



Engaging Communities to Support Our Youth

TOOLKITS AND EDUCATION FOR SUCCESS



Adverse Childhood Experiences

Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs) play a significant role in the overall development of children. When children experience one or more ACE, they are more likely to participate in risky behaviors such as smoking, alcohol use, and violence. Preventing ACEs can help children thrive and lower the risk of chronic health conditions such as depression, cancer, suicide, diabetes, and substance use disorder.⁸ By addressing ACEs, we as a community, can increase protective factors and provide stable and nurturing environments for children to succeed.

Table of Contents

Prevention Education	1
Risk and Protective Factors	3
Strategies to Prevent ACEs	6

This series will consist of six toolkits released throughout the 2023-2024 school year.

Prevention Education



What is Prevention?

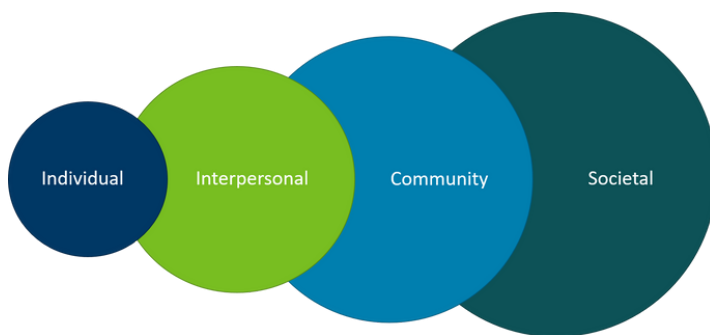
Prevention means helping people make good choices and live healthy lives to prevent negative impacts on a person or society's health and wellbeing. Our goal at the Center for Prevention & Counseling (CFPC) is to ensure everyone understands the connection between ACEs and the increased likelihood to engage in substance misuse with the hope of reducing the negative effects of both.

Effective prevention helps people and communities learn how to stop the misuse of alcohol, tobacco, marijuana, and other substances. This is achieved by providing tools, resources, education, and knowledge and using evidence-based practices to ensure our methods are effective.

Substance use is a growing public health concern, and integrating prevention education into everyday learning is an effective strategy to address this crisis. Prevention education aids in developing protective factors (things that protect and reduce substance misuse and other risky behaviors). Studies show that when protective factors are incorporated into a youth's life, they are less likely to use substances. By teaching young people what they need to know to make good choices, they can live longer, healthier, substance-free lives. This result makes our community strong and healthy so families can thrive for many generations.

"An ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure."

Prevention works! With the help of prevention education, youth use of alcohol in Sussex County has been trending downward over the last 10 years.



While prevention education typically occurs in schools, **real change** occurs when our youth are supported at home, **feel safe** in their community, and when there are **policies to protect and support** them, we see our youth begin to thrive. **We all have a role in the success of youth.**



Prevention is essential for everyone - including you as an individual, your friends, your community, and our whole society! When a whole-community approach is applied to prevention, communities learn how to make smart choices to live happy, healthy, and fulfilling lives. This education is for young people, adults, and everyone in our community. By working together, we can ensure our community is equipped with the knowledge and skills to thrive.

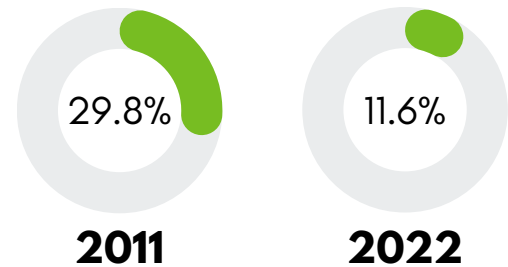
Prevention is a Smart Investment

Prevention is like making a wise investment that provides a good return. When we invest in prevention, we put our resources into strategies and actions that can help us avoid problems and challenges in the future. By focusing on prevention, we can save money, time, and effort that would otherwise be spent on addressing the consequences of those problems. Evidence-based prevention strategies can have long-term, cost saving benefits for both personal and public health, particularly when implemented during childhood and adolescence.

