

National Public Health Week

APRIL 6 - APRIL 12, 2020

& Substance Use Prevention

MENTAL HEALTH

Supporting youth living with a mental illness is essential for preventing substance use.

- 1 in 4 children in Maine are living with a mental health disorder, higher than the national rate of about 1 in 6.[1]
- Youth who experience mental illness have increased risk of developing of a substance use disorder.[2]
- Access Health provides local mental health [resources](#) for educators & caregivers community-wide.

MATERNAL & CHILD HEALTH

Providing critical resources to new mothers decreases the risk of youth substance use.

- Teens who have experienced trauma like maltreatment, caregiver mental illness & poverty, have an increased risk of developing a substance use disorder, 2 to 4 fold.[3]
- Families have a lower risk of exposing their child to adverse experiences that increase the likelihood of alcohol use & lifetime substance use when they feel supported in their communities.[4]
- Access Health provides parental monitoring tips, substance use information & other community [resources](#) for parents & caregivers.

VIOLENCE PREVENTION

Protecting youth from violence reduces the likelihood of substance use for adolescents.

- 2019 data shows 19% of local high school students wanted to leave home due to violence or threats of violence. [X]
- Children who experience bullying in 5th grade are more likely to use substances in the 10th grade, while teens who bully their peers overall are more likely to use alcohol, tobacco & marijuana.[5]
- Preventing exposure to violence reduces levels of substance use, as teens who do not experience violence or bullying are likely to use harmful substances.[6]

ENVIRONMENTAL HEALTH

Creating a healthy & safe environment promotes substance free living.

- Almost 12% of local teens report easy access to prescription medication like OxyContin, Percocet, Vicodin & Adderall.[8]
- Disposing of unused or unwanted medications reduces the likelihood of poisoning, pollution & substance use.
- Access Health's initiative, the [Big Green Box](#), provides a safe, accessible & eco-friendly way to dispose of expired, unused, unwanted medications.

EDUCATION

School systems play an important role in preventing youth substance use.

- Students who feel connected to their school are less likely to engage in high risk behavior like alcohol, tobacco, other substance use & violence.[9]
- Adolescents who have a caring role model within the school system are less likely to initiate substance use.[10]
- Access Health partners with local schools to deliver a free risk-reduction [program](#) for teens experimenting with harmful substances.

ECONOMICS

Reducing youth substance use helps our economy thrive.

- Substance use costs an estimated \$442 billion per year in health care costs, lost productivity & criminal justice costs nation-wide.[12]
- Families who are experience economic stress are more at-risk for developing a substance use disorder.[13]
- Mainers living with a substance use disorder often face economic hardships & costly legal problems.[14]

What Can You Do?

1. Educate communities to reduce the stigma of mental health disorders
2. Learn how your communities can provide support to people experiencing a mental health disorder.
3. Encourage community & state policymakers to address maternal health gaps to increase access to critical resources.
4. Advocate for community-based strategies that create safe, stable & nurturing environments that help prevent bullying & community violence.[7]

5. Meet with community members to identify resources, needs & environmental health priorities.

6. Support school-based programs that help connect students to local high-quality health & wellness services.[11]

7. Support neighborhoods & communities that provide equal economic & educational opportunities.