
**Report to
The Vermont Legislature**

**Substance Misuse Prevention Oversight and Advisory Council Annual Report
2021 Report to the Legislature**

In Accordance with Act 82 (2019), An Act Related to Substance Misuse Prevention

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

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Substance Misuse Prevention Oversight and Advisory Council Annual Report

JANUARY 1, 2021

Introduction

The Substance Misuse Prevention Oversight and Advisory Council (Council) was created through Act 82 (2019). This Council replaces three previous councils: the Opioid Coordination Council (OCC), Vermont Alcohol and Drug Abuse Council (VADAC), and the Vermont Tobacco Evaluation and Review Board (VTERB). This consolidation is intended to improve the health outcomes of all Vermonters through a coordinated and holistic approach to substance misuse prevention that addresses all categories of substances subject to misuse. The Council is charged with reviewing the current prevention policies and initiatives in Vermont, and providing advice to the Governor and the General Assembly on the prevention services throughout the state, and to ensure that data and evidence-based strategies are at the forefront of all policy determinations. In accordance with Act 82 (2019), this report also addresses measurable goals for the effectiveness of prevention programming statewide; performance measures for all substances at risk of misuse that demonstrate the system's results; the results of evaluations of State-funded programs; and an explanation of State-funded program budgets.

2020 Council Activities

The Council held eight meetings during the 2020 calendar year. The Council's scheduled meetings in April and May were cancelled due to COVID-19, and meetings from June through November were held virtually. Meeting minutes and information on the Council's membership can be found on the Department of Health's (Department) [website](#).

All positions for the Council's Executive Committee have been filled, except for the Chief Prevention Officer position, which has not yet been appointed.

Impacts of COVID-19 on Substance Misuse Prevention

The Department administered a Prevention Inventory survey as part of an assessment of substance misuse prevention services throughout Vermont, which included a question regarding the impacts of COVID-19 on prevention services. Survey respondents noted a minimal disruption in service delivery as prevention organizations adjusted to meet the safety requirements associated with COVID-19, but were generally able to continue throughout the pandemic.

Measurable Goals for Prevention Programming

The Council identified the following goals as necessary to ensure an effective substance misuse prevention program statewide:

1. Increase protective factors, build resilience, and promote feelings of connectedness within 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 Council will prioritize the following activities to support the goals identified above:

- Review state laws, rules, policies, programs, best practices, initiatives, and evaluations for all Vermonters, with particular attention to youth and older adults.
- Recommend best practices to reduce demand for substances and address gaps in services or populations.
- Identify strategies to integrate prevention initiatives across state and partnerships.
- Propose changes to state laws, rules, policies, and programs to address redundancy and eliminate barriers to coordinating prevention with State government.
- Assist in the development of a media campaign for prevention.
- Host two public meetings to receive public input and advice for setting program priorities for substances at risk of misuse.
- Advise the Governor, General Assembly, and community programs in best practices for prevention.

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

Performance Measures

The Council proposes the following population outcomes to track progress towards the goals identified above:

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 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.

Recommendations

The Council recommends consideration of the following policies related to substances at risk of misuse. The Council plans to provide a supplemental report with recommendations specific to cannabis later in 2021.

General:

- Establish a permanent funding source for prevention services in Vermont from sales revenue from alcohol, cannabis and tobacco.
- Prohibit the sale of flavored cannabis and nicotine products.

Alcohol:

- Increase the Vermont sales tax on alcohol in order to reduce demand.

Tobacco:

- Separate the tobacco license from the alcohol license in order to reduce the number of tobacco retailers and/or increase revenue for enforcement and prevention services.
- Increase the licensing cost for tobacco retailers in order to reduce the number of tobacco retailers and/or increase funding for enforcement and prevention services.
- Allow local control of sales licenses regarding determinations of location and manner of sale.
- Enact price floors on all tobacco products that are above the free-market rate, and adjusted annually for inflation. This change will help to reduce demand with all Vermonters, create a disincentive for youth to initiate use, and increase revenue for enforcement and prevention services.
- Ban discounting practices such as coupons, which can undermine efforts to reduce consumption through price floors and other regulations.

Cannabis:

The Council finds the proposed membership of the Cannabis Control Board (CCB) is lacking in public health representation, which may undermine public health interests that aim to protect vulnerable populations and ensure safety. Therefore, the Council recommends:

- Expanding or modifying the membership of the Cannabis Control Board to better represent public health interests, including experts from the following fields:
 - Youth Development
 - Public Health Marketing, and Research
 - Tobacco Control
 - Health
 - Pediatrics
 - Addictions
 - At least one member of the Council
- Add a statutory requirement that, at all times, there be a sitting member of the Cannabis Control Board with an epidemiological or similar public health background. This requirement could be codified through the definition of “well-qualified” as used in 7 V.S.A. §§ 842(c) and 843(c).

Explanation of State Funded Prevention Program Budgets

The following substance misuse prevention programs within the Department receive funding through the General Fund and/or special funding:

- School-based Substance Abuse Services;
- 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 2020 (July 1, 2019-June 30, 2020), are as follows:

Program	General Fund FY20 Spend	Special Fund FY20 Spend	Total General and Special Fund FY20 Spend
School-Based Substance Abuse Services	\$218,121	\$25,483	\$243,604
Substance Misuse Prevention Oversight and Advisory Committee	\$0	\$79,276	\$79,276
Tobacco Control Program	\$713,036	\$1,299,640	\$2,012,676
Total General Fund and Special Fund Spend			\$2,823,281

Budget Explanations:

- School based substance use prevention programming: \$243,604
 - Funding is provided to 15 school supervisory unions/districts of the 54 in Vermont to provide screening for substance use among students, referral to an assessment and, if indicated, a referral to services, consistent with support for 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 student.
- Substance Misuse Prevention Oversight and Advisory Council: \$79,276
 - Consistent with Act 82 (2019), this funding is used to support the salary of the Substance Misuse Prevention Manager and the inventory of prevention services. Funding was utilized to support the data collection and analysis of the inventory of prevention services as required by Act 82. This work was contracted to HBSA (dba Pacific Institute for Research and Evaluation) through a six-month contract (May 2020 – October 2020), with a maximum payable amount of \$98,000.00 over the contract period, which spans FY20 and FY21.
- Tobacco Control Program

- Global Commitment Funding State-Share: \$713,036
 - 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 to, and promotion of, tobacco; 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 to increase cessation among those that identify as LGBTQ and promote cultural sensitivity among providers. This funding also supports counter-marketing against the tobacco industry’s promotions to youth/young adults and performing evaluation of programs for quality improvement and outcome monitoring.
- Tobacco Master Settlement Agreement (MSA) Funding: \$1,299,640
 - The MSA funded the Tobacco Control Program’s infrastructure by supporting a .5FTE 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](#)
- [Tobacco Control Program](#)
- [Inventory of Vermont Prevention Services](#)

Planned Activities for 2021

The Substance Misuse Prevention Oversight and Advisory Council will strive to meet monthly, with a minimum target of six times during 2021. The Council will review additional data, including additional Youth Risk Behavior Survey data around resiliency, and other resources to further inform recommendations to the General Assembly, Governor and the Department in alignment with the goals identified by the Council.

An additional data source that the Council will be reviewing in 2021 is the Policy and Communications Evaluation ([PACE](#)). The PACE study is a flexible online survey of youth/young adults age 12-25 to assess awareness, knowledge, and behavior for substance abuse, which is a collaborative project between the Health Department and

the University of Vermont. This data will help inform strategies for addressing vaping and other substance use.

Appendix I – SMPC Logic Model:

