



# Drug-Free Communities Support Program

# AT-A-GLANCE

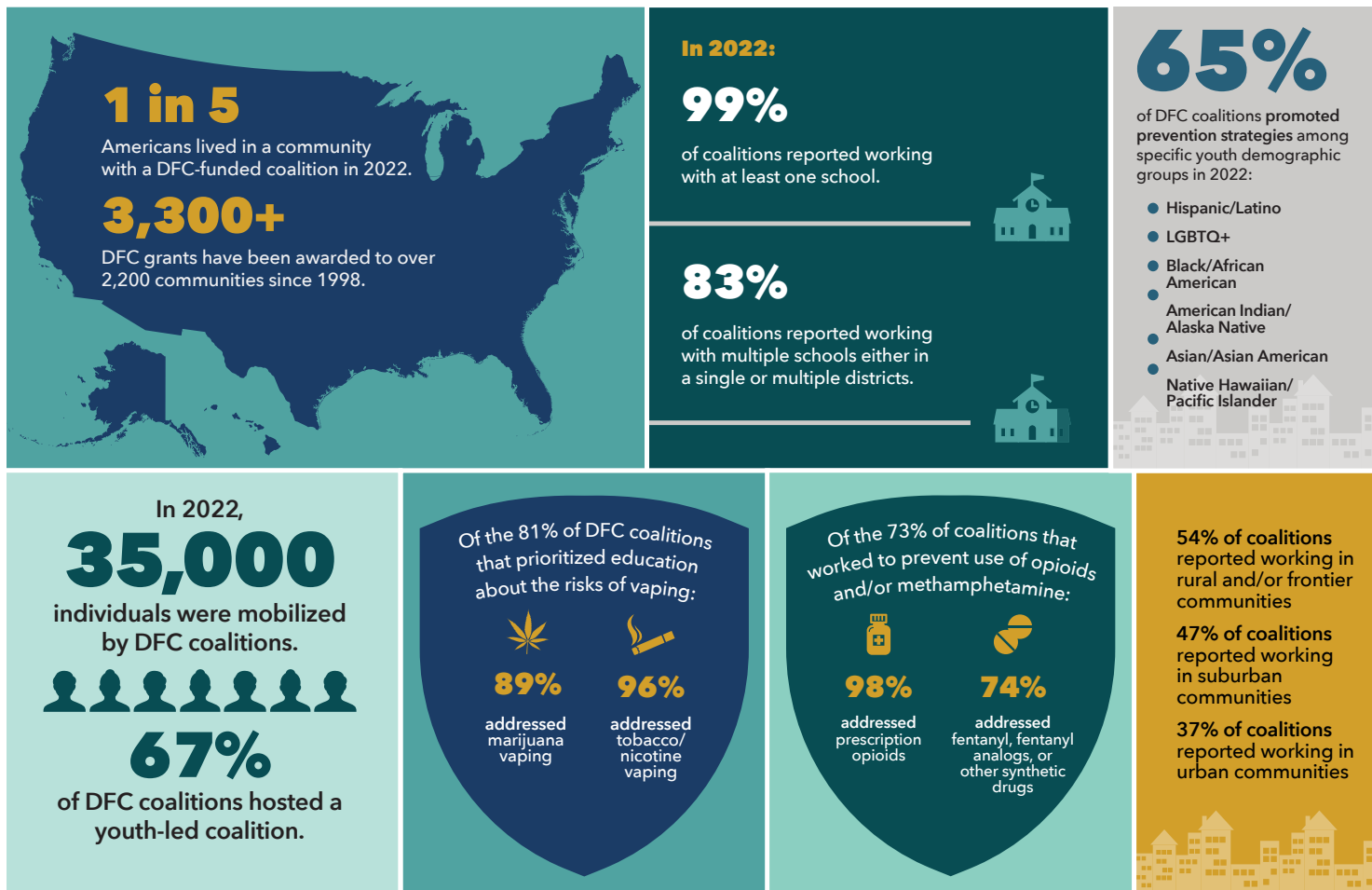
## What Is The DFC Program

The Drug-Free Communities (DFC) Support Program is the nation's leading effort to prevent and reduce substance use among youth by supporting community coalitions.

A DFC coalition is an array of organizations and sectors that collectively identify, plan, and implement strategies to build safe, healthy, and drug-free environments for youth. In 2023, the Office of National Drug Control Policy (ONDCP) awarded DFC funding to 751 communities across all 50 states, Guam, and Puerto Rico to prevent alcohol, tobacco, marijuana, and prescription drug use among youth.



## DFC By The Numbers



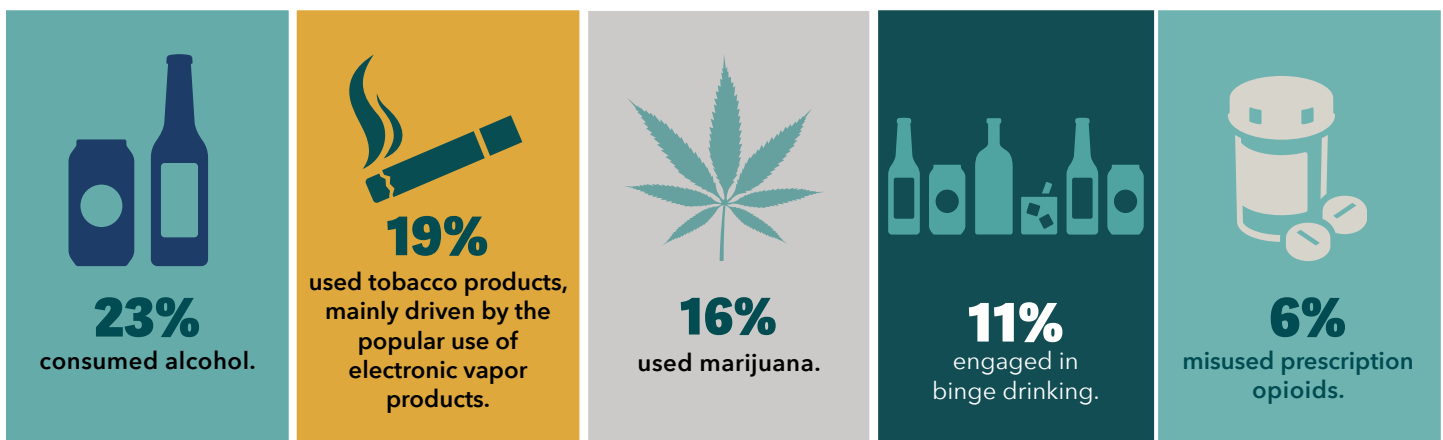


## Address It Today. Prevent It Tomorrow.

Preventing the initiation of and use of substances among youth is critical. Substance use at a young age is associated with negative health outcomes such as effects on brain development, poor physical and mental health, and the development of a substance use disorder, which can increase the risk of drug overdose.<sup>1</sup> From 2019-2022, overdose deaths doubled among young people aged 15-19.<sup>2</sup> While youth self-reported substance use has declined over time, recent data from CDC’s Youth Risk Behavior Survey (YRBS) show that too many young people continue to use substances.<sup>1</sup>

## Substance Use Among Youth

High school students reported using different substances in the past 30 days<sup>3</sup>



## Empowering Communities To Prevent Youth Substance Use

Youth substance use patterns vary among different populations and are impacted by how people live, work, learn, and play. Coalitions address these factors, which can include:

- **Risk factors:** adverse childhood experience (ACEs); lack of parental guidance to reject substance use; family rejection of sexual orientation; lack of connectedness to school; and community norms, policies, and practices favorable to substance use.
- **Protective factors:** Parent or family support and engagement, school connectedness, and community policies that limit the availability and accessibility of substances.

These risk and protective factors vary in communities across the United States. DFC coalitions are empowered to select prevention strategies that will be most effective in their communities. DFC coalitions also focus on youth most at-risk for substance use and apply their unique knowledge of their community to implement comprehensive strategies and activities using the seven strategies for community-level change. Coalitions plan and develop this comprehensive approach with the goal of changing the community environment to change or influence community institutions, attitudes, and policies that shape individuals’ behaviors.



## Empowering Young People To Use Their Voices

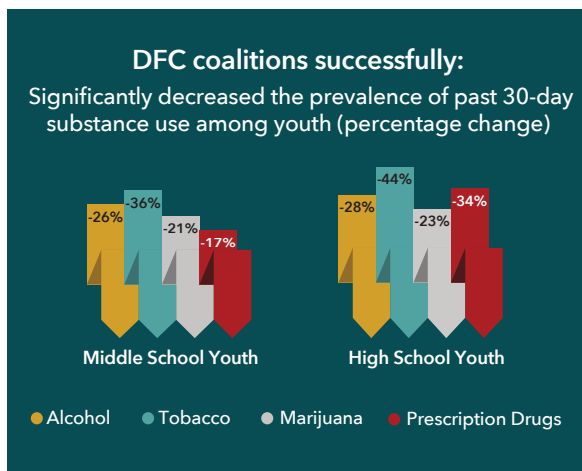
Meaningful youth engagement is a cornerstone of the DFC Program. Building strong bonds and relationships with adults and friends at school, at home, and in the community provides youth with a sense of connectedness. This feeling of connectedness can buffer adolescents against experiencing poor mental health, and other risk factors like substance use and experiencing violence.

