

Chester County Youth Survey 2007/2008 Highlights

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MESSAGE FROM THE DIRECTOR

Since school year 1999/2000, the Chester County Department of Drug and Alcohol Services has sponsored a survey of secondary school youth on their behavior, attitudes and knowledge concerning alcohol, tobacco and other drugs. The Youth Survey is conducted every two years and provides information that helps target prevention and intervention activities in the county. For the 2007/2008 survey, 12 Chester County school districts and two (2) Centers for Arts and Technology participated. A total of 16,305 valid surveys were completed by youth in grades 6, 8, 10 and 12.

The survey instrument used in the county is based on the Communities That Care (CTC) Youth Survey and is the same instrument used for the Pennsylvania Youth Survey (PAYS). By selecting the same instrument as the state, this allows us to compare local and state data.

The Youth Survey measures prevalence data for alcohol, tobacco and other drugs including past 30-day use (best measure of current use) and lifetime use (best measure of experimentation). In addition to prevalence data, the survey provides information on antisocial behaviors, depression, gambling and violence. Finally, the survey also measures risk and protective factors related to substance use and other unhealthy behaviors.

As in any survey of this magnitude, both good news and bad news can be found. Listed below are some notable results:

- Alcohol continues to be the primary substance of abuse among all grade levels and is a significant concern.
- Cigarette use continues to decline in all grade levels except 12th.
- Marijuana use continued to decline or progress was sustained in 6th, 8th and 12th grades.
- 12th graders report of driving after smoking marijuana (23.4%) or drinking alcohol (22.1%) remains a concern.
- Protective Factor scores continue to be above the normative average of 50, with the exception of Religiosity. Protective Factors are characteristics that are known to decrease the likelihood that youth will engage in problem behaviors.
- Risk Factor scores continue to be below the normative average of 50, with the exception of Peer Rewards for Antisocial Behavior (52). Risk Factors are 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 behavior.
- 8th grade students are showing marked progress in prevalence as well as risk and protective factors.

Where Do We Go From Here?

Based on a comprehensive analysis of the survey data as well as information from a variety of other sources (i.e. drug and alcohol treatment data, key

SPECIAL EDITION

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informant needs assessment, etc.), the following types of prevention activities, as well as target populations will form the basis of prevention programming for the upcoming fiscal year:

- ✦ Target middle school youth
- ✦ Underage alcohol use
- ✦ Marijuana use
- ✦ Parent education programs
- ✦ Support intervention services to help youth at risk engage in services
- ✦ Utilize environmental strategies (i.e. change public perceptions and attitudes, improve and enforce laws and regulations, decrease the availability or access to harmful drugs)
- ✦ Peer Leadership/Youth Mentoring Programs
- ✦ Support community-based coalitions that bring together community members to address the issue.

It is our wish to create and sustain an atmosphere in all of our communities that supports positive youth development; this would be the ultimate in prevention planning and programming for adolescents. To achieve this we need to work together – this would include communities, schools, businesses, community organizations, faith organizations, families as well as individuals and peers all playing a part in prevention efforts. An integrated approach, utilizing all areas that touch our youths’ lives will bring about long-term change.

Included in this issue are highlights from the 2007 Chester County Youth Survey. To access a copy of the full report please go to www.chesco.org, click on Departments/Human Services/Drug and Alcohol and “What’s New” – 2007 Youth Survey.

For a complete copy of the 2007 Pennsylvania Youth Survey log onto:

http://www.pccd.state.pa.us/pccd/lib/pccd/stats/payoutsurvey/2007docs/2007_pays_statewide_random_sample_report.pdf

AGE OF ONSET

Using age-of-initiation data to coordinate the timing of prevention efforts is an important tool for maximizing program effectiveness. For example, programs delivered after the majority of potential drug users have already initiated the behavior may have limited impact. Alternatively, very early intervention might prove less effective because it is not close enough to the critical period.

