

The seal of Broome County, New York, is a large, circular emblem in the background. It features a central shield with a tree and a plow, flanked by a figure holding scales and a figure holding a staff. The shield is topped by an eagle with wings spread. The outer ring of the seal contains the text "SEAL OF BROOME COUNTY" at the top and "THE STATE OF NEW YORK" at the bottom, separated by a star on the left.

**BROOME COUNTY
YOUTH PREVENTION PARTNERSHIP
State Incentive Cooperative Agreement (SICA) Project**

Status Report- May 2001

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Acknowledgments

Listed below are the current members of the Broome County Youth Prevention Partnership (BCYPP). These individuals are committed to making a positive impact on youth and families in our community. They have given their time on committees, workgroups, coordinating the administration of the youth and parent surveys and youth focus groups, and attending a series of four out of town trainings in the Communities That Care® process.

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Doug Stento	Binghamton City School District
Ann VanSavage	Broome County Youth Bureau
Jackie Visser	Union Endicott Central School District
Karen Wintergrass	Broome County Youth Bureau

Members of the Broome County Integrated County Planning (ICP) group have served as a Steering Committee to this project at the time of grant application and early start up. The ICP has been a source of continual support to the project. The Professional Advisory Group of OASAS funded programs and the Broome County Mental Health Department Alcohol and Substance Abuse Subcommittee have also supported the prevention planning efforts of the BCYPP. The Broome County Youth Prevention Partnership will continue the associations with the ICP and these other committees to assist in countywide planning for substance abuse prevention.

Project Staff and Binghamton University Evaluation Team:

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**Broome County Youth Prevention Partnership
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Background

The Broome County Mental Health Department received a grant in 2000 from the New York State Office of Alcoholism and Substance Abuse Services (OASAS) to develop a SICA Project. Broome County's project is one of fifteen SICA Projects statewide targeted to combat youth substance abuse. The project is funded to conduct local research and to build a community partnership, that is a collaboration of school, county, and community leaders committed to working together to implement substance abuse prevention programs. Local schools are the focus and "anchor point" for building and rebuilding the identity of the community, related to healthy youth and families. Although the schools are a focal point of this project, it is the whole community that is needed to build and support the plan. This is a three-year initiative with the expectation that the Partnership with support from the schools, the county, and community will find a way to sustain its efforts for continuing community planning and prevention activities.

The Broome County Youth Prevention Partnership (BCYPP) was formed in August 2000. The Communities That Care® (CTC) operating system and model of coalition building is the base for the Partnership and the process utilized to conduct a comprehensive assessment of the needs and resources of our community. The Partnership currently has about 15 active members and has adopted the following as its vision:

"The Broome County Youth Prevention Partnership is a collaborative effort to create opportunities for supportive, healthy, drug-free youth, families, and neighborhoods in Broome County".

The BCYPP's initial target areas are the school districts and communities of Binghamton City, Johnson City, Union Endicott, and Maine-Endwell. In the fall of 2000 we administered the Communities That Care® Youth Survey in grades 7-12 in each of the four schools. We conducted youth focus groups in the spring of 2001. We are interested to learn the prevalence of youth substance use and youth views on substance abuse and their relationship with family, their community, school, and peers. Very soon we are scheduled to conduct a parent survey to learn the same information from a parent perspective. We also plan to conduct additional focus groups with community youth and adults in order to learn as much as we can about substance abuse in our community. In addition to the surveys and focus groups, we are collecting data and information already on record, about substance abuse and areas that we know impact its use. We have also collected detailed information from our local agencies and organizations about youth resources in the community.

The BCYPP is currently in the process of looking at all the information and data we have collected, so that we may begin to make recommendations for substance abuse prevention programs and activities in our community. We have a research team from Binghamton University (BU) working with the Partnership whose role it is to develop evaluation tools and analyze the research component of the project. During the course of this analysis we will identify strengths and gaps in the community's resources, prioritize risk factors, and develop a community profile by which we will be able to make recommendations for selected prevention programs.

As the first year of this project is winding down, and over the course of the next two years, we will share the data we have collected and work we have done with the other groups, organizations, and planning teams in the community so that we may all begin to impact systems changes around the planning and provision of prevention services to youth and families.

