
Prevention Works!VT

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Introduction to Prevention Works!VT

Prevention Works!VT is a network of community coalition leaders, prevention consultants, service providers, and individuals from across the state. We collaborate with local substance misuse coalitions across the state as well as other community organizations that share a common goal of supporting healthy living for all Vermonters. PW!VT partners help shape how substance misuse prevention is valued in our state.

Our mission is to unify voices and be a guiding force on policy, practice, and attitudes that promote substance misuse prevention, health, and wellness in Vermont. Our vision is a strong, sustainable and unified system to prevent substance misuse in Vermont



What is Substance Use Prevention?

- Primary Prevention efforts focus on ***delaying the onset of any of drug use***, whether it is alcohol, tobacco or marijuana.
- Secondary Prevention or early intervention, is detecting who is at higher risk or who may have already initiated early use. The goal is ***intervening to stop the substance use***.

Prevention efforts focus on having an environment that protects adolescents from early substance use.

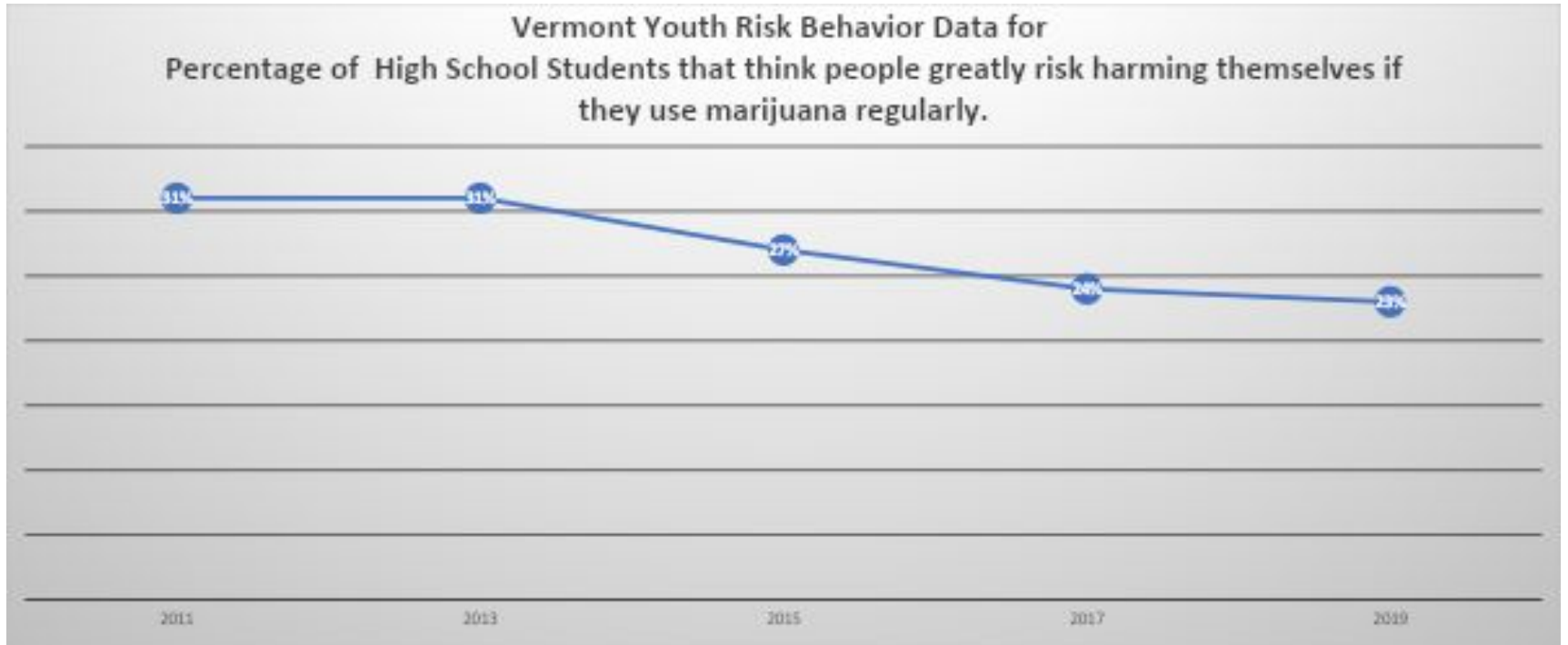
Comprehensive strategies reduce risk factors for substance misuse and addiction and counterbalances them with protective factors.