Below is a historical look at age of first use for Chester County youth in 12th grade for alcohol, marijuana and tobacco. Comparison data with the Pennsylvania state survey is included for the 2007/08 year:

Age of First Use

- **Age of first use is included in this report. For Chester County 12th graders the average age of first use reported include:**

	<u>2003/04</u>	<u>2005/06</u>	<u>2007/08</u>	<u>PA 2007</u>
➤ Trying Alcohol	13.9		14.1	14.1
➤ Drinking Alcohol Regularly	15.4		15.5	15.4
➤ Smoking Marijuana	14.5		14.5	14.6
➤ Smoking Cigarettes	13.3		13.8	13.6

- **Studies show youth who begin drinking before age 15 are 4 times more likely to develop alcohol dependence and are 2.5 times more likely to become abusers of alcohol than those who begin drinking at age 21. (Office of Applied Studies, Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration, 2001)**

GRADE LEVEL RESULTS AND COMPARSION DATA

Alcohol, tobacco and other drug use is measured in the Pennsylvania Youth Survey (PAYS) – the same survey utilized in Chester County - by a set of 36 questions. The questions are similar to those used in the *Monitoring the Future* study, a nationwide study of drug use by middle and high school age youth. Consequently, national data as well as data from similar surveys can be easily compared from the PAYS.

The full survey contains results for two (2) prevalence-of-use timeframes: Lifetime Use (whether the youth has ever used the drug – a good measure of experimentation) and Past 30-Day Use (whether the youth has used the drug within the past month – a good measure of current use).

The following chart shows Past 30-day alcohol, tobacco and other drug use across grades 6, 8, 10 and 12, and includes Chester County, Pennsylvania and national data for the 2007/08 year. Comparing and contrasting findings from the county, state and national level surveys provides us with a valuable perspective on our local data.

Chester County/Pennsylvania/National Comparison of Past 30-Day Use of Alcohol, Tobacco and Other Drugs

	Chester County				Pennsylvania				National			
	6 th %	8 th %	10 th %	12 th %	6 th %	8 th %	10 th %	12 th %	6 th %	8 th %	10 th %	12 th %
Alcohol	2.7	11.2	34.4	53.5	3.3	13.9	31.9	44.8	15.9	33.4	44.4	
Binge Drinking	1.3	4.7	18.7	33.2	1.4	6.5	16.8	25.7	10.3	21.9	25.9	
Cigarettes	0.5	3.6	12.6	23.6	1.3	5.5	13.7	20.6	7.1	14.0	21.6	
Marijuana	0.3	2.3	15.4	27.1	0.2	2.8	12.0	19.2	5.7	14.2	18.8	
Inhalants	2.0	3.0	2.8	3.3	2.6	3.7	3.4	1.7	3.9	2.5	1.2	
Cocaine	0.2	0.3	1.7	3.8	0.0	0.2	1.0	1.8	0.9	1.3	2.0	
Crack Cocaine	0.2	0.3	1.2	1.1	0.2	0.2	0.9	0.5	0.6	0.5	0.9	
Heroin	0.1	0.2	0.8	0.9	0.1	0.2	0.4	0.5	0.4	0.4	0.4	
Hallucinogens	0.2	0.5	2.6	5.7	0.0	0.4	1.7	2.4	1.0	1.7	1.7	
Methamphetamine	0.1	0.2	0.9	1.1	0.2	0.3	0.6	0.4	0.6	0.4	0.6	
Ecstasy	0.2	0.4	1.4	3.2	0.0	0.4	1.1	0.9	0.6	1.2	1.6	
Steroids	0.3	0.5	0.8	1.2	0.3	0.7	0.7	0.5	0.4	0.5	1.0	
Any Illicit Drug (Other than Mari- juana)	2.4	3.7	6.4	11.0	2.9	4.6	6.1	4.9	—	—	—	

* - Monitoring the Future

Although Chester County 12th grade youth, in survey year 2007/08, report higher levels of Past 30-day alcohol, tobacco and other drug use than state and national data, we have seen significant decreases in our 8th and 10th grade use of alcohol, binge drinking and marijuana use between survey years 2001/02 and 2007/08.

