

Garden Grove Drug Free Communities Task Force

Baseline Findings on Youth Alcohol and Marijuana Use

Evalcorp Research & Consulting was contracted by Community Service Programs, Inc. (CSP) Project Positive Action Toward Health (PATH) to provide evaluation services and consultation on the Faith and Institutions Together for Health (FAITH) Coalition project, funded by the Drug Free Communities (DFC) Support Program. This DataBrief summarizes key findings from an assessment of the prevalence and problems associated with alcohol and marijuana use by youth in Garden Grove, California that was conducted throughout 2009, the first year of project implementation.



Project Overview

In October 2008, CSP Project PATH received a five-year DFC grant on behalf of the FAITH Coalition to establish and strengthen collaboration among communities, government and non-profit organizations in the City of Garden Grove. The aim was to expand prevention efforts to reduce substance abuse among youth, and over time among adults, by addressing factors in the community that increase risk, while promoting those that minimize the risk.

Consisting of substance abuse professionals and faith leaders, members of the FAITH Coalition and the Garden Grove FOCUS Collaborative joined forces to create the Garden Grove DFC Task Force. They partnered with local law enforcement, school district, and faith- and community-based organizations to reduce youth access to and use of alcohol and marijuana. To accomplish this goal, the project objectives are to:

1. Build capacity for alcohol and marijuana prevention among youth and adults;
2. Implement an awareness campaign on the dangers of youth alcohol and marijuana use;
3. Decrease access to and use of alcohol and marijuana-related drug paraphernalia; and,

4. Identify problem environments which contribute to youth access and use, and address them through policy development and implementation.

A comprehensive community assessment was conducted during the first year of the project to inform and build capacity for prevention efforts. Quantitative and qualitative data collection methods were used to measure alcohol and other drug (AOD) use and problems among youth in Garden Grove. Baseline data were collected from the Garden Grove Unified School District (GGUSD) California Healthy Kids Survey (CHKS) and from the Alcohol/Drug Sensitive Information Planning System (ASIPS) which provides analysis of Garden Grove Police Department calls for service.

In addition, key informant interviews with local stakeholders and focus groups with youth and adults were conducted to assess community perceptions of substance abuse among youth and local conditions that may contribute to use. Key findings from this community assessment are outlined on the following pages.

“The early onset of drug use, as early as in 5th and 6th grade, and the widespread use of alcohol cuts across all economic classes and ethnicities.”

- Key Informant Interviewee



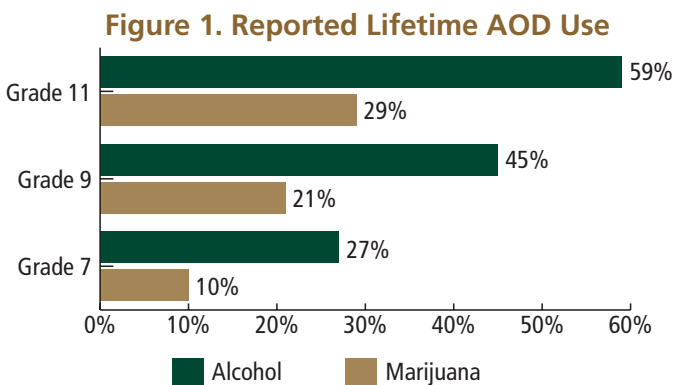
Overview of Baseline Data

Several data indicators were used to provide a baseline of youth alcohol and marijuana use and associated-problems in Garden Grove. Key findings from data indicators are presented below.

Youth Alcohol and Marijuana Use

CHKS assesses student risk behaviors and resilience in public schools every two years. Key findings from CHKS administered in June 2008 to GGUSD 7th, 9th, and 11th graders included:

- **Alcohol was the most frequently used substance, with use increasing with age.** As Figure 1 shows, 59% of 11th, 45% of 9th, and 27% of 7th graders reported using alcohol at least once in their life; whereas, 29% of 11th, 21% of 9th, and 10% of 7th graders reported using marijuana at least once.



- **Many students said it was easy to obtain alcohol and marijuana.** In fact, 73% of 11th, 57% of 9th, and 39% of 7th graders reported it was easy to access alcohol; 64% of 11th, 47% of 9th, and 26% of 7th graders indicated that marijuana was easily obtained.
- **Although the majority think frequent alcohol and marijuana use is harmful, fewer students perceived harm in 2008 than in 2006.** For example, 76% of 7th graders in 2008 said drinking 1-2 times a week was harmful, compared to 91% of 7th graders in 2006. For marijuana use, 74% of 7th graders in 2008 perceived harm versus 94% of 7th graders in 2006.
- **Several students reported binge drinking,** with 18% of 11th, 14% of 9th, and 7% of 7th graders saying that they drank 5 or more drinks in a row in the past 30 days.

AOD-Related Police Incidents

An analysis of ASIPS and GIS Community Tour data was conducted by CLEW Associates to identify AOD involvement in all police incidents in Garden Grove in 2008 and trends in police data from 2005-2008.

- **Police responded to 6,066 AOD-related calls for service in 2008, with 75% of these calls pertaining to alcohol and 25% to drugs.** This constitutes one-eighth of all calls for service. About one-third of the arrests resulting from all calls are AOD-related.
- **There was a steady increase in Loud Party calls from 2005 to 2008 of about 100 additional calls each year,** with 1,701 calls in 2005 and 2,093 calls in 2008.
- **Loud Parties make up one-third of all AOD-related calls and one-seventh of all police calls.** Over 90% of the Loud Party calls involved alcohol, some including violations for underage drinking and furnishing to minors.
- **Half of all Loud Party calls came from only 8% of the Loud Party addresses.** However, a map analysis showed a wide and even distribution of Loud Party calls across Garden Grove with elevated activity at individual addresses.
- **About 60% of arrests and 50% of all AOD-related calls at retail alcohol outlets came from only 10% of the retail establishments.** A map analysis showed clusters of AOD-related calls for service at shopping areas along three commercial strips; whereas, drug-related events were more dispersed.
- **Youth under the age of 21 are noticeably involved in Drug Offenses, Disturbances/Fights, and Missing Persons from all calls for service and Loud Party calls.** To a lesser extent, youth were also involved in Loud Party calls for Assaults, Alcohol Law Violations, and Vandalism/Graffiti.