The Strategic Prevention Framework

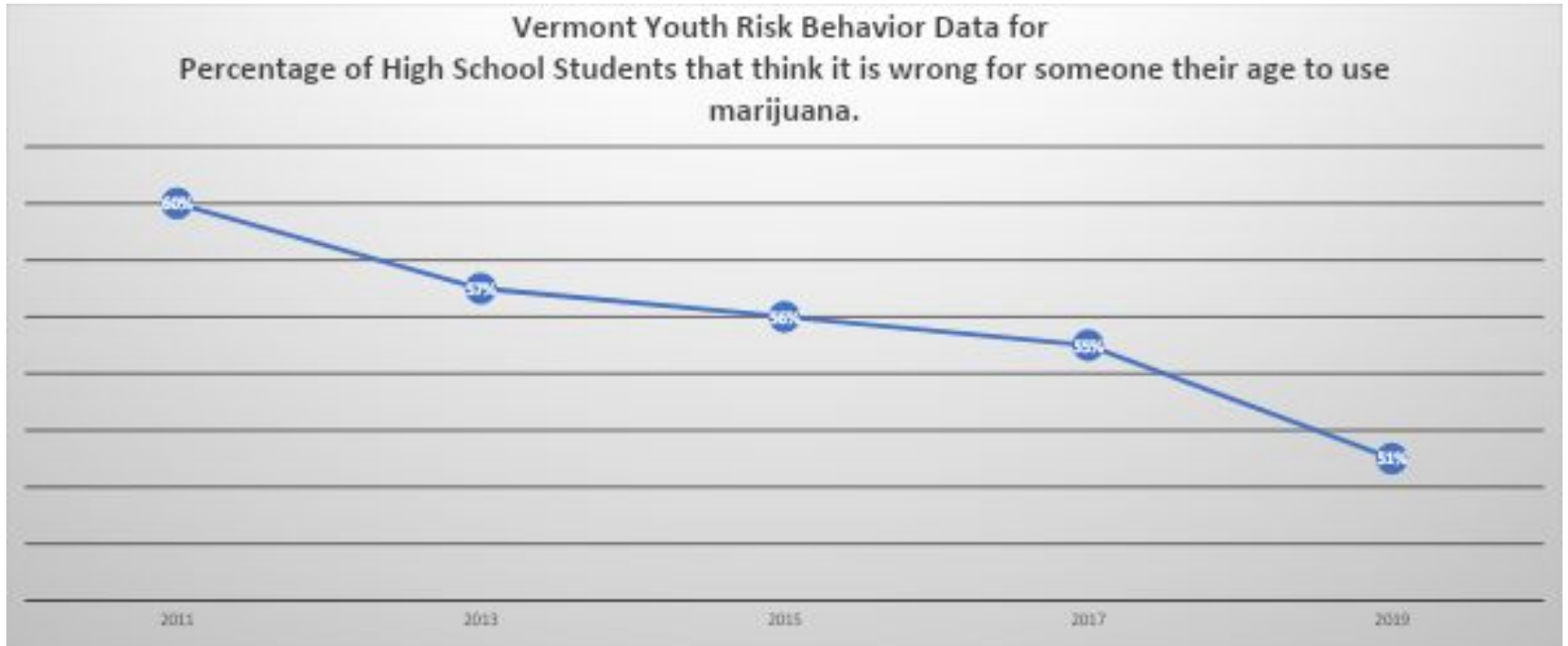
Supports Accountability, Capacity, and Effectiveness



