
**Report to
The Vermont Legislature**

**Substance Misuse Prevention Oversight and Advisory Council Annual Report
2022 Report to the Legislature**

In Accordance with Act 82 (2019), Section 3

Submitted to: House Committees on Appropriations and Human Services
Senate Committees on Appropriations and Health and Welfare

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Report Date: January 1, 2022



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Introduction

The Substance Misuse Prevention Oversight and Advisory Council (SMPC) was created through Act 82 (2019). The SMPC is charged with reviewing the current prevention policies and initiatives in Vermont and providing advice to the Governor and General Assembly on the prevention system throughout the state, ensuring that data and evidence-based strategies are at the forefront of all policy determinations.

Substance Misuse Prevention Oversight and Advisory Council Progress

All positions for the Substance Misuse Prevention Oversight and Advisory Council's Executive Committee have been filled and the SMPC has completed its first two years of work. The Executive Committee is currently engaged in identifying seats on the SMPC for those individuals who choose not to continue with another two-year term (January 2022-December 2023).

The SMPC held seven fully-attended meetings during the 2021 calendar year. Meetings were held virtually with an in-person option becoming available in July. Information on the membership of the Substance Misuse Prevention Oversight and Advisory Council can be found [here](#).

Measurable Goals for Prevention Programming

Using a group decision-making process, the Substance Misuse Prevention Oversight and Advisory Council identified the following three goals as necessary for effective substance misuse prevention statewide:

1. Increase protective factors and build resilience and feelings of connectedness in Vermont communities, across all ages, cultures, and socioeconomic conditions.
2. Decrease risk factors for substance misuse in Vermont for individuals of all ages, cultures, and socioeconomic conditions.
3. Increase efficiency and collaboration on prevention efforts across all state, public, and private entities, through a consolidated and holistic approach to prevention that is sustainable, scalable, and equitable.

Activities to Support Goals

The SMPC will prioritize the following activities to support the goals identified above:

- Review best practices, initiatives, and evaluations for youth and older adults, and existing state laws, rules, policies, and programs.
- Recommend best practices to reduce demand for substances and address gaps in services or populations, and strategies to integrate prevention initiatives across the state and throughout partnerships.
- Propose changes to state laws, rules, policies, and programs to address redundancy and eliminate barriers to coordinating prevention with State government.

- Advise the Health Department on their substance use prevention communications activities and host two public comment sessions.
- Advise the Governor, General Assembly, and Community Programs on best practices for prevention.

The current SMPC logic model can be found in Appendix I of this report.

To complete the work of the SMPC, four subcommittees were created:

- Communications
- Equity
- Policy
- Prevention

Each subcommittee identified priority topics that will support a cohesive prevention system in Vermont.

Performance Measures

The SMPC will track the following population outcome measures to inform the effectiveness of prevention programming statewide:

1. Percent of high school and middle school students who believe they matter to their community.
2. Percent of high school and middle school students who perceive harm in using substances (marijuana, alcohol, and tobacco).
3. Percent of Vermonters aged 12 years old and older who used alcohol, marijuana, and/or tobacco in the last 30 days.
4. Percent of Vermonters aged 18-25 who use alcohol, marijuana, tobacco, stimulants (prescription and illicit) and opioids (prescription and illicit).
5. Number of prevention initiatives and services available and sustainably funded across Vermont's communities and schools.

These performance indicators are currently collected and used to inform the [Agency of Human Services'](#) and [Department of Health's](#) strategic planning processes.

SMPC Recommendations

The SMPC has developed the following recommendations for consideration related to substances at risk of misuse. These recommendations are addressed to Vermont substance misuse programs, state agencies, and the Vermont Legislature.

