



**Sarasota Prevention
Research Center**

Sarasota County Health Department

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**Prevention of Tobacco and Alcohol Use
Among 6th-10th Grade Youth in Sarasota County**

**A Report from the Sarasota County
Community-Based Prevention Marketing
Demonstration Project
and the Florida Prevention Research Center**



**Florida Prevention
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**Partners in
Community-Based
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Background and Purpose of This Report

Two years ago, a group of concerned citizens representing approximately 35 organizations from Sarasota County formed a community advisory committee (CAC). The goal of the CAC is to prevent adolescent tobacco and alcohol use in Sarasota County. To target these behaviors, the CAC is using Community-Based Prevention Marketing (CBPM), a community-driven process developed by the Florida Prevention Research Center at the University of South Florida. This model uses commercial marketing concepts in a community-driven process to plan, implement, and evaluate disease prevention and health promotion programs. Since its inception, the Florida Prevention Research Center has been working with the CAC to apply the CBPM model to prevent adolescent alcohol and tobacco use. This work initially focused on identifying the factors that most strongly influence adolescent alcohol and tobacco use behaviors.

This report is intended to provide interested persons with an overview of the research process used to identify the factors that influence alcohol and tobacco use behaviors and key results. *For more detailed information regarding the project or the research results, we recommend that you contact Susan Calkins, the project's Community Marketing Coordinator, or visit the Florida Prevention Research Center's web site (see front cover for contact information).*

Overview of the Research

To plan a program that targets the factors that most influence whether youth will use tobacco or alcohol, the CAC and the Florida Prevention Research Center have conducted consumer-oriented research with 6th-12th grade youth in Sarasota County. The results of the consumer research will be used by Sarasota County community organizations and government agencies to develop prevention interventions and strategies to prevent alcohol initiation and tobacco use among Sarasota youth.

Specific objectives of the research were to identify:

- the factors that motivate Sarasota youth to use tobacco and alcohol;
- the factors that deter use of tobacco and alcohol among Sarasota youth;
- effective information channels and spokespersons for preventing tobacco and alcohol use among Sarasota youth; and
- effective strategies for preventing tobacco and alcohol use among Sarasota youth.

The study was conducted in three phases. The first phase involved qualitative research (focus groups and interviews) with Sarasota youth. The second phase involved a self-administered standardized survey in Sarasota middle schools and high schools. The third phase involved qualitative research (focus groups and interviews) with parents of Sarasota youth. Phases I and II were conducted among 6th through 10th grade youth.

In phase I, 206 youth participated in 22 focus groups and 112 individual interviews. The youth were interviewed by eleven Sarasota youth who had been trained to conduct both focus groups and individual interviews.

The second phase of the study focused on using the qualitative research results and literature to develop, pilot, and implement a standardized survey of youth in grades 6 through 10. All public middle and high schools participated in the survey. Among the 13 private schools invited to participate, 9 declined. Of the remaining four, one participated and three others expressed interest in participating in the future. A total of 113 classes, comprised of 2,407 students were surveyed.

Phase III consisted of qualitative research (focus groups and interviews) with Sarasota County parents of middle and high school youth. Forty-seven parents participated in 6 focus groups and 12 individual interviews. Recruitment of parents proved to be difficult.

This report summarizes the results of the second phase of the study: the standardized survey of 6th through 10th graders.

Rates of Tobacco and Alcohol Use by Grade Level

Fifty-one percent of survey respondents reported they had ever used cigarettes and 19% reported use of cigarettes within the past 30 days. Nine percent of survey respondents reported previous use of smokeless tobacco products, and 2% reported use of smokeless tobacco products within the past 30 days.