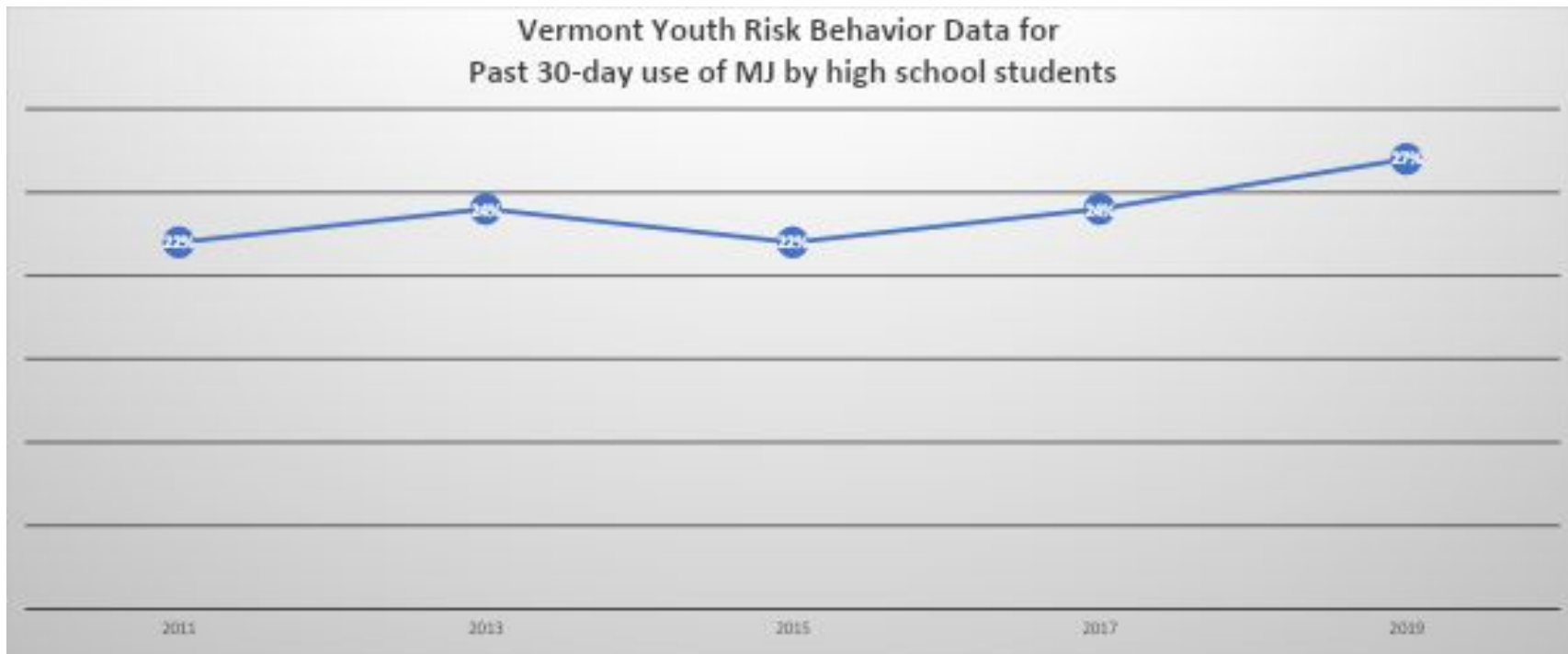
Perceived risk of harm from marijuana among high school students has been decreasing in VT. Research shows that as perception of harm decreases, use increases.