Empowering Youth, Preventing Costs

Substance misuse costs the United States hundreds of **billions** of dollars each year, according to the National Institute on Drug Abuse.³ We hope and expect to see positive change by empowering youth with prevention education.

Sussex County youth that used Alcohol in the past 30 days



ISA Sussex County School data, 6- 12th grade, 2022

Working Upstream for Prevention

Prevention is vital to helping our youth, families, and community overcome tough times, challenges, and difficult experiences. A powerful analogy is that prevention is the attempt to work upstream to prevent a downstream flow of addiction. Working upstream with youth to prevent ACEs during a critical time of brain development is one of the most effective approaches to preventing substance misuse and addiction later in life. This means finding the root cause, including risk factors, social determinants of health, and other factors directly related to ACEs. By doing this, protective factors that help young people make healthier choices are created, resulting in positive impact and outcomes.



*Looking for a direct connection to programs, resources, and services?
Call the number below!*

**Sussex County
WARM LINE**
(973) 383-4787

Upstream Parable

“Imagine a large river with a high waterfall. At the bottom of this waterfall hundreds of people are working frantically trying to save those who have fallen into the river and have fallen down the waterfall, many of them drowning. As the people along the shore are trying to rescue as many as possible one individual looks up and sees a seemingly never-ending stream of people falling down the waterfall and begins to run upstream. One of other rescuers hollers, “Where are you going? There are so many people that need help here.” To which the man replied, “I’m going upstream to find out why so many people are falling into the river.”

Story by Irving Zola

Risk and Protective Factors

What is a Risk Factor?

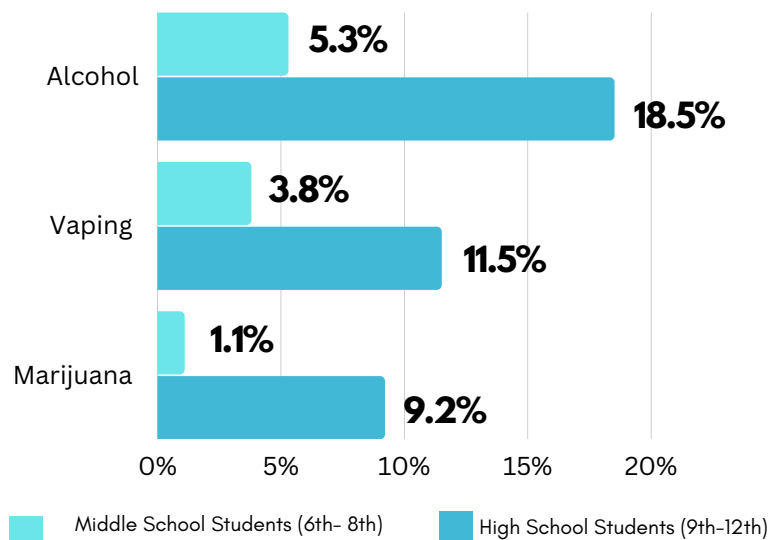
No one factor can predict if a person will become addicted to drugs. A combination of factors (biological, environment, development) influence risk for addiction.⁴ The more risk factors a person has, the greater the chance that using drugs can lead to addiction. Some risk factors include violence, a loved one with a substance use disorder, or getting in trouble with the police.

Results from the 2022 ISA Survey of 3,000+ Sussex County student participants

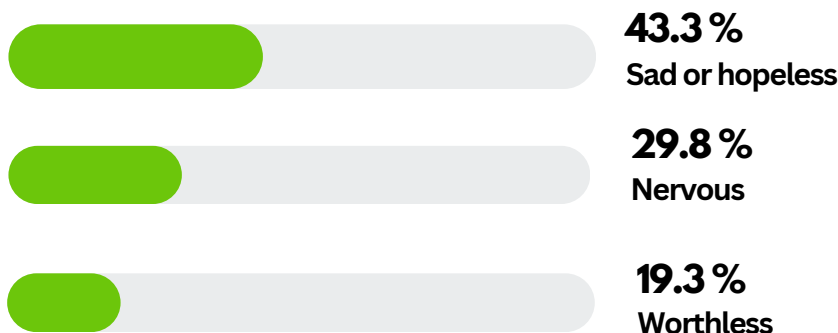
Past 30-Day use of Substances

Is Substance Use Jeopardizing Sussex County Youth?