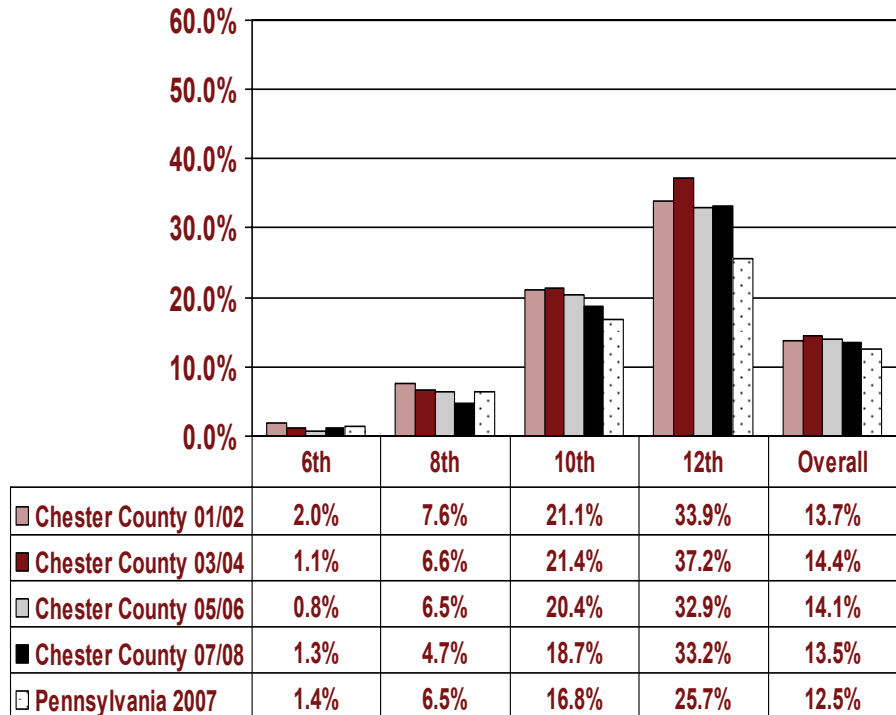
PREFERENCE AND PRIORITY FOR SERVICES IS PROVIDED FOR WOMEN WHO ARE PREGNANT AND INDIVIDUALS WHO ARE INJECTION DRUG USERS.

BINGE DRINKING

Teenagers who binge drink are 60% more likely to become alcoholics by the time they reach age 30 than non-binge drinkers – they are also more likely to use illicit drugs and commit crimes according to a recent study by The U.K. Institute of Child Health. Other studies associate binge drinking with serious health risks such as alcohol poisoning, unintentional injuries (car crashes, falls and burns, drowning), intentional injuries (firearm injuries, sexual assault) sexually transmitted diseases, unintended pregnancy, high blood pressure, stroke, liver disease and neurological damage.

Compared to national findings in survey year 2007/08, Chester County 8th and 9th graders reported lower rates of binge drinking and 12th graders reported a higher rate of use, however, as seen in the graph below, Chester County youth report higher rates than the state for binge drinking in 10th and 12th grades:

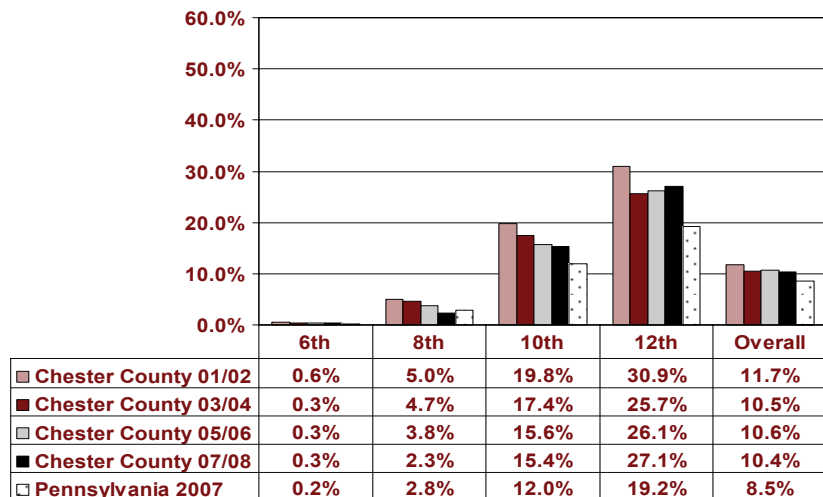
Binge Drinking (Five or More Drinks in a Row in the Past 2 Weeks) 2001/2002 - 2007/08



Past 30-Day Use of Marijuana – Historical Comparison

Past 30-day use of marijuana has declined since the survey was conducted in 2001/02. The following graph illustrates this trend:

Past 30 Day Use - Marijuana 2001/02 - 2007/08



Driving After Alcohol or Marijuana Use

Driving a car requires clear thinking and good hand-eye coordination and, as we are aware, operating a vehicle after using alcohol or marijuana will impair these driving skills. If you add alcohol or other drug use with an inexperienced driver you dramatically increase the chance of a traffic accident or fatality. For example, in 2003, alcohol was involved in 19.6% of fatal crashes involving drivers age 16 to 20.