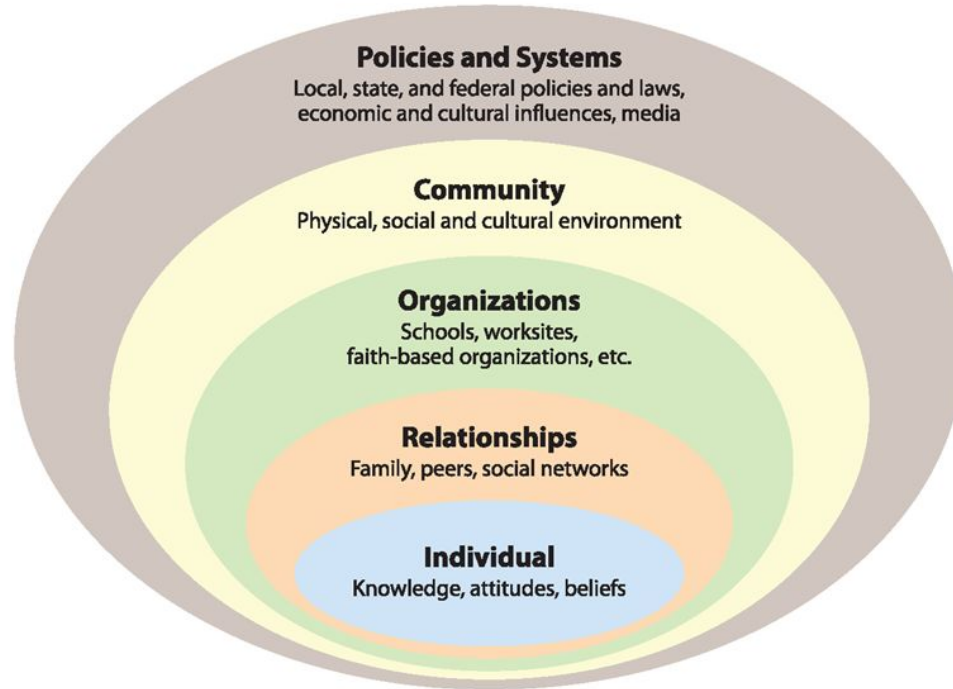
Normalization of marijuana use has led to just over half of high school students believing it is wrong for them to use marijuana.



Past 30-day use of marijuana among high school students has stayed static until the most recent data shows an uptick in use.



Vermont Prevention Model



Prevention Strategies

- Education and Skill Building
- Limiting Access
- Community Norms
- Support and Early Screening
- Physical Design
- Policies

Additional Recent Vermont Marijuana Data

- 6% of Vermont high school students report trying marijuana for the first time before age 13.
- 40% of Vermont high school students report ever using marijuana
- 62% of Vermont high school students report that it is sort of easy or very easy for them to get marijuana.

Funding

- 30% of excise tax to go to substance misuse prevention
- How do we ensure the funds go to substance misuse prevention as intended? (Dedicated Fund)
- How do we ensure the funds are allocated based on criteria as to what is evidence-based prevention? (Designate an entity or department with expertise in evidence-based prevention practices to manage)

Funding

- Concern of the Governor, Substance Misuse Prevention Committee and Prevention Works VT!
- History of non-dedicated funds for substance misuse prevention S.146 (Act 82)

Licensing

Impacts youth:

- Access
- Perception

Licensing & Health Equity

As in other areas, policies that apply to everyone in a community, including strong licensing rules, can ensure that all youth will grow up with healthy brain and body development.

“The location, density, and type of tobacco retailers in a community affect tobacco use rates and contribute to health inequities,”

--ChangeLab Solutions

Licensing Recommendations

Strategies for strengthening health equity:

When making rules about licenses, utilize a minimum half-mile distance from schools, youth centers, daycares, playgrounds, and substance use treatment/recovery centers (places that hold 12-step meeting), libraries, bus stops as a guide to:

- Total number of licenses allowed state-wide
- Concentration of licenses

Also consider 21+ population in Vermont and capacity to train retailers to prevent underage sales.

