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# Parenting for Prevention

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Student Assistance Services Corp., 660 White Plains Road, Tarrytown, New York, 10591, September, 2018

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## Beginnings



Many greet September with a sense of positive anticipation. For many this seems more like the beginning

of a “new year,” than the change of a year date on a calendar to January 1.

Most of us are looking forward to cooler weather after our brutally hot summer. I for one, did not have a lot of enthusiasm for new projects or adventures during the summer heat but with the arrival of fall, my energy level rises and my excitement to do some new things increases.

I hope that after reading the history of the development and positive impact of substance abuse prevention coalitions, that parents, school personnel or others will consider joining their community’s coalition, starting a coalition if there isn’t one, and if there is already a viable coalition in the community, continuing to participate in or support the coalition’s activities. Coalitions make a difference and the stakes are high with the ongoing opioid epidemic, increased marijuana use, and concerning rates of underage drinking, vaping, and other substance use.

Editor: Patricia Murphy Warble, MSW, CPP

## National Recovery Month

September is National Recovery Month, a national observance to educate Americans about the availability of substance abuse and mental health programs and their effectiveness in helping individuals live a healthy and rewarding life. Recovery Month celebrates those in recovery and promotes the positive message that behavioral health is essential to overall health, prevention works, treatment is effective, and people can and do recover.



There are many Americans whose lives have been transformed through recovery and Recovery Month highlights their accomplishments. Each September those in recovery speak about the gains they have made and share their success stories with their neighbors, friends, and colleagues. In doing so, awareness is increased and there is a greater understanding of mental and substance use disorders.

Recovery Month also promotes the message that recovery in all of its forms is possible and encourages everyone to take action to help expand and improve the availability of effective prevention, treatment, and recovery services for those in need. The 2018 Recovery Month theme, “*Join the Voices for Recovery: Invest in Health, Home, Purpose, and Community*,” explores how integrated care, a strong community, sense of purpose, and leadership contributes to effective treatments that sustain the recovery of persons with mental and substance use disorders.

Each year, SAMHSA creates a Recovery Month toolkit to help individuals, communities and organizations increase awareness of the power of recovery. Go to <https://recoverymonth.gov/about> to learn more about what is available.

## **Value of Substance Abuse Prevention Community Coalitions**

Over the past 30 years, there has been a new wave of initiatives to deal with concerns about the use of alcohol and other drugs by young people in our country. In our county, there are many coalitions, school-based committees, and community-based organizations dealing with the issue.

**Given the issues surrounding the increased availability and toxicity of marijuana, the explosion in the use of e-cigarettes and the opioid epidemic, this a critical time for all people concerned about the well being of our young people to either start or get involved with their local coalition.**

Historically the movement to begin coalitions began when concerns were raised as result of data that reports the alcohol and drug use by teens from an ongoing longitudinal report that is released each year by the University of Michigan called *Monitoring The Future*. In addition, better research and more sophisticated technological advances like magnetic resonance imaging and CAT scans began to demonstrate in a concrete way how alcohol and other drugs could negatively impact the teen brain. This information became a call for

action by concerned parents, educators and other community members to begin forming community coalitions to address their concerns.

There were many iterations of coalitions founded years ago by concerned individuals in Westchester County. Some were school based while others were community-based initiatives but the funding was sporadic and not secure. Often the funding was dependent on the commitment of the leadership in a school or community.

However, that changed when the White House Office of National Drug Control Policy (ONDCP) was created by the Anti-Drug Abuse Act of 1988. ONDCP administers several grant programs including the Drug-Free Communities (DFC) Support Program, created by the Drug-Free Communities Act of 1997. This grant continues to be the nation's leading effort to mobilize communities to prevent youth substance use and is directed by (ONDCP) in partnership with the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA). The DFC Program provides multiyear grants to community coalitions to strengthen the infrastructure among local partners to create and sustain a reduction in local youth substance use.

Recognizing that local problems need local solutions, DFC-funded coalitions engage multiple sectors of the community and employ a variety of strategies to address local substance use problems. DFCs stimulate local communities in finding solutions and also increase awareness among youth, parents, and others to recognize that the majority of our nation's youth choose not to use substances.

Many communities in Westchester have received DFC grants. These grants provide a steady stream of funding so coalitions can plan effective long-term prevention programs and initiatives. In addition, as concerns grew, schools, communities, agencies, and local, county, and state government also started and funded local efforts to address alcohol and other drug use among youth.

Nationally and locally, two organizations were formed to help community coalitions become more effective. Community Anti-Drug Coalitions of America (CADCA), a national organization was formed to help community coalitions become an effective force in dealing with the issues associated with

underage drinking and drug use. This organization provides a myriad of resources for coalitions and provides technical assistance, trainings, seminars and national conferences and advocacy.

Westchester County also joined the effort and formed the Westchester Coalition for Drug and Alcohol Free Youth. This Coalition is an “umbrella coalition” for local coalitions and spearheads the Westchester County Office of Drug Prevention and STOP-DWI. George Latimer, Westchester County Executive, and Anthony A. Scarpino, Jr., Westchester County District Attorney, serve as honorary co-chairs of the Coalition.

The Westchester Coalition for Drug and Alcohol Free Youth, a helpful resource for local coalitions, has a valuable website, [powertotheparent.org](http://powertotheparent.org), which has information, media campaigns, and other resources for parents and communities. This county coalition also organizes monthly steering committee meetings that provide coalition leaders with the opportunity to receive trainings, obtain valuable updated research-based information, network with each other, and share resources.

The coalition has also held a yearly Youth Leadership Conference for middle and high

school students, provides periodic networking events for student leaders, and organizes and distributes special targeted prevention materials that coalitions can use in their communities. One of the most popular is the prom/graduation brochure which provides a clear prevention message that helps parents keep their children safe.

Currently, there are over 30 school-based and community coalitions in the county actively implementing prevention focused initiatives targeting vaping, underage drinking, and drug use. Each coalition has distinctive characteristics to respond to the identified needs of their own community. Overall, most coalitions do similar prevention activities and implement research-based strategies to raise awareness about the dangers of underage drinking and drug use, and access to these substances. They include presentations for parents and students, forums, wellness days, drug take back days, distributing flyers and posters, sponsoring youth leadership conferences, organizing parenting classes, working with law enforcement to reduce the sale of alcohol and nicotine containing products to minors, and other prevention initiatives. As a result of all these activities, teens are living healthier lives and making better decisions about alcohol and other drug use.

Data has been collected in the county from a cross-section of DFC communities and the data shows that the interventions that are being done with our teens by community prevention coalitions are having a positive impact. Specifically monthly alcohol use and binge drinking, cigarette use, and misuse of prescription drugs have all decreased among Westchester teens. While communities can take pride in these results, the following challenges remain:

- The perception of risk of harm of marijuana use has decreased.
- Almost a third of high school seniors are using marijuana and/or vaping.
- 1 in 5 high school students are binge drinking

If you want more information or are interested in taking the steps to start a coalition or apply for a federal DFC grant, please contact Patty Warble at 914-332-1300. Patty, along with others that have been involved with this movement for many years, would be happy to meet with a group and provide information and direction on how to proceed.







New teachers,  
new supplies,  
new clothes,  
new friends,  
new pressures.

New opportunity  
to talk to your teen.

Back to school is an exciting time filled with new opportunities. But for many teens the start of the new year can also be filled with stress, anxiety, and the pressure to fit in. Learn how to talk to your teen about coping with these things safely at [www.PowerToTheParent.org](http://www.PowerToTheParent.org).



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Student Assistance Services  
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Tarrytown, New York 10591