Key Qualitative Findings

In-depth key informant interviews and focus groups were conducted with a select group of community leaders, parents, and youth referred to participate due to their knowledge and perspectives. Though the samples may not be representative, findings summarized below provide insight into community concerns and perceptions.

Key Informant Interviews

Structured interviews were conducted with 10 community leaders with extensive community knowledge and youth contact. Interviewees worked in local law enforcement, education, business, and faith- and community-based organizations.

- **All interviewees were concerned about alcohol and drug use.** They shared concerns about youth using alcohol and drugs, access to and availability of AOD, low perception of harm from use, rising use of prescription drugs, and early onset of use across all economic levels and ethnicities.
- **Underage drinking takes place in minors' own homes, teen parties, friends' homes, and in parks.** In addition, minors access alcohol from older siblings, friends, or strangers who buy it for them, steal it, and/or buy it from liquor stores, *"especially where the owners have not been trained in responsible beverage service."*
- **Nearly all interviewees reported that home parties were a major alcohol access point for youth.** Law enforcement officials said that alcohol, ecstasy, and nitrous oxide are commonly used in home settings, with police breaking up an average of 10 AOD-involved parties per week.
- **Marijuana is used by youth in homes, home parties, schools, parks, and cars.** Youth get marijuana from other teens who sell it, older youth with medical marijuana cards, and drug dealers who also sell ecstasy and methamphetamine.

Youth Focus Groups

Two focus groups were facilitated in Spanish with a total of 26 Hispanic youth, 73% of whom were female. Participant ages ranged from 12-18, with 81% in high school, 15% in middle school, and 4% in college.

- **Almost all youth believed that underage drinking occurred frequently and that marijuana use was common.** Youth thought that alcohol use increased and marijuana use decreased after the age of 18.
- **Most said it was easy to obtain alcohol, particularly for girls.** Youth get alcohol from friends who are legal drinking age, older relatives, strangers, liquor stores, and at parties.
- **Underage drinking typically occurs at parties, homes, schools, clubs, parking lots, parks, and neighborhood areas,** with binge drinking often occurring at home parties. Many high school students said that 2-10 beers plus 2-6 shots of hard liquor are usually consumed at a typical party or drinking session, with one participant saying youth *"drink until they pass out."*
- **Most reported it was easy to get marijuana, as youth can get it from friends, family members, parents' friends, "connections," and people at school.** Marijuana use typically occurs at homes, home parties, schools (in bathrooms, handball courts, parking lots, and by PE lockers), parks, cars, alleys, and behind buildings.

"Teens steal alcohol, buy it from liquor stores, or get it at home." - Key Informant Interviewee

Adult Focus Group

One focus group was conducted in Spanish with 11 Hispanic adults, 9 of whom were female, ranging in age from 22 to 59 years old. All participants had children living in their homes.

- **Adult participants agreed that underage drinking and marijuana use was common, with use increasing with age.** Some believed that drinking was beginning earlier, as young as 10 years old.
- **Many reported that youth access alcohol from friends who are over 21 or strangers willing to buy it in exchange for money.** Underage drinking occurs in homes, home parties, night clubs, cars, parks, hotel rooms, and warehouse parties.
- **Adults thought that youth get marijuana from friends and dealers who approach them in schools and neighborhoods.** Marijuana use by youth occurs at schools, home parties, neighborhoods, and “all over.”

Summary of Community Assessment Findings

When synthesizing baseline quantitative and qualitative data, the following key findings and themes emerge:

- Alcohol and marijuana use among youth in Garden Grove is a city-wide concern.
- Social access to alcohol by youth occurs most frequently at homes, home parties, schools, and parks.
- Commercial access to alcohol by youth tends to occur at liquor stores and on-sale alcohol establishments.
- Youth obtain and use marijuana at homes, home parties, schools, and parks.
- Home parties are a primary access point for underage and binge drinking, as well as other drug use by youth.

Recommendations and Next Steps

Based on baseline community assessment findings, the following steps are recommended for the Garden Grove DFC Task Force as they proceed with efforts to reduce youth access to and use of alcohol and marijuana in Garden Grove.

Develop, implement, and/or amend policies to prevent underage drinking

- Amend Garden Grove’s existing Loud Party Ordinance to include Social Host Liability
- Implement a deemed approved ordinance and an ordinance calling for mandatory Responsible Beverage Service (RBS) training for all alcohol establishments

Train alcohol retailers on responsible beverage sales and service

- Train on-sale and off-sale alcohol establishments on strategies to reduce youth access, laws and consequences for selling/serving to minors, and strategies for handling alcohol-related problems

Implement public awareness campaigns

- Educate parents, youth, and community members on hazards of youth alcohol and marijuana use, laws and legal consequences related to furnishing alcohol to minors, and youth asset building

Strengthen and enforce policies to prevent marijuana and other drug use

- Tighten Conditional Use Permit conditions on medical marijuana dispensaries
- Enforce policies on sales of tobacco and illegal drug-paraphernalia at smoke shops
- Enforce zero tolerance policies and increase police presence on school grounds
- Modify the physical environment and/or increase police presence at parks