Advertising



- Advertising for adult use substances is often designed to target youth
- Bright colors, advertising low to the ground, and discounts or buy one-get one are all designed to grab youth attention and make these products more affordable to youth
- Without signage policy, we wind up with stores like this one in Colchester, where the windows and doors are so covered in advertising that you can't see in or out of the store

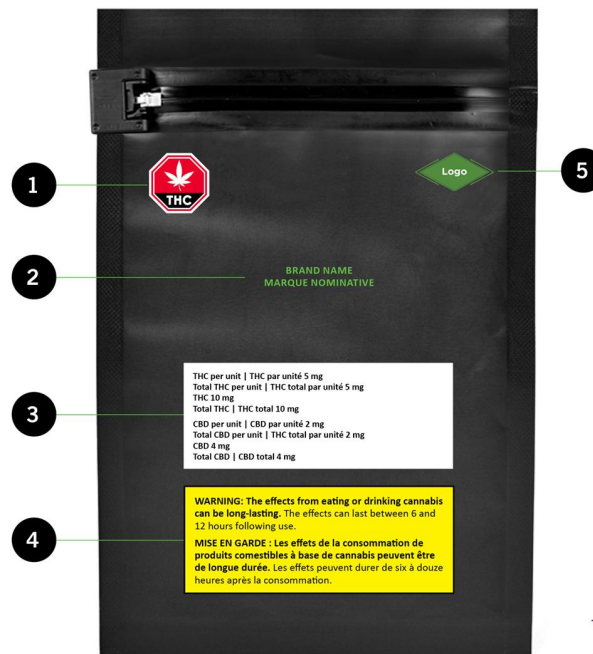
Flavors Target Youth

- Mint/menthol
- Mango
- Chocolate
- Candy (Skittles, Sour Patch Kids, Gummy Bears, etc)
- Birthday Cake
- Berries/other fruit
- Ice cream
- Cereal



Advertising/Packaging Recommendations

- Plain packaging without bright colors
- Clear THC warning label, both graphic (see #1) and in legible print (see #4)
- Small logo
- Childproof packaging, especially for edibles and e-liquids
- Individually packaged single serving sizes, or very clearly marked serving sizes
- Content neutral advertising policies such as 15% or less of exterior covered in signage
- No discounts or price promotions
- No added flavors



Potency

Potency has an important impact on mental health. Just 15% THC in the flower triples the risk of psychosis in cannabis users. That risk increases by five times with daily use.

- Pediatric cannabis exposure rates increased five times in Colorado from 2009-2015
- Hospitalizations for cannabis exposure in children doubled after legalization in Colorado
- Median age of children impacted was under 3

Potency Recommendations

California and Colorado are both exploring reduced potency in response to increased risk for children. Our recommendations include:

- reducing the allowed maximum percent THC
- 10mg THC considered a single “serving”
- 5mg THC considered as the starting “low” dose for first time use
- packaging in single servings to eliminate accidental over serving

Licensing-Education-Compliance-Enforcement

Local prevention coalitions and Prevention Works!VT have worked with the Department of Liquor and Lottery Control for over a decade, providing a unified voice and guiding force on policy, practice, and attitudes that promote substance misuse prevention, health, and wellness in Vermont.

This partnership has led to local retailer trainings with prevention strategies included, retailers recognized locally for successful compliance checks and additional resources provided when needed.

Recommendations

- Point-of-sale training for store owners and managers as well as store clerks
- Full re-licensing and re-training when a store changes ownership
- Frequent compliance checks, just like with tobacco and alcohol
- Enforcement focused on retailers, not on youth

Summary

In summary, now that cannabis retail sales are coming to Vermont towns, we hope that as regulations are determined, that the impact on our youth and what can be done to protect them will always be considered. We advocate for:

- A dedicated fund to be created to ensure that the funds go to substance misuse prevention and an agency such as the Vermont Department of Health be designated to disperse the prevention funds to ensure it is allocated to evidence-based prevention strategies
- Cannabis facilities and outlets be distanced from schools, daycares, and other places that children and youth gather and the number and density of outlets be limited
- Advertising and signage does not promote marijuana use messages to young people
- Potency limits be considered
- Preventing access of cannabis products to youth through enforcement focused on retailer training, education, and compliance through an experienced agency such as the Department of Liquor and Lottery



Thank You!

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