Approximately two-thirds (67%) of DFC coalitions reported hosting a youth coalition – a group of youth working together to plan and implement activities related to the mission of the full coalition. Most coalitions (83%) reported the youth coalition met at least once a month and rated involvement in planning prevention activities as high or very high (72%).<sup>4</sup>

### Seven Strategies for Community Level Change

- Provide information
- Enhance skills
- Provide support
- Enhance access & reduce barriers
- Change consequences
- Change the physical design
- Educate and inform about modifying or changing policies

## DFC's Impact



Findings from the 2022 DFC Support Program National Cross-Site Evaluation:<sup>4</sup>

- DFC coalitions significantly decreased the percentage of substance use in the past 30 days among middle school and high school students.
- DFC coalitions successfully mobilized approximately 35,000 community members to engage in evidence-based youth substance use prevention/reduction efforts.
- More than two-thirds (69%) of DFC coalitions implemented at least five of the seven strategies for community change.

## DFC Coalition Story Snippets

### Prevention Starts at Home in New Britain, Connecticut

When data from their 2022 Youth Voices Count survey indicated that young people were accessing alcohol and prescription drugs in their homes, the New Britain Local Prevention Council created a marketing campaign to raise awareness about how easily young people access substances at home. [The Limit Access - Prevention Starts with You](#) campaign informs young people about the risks of using substances and aims to educate adults that accessibility is a common risk factor for youth substance use. They worked with their media partners to air commercials in both English and Spanish on Connecticut news networks such as NBC and Telemundo for the entire month of September in recognition of National Recovery Month.



## Reducing Stigma to Get People Talking in Navajo Nation

The Navajo Youth Builders Coalition (NYBC) in Fort Defiance, New Mexico works to overcome the barriers of geographical isolation by conducting outreach into underserved communities. Due to the isolated nature of many communities within the Navajo Nation, they may not be aware of current trends in drug use until it begins to impact young people. Addressing cultural taboos within a tribal community requires sensitivity, understanding and tactfulness. The NYBC successfully hosted an indigenous speaker series that focused on health equity and access to prevention, treatment, and recovery. The NYBC works to bridge gaps in access to collect feedback from these sessions and use it to develop future discussions or activities in the Navajo Nation.

## Shifting Priorities to Address Emerging Drug Threats

The Substance Abuse Prevention Coalition of Athens (SAPCA) works to reduce the use of alcohol and marijuana among youth in Athens, Georgia. However, in recent years they found that the culture around substance use has shifted in their community. Other substances have surfaced, such as prescription drugs, nicotine and marijuana in the form of vaping, and fentanyl. SAPCA expanded their focus to address these emerging substances and became one of the leading providers of youth prevention programs and naloxone trainings. They work closely with the Department of Public Health (DPH) where the coalition provides naloxone trainings and the DPH distributes the naloxone. SAPCA quickly adapted and responded to the unique needs of their community.

## Educating Alcohol Providers to Create Safer Environments

The Wilmington Coalition for a healthy community (WCHC) in the state of Illinois identified the importance of educating alcohol providers about the potential risks of marketing alco-pops, an appealing beverage combining popular soft-drinks with malt liquor. WCHC partnered with the Illinois Liquor Control Commission to implement Beverage Alcohol Sellers and Servers Education and Training (BASSET) classes to educate representatives from local businesses to operate safely, legally, and responsibly. During the class, participants are encouraged to inform consumers of alcohol content in their products; trained to administer life-saving naloxone to reverse opioid overdoses; and get naloxone for their establishments.

## References

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1. U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS), Office of the Surgeon General, Facing Addiction in America: The Surgeon General's Report on Alcohol, Drugs, and Health. Washington, DC: HHS, November 2016.
2. Tanz LJ, Dinwiddie AT, Mattson CL, O'Donnell J, Davis NL. Drug overdose deaths among persons aged 10–19 years, United States, July 2019–December 2021. *MMWR Morb Mortal Wkly Rep* 2022;71:1576–82. Doi: 10.15585/mmwr.mm7150a2
3. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Youth Risk Behavior Survey Data. <http://www.cdc.gov/yrebs>. Accessed February 13, 2024.
4. Drug-Free Communities Support Program National Cross-Site Evaluation: End-of-Year 2022 Report. Washington, DC: Office of National Drug Control Policy. <https://www.cdc.gov/drugoverdose/drug-free-communities/pdf/DFC-National-Evaluation-EoY-Report.pdf>. Accessed February 13, 2024.