Driving After Alcohol or Marijuana Use 2001/02 - 2007/08

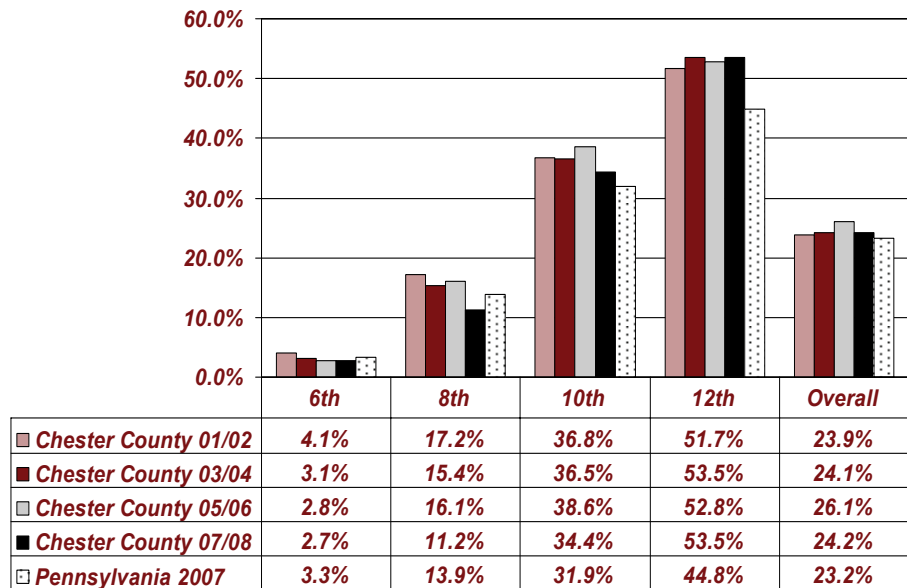
	<u>2001/02</u>	<u>2003/04</u>	<u>2005/06</u>	<u>2007/08</u>	<u>PA 2007</u>
■ Percentage of 12 th Graders Reporting Driving After Drinking	20.8%	23.8%	24.1%	22.1%	17.8%
■ Percentage of 12 th Graders Reporting Driving After Marijuana Use	28.9%	25.2%	24.2%	23.4%	16.4%

The impact of alcohol or marijuana use on automobile safety is assessed in the Chester County Youth Survey by asking 12th graders the following two questions: “How often have you driven a car while or shortly after drinking?” and “How often have you driven a car while or shortly after smoking marijuana?” Results from the survey are depicted above.

PAST 30-DAY ALCOHOL USE – Historical Comparison

Typically, prevalence rates for the use of most substances increase as youth age. Chester County youths’ self-reported, past 30-day use of alcohol conforms to this pattern. For survey year 2007/08 alcohol use ranges from a low of 2.7% among 6th graders to a high of 53.5% for 12th graders.

Past 30 Day Use – Alcohol 2001/02 - 2007/08



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The Exchange Winter 2008



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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Resources

Looking for Help in Chester County?

AA Web Site

www.aachesco.org

Al-Anon/Ala-Teen

1-888-4AL-ANON

Al-Anon/Ala-Teen Web Site

www.al-anon-alateen.org

Alcohol and Drug Information

– Personal & Confidential

1-866-286-3767

Alcoholics Anonymous (AA)

215-923-7900

Crisis Intervention

1-877-918-2100

Domestic Violence

1-888-711-6270

Health and Human Service Agencies

www.referweb.net/chesco

Narcotics Anonymous (NA)

215-629-6757

NA Web Site

www.na.org

Welfare Office

610-466-1000

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.