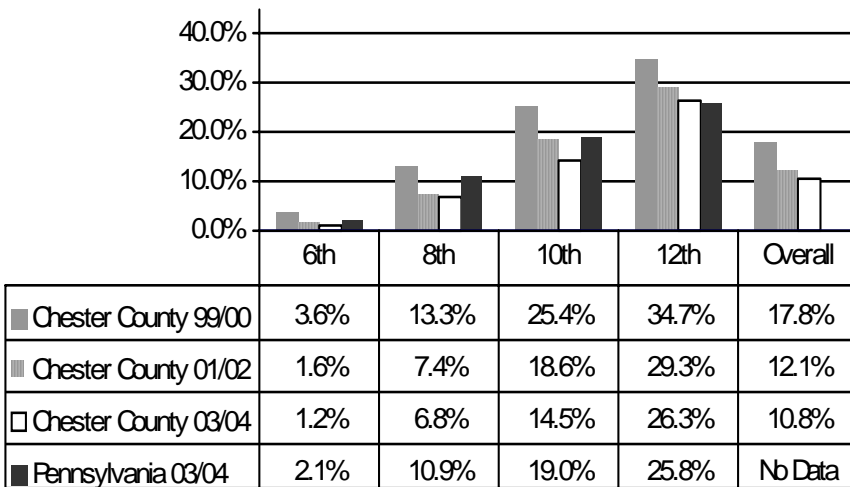
We encourage all agencies and organizations serving Chester County to read and utilize the report. Both professional organizations and grassroots community coalitions have successfully used survey data to apply for local foundation and government grants. For a copy of the report please contact the Chester County Department of Drug and Alcohol Services at 610-344-6620 or visit our website at www.chesco.org, scroll down to Community, Health & Safety and click on Chester County Youth Survey.

Kim P. Bowman

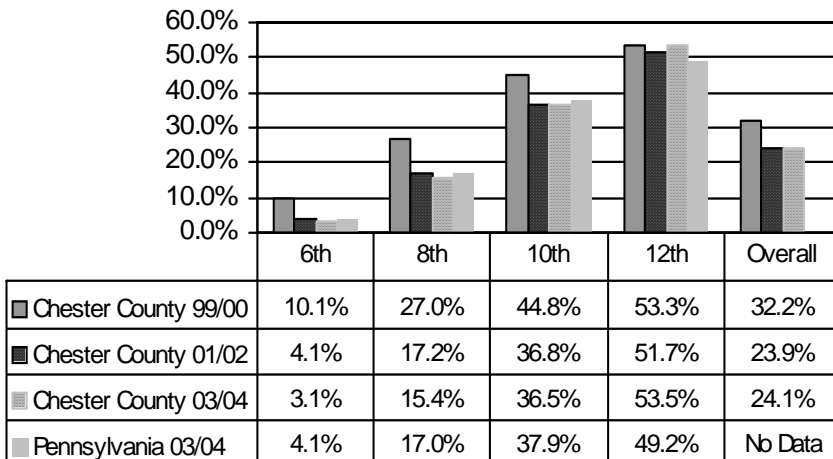
Director, Chester County Department of Drug and Alcohol Services

