

## Important Information From NS-CASA

In January 2020 the North Shore School District administered the [Bach-Harrison Prevention Needs Assessment survey](#) (“the survey”) to 1044 7<sup>th</sup> thru 12<sup>th</sup> graders in order to gain insights into our students’ use of and attitudes on substances (alcohol, marijuana, vaping, tobacco, opioids etc.) and to highlight the community’s main prevention needs. The North Shore Counselling office presented this information to the School Board and any virtual public attendees on June 18, 2020. Below is NS-CASA’s recap of the information publicly available.

It’s critically important that you understand the results and the implications to YOUR children. Together, we can address these issues and have a positive effect on all of our children and the entire North Shore community.

### **WE ARE CASA!**

NS-CASA shares the following data not to scare parents during an already anxiety-ridden time. We share it to educate parents on the state of our own kids in the North Shore Community so that we may all be armed with the facts needed to make meaningful change. Many of our kids are experimenting with risky behaviors that could lead to serious consequences. We have an opportunity, as a community, to strengthen our safeguards, deepen our conversations, and be unified in our approach to help our youth avoid substance use and abuse.

### **RESULTS OVERVIEW**

For ease of digestion, we provide a ‘big picture’ overview of the critical datapoints we identified, which is followed by more detailed statistics and information.

1. **Youth alcohol use is high and NS students are binge drinking at rates that far exceed the national norms.** NS 12<sup>th</sup> graders self-report 59.6% drinking in the past 30 days (almost double the 30.2% national average) and 38% regularly bingeing (5 consecutive drinks in a row), with our bingeing number

almost triple the national survey average of 14%. Even as young as 9<sup>th</sup> grade, 13.7% of students reported binge drinking. Educating our youth on the potential dangers of binge drinking is a task that our community must take on, both for the direct health results as well as the ancillary dangers (drinking and driving, sex, bullying, etc.). It starts with educating parents and students on the facts about youth alcohol use, teaching adults how to talk to our kids effectively, and what to do if we suspect a problem.

2. **Marijuana use has remained steadily high in the upper grades over the past few years.** In both 2018 and 2020, 12<sup>th</sup> graders have reported that over 42% have used marijuana in their lifetime. This is close to national survey norms of 43% and use is at a level that many experts are concerned about. Marijuana has proven to be harmful in many ways and children are most susceptible to its harmful effects that include cognitive impairment causing problems with concentration and thinking, and leading to impaired judgment. There's also an increased risk of developing anxiety, depression and psychosis. Heavy users of marijuana can have short-term problems with attention, memory, and learning, which can affect relationships and moods. Studies have also shown that marijuana use can cause changes in the brain similar to those caused by cocaine, heroin and alcohol, which can lead to severe mental problems.
  
3. **Our kids are drinking and using marijuana too young.** The age of first use for both substances is under 15 years old for NSSD students who have reported use by 12<sup>th</sup> grade. This is concerning since children who begin drinking early are 7 times more likely to have alcohol abuse issues later on in life. Further, a [recent study](#) in the American Journal of Psychiatry found that marijuana has a more negative impact on a teenager's cognitive development than alcohol. The youth survey also highlights a spike in alcohol and marijuana usage between 8<sup>th</sup> and 9<sup>th</sup> grades, suggesting that education and prevention should target middle school age children before they arrive in high school.