Table 1. Rates of Tobacco and Alcohol Use by Grade Level

Self-Reported Behavior	Grade Level				
	6th Grade	7th Grade	8th Grade	9th Grade	10th Grade
Cigarette Smoking					
Ever used	29%	39%	53%	64%	70%
30-day use	6%	13%	20%	24%	32%
Smokeless Tobacco					
Ever used	3%	6%	11%	13%	19%
30-day use	<1%	1%	3%	3%	5%
Alcohol Use					
Ever used	45%	60%	70%	79%	87%
30-day use	15%	21%	32%	47%	49%
5+ drinks per day in past 12 months	7%	11%	25%	37%	46%

A large proportion of the youth report they have already consumed alcoholic beverages. As shown in Table 1, nearly half (45%) of 6th grade students report ever drinking alcohol, with steady increases through 10th grade. Fifteen percent of 6th grade students report drinking alcohol in the past 30 days, with steady increases across grade levels. Of particular note is the increase in 30-day alcohol use between 8th (32%) and 9th (47%) grades. The proportion of students who have had five or more drinks in one day at some point in the past 12 months also increases steadily from 6th to 10th grade.

Factors that Influence Whether Youth Will Use Tobacco

Our research examined the factors associated with initiation of cigarette use (**ever smoking**), and among youth who had used cigarettes, the factors associated with cigarette use in the past 30 days (**recent smoking**). The following is a summary of the factors that best explain whether youth will engage in each of these smoking behaviors.

Perceived Benefits of Smoking:

- Believing that smoking provides emotional benefits (such as relaxation, relief from boredom, and dealing with problems) is positively associated with having *ever smoked* and *recent smoking*.
- Believing that smoking is a good way to get back at their parents is positively associated with having *ever smoked*.

Perceived Costs of Smoking:

- Believing that cigarettes taste bad is negatively associated with having *ever smoked* and *recent smoking*.
- Believing that youth who take cigarettes to school will get caught is positively associated with *recent smoking*.

Social Norms Associated with Smoking:

- Believing that a large proportion of kids smoke is positively associated with having *ever smoked*.
- Believing that one would be able to refuse cigarettes from others is negatively associated with having *ever smoked* and *recent smoking*.
- Believing that kids usually smoke with their friends is negatively associated with *recent smoking*.

Parental Influence on Smoking:

- Believing that one's mother would be more disappointed if she caught them smoking is negatively associated with having *ever smoked* and *recent smoking*.
- Allowing youth to make their own decisions about the people they hang around with is positively associated with *recent smoking*.
- Listening to parents when they gave advice about smoking is negatively associated with *recent smoking*.

Access to Cigarettes:

- Believing it is easy to obtain cigarettes is positively associated with having *ever smoked*. Gaining access to tobacco (cigarettes) appears to be relatively easy for youth in Sarasota County.

Youth Background Characteristics Associated with Smoking:

- RACE: Black youth are less likely than white youth to report *recent smoking*.
- GRADE LEVEL: Youth in ninth and tenth grade are almost two times more likely than sixth graders to have *ever smoked*. As youth progress from sixth grade through tenth grade, they are more likely to report *recent smoking*.
- GRADES IN SCHOOL: The lower the grades youth usually earn in school, the greater the likelihood that they have *ever smoked*.
- FAMILY SITUATION: Youth whose living arrangements were divided between mothers' and fathers' homes and those who live with a parent and step parent are nearly three times more likely as youth who live with both parents to have *ever smoked*.
- DEPRESSION: The higher youth's self-reported depression level, the more likely youth are to have *ever smoked*.
- EMPLOYMENT: The number of hours worked at a paying job during the school year is positively associated with having *ever smoked*.
- SPORTS PARTICIPATION: Involvement in sports is positively associated with having *ever smoked*.

Trusted Tobacco Spokespersons:

Trustworthy spokespersons for providing information about risks of smoking varied widely among grade levels. Sixth graders noted a DARE officer/Resource officer and school counselor, number one and two, respectively. Seventh graders ranked a celebrity and older kids, number one and two, respectively, whereas, 9th and 10th graders said that “other kids my age who smoke” would be their first choice. Older brothers and sisters and other relatives (not parents or older siblings) were information sources ranked in the top ten by students in all grades.

Factors that Influence Whether Youth will Use Alcohol

Our research examined the factors associated with initiation of alcohol use (**ever used alcohol**), and then, among youth who had drunk alcohol, the factors associated with alcohol use in the past 30 days (**recent drinking**), and drinking five or more drinks on one occasion in the past year (**binge drinking**). The following text summarizes the factors that best explain whether youth will engage in each of these drinking behaviors.

Perceived Benefits of Alcohol Use:

- Believing that kids who drink alcohol look more mature than kids who do not drink alcohol is negatively associated with having *ever used alcohol*.
- Believing that drinking is fun is positively associated with *recent drinking* and *binge drinking*.
- Believing that alcohol has emotional benefits (such as relaxation, relief from boredom, and dealing with problems) is positively associated with *recent drinking*.

Perceived Costs of Alcohol Use:

- Believing that drinking can cause serious health problems is positively associated with having *ever used alcohol*.
- Believing that drinking makes kids more likely to get in an accident is negatively associated with having *ever used alcohol*.
- Believing that it is easy to get addicted to alcohol is negatively associated with having *ever used alcohol*.
- Believing that alcohol tastes bad is negatively associated with having *ever used alcohol*, *recent drinking*, and *binge drinking*.

- Believing that drinking makes kids their age look dumb is negatively associated with *recent drinking* and *binge drinking*.

Social Norms Associated with Alcohol Use:

- Believing that a large proportion of youth drink alcohol is positively associated with having *ever used alcohol* and *binge drinking*.
- Believing that one would be able to refuse alcohol from others is negatively associated with having *ever used alcohol*.
- Believing that it is OK for kids to drink on special occasions is positively associated with having *ever used alcohol*.
- Believing that it is OK for kids to drink is positively associated with *binge drinking*.
- Believing that drinking improves one's social image is negatively associated with *binge drinking*.

Parental Influence Associated with Alcohol Use:

- Believing one's parents think it is OK to drink alcohol is positively associated with having *ever used alcohol*.
- Having a positive view of one's relationships with his/her mother is positively associated with having *ever used alcohol* and *recent drinking*.
- Spending more than an hour after school without an adult around is positively associated with having *ever used alcohol* and *recent drinking*.
- Having parents who allow one to make his/her own decisions about weekend curfews is positively associated with having *ever used alcohol*.
- Listening to parents' advice about drinking alcohol is negatively associated with *recent drinking*.

Access to Alcohol:

- Believing it is easy to obtain alcohol is positively associated with having *ever used alcohol*.

Youth Background Characteristics Associated with Alcohol:

- **GRADE LEVEL:** Youth who were in 9th and 10th grade are more than twice as likely as youth in 6th grade to report *binge drinking*.
- **RACE:** Blacks are nearly three times as likely as whites to have *ever used alcohol*. Other nonwhites are over two times as likely as whites to have *ever used alcohol*.
- **FAMILY STRUCTURE:** Compared to youth who lived with both parents: (1) youth whose living arrangements are divided between mothers' and fathers' homes are nearly three times as likely to have *ever used alcohol* and (2) youth who lived with one parent, or with one parent and a step-parent, are nearly twice as likely to have *binge drank* in the past year.
- **USUAL GRADES IN SCHOOL:** Earning low grades in school is positively associated with having *ever used alcohol*.
- **EMPLOYMENT:** The number of hours worked at a paying job during the school year is positively associated with having *ever used alcohol*.
- **PARTICIPATION IN SCHOOL ACTIVITIES:** Participation in school activities is negatively associated with *binge drinking*.

Trusted Alcohol Spokespersons:

Trustworthy spokespersons for providing information about risks of drinking alcohol varied widely among grade levels. Sixth and seventh graders noted a DARE officer/resource officer, number one and two, respectively, whereas 9th and 10th graders said that "other kids my age who drink" would be their first choice. Parents, other relatives, friends, and "other kids my age" were information sources ranked in the top ten by students in all grades.

Future Directions

The Community Advisory Committee for this project and other community representatives have participated in a series of working meetings to develop and plan intervention strategies for Sarasota youth based on these results. If you wish to learn more about the programs being planned, please contact Susan Calkins, the Community Marketing Coordinator (see cover page for contact information).