



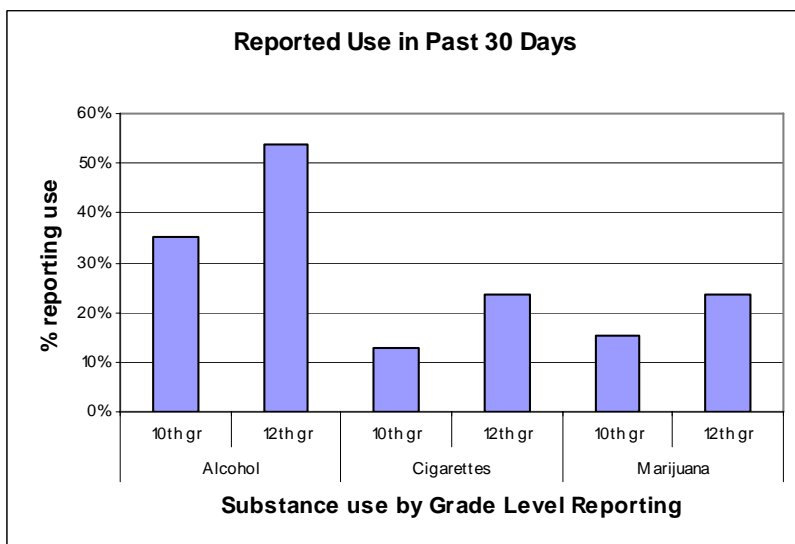
Substance Abuse among Children and Youth in Johnson County

Nationally, levels of illicit drug use among 8th, 10th, and 12th grade students have generally remained stable or been declining for several years. Overall, local data reflects similar trends, although Johnson County children and youth differ from their counterparts in Kansas in some ways. For example, while local students initiate their abuse of many substances later than the state average, by 10th or 12th grade they have met or surpassed the state average in their likelihood of reported lifetime use and their past 30 day use.

In the 2008-2009 school year, 72% of eligible students participated in the Communities that Care survey, which asks 6th, 8th, 10th and 12th graders about behaviors and attitudes that are correlated with their risk for substance abuse. Since the 2006-2007 school year, all six Johnson County public school districts have conducted the survey with their students.

Drugs of Choice among Children and Youth in Johnson County

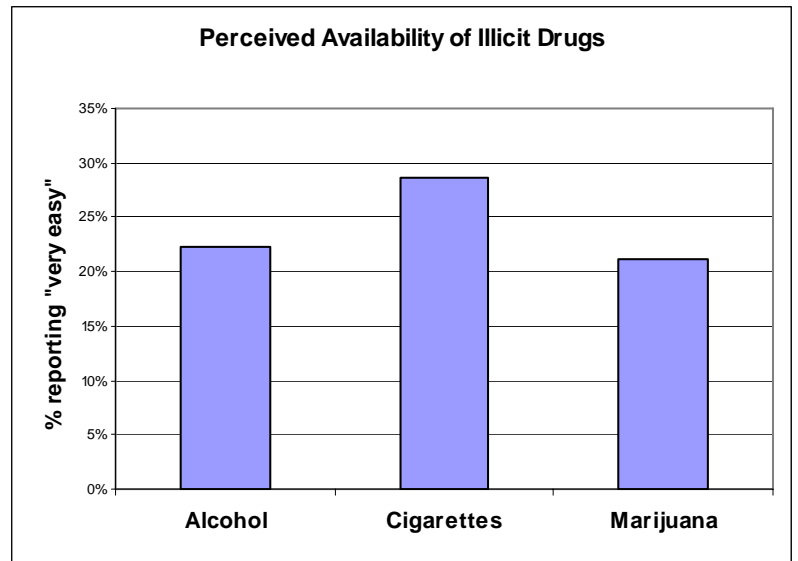
- Alcohol is still the most likely substance to be abused by children and youth, with 42% of 6th, 8th, 10th and 12th graders reporting that they had used alcohol at least once in their lifetime; more than one in four reported having used in the past 30 days.
- Almost one in five 12th graders and one in seven 10th graders reported having been drunk or high at school at least once in the past year.
- Many local students are engaged in binge drinking. Overall, 14% of 6th, 8th, 10th and 12th graders reported having consumed five or more drinks in a row within the past two weeks – while 35% of 12th graders reported having done so.
- High school age students in Johnson County continue to report both greater lifetime usage and use within the past 30 days of marijuana than the state average, with 24% of 12th graders (KS average = 17%) and 15% of 10th graders (KS average = 12%) reporting that they had used marijuana in the past 30 days. While 19% of 12th graders think it is “not wrong at all” for someone their age to use marijuana, 88% indicated that they believe smoking marijuana on a regular basis is harmful.



- While the use of many illicit drugs has stabilized among Johnson County students, the abuse of prescription drugs is problematic because of its connection to related illegal opioid abuse. Among older teens, 15% of 10th graders and 23% of 12th graders reported using prescription drugs that were not prescribed to them. One in thirteen 10th graders and one in ten 12th graders had used these substances in the past 30 days. Prevention specialists and law enforcement are concerned about these numbers because of the likelihood of addiction and possibility of turning to illegal drugs, such as heroin, as an alternative when prescription drugs become too expensive or difficult to obtain.

Factors Contributing to Risk: Perceptions of availability and repercussions for substance abuse

- Johnson County students reported that they thought it was very easy to get access to many illicit substances, including alcohol, cigarettes and marijuana.
- When Johnson County students were asked if they would get caught by police if they drank alcohol or smoked cigarettes, more than three of five answered “No.” More than half of students (53%) reported that they would also not be caught by police if they used marijuana.
- Students’ confidence that they would not be caught by police or parents escalated with age.



- A recent study conducted by the American Medical Association and the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation found that one in four teens (age 13-18) reported that their own parents supplied them with alcohol. A separate survey of parents with teens (age 12-20) confirmed related attitudes among parents – 25% of parents said they had allowed their teens to drink in the past six months with their supervision.

Preventing Substance Abuse among Children and Youth

There are a variety of strategies and programs to prevent substance abuse among children and youth, but most include components of information, education, opportunities for alternative behaviors and primary and early intervention activities focused on reducing risk factors for substance abuse or enhancing protective factors. The Office of National Drug Control Policy (www.whitehousedrugpolicy.gov) suggests that several prevention activities or strategies in combination may be an effective way to prevent substance abuse. Categories of such prevention strategies include:

- Building critical life and social skills through structured learning processes, including decision making, peer resistance, coping with stress, problem solving, interpersonal communication, and judgment abilities,
- Providing knowledge and increasing awareness of the nature and extent of drug use, abuse, addiction, and the effects on individuals, families and communities, and
- Providing alternative constructive and healthy activities for children and youth that exclude drug use,
- Changing written and unwritten community standards that tolerate, accept, or support the abuse of drugs in the general population,
- Enhancing the ability of the community to more effectively provide prevention and treatment services for substance abuse,
- Assuring the availability of early intervention activities to change the behavior choices made by new substance abusers,
- Implementing activities that identify those who are engaged in substance abuse in order to intervene through education and possibly refer to other services.

Local data for this fact sheet are based on the 2009 Johnson County Communities That Care Student Survey www.ctcdata.org. Additional data and analysis were provided by the Regional Prevention Center of Johnson, Leavenworth and Miami Counties.

CONTACT INFORMATION

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