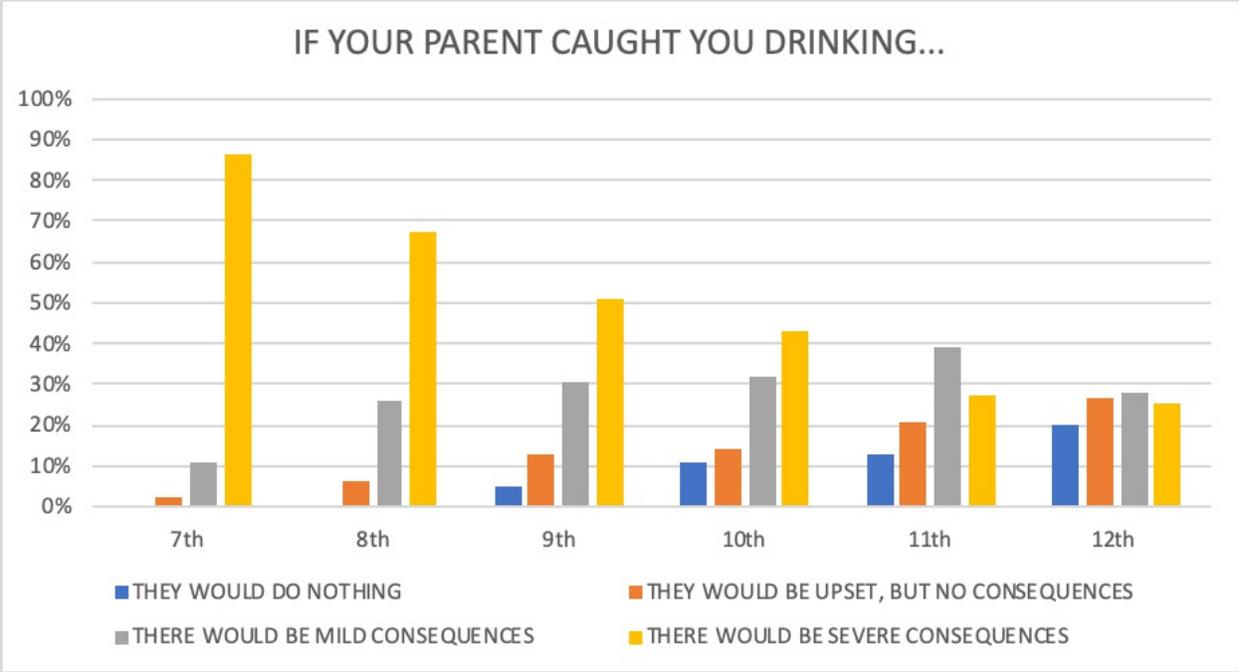
4. **Vaping by our students has dropped significantly**, particularly in the 7-9<sup>th</sup> grades. Across all grades, vaping has fallen from 21% in 2018 to 10% in 2020 – a very positive move that we believe was influenced by the education and prevention efforts by the NSSD and CASA over the last three years.
  
5. **Depressive symptoms are up since 2018 and above national averages.** Knowing the strong link between the emotional health of our youth and their potential use of substances as a coping mechanism, NS-CASA shares in the District’s concern over the numbers reported. 58% of our 10<sup>th</sup> graders and 44% of our Seniors reported depressive symptoms - such as feeling sad or depressed. For our part, NS-CASA will continue to stress the use of healthy coping skills for our youth and asking parents to model and discuss those skills in the home. We will also continue to look for opportunities to educate all families on mental health, such as the showing of the film *Angst* during the 2019-2020 school year. Look out for programs on mental health for parents in our 2020-2021 CASA Coffee offerings and please join in the community discussion.
  
6. **Although the numbers remain low, there was some reported use of “other narcotics” in the 2020 survey**, defined as narcotic prescription drugs such as OxyContin, methadone, morphine, codeine, Demerol, Vicodin, or Percocet. Reported lifetime use in 10<sup>th</sup>, 11<sup>th</sup> and 12<sup>th</sup> grades were 4.1%, 4.9% and 3% respectively. NS-CASA believes that even these low percentages should serve as a wakeup call to the community that our children are not immune to the national opioid crisis. This community has lost many of our youth to substance overdoses post-graduation and these numbers suggest that we cannot let up on our fight to educate our kids on the imminent risks of opioid use.

## **COMMUNITY AND PARENT IMPACT**

The issue of ACCESS is a big one for our community and one that the survey tackles head on. Where are our kids getting their alcohol? The answer is overwhelmingly clear....they get it from us. While there are, of course, many ways for teens to gain access to substances, we are often the providers whether we mean to be or not. The data below speaks for itself:

<b>If you drank alcohol, where did you get it?</b>	<b>7th</b>	<b>8th</b>	<b>9th</b>	<b>10th</b>	<b>11th</b>	<b>12th</b>
<b>Got from home WITH parents' permission</b>	<b>28.60%</b>	<b>37.50%</b>	<b>30.80%</b>	<b>32.10%</b>	<b>23.80%</b>	<b>35.50%</b>
<b>Got from home WITHOUT parents' permission</b>		<b>7.50%</b>	<b>24.40%</b>	<b>38.50%</b>	<b>29.40%</b>	<b>23.60%</b>
<b>Where did you drink?</b>						
<b>At home or someone else's home - NO PERMISSION</b>	<b>3.80%</b>	<b>16.70%</b>	<b>46.60%</b>	<b>61.30%</b>	<b>56.40%</b>	<b>57.3%</b>
<b>At home with PARENT PERMISSION</b>	<b>42.3%</b>	<b>50.0%</b>	<b>39.7%</b>	<b>45.0%</b>	<b>42.7%</b>	<b>54.5%</b>
<b>At someone else's home -WITH THEIR PARENTS' PERMISSION</b>	<b>3.8%</b>	<b>7.1%</b>	<b>28.8%</b>	<b>32.5%</b>	<b>47.0%</b>	<b>50.9%</b>

Additionally, the chart below shows what the students perceive the consequences of being caught drinking would be at home. It illustrates a rather lax attitude, or at least children perceive that to be the case. For our 11<sup>th</sup> graders, 112 out of 154 (72%) believe there would be mild or no consequences if caught drinking with 20 (13%) saying their parents would do nothing at all. The clear message is that as our teens progress through high school, their perception is that there are little or no parental consequences to drinking.