Substance use is a significant risk factor, primarily when referring to youth. Youth who use or misuse a substance before their brain fully develops may increase their risk of developing a substance use disorder.



Feelings over the past 30 days



Youth Emotional Struggles Post-Pandemic: What Does the 2022 ISA Survey Reveal?

After the 2020 pandemic, it is evident that youth and most other community members have struggled emotionally and behaviorally. The 2022 ISA survey collected information about how 6th- 12th graders felt over 30 days.

Risk and Protective Factors

What is a Protective Factor?

Protective factors are characteristics that work to reduce the impact of risks and lower the chances of negative outcomes. These factors can be seen as positive events that help overcome challenging situations.¹

Protective factors include...

- Positive attitudes, values, or beliefs
- Conflict resolution skills
- Positive self-esteem
- Success at school
- Good parenting skills
- Parental supervision
- Strong social supports
- Community engagement
- Positive adult role models, coaches, mentors
- Good peer group/friends
- Stable housing

Protective factors encourage the health and overall wellbeing of youth and lower the possibility of negative outcomes or risk factors. In 2022, over 3,000 Sussex County students 6th– 12th grade were surveyed and reported that they participated in the following "often" or "a lot".



76.9%
Make good grades



18.1%
Faith Based
Activities



30%
School Activities



40.3%
Involved in Sports



21.8%
Community Activities



77.8%
Parents Set
Clear Rules



Risk and Protective Factors

Perception of Harm:

The perception of harm is the most important factor in whether young people will use substances. When perception of harm is low, substance use tends to increase. Our goal is to educate young people about the dangers of using these substances during adolescence.

It is clear that many youth do not believe that marijuana is harmful. This belief has been steadily going down since 2015, when the highest percentage of young people in Sussex County thought it was harmful, reaching 72%.



77.6%
of youth believe that **vaping** is harmful



69.1%
of youth believe that **alcohol** is harmful



53.3%
of youth believe that **marijuana** is harmful

ISA Sussex County School data, 6-12th grade, 2022

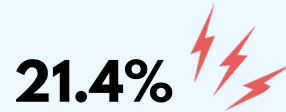
The closer the number is to 100 the less likely youth are to use the substance



14.1%
In trouble with the police



62%
"Never or seldom" participate in community activities



21.4%
Have been afraid a student may hurt them

ISA Sussex County School data, 6-12th grade, 2022

It is no secret that in order to create strong, resilient adults, children need a safe, stable, and nurturing environment to flourish. Although risk factors may be inevitable, as a community, we can work together to minimize their effect on our youth by increasing protective factors.



Strategies to Prevent ACEs

Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs) are preventable- but how?

As a community, we can work together to create and sustain safe and stable relationships and environments for all children and families. By utilizing [these 6 strategies created by the CDC](#), we can not only mitigate the harms of ACEs but prevent them from happening to begin with.²

1 Strengthen Economic Supports for Families

Stress can have a toll on the developing body- but what about adults? Well, let's face it, stress can impact anyone, in any way. "Research shows that parents facing financial hardship are more likely to experience stress, depression and conflict in their relationships and family" (CDC, 2019). Strengthening household financial security will support families and work to reduce the rate of children who are experiencing adverse childhood experiences.

