

Journal-Times

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[Carter drug use declines for youth](#)

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March 13, 2013 — Drug use among Carter County's youth has decreased, according to the National Institute of Drug Abuse (NIDA). Seventeen percent fewer tenth graders reportedly used prescription drugs in the past year. NIDA conducted a survey among sixth through twelfth graders in 2004, and then again in 2012. The Kentucky Incentives for Prevention (KIP) student survey addressed alcohol, tobacco, marijuana, prescription and other drugs.

Participants were asked to sign up to be a part of a coalition and begin efforts to identify and address issues related to substance abuse. An educational Advisory Council organized the Carter County Drug Free Coalition in November of 2006.

Survey results indicate alcohol use is up by five percent among tenth and twelfth graders. Nine percent fewer eighth graders used marijuana. Tobacco use among eighth graders is down by 37 percent. Ten percent fewer twelfth graders used Oxycontin. The amount of sixth graders that used inhalants is down by six percent.

The advisory council determined youth substance abuse was a contributing factor to a variety of school and community issues. Drug addiction costs taxpayers nearly \$534 billion in health care, law enforcement, crime and other related costs. The council maintains drug abuse is a preventable behavior.

The Coalition's vision is "A community working together for a healthy, safe, drug-free Carter County." Its mission is to empower individuals, strengthen families and integrate systems to reduce youth substance abuse and its negative impact on the community. The Coalition is facilitated by the Pathways Regional Prevention Center. Its structure includes an Executive Committee, a broader coalition that includes youth, parents and representation from a number of community systems.

The Coalition has worked for the past six years to reduce drug and alcohol use among Carter County's youth. The group has received Drug Free Communities grant funding for the past five years to support its efforts. The group determined what infrastructure to put in place to manage efforts and what strategies, programs or efforts would make a difference in the community.

It decided individual and community-based prevention strategies have been successful at reducing drug use and abuse among Carter County's youth. Individual strategies include a research-based substance abuse prevention curriculum for third through ninth graders. Community-based strategies include media advocacy, advocacy for a drug-free workplace policy and a Safe Homes initiative.

The Coalition is determined to prevent the negative consequences substance abuse takes on individuals, families and communities. More than 20 years of research shows that drug abuse prevention interventions reduce risk and enhance protective factors. Substance abuse programs are cost effective, too. Each dollar invested in prevention achieves a savings of up to \$7 in substance abuse treatment and criminal justice costs.

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