The survey provided very interesting insights into community attitudes towards drug use by students. As the table below indicates, almost half of high school students report that they believe that their parents have attitudes that ‘favor drug use’, well above the national average of 37% in senior year. Even more disconcerting is that more than two-thirds of 10<sup>th</sup>, 11<sup>th</sup>, and 12<sup>th</sup> graders report that there are *peer rewards* for anti-social behavior, almost 50% higher than the national average.

		8th			10th			12 <sup>th</sup>	
	7th	NSSD	Nat'l Avg.	9th	NSSD	Nat'l Avg.	11th	NSSD	Nat'l Avg.
Parent Attitudes Favor Drug Use	11%	19%	23%	34%	45%	36%	42%	46%	37%
Parent Attitudes Favor Anti-Social Behavior	28%	47%	47%	52%	45%	50%	48%	42%	49%
Peer Rewards for Anti-Social Behavior	17%	20%	34%	59%	64%	44%	64%	70%	48%
Peer Attitudes Favorable to Drug use	12%	14%	38%	31%	51%	40%	43%	50%	41%

The survey provides insights into the major family, school, and community influences, both positive and negative:

- Major negative influences: very high peer pressure rewarding anti-social behavior; general lack of parental consequences assigned to substance use.
- Major positive influences: above average community protective support services, school domain protective services well above norms.

## **TAKING ACTION TOGETHER:**

NS-CASA feels that continuing our efforts is more important than ever and changing student, parent, and community attitudes along with a stronger focus on middle schoolers are the best ways to make an impact. Towards that end NS-CASA, working with NSSD and YOU, will employ the following Action Plan:

1. Collaborating with the school district, NS-CASA will continue education and prevention initiatives in elementary through high school with an increased focus on middle schoolers.
2. Continue to gain members for our 'Safe Homes Parent Pledge' program (<https://www.nscasa.org/parent-pledge.html>)
3. Launch 'Project Sticker Shock' program focused on retail distributors to delay early use. The goal is, and will continue to be, encouraging parents and other community members not to provide alcohol to our youth. NS-CASA is currently looking for interested youth to join in this effort!
4. Continue to provide an ongoing forum for community discussion, education and collaboration at our CASA Coffee series starting in October.
5. Continue with alcohol and marijuana education as our primary focus, stressing the dangers of binge drinking, debunking the myths associated with marijuana while also expanding our education on other drugs.
6. Introduce more aggressive mental health programs, emphasizing coping skills that can be used by both youth and adults.
7. Make recommendations to the NSSD on substance use education and prevention - such as facilitating the new contractual relationship that the District has with the Long Island Council on Alcohol and Drug Dependence.
8. Continue collaborative efforts with NSSD Counselling Office
9. Conduct broader outreach to our youth – providing opportunities for rich community involvement that will increase the protective factors against substance use for our kids. Parents looking for their students to get involved should reach out to us at [northshorecasa@gmail.com](mailto:northshorecasa@gmail.com)

YOUR role in this is clear:

- Join as a member at [www.NSCASA.org](http://www.NSCASA.org) and never miss out on notification of an event or community initiative
- Attend our education and prevention events
- Donate to our organization <https://www.nscasa.org/join-donate.html>
- Take the parent pledge at [www.NSCASA.org](http://www.NSCASA.org)
- Follow NS-CASA's recommendations
- Share NS-CASA info with your child and encourage their participation in CASA events and campaigns.
- Get more involved as a volunteer or sector lead by reaching out at [northshorecasa@gmail.com](mailto:northshorecasa@gmail.com).
- Stay in touch and informed by following us on Facebook, Instagram and Twitter

Taking some or all of the actions above will ensure that YOU are taking a step towards greater wellness for our kids in every way! We now all know what the problem is: a community effort led by YOU and NS-CASA is the solution.

Learn more at <https://www.nscasa.org/>

## **North Shore Coalition Against Substance Abuse Board of Directors**

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