Data Highlights from the 2003/2004 Chester County Youth Survey

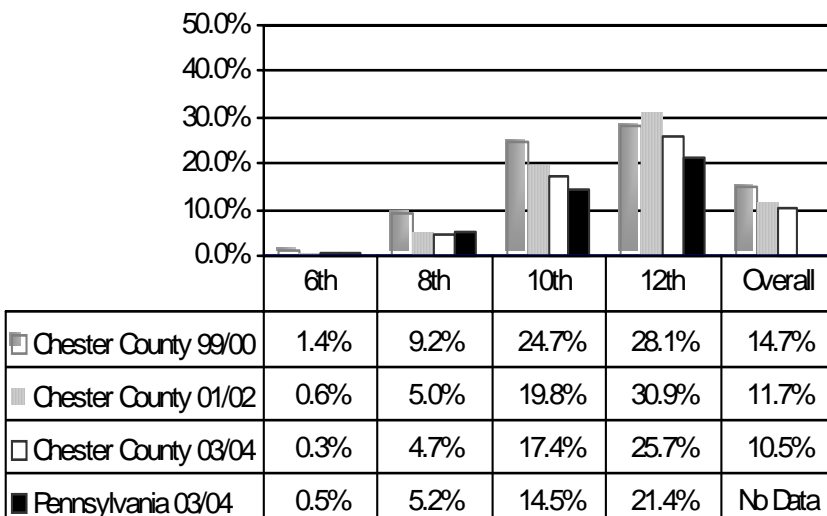
Cigarettes—past 30 day use



Alcohol —past 30 day use



Marijuana —past 30 day use



Monitoring the Future Study and Chester County Youth Survey Results

A comparison of the 2003 *Monitoring the Future Study* (an ongoing - national - study of the behaviors, attitudes and values of American Secondary school students, college students, and young adults), with the 2003 Chester County Youth Survey Report show that across the three comparison grades (8th, 10th, and 12th), students in Chester County reported a *higher* average level of lifetime alcohol use than their national counterparts and *lower* average levels of lifetime cigarette, smokeless tobacco, marijuana, inhalant and methamphetamine use. The largest grade-level differences in lifetime substance use were for marijuana in the 8th grade (8.8% versus 17.5% for *Monitoring the Future*) and cigarettes in the 8th and 10th grades (18.3% and 34.3% versus 28.4% and 43.0% for *Monitoring the Future*).

For past 30-day alcohol, tobacco and other drug (ATOD) use, students in Chester County reported a *higher* average level of hallucinogen use than their national counterparts and a *lower* average level of smokeless tobacco use. The largest grade level differences in past 30-day substance abuse were for binge drinking in the 8th and 12th grades (6.6% and 37.2% versus 11.9% and 27.9% for *Monitoring the Future*) and alcohol in the 12th grade (53.3% versus 47.5% for *Monitoring the Future*).

An overview of Key Findings from the 2003 *Monitoring the Future Study* is available on the following website:

www.monitoringthefuture.org

CHESTER COUNTY YOUTH SURVEY 2003/04 HIGHLIGHTS

AGE OF ONSET

Age of first use is included for the first time in the Chester County Youth Survey for school year 2003/2004. For Chester County 12th graders the average age of first use reported include:

- ◆ Trying Alcohol 13.9 years old
- ◆ Drinking Alcohol Regularly 15.4 years old
- ◆ Smoking Marijuana 14.5 years old
- ◆ Smoking Cigarettes 13.3 years old

(Note: These ages are consistent with the PA statewide results)

DRIVING AFTER ALCOHOL OR MARIJUANA USE

	<u>2001/02</u>	<u>2003/04</u>
Percentage of 12 th Graders Reporting Driving After Drinking	20.8%	23.8%
Percentage of 12 th Graders Reporting Driving After Marijuana Use	28.9%	25.2%

Mark Your Calendar



January 7, 8, 9, 2005 – Chester County Youth to Youth Conference: 3rd annual youth leadership and drug and alcohol prevention conference held at the Unionville/Chadds Ford High School. For more information contact Kate Nolt at The Coad Group, 610-363-6164 or knolt@coadgroup.com.

January 28, 2005 (11:30 a.m. to 2:30 p.m.)

Risky Business-Planning for Successful Outcomes Presenter: Maggie Marcopul. Learn the basics about the Communities That Care (CTC) prevention model and risk assessment. Contact Nancy Clegg at The Coad Group – nclegg@coadgroup.com or 610-363-6164 for more information.

February 23, 2005

Students Against Destructive Decisions (SADD) Conference: Conference offers a wide variety of workshops aimed at providing students and advisors with information and tools to enhance school based prevention efforts. Annual conference will be held at the Penn State Great Valley Campus. For more information contact Diane Batcher at The Coad Group, dbatcher@coadgroup.com or 610-363-6164.