Programmatic Policies

Areas of immediate opportunity for advancing equity in substance misuse prevention were explored to formulate actionable policy recommendations. The themes below align with SAMHSA's Office of Behavioral Health Equity's policies and [key strategies](#), and are cornerstones for achieving the intent of Act 82 (2019) that, *"prevention efforts focus on social and environmental factors to ensure that all Vermonters have opportunities to be active, engaged, connected and heard throughout their lifetime."*

Accordingly, the SMPC recommends that the following programmatic policies be implemented:

Data-driven Remediation of Inequities

- a. The Office of Racial Equity should incorporate substance misuse prevention data into their dashboarding and that substance misuse prevention data are considered as part of the Office’s policy and funding decision making.

Responsible Messaging

- b. The Agency of Human Services should develop inclusive, trauma responsive, and resilience-based messaging on substance misuse prevention to effectively reach communities with culturally responsive and linguistically appropriate resources.

Equitable Access

- c. Substance misuse prevention programs should leverage technology and evidence-based tools to pilot and evaluate outreach strategies to more effectively engage under-served and under-represented communities, including Black, Indigenous, People of Color (BIPOC), New Americans, people with disabilities, older Vermonters, and the LGBTQ+ communities.

Legislative Policies:

The SMPC recommends that the following proposals be considered by the Vermont Legislature:

Representation and Leadership

- a. Amend 18 V.S.A. §4803 to require that Substance Misuse Prevention Council membership include broad representation from communities in Vermont, including but not limited to: Black, Indigenous, People of Color (BIPOC), New Americans, people with disabilities, older Vermonters, and the LGBTQ+ communities.

THC Limits

- b. Reconsider a safe level of THC for adult-use cannabis to align with the most recent science related to the impact of high levels of THC on mental health.
- c. Develop a process by which the legislature reconsiders the allowable THC limits for adult use cannabis at regular intervals to ensure alignment with evolving scientific research.

Tobacco and Nicotine Flavor Ban

- d. Enact a comprehensive ban of the sale of all flavored tobacco and nicotine products in Vermont, including menthol flavored products.

Cannabis Excise Tax

- e. Appropriate to the Department of Health a portion of the 30% excise tax on retail sales of cannabis and cannabis products for substance misuse prevention efforts.

Explanation of State-Funded Prevention Program Budgets

The following substance misuse prevention programs within the Department of Health receive funding through general fund or special funding:

- School-based Substance Abuse Services;
- Statewide Drug Disposal Program;
- Substance Misuse Prevention Oversight and Advisory Council;
- Tobacco Control Program Global Commitment Funding State-Share; and
- Tobacco Master Settlement Agreement Funding

The amounts spent from these programs in State Fiscal Year 2021 (July 1, 2020-June 30, 2021), are as follows:

Program	General Fund FY21 Spend	Special Fund FY21 Spend	Total FY21 Spend General and Special Funds
School Based Substance Abuse Services	\$219,512	\$16,776	\$236,288
Statewide Drug Disposal Program	0	\$633,825	\$633,825
Substance Misuse Prevention Oversight and Advisory Committee	0	\$185,872	\$185,872
Tobacco Control Program Global Commitment	\$806,952	0	\$806,952
Tobacco Master Settlement Agreement	0	\$936,091	\$936,091

Spending overview:

- School based substance misuse prevention programming: \$236,288
 - Funding is provided to 15 (of 54) Vermont school supervisory unions/districts of to fund screening for substance use among students, referral to an assessment and if indicated a referral to services, while supporting the Whole School, Whole Community, Whole Child model. Additionally, schools may choose to implement any of the following evidence-based activities: evidence-based classroom health curriculum, advising and training of peer leadership groups, delivery of parent information and implementation of educational programs, teacher and support staff training and educational support groups for students.
- Statewide Drug Disposal Program: \$633,825
 - In fidelity with Act 173 (2016), sections 14 and 17, this funding is used to support the statewide prescription drug disposal system. Specifically, this funding supports: the drug disposal system, which includes, but is not limited to, increasing the availability of physical drug disposal kiosks, the purchasing and disposing of medication through mail-back envelopes, the development and

promotion of the new drug disposal campaign Do Your Part, and messaging to adults on the risk of opioid use; and to partially fund the salary of the Substance Abuse Program Manager at the Department of Health who is responsible for developing, maintaining and managing the statewide drug disposal system.