The purpose of this and future status reports is to highlight the progress of the Broome County Youth Prevention Partnership and to share the preliminary findings of the Communities That Care® Youth Survey conducted last fall. We believe that by sharing these findings, we will offer the opportunity to the community to exchange ideas with the Partnership. Through this exchange and dialogue, we may identify areas together for further study and research.

Risk and Protection Framework

The Communities That Care® model of assessment and Youth Survey helps us measure not only substance abuse and other problem behaviors, but also the risk and protective factors that influence youth. Young people are faced with alcohol and drug abuse risk in multiple areas of their lives: school, community, family, peers, social norms, and individual characteristics, to name a few. Research has demonstrated that youth exposed to certain risks in their community, at school, and at home are more likely to develop a variety of problem behaviors, such as substance abuse and delinquency. Research has also identified protective factors that can decrease the likelihood that substance abuse problems will develop. These protective factors also exist in the same multiple areas as risk factors. As the number of risk factors increases, the need for more protective factors increases. A teen who lives in a neighborhood where drugs or alcohol are easily accessible, whose friends use drugs or alcohol, and who is not doing well in school is exposed to three risk factors. A teen whose parents believe alcohol and drug use is wrong, lives in a neighborhood where youth and adults share positive activities, is involved in activities at school, and has friends who believe alcohol and drug use is wrong is exposed to four protective factors.

This Risk and Protective model incorporates many of the theories about alcohol and substance abuse. This model has a proven research basis for prevention programming that can impact and decrease risk and increase protection, thus having a positive influence on youth substance abuse.

Communities That Care® Youth Survey

Survey Framework

The CTC Youth Survey was developed by researchers at Developmental Research and Programs, Inc. (DRP) to provide scientifically sound information to communities on the prevalence of risk and protective factors among youth. The CTC survey also provides communities with information about the prevalence of substance abuse and other problem behaviors such as delinquency and violence. DRP has administered this survey to over 100,000 youth across the country.

A total of 4,025 students grades 7-12 from four school districts in Broome County participated in the CTC Youth Survey in the fall of 2000. The Broome County Youth Prevention Partnership contracted with Developmental Research and Programs, Inc., of Seattle, Washington, to analyze the survey data. DRP has developed a method to purge invalid responses using strategies that eliminate students who appear to exaggerate their substance use and students who repeatedly report logically inconsistent patterns of substance use. Broome County produced a high percentage of valid responses and less than 4%, or 152 youth surveys, were eliminated using DRP's criteria.

The Broome County survey results were compared to the national data comparison "Monitoring the Future" conducted by University of Michigan researchers. "Monitoring the Future" provides national prevalence information for alcohol, tobacco, and other drugs. DRP also used a "CTC Matched Comparison" database to analyze the risk and protective factors. The "CTC Matched Comparison" compares Broome County to communities with similar demographic characteristics and will provide the best overall comparison by which to assess Broome County's results.

Communities That Care Survey®: Preliminary Findings

Overall Survey Results

To paraphrase a common saying, "There's good news, and there's not-so-good news". With regards to substance use in general, the survey results indicate that Broome County youth fare very well when compared to the national sample drawn from the Monitoring The Future (MTF) survey. Nonetheless, there is little reason for comfort. First, as the survey also makes clear, in general, substance use in Broome County schools increases over grade levels. Second, where data indicate that drug use in Broome County is no worse than that of a national matched sample, Broome County residents still must consider for themselves the meaningfulness or interpretation to be given to any levels of reported drug use.

For the results that are summarized below, please consult the appended Tables 1 and 2 regarding Lifetime and Past 30-day usage, respectively.

Alcohol

Alcohol is by far the most pervasive substance for adolescents in terms of its availability and frequency of use. Among Broome County youth, the prevalence of underage drinking rises from 31% among 7th graders to 81% of 12th graders. In the lower grades, Broome County students actually report prevalence rates that are somewhat lower than those in the matched sample, but which rise to a comparable level by grade 12. Combining all grades, 58% of students have used alcohol sometimes in their life.

A good measure of current use are the data that reveal that 34% of students report alcohol use during the past 30 days. This represents a rise from 22% of 8th graders to 55% of 12th graders, which is quite comparable to the results of the matched sample.

Binge drinking rates (representing 5 or more drinks in a row) during the past 2 weeks reveal an increase from 4% among 7th graders to 36% among 12th graders. Across all grades, 19% report binge drinking during that 2-week period. Once again, in the lower grades, Broome County students' rates are lower than the national sample, but actually surpass the national sample by the 12th grade.

Tobacco

This category includes use of both cigarettes---the next most commonly used substance after alcohol among youth --- as well as smokeless tobacco. Survey results for cigarette use among Broome County students reveal some interesting parallels to that of alcohol. Notably, both cigarettes and smokeless tobacco are used in the lower grades much less frequently than the matched sample, but by 12th grade, reported use is comparable to that of the matched sample.

Prevalence of reported cigarette use in Broome County rises from 18% in grade 7 to 62% in grade 12. Broome County 8th graders report almost 33% less cigarette use than the matched sample, but 12th graders are comparable to the national sample. Current cigarette use, as measured by 30-day prevalence, is 30% overall for Broome County students. This includes 5% of students in grade 7, rising to 31% by grade 12. At each of the grade comparison levels (8, 10, and 12), Broome County students' current cigarette use is somewhat less than that of the national sample.

Interestingly, despite its relatively low use overall, reported use of smokeless tobacco shows a trend that resembles that of cigarettes. Lifetime prevalence rises from 5% in the 7th grade to 20% by the 12th. Students in lower grades report notably less use of smokeless tobacco than the matched sample, but that difference is small by the 12th grade. Current use of smokeless tobacco appears quite low (6% or less); except for comparable usage levels in the 10th grade, Broome County students' 30-day rates are less than the matched sample.

Marijuana

After a steady rise through the 1990's, the rate of marijuana use nationally appears to have stabilized at this higher level (e.g., 8th, 10th, and 12th grade reported 30-day prevalence of 10%, 19%, and 23% respectively). For the most part, Broome County students report lower lifetime and 30-day rates than the national sample, except for 12th graders, who exceed it.

About 29% of Broome County students report using marijuana in their lifetime, with use rising from 4% for those in the 7th grade to 53% in the 12th grade. Between those grades, reported rates of usage in Broome County appear clearly lower than that of the matched sample. In contrast, while reported use of marijuana during the past 30 days is much lower in Broome County 8th graders, by 10th grade the rates are equal, and by 12th, Broome County students report a higher rate (31% versus 23%) than the matched sample.

Inhalants

Ease of access and the disdain of older children make inhalants popular with younger children. This observation is somewhat borne out by the survey results in Broome County, where students in the 7th grade report higher Lifetime and 30-day use (11% and 5%) of inhalants than they do marijuana. Lifetime use in the matched sample decreases by 20% from grade 8 to 12, but in Broome County it remains relatively stable. Nonetheless, the lifetime level of inhalant use is less than the matched national sample. Surprisingly, 30-day rates of use are comparable to those reported in the matched sample. Caution is urged in the interpretation of the results of inhalant use because the category was based on only one question and because the absolute number of students reporting use was quite small overall.

Miscellaneous

Reported rates of usage of a variety of other drugs (including amphetamines, cocaine, crack, LSD, steroids, heroin, etc.) are quite minimal in Broome County, and much lower than the rates for alcohol, tobacco, marijuana, and inhalants. These rates are generally lower than or comparable to those of the matched sample. The only noteworthy exception is the reported usage of LSD. Lifetime prevalence of LSD use is 11% in the 12th grade, a rate comparable to the matched sample, and to Broome County 12th graders use of inhalants. 30-day usage of LSD is substantially lower than the matched sample until the 12th grade, when it jumps to a level comparable with the matched sample. The peaking of rates at the higher grade levels is apparently common for illicit drugs.

Antisocial Behavior

There are eight categories of antisocial behavior on the CTC Youth Survey: Suspension, Vehicle Theft, Drunk or High at School, Carrying a Handgun, Taking a Handgun to School, Been Arrested, Selling Drugs, and Attacking with Intent.

Unfortunately, a comparison group was not available to determine whether the rates in Broome County are higher or lower than expected. However, several general themes emerge. First, only a very small percentage of students reported engaging in antisocial behaviors. With such a small number of students reporting to engage in these behaviors in Broome County, it is not likely to be meaningfully different from the low rate of these behaviors at the national level.

Also, regardless of type of antisocial behavior, the percentage of boys reporting to engage in these behaviors was consistently higher than that of girls. Given previous findings, this gender difference is to be expected. Finally, as with substance use, the likelihood of engaging in these behaviors increases as grade level increases with the exception of three categories: Carrying a Handgun, Taking a Handgun to School, and Attacking Someone with Intent to Harm. The percentages for these categories, reflecting potential aggression toward another, are variably distributed across grades and are, again, very small.

The category of Drunk or High at School represents the antisocial activity most frequently engaged in by Broome County students with a relatively high percentage (30.8%) of 12th graders endorsing this item.

Caution should be used when interpreting these data given the small proportion of students reporting the behavior. In addition, many terms (e.g., suspension, arrest) were left for the student to provide his or her own definition as well as the fact that school policies regarding suspension differ across districts.

Risk and Protective Factors

For each risk and protective factor, comparison data are available at the national level as well as for a matched comparison sample for the CTC Youth Survey. The matched sample is considered similar to Broome County students in terms of age, ethnicity, and gender. The score for the national comparison is always 50.

For risk factors, a higher score represents a weakness and a lower score a strength. The opposite is true for protective factors in which having a higher score reflects “more protection” and is a strength whereas a lower score is a weakness. Each of the 10 protective factors and 24 risk factors are divided into one of four domains: community, family, school, and individual/peer. For a complete list of the risk and protective factors and the scores obtained by Broome County and the CTC matched comparison sample, please refer to Tables 3a, 3b, and 3c.

In general, Broome County tends to fare better than the matched sample in the lower grades and increasingly worse in the higher grades. Several factors including “Religiosity”, “Parental Attitudes Favorable to ATOD Use”, and “Perceived Risks of Drug Use” appear as strengths in the lower grades only to become weaknesses by grade 12. This finding is not surprising in that the risk to adolescents tends to increase with age. Likewise, protective factor scores tend to decrease in the higher grades.

“School Opportunities for Prosocial Involvement”, a protective factor, is a notable strength for Broome County (57) relative to both the national level (50) as well as the

matched sample (47). For all other protective factors, with the exception of “Belief in the Moral Order” as another strength, Broome County was comparable to both the national level as well as the CTC matched sample.

With respect to risk factors, strengths and weaknesses are distributed across three of the four domains. All four risk factors in the family domain are at levels comparable to both the CTC matched comparison sample as well as the national average. Within the school domain, “Poor Academic Performance” stands out as a weakness for Broome County (57) relative to the matched sample (51) as well as the national level.

At the level of the peer/individual, “Friends’ Use of Drugs” (55) and “Favorable Attitudes Toward ATOD Use” (55) are weaknesses in Broome County as compared to the national average. However, both are comparable to the matched sample, which scored 54 for both. Examining these risk factors by grade level, in the 12th grade both risk factors received the highest score for Broome County (70). This places Broome County significantly higher than the national average of 50, although still comparable to the matched sample (65 and 64 respectively).

Three behavioral outcomes – “Current ATOD Use”, “Current Antisocial Behavior”, and “Gang Involvement” - are also provided by the CTC Youth Survey. Broome County is at a level comparable to the national and matched comparison groups.

Future Plans

In this phase, it becomes necessary to integrate the findings from the CTC Youth Survey with those from other sources. Collection of archival data, as local indicators of substance abuse and related problems, is in progress. Examples include school attendance rate and juvenile arrests. A total of twenty focus groups have been conducted in each of the four participating school districts; summarization of this information is in progress. Additional focus groups are being considered for the future with non-student populations including parents, teachers, and business leaders. The distribution of parent surveys to parents in each of the four school districts is currently underway.

Although collection of data is still in progress and constitutes an ongoing process, a series of discussions have begun to take place regarding the selection of two or three priority risk factors. A Partnership committee comprised of school and community board members is working together with project staff and the Binghamton Evaluation team in this process. Currently, the following priority risk factors are under consideration: “Poor Academic Performance”, “Low School Commitment”, “Favorable Attitudes Toward ATOD Use”, “Friends’ Use of ATOD”, “Low Neighborhood Attachment”, and “Personal Transitions and Mobility”. This committee with the input from the full Partnership, will continue to finalize this process to the goal of selecting a research based prevention program to implement in our participating schools this fall. This committee will also continue a process to look at Broome County’s protective factors. We will consider plans to enhance these factors, and build on community strengths.

This is an evolving Partnership and is a beginning. We will continue to keep the community informed of our efforts and our findings. We welcome community input. For more information or to express an interest in this Partnership, call 778-1162.