February 13-19, 2005 – Children of Alcoholics Week: www.nacoa.org

March 20-26, 2005 – National Inhalants and Poison Awareness Week: www.inhalents.org

April 7, 2005 – National Alcohol Screening Day: www.NationalAlcoholScreeningDay.org.

No Difference in Drug Use Between Urban, Suburban Students

(Source: Join Together Online
www.jointogether.org)

New research finds that suburban high-school students are just as likely to use illegal drugs and drink alcohol as those living in urban areas, the Garnett News Service Reported Jan.28, 2004.

“This provides some information for parents who have a false perception that all the sex, drinking, illegal drugs, and misbehaving is going on at urban schools and that the suburbs are clean and safe”, said Greg Foster who was involved in the study by the Manhattan Institute.

According to the report, one out of seven urban and suburban students have used illicit drugs at school. *In the 2003 Chester County Youth Survey: 14.6% of our 8th grade students and 20.1% of our 12th grade students self report “Being Drunk or High at School During the Past Year”.*

The report also revealed no differences between suburban and urban students when it came to engaging in sex, getting pregnant, having an abortion, and stealing and fighting.

For the study, researchers examined Department of Health and Human Services surveys taken by 11,000 public high-school students nationwide in 1995 and 1996.



Is Someone You Care About Having Problems with Alcohol or Other Drugs?

Pennsylvania Recovery Organization
Achieving Community Together (PRO-ACT)

Presents:

The Family Program

PRO-ACT, Chester County Chapter, is a community-based organization promoting recovery from addiction and offering a FREE program for families in crisis due to a loved one's drug or alcohol problem. “Finally, a place where the family and friends of the addicted person can go for help... The person with the addiction can go to rehab or treatment, but there was no place for the family to go to get information and help and healing, until this program was offered”, stated one Family Program participant.

At PRO-ACT's Family Program, you'll gather the information, resources and tools you need to help your family deal with addiction and get started on the road to recovery. The Family Program covers the following topics: understanding addiction; the impact on the family; and developing a support network. You will also learn how to become an advocate for your loved one.

The Family Program runs on alternating months, one all day Saturday program or the first three Wednesdays from 7 p.m. to 9 p.m. at the YMCA of Brandywine in Coatesville, PA. Please phone 1-800-221-6333 between 9 a.m. and 5 p.m. for dates. Pre-Registration is required.



The Exchange is sponsored by: The Chester County Department of Drug and Alcohol Services, P.O. Box 2747, 601 Westtown Road Suite 325, West Chester, PA 19380-0990.

For more information or to be on the mailing list for this newsletter, contact the Community Prevention staff at: The Coad Group, 930 East Lancaster Avenue, Exton, PA 19341. 610.363.6164 or 1.800.917.1117

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The Department of Health and Chester County Commissioners specifically disclaim responsibility for any analyses, interpretations, or conclusions herein.

The Chester County Department of
Drug and Alcohol Services, P.O. Box
2747, 601 Westtown Road Suite 325,
West Chester, PA 19380-0990

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For More Information...

Join Together (617) 437-1500

www.jointogether.org

National Institute on Drug Abuse

www.nida.nih.gov or clubdrugs.org

**National Center for Chronic Disease
Prevention and Health**

www.cdc.gov/tobacco

**National Clearinghouse for Alcohol & Drug
Information**

1-800-729-6686 www.health.org

Partnership for a Drug-Free America

(212) 922-1560 www.drugfreeamerica.org

**PA Dept. of Health, Research & Info. Clearing-
house** www.padohric.org

Al-Anon Family Group Headquarters.

(800) 344-2666 or (800) 356-9996.

www.al-anon.alateen.org

The Coad Group

www.coadgroup.com

You can view or print this newsletter by visiting Chester County's Website: www.chesco.org and following the links for Human Services to Drug & Alcohol Services.