In the U.S, about 4 in 10 children live in a low income house hold²

Sussex County Programs and Resources

NORWESCAP: [Pathways 2 Prosperity](#)
[Financial Empowerment programs](#)

Project Self Sufficiency:

[Career and Employment Training](#)

[Training and Education Program for Pregnant and Parenting Young Adults](#)

[Legal Advice, Education and Assistance](#)

Internal Revenue Service (IRS):

[Earned Income Tax Credit \(EITC\)](#)

[Child Tax Credit \(CTC\)](#)



State of New Jersey: [Department of Community Affairs](#)

Sussex County Health & Human Services: [Sussex County Skyland's Ride](#)

New Jersey's Department of Human Services:

[Catastrophic Illness in Children Relief Fund](#)

[Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program, NJ- SNAP](#)

Strategies to Prevent ACEs

2 Promote Social Norms that Protect Against Violence and Adversity

Social Norms are beliefs or expectations of how members of our society, community, or group should behave. Some norms may include, speaking quietly in the library or getting your license at 17. **Positive social norms** can be used to protect our community from experiencing unwanted violence or adversity by:

- Normalizing a shared responsibility for the health and wellbeing of children
- Supporting parents and positive parenting around safe and effective discipline
- Reducing stigma around help-seeking
- Enhancing connectedness to build resiliency in the face of adversity.²

Sussex County Programs and Resources

Domestic Abuse & Sexual Assault Intervention (DASI):

[Community Education](#)

Veto Violence: [Help Stop Violence Before it Happens](#)

NJ-PCA-NJ & PSS: [Enough Abuse Campaign](#)

Ginnie's House: [Sussex County's Children Advocacy Center](#)

End Violence Against Children: [Ending Corporal Punishment](#)

Futures Without Violence: [Coaching Boys into Men](#)



About 1 in 7 youth experienced child abuse & neglect in the last year⁶

3 Ensure a Strong Start for Children

Fostering the development of young individuals and nurturing a solid foundation from an early stage is essential in guaranteeing long-term success. The power of one positive adult in a child's life can help foster success and plays a major role in healthy brain development.²



Sussex County Programs and Resources

NORWESCAP: [Head Start](#)

Project Self Sufficiency: [Little Sprouts Early Learning Center](#)

Health Crisis Workgroup: [Sussex County Health and Wellness Resource Guide](#)

Nurse Family Partnership: [NFP and Child First Program Overview](#)



Strategies to Prevent ACEs

4

Provide Skill-Based Learning Programs

Did you know?

Our Prevention Team provides evidence-based programming in Sussex County school working to build resilient students!

As humans, our brains are designed to constantly be learning. Skill-based learning plays a key role when it comes to preventing and mitigating Adverse Childhood Experiences. By teaching youth life skills such as, how to handle stress, manage their emotions, make healthy decisions, and resolve conflict properly, they are more likely to flourish into resilient adults.

The Center for Prevention and Counseling (CFPC) is dedicated to promoting healthy lifestyles for youth and adults. It is our mission to provide services to foster addiction-free lives, emotional wellness and an overall safe community.



Skill-based Prevention Programs provided by CFPC



Boosting Communication Skills & Self Advocacy

for Personal Growth: Botvins Life Skills Training is a universal evidence-based prevention program proven to reduce the risks of alcohol, tobacco, drug

misuse, and violence. Students have the opportunity to interactively learn how to manage stress, cope with anger and anxiety, resist peer pressure, and further develop social and communication skills they need to become thriving young adults.



Deconstructing Media Messages & Influences: We're Not Buying It! 2.0 (WNBI 2.0) is a media literacy program targeting middle school-aged youth that aims to prevent or delay the onset of alcohol, marijuana, and non-medical



prescription drug use, and to prevent bullying. Youth learn how to deconstruct media messages that promote or glamorize substance use. With a deeper understanding of the marketing directed toward them, students are better able to resist messages and to make healthy decisions.



Building Strong Foundations for Managing Emotions and Healthy

Decision Making: Footprints for Life™ is a research-based primary prevention program designed to build developmental assets and teach skills. Developed for 2nd and 3rd grade, Footprints utilizes puppets to follow the story of a children's soccer team and the animal characters experience real-life situations.

Strategies to Prevent ACEs

Strengthening Families through Resiliency and Well-being:

Strengthening Families Program is for the entire family! Families will have an opportunity to build on their unique set of strengths in showing love and guidance to each other while gaining support and resources through fun and interactive activities.



Empowering Youth for Life Long Success: Developmental Assets is based on a framework consisting of 40 key characteristics youth need to succeed. Discover the power we all have to bring positive experiences and qualities into the lives of children and youth. These workshops will provide the tools to promote positive development and prevent risk factors in childhood, helping them thrive as resilient adults.

