



Making a Collective Impact: Engaging Actors across Different Sectors

Kat Allen

Name of project or collaborative

Communities That Care Coalition

Geography

Serving Franklin County and the North Quabbin Region in rural Western Massachusetts

Brief description

The Communities That Care Coalition works to reduce youth substance use and improve youth health by bringing together and coordinating the efforts of human service providers, schools, youth and parent groups, local law enforcement, local businesses, town governments, faith-based organizations, health care and mental health providers, and our hospital. The Coalition, which was formed in 2002, is a prototypical example of a collective impact initiative in a small rural community, and has been very successful in meeting its population-health goals.

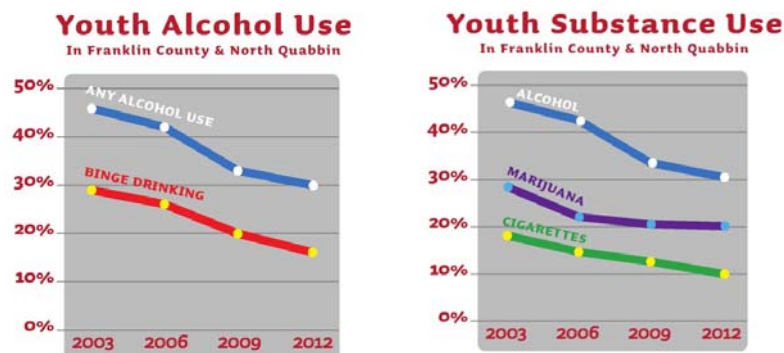
The Coalition created and maintains a Community Action Plan that – based on data from an annual Teen Health Survey the Coalition conducts in collaboration with the schools – outlines shared goals for reductions in youth substance use, identifies several underlying risk and protective factors that are priorities for improvement in the region, and identifies evidence-based, community-appropriate strategies for improving these priority risk and protective factors.

Strategies:

Strategies range from evidence-based prevention curricula in the schools, to a social marketing campaign for parents, to a collaborative Memorandum of Understanding for regional alcohol compliance checks by local police departments. Strategies are implemented by a variety of community partners, and several action-oriented Coalition workgroups meet regularly to coordinate these strategies, and check in on progress toward goals.

Results/outcomes

During the 12 years of its work, the Coalition has measured substantial improvements in youth substance use (see graphs below) as well as the underlying priority risk and protective factors. They have been written up in the Stanford Social Innovation Review and invited to speak at the White House for their success.



Funding

The Communities That Care Coalition is funded through state and federal grants. Finding funding that supports the “backbone” role of the coalition is currently the biggest challenge for the Coalition.

Contact

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