



# Changing **Social Norms**

*Substance Use & Mental Health*



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# Welcome Message

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**Thank you for taking the time to explore how we can change social norms at your school district. Students need people like you to advocate for them!**



Reality Check, located in Jaffrey, NH, aims to reduce youth substance use across the Monadnock Region. We know many things contribute to substance including mental health, parental use, and bullying. By changing social norms around all of these topics, we will start to see the difference in students' lives long-term.

As you read on, envision the impact of changing social norms at your school. What will look different? Which students come to mind that would benefit? How will your role change?

# Local Data

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## High School

- 1 out of 5 students report being bullied in the last year
- 1 out of 5 report using a vaping product in the last 30 days
- 1 out of 10 report not feeling safe at school

## Middle School

- 1 out of 3 students report being bullied in the last year
- 1 out of 5 have engaged in self-harm
- 1 out of 3 live with someone with a substance use issue



Source: *Youth Risk Behavior Survey, 2021 and Teen Assessment Project, 2023*

# Campaign Components



## Curricula

Offer evidence-based substance use prevention: Life Skills Training, AllStars, Prime for Life, and Not on Tobacco (NOT)



## Activities

Celebrate yearly observances like Red Ribbon Week and National Drug & Alcohol Facts Week. This may include alternative events like hikes, gardening, or art projects.



## Policies

Make the move from punitive policies focused on punishment to supportive policies for drug or alcohol-related offenses.



# Suggested Activities

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## Curricula

Evidence-based curricula is a critical in changing social norms. Programs can be for a universal audience (the entire student body) or for targeting high-risk students.

### **PRIMARY CURRICULA INCLUDE:**

- Botvin Life Skills Training
- AllStars|
- Prime for Life
- Not on Tobacco (NOT).

*\* Reality Check can assist getting facilitators trained.*

## Electronic/Print Materials

Make resources visible to students and parents. Dedicate space for flyers that encourage conversations around hard topics.

Reality Check can provide electronic materials for school newsletters and hard copy resources to display in school.

Want your school's logo or something else added?  
Just ask!



# Suggested Activities

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## Policies

Modifying policies to accurately reflect changing norms is “walking the walk.” Encourage asking for help for students who may be using substances, and update policies to reflect this related to repercussions.

Reality Check can work with you to change policies and put action items for students in writing. For example:

**Instead of:** External suspension for vaping offenses

**Switch to:** an educational module about vaping that provides students education and a certificate upon completion

# Suggested Activities

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## Activities

Hosting activities throughout the school year helps highlight impacts made by other campaigns and social norms activities. These can be scheduled during the school day or outside of school hours.

Examples of past events include:

- Poster Contest
- Trivia at Lunch
- Field Day
- Movie Night
- Role Play for Groups



# Data Collection

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## Youth Risk Behavior Survey

The Youth Risk Behavior Survey (YRBS) measures health-related behaviors such as drug use, safety, and violence in students in grades 9-12.



## Teen Assessment Project

The Teen Assessment Project (TAP) Survey measures health behaviors in middle-school students.



## Reality Check Survey

Reality Check has a brief Substance Use Survey covering use in four substances and is only 20 questions. It can be administered to both middle and high school students.



# School Year Planning

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## **Trained Professionals**

Ensure there are facilitators to implement the curriculum chosen before school starts. Reality Check can assist in getting staff trained. If there are no school staff members trained in your chosen curriculum, we can help find one for you.

## **Materials**

Have curricula materials, campaigns, promotion, ready to go to ensure implementation is smooth throughout the school year. Reality Check can provide physical materials for campaigns at no cost, and assist in covering some costs for curricula materials.

## **Timing**

Spread activities out across the school year to ensure messages and lessons stay consistent. Planning specific dates in advance allows for promotion efforts and participation to be the most successful.



# School Year Template

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## Summer

- School staff trained as facilitators of curricula
- Schedule dates of school-year activities
- Evaluate policies for proposed modification
- Gather materials for yearly events

## Fall

- Red Ribbon Week Celebration
- Curricula run after school or during free blocks
- Mock Teen Bedroom hosted during open house
- Education on substances and mental health offered in health class

## Spring

- National Drug & Alcohol Facts Week
- Curricula run after school or during free blocks
- Movie screenings
- Education on substances and mental health offered in health class



# Thank You!


for being an agent of change in  
your community.



## Contact Information:

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