- Substance Misuse Prevention Oversight and Advisory Council: \$185,872
 - Consistent with Act 82 (2019), this funding is used to partially fund the salary of the Substance Misuse Prevention Manager. Additionally, funding was utilized to support the data collection and analysis of the inventory of prevention services as required by Act 82 (2019). This work was contracted to HBSA through a six-month contract (May 2020 – October 2020), with a maximum payable amount of \$98,000.00 over the contract period, which spanned FY20 and FY21. From this work, HBSA developed the [Prevention Inventory Report](#).
- Tobacco Control Program Global Commitment Funding State-Share: \$806,952
 - This funding supported the Tobacco Control Program’s youth engagement programs, Our Voices Exposed and Vermont Kids Against Tobacco, for training summits facilitated by the Governor’s Institute. The Global Commitment funding is also instrumental for implementing community-based prevention strategies with 14 tobacco grantees. Grantees work on increasing perception of harm, reducing youth access, promotion of tobacco prevention strategies, and engaging stakeholders for creating protective town level policies, including those that reduce smoking in public places and around multi-unit housing. The program collaborated with the Pride Center in addition to Outright Vermont to increase awareness of harm caused by tobacco, promote cessation among those that identify as LGBTQ, and provide cultural sensitivity training among providers. Importantly, this funding also supports counter marketing against tobacco industry’s promotions to youth/young adults and other populations at risk for industry targeting including BIPOC. The funds also support performing evaluation of programs for quality improvement and outcome monitoring.
- Tobacco Master Settlement Agreement (MSA) Funding: \$936,091
 - The MSA funded the Tobacco Control Program’s infrastructure by supporting a .5 FTE staff position. A more significant share of the funds went toward funding the Quitline and Quit Online services offered by 802Quits and providing tobacco treatment specialist training for Blueprint for Health’s tobacco self-management program. The program also engaged providers with 802Quits materials and conducted mass media and social media to reach Vermonters with quit resources.

Evaluation Results of State Funded Prevention Programs

The most recent evaluations for the following programs can be found at the links or documents included:

- [School-based Substance Abuse Services Evaluation](#)
- [Law Enforcement Drug Disposal Program](#)
- [Tobacco Control Program](#)
- [Prevention Inventory](#)

Next Steps

The Substance Misuse Prevention Oversight and Advisory Council will meet as a full Council seven times in 2022, with subcommittees meeting a minimum of four times. During the 2022 calendar year, the Council will review additional data and programs to develop recommendations for the Health Department and General Assembly on how to achieve the SMPC's third goal of increasing efficiency and collaboration on prevention efforts across all state, public, and private entities, through a consolidated and holistic approach to prevention that is sustainable, scalable, and equitable.

Additionally, the Communications Subcommittee of the SMPC will provide advisory support to designated staff from substance misuse and prevention programs engaged in health promotion in Vermont. The SMPC will review and synthesize the growing body of published literature on substance misuse and prevention. The SMPC will also explore an opportunity to partner with the UVM PACE program (<https://www.pacevt.org/>). PACE is currently engaged in a systematic review of alcohol, tobacco, and marijuana mass media campaigns (national, regional, and local) for any method or mechanism. This research encompasses:

- Formative national research
- Message testing national research
- Evaluation of campaign outcomes

A representative serving on the Communications Subcommittee will join future meetings with PACE for this project. The report PACE develops in 2022 will provide valuable research-based recommendations for health promotion. The role of the Communications Subcommittee, and the SMPC more broadly, will be to translate the report findings into recommendations for VT programs. This work will be supported by Department of Health Information Directors.

Finally, as the dashboards at the Office of Racial Equity are developed and finalized, the SMPC will utilize these dashboards to inform the future work of the SMPC in relation to policy and programmatic recommendations.

Appendix I – SMPC Logic Model:

