

**NEWS from the North Dakota Department of Human Services
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North Dakota sees positive trends in youth substance use

BISMARCK, N.D. - North Dakota's investment in youth substance use prevention is paying off. The North Dakota Department of Human Services' Behavioral Health Division highlighted the positive trends after reviewing the 2017 Youth Risk Behavior Survey results that were released earlier this week.

The percentage of North Dakota high school students who report having their first drink before age 13 has decreased from 32.3 percent in 1995 to 14.5 percent in 2017. Current alcohol use among this age group has fallen from 60.7 percent to 29.1 percent from 1995 to 2017, and current marijuana use also shows a decrease from 22 percent in 2001 to 15.5 percent in 2017.

"Prevention works. It takes time, persistence and collaboration, but prevention efforts are producing results, and it is important these efforts continue," said Laura Anderson, prevention administrator for the North Dakota Department of Human Services' Behavioral Health Division.

She said effective prevention is based on science, with input from health, education, justice and social service systems, and it makes economic sense.

The Surgeon General's Report on Alcohol, Drugs, and Health released in 2016 estimated the savings at \$64 for every \$1 invested in prevention according to Anderson.

The Department of Human Services is currently funding 24 communities, including four tribal communities, to implement data-driven, evidence-based prevention strategies targeting either underage drinking, adult binge drinking, or opioid abuse and overdose.

Over the past six years, the division has received federal discretionary funds, she said, which were awarded to communities to help them develop local prevention infrastructure and decrease underage drinking, adult binge drinking and related consequences.

"North Dakota communities recognize that investing in substance abuse prevention is important. It is one of the best investments we can make in our state's future – creating safe and healthy individuals, families, businesses and communities," said Anderson.

She said individuals can support prevention and positive changes by taking these actions:

- Identify the issues unique to your community.
- Familiarize yourself with strategies proven to work. Visit www.prevention.nd.gov for details.
- Start at home. Be a leader and positive role model. Visit www.parentslead.org for useful information, tools and resources.
- Get involved with a local coalition or community group. Partner with law enforcement, schools, faith groups, health departments and others working toward prevention of alcohol-related consequences.

For free resources and information about substance abuse prevention, visit the department's North Dakota Prevention Resource and Media Center at www.prevention.nd.gov.

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