The Center for Prevention and Counseling offers numerous programs for youth, families, and the community at large. To read more about our services, programs, and other opportunities to get involved, click here.



**Center for
Prevention and
Counseling's
Prevention Services
in Sussex County**

Prevention programs can have a positive multi-generational impact⁷



DASI

Safe Dating and Healthy Relationships: Safe dating and other healthy relationship building programs are important to reduce the risk of ACEs. Check out the [Community Education](#) programs the Domestic Abuse & Sexual Assault Intervention Services, DASI, offers here in Sussex County.

Equipping Adults to Recognize Mental Health Challenges: [Mental](#)

[Health First Aid](#) is an early intervention public education program that teaches adults how to recognize the signs and symptoms of a potential mental health challenge, while also reassuring the person, and referring them to the correct resources.

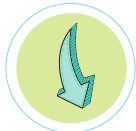


The Mental Health Association offers counseling, family support, and a [Mental Health Urgent Care, or Wellness HUB](#) as well as other services. Feel free to walk in to the support center to receive immediate access to treatment for anyone experiencing mental health symptoms.

Strategies to Prevent ACEs

5 Connect Youth to Caring Adults and Activities

As adults, we have the opportunity to instill positive qualities in youth and assist them throughout their building block years of life. These positive relationships have the ability to prevent ACEs and improve protective factors among youth to help build resilience.



Sussex County Programs and Resources

Project Self Sufficiency: [Project Sussex Kids](#)

Sussex County YMCA: [Connecting the Community](#)

Center for Prevention & Counseling: [Prevention Services](#)



“Every kid is ONE caring adult away from being a success story.”⁵

Josh Shipp

6 Intervene to lessen immediate and long-term harms

Youth who have experienced Adverse Childhood Experiences may demonstrate behavioral and mental health challenges, including depression, insomnia, early substance use, difficulty concentrating, irritability, or overall traumatic stress response. ACEs can pass down from one generation to another, which means that kids whose parents had ACEs may have a higher chance of experiencing similar difficulties.⁹ There are various approaches and resources available that adults may utilize to help mitigate the effects of ACEs.



Sussex County Programs and Resources

Center for Prevention & Counseling: [Recovery Community Center](#) [SMART Recovery](#)

C.L.E.A.R 24/7 Addiction Helpline: [844-SC-CLEAR](#)

DASI: [Sexual Assault Response Team \(SART\) and Domestic Violence Response Teams \(DART\)](#)

211 New Jersey: [2.1.1](#)

Zufall Health: [Federally Qualified Health Centers](#)

Mental Health Association: [Serving Northern New Jersey](#)

SAMHSA: [988 Suicide & Crisis Lifeline](#)

The Weekend Bag Program: [Work to End Juvenile Food Insecurity](#)

Benny's Bodega: [People Helping People: Food, Clothing, Hygiene, & Cleaning Supplies](#)

Resources

Mental Health Services

Mental Health Association

<https://www.mhainspire.org/>

Youth Mental Health First Aid

<https://www.mentalhealthfirstaid.org/population-focused-modules/youth/>

988 Suicide & Crisis Lifeline

<https://988lifeline.org/>

Addiction Services

Center for Prevention and Counseling

<https://centerforprevention.org/>

SMART Recovery

<https://www.smartrecovery.org/>

C.L.E.A.R

<http://clearprogram.org/>

Evidence-Based Programs

Botvin's Life Skills Training

<https://www.lifeskillstraining.com>

We're Not Buying It 2.0 (WNBI)

find webpage

Footprints for Life

<https://www.footprintsforlife.org/>

Strengthening Families

<https://strengtheningfamiliesprogram.org/>

Resources

40 Developmental Asset Framework

<https://www.search-institute.org/our-research/development-assets/>

Youth Mental Health First Aid

<https://www.mentalhealthfirstaid.org/population-focused-modules/youth/>

Community Resources

NORWESCAP

<https://norwescap.org/>

Project Self Sufficiency

<https://www.projectsselfsufficiency.org/>

Family Promise

<https://familypromise.org/>

Sussex County Health & Human Services

<https://www.sussex.nj.us/>

New Jersey Department of Human Services

<https://www.nj.gov/humanservices/>

Domestic Abuse & Sexual Assault Intervention Services

<https://www.dasi.org/>

Center for Disease Control & Prevention (CDC)

<https://www.cdc.gov/>

Ginnie's House- Sussex County's Children Advocacy Center

<http://ginnieshouse.org/>

New Jersey Department of Agriculture

<https://nj.gov/agriculture/farmtoschool/>

Sussex County YMCA

<https://www.metroymcas.org/locations/sussex-county-ymca/sussex-county-ymca/>



Resources

Center for Prevention and Counseling

<https://centerforprevention.org/>

Zufall Health

<https://www.zufallhealth.org/>

The Weekend Bag Program

<https://weekendbagsprogram.com/>

Benny's Bodega

<https://www.bennysbodega.com/>



End Notes

1. <https://www.samhsa.gov/sites/default/files/20190718-samhsa-risk-protective-factors.pdf>
2. <https://www.cdc.gov/violenceprevention/pdf/preventingACES.pdf>
3. <https://archives.nida.nih.gov/research-topics/trends-statistics/costs-substance-abuse#supplemental-references-for-economic-costs>
4. <https://nida.nih.gov/publications/drugfacts/understanding-drug-use-addiction>
5. <https://www.safersociety.org/every-kid-is-one-caring-adult-away-from-being-a-success-story/>
6. <https://www.cdc.gov/violenceprevention/childabuseandneglect/fastfact.html>
7. <https://archives.nida.nih.gov/news-events/nida-notes/2021/07/preventive-interventions-delivered-in-childhood-may-reduce-substance-use-over-two-generations>
8. <https://www.cdc.gov/vitalsigns/aces/index.html>
9. <https://www.acesaware.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/12/13-Two-Generation-Approach-to-ACEs-English.pdf>

Toolkits and Education for Success is a six part series.

For additional information regarding Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs), 40 Developmental Assets, or other prevention programming within Sussex County, contact Michaela McKernan at michaela@centerforprevention.org. We would love to hear from you! ***Click here*** to join our ACEs Toolkits and Education for Success distribution list to receive news and updates regarding future toolkits and resources.



The Center is a 501(c)(3) non-profit agency in Newton, NJ. Our mission, since 1973, has been to promote hope, health, and recovery among all people by creating an environment that is safe and free from the effects of substance use and addiction. The Center provides substance use prevention, evaluation, counseling, and recovery support services to Sussex County children, teens, adults, and families regardless of cultural background, socioeconomic status, age, gender, or sexual orientation. www.centerforprevention.org



The Office of Resilience was created in June 2020, led by an executive on loan which is funded by the New Jersey ACEs Collaborative, an alliance of three NJ philanthropic organizations, the Burke Foundation, The Nicholson Foundation and the Turrell Fund, in partnership with the NJ Department of Children and Families. The purpose of the office is to host, coordinate and facilitate statewide initiatives related to raising awareness of and creating opportunities to eradicate Adverse Childhood Experiences, or ACEs, through grassroots and community-led efforts, technical assistance, and strategic support for organizations already pursuing this work.



CUMAC's mission is to fight hunger, and its root causes through a holistic, trauma-informed approach that provides fresh and healthy groceries and basic necessities to low- and moderate-income individuals and families who need them. CUMAC's and its Trauma-Informed Community Building (TICB) strategy aims to combat inequitable systems that perpetuate hunger and poverty by providing individuals and families with the power they need to secure vital resources, including jobs, housing, food, healthcare, and other supportive services. By providing resources and referrals to supportive services for our guests through sustainable community partnerships, CUMAC decreases barriers to accessing services, and the amount of toxic stress guests face. Reducing toxic stress in combination with supportive services is a vital part of our restorative process that builds on the existing resiliency of guests, decreases the effects of Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs), and breaks the cycle of poverty.