

The MYDAUS/YTS Guide

MAINE YOUTH DRUG AND ALCOHOL USE SURVEY
& YOUTH TOBACCO SURVEY

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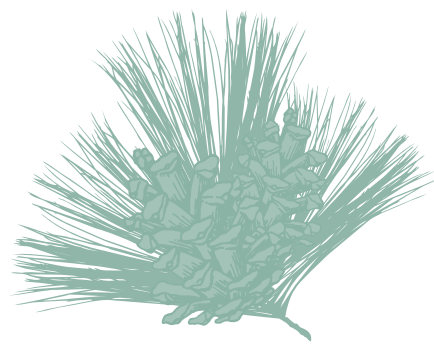
Using Your Data to Build Support for Prevention



OFFICE OF SUBSTANCE ABUSE
MAINE DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH & HUMAN SERVICES
2007

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INTRODUCTION

This brochure was created to help communities effectively utilize Maine Youth Drug and Alcohol Use Survey/Youth Tobacco Survey (MYDAUS/YTS) data. The MYDAUS/YTS is a survey of 6th through 12th graders in Maine's public and quasi-public¹ schools, administered every two years by the Maine Department of Health and Human Services. Its purpose is to assess: 1) the use of alcohol, tobacco, other drugs; 2) related pro-social and antisocial attitudes and behaviors; and 3) the risk and protective factors, which influence the student's choice of whether or not to engage in prohibited behaviors. In recent administrations of the survey, an average of 80 percent of all eligible schools have participated (66% of all eligible students in the State), with all 16 Maine counties represented in the results.

The MYDAUS/YTS is currently supported by a combination of State General Funds and the Fund for a Healthy Maine. It is co-funded by the Department of Health and Human Service's Office of Substance Abuse and Maine Center for Disease Control and Prevention.

The Maine Office of Substance Abuse and Maine Center for Disease Control and Prevention would like to thank school administrators and staff for their interest and participation in the MYDAUS/YTS. We especially want to thank the students who have participated in this survey.

¹ Private non-sectarian schools with more than 60% publicly funded students



Interpret the Results: What Does the Data Tell You?

In order to know what information should be shared with your community, you will need to access your MYDAUS/YTS data, then study it and interpret the results.

What does the data tell you? What “known” problems are supported by the data? What new problems are emerging? What are the areas in which your community is doing well; what are your community's strengths?

What changes would you like to see in your community at this point in time?

Keep in mind that people are more likely to pay attention to constructive information if it is framed to include:

- 1) what is being done well;
- 2) what areas need to be improved; and
- 3) clear steps to make improvements.

Be sure to emphasize that the issues raised by MYDAUS/YTS results are a reflection of community issues that need to be addressed by all members of the community; the results are not a report card on school performance.

"You've got to have kind of a thick skin to look at it, because it's information that makes you squirm."

Robert Stevens
Principal
York High School



As of 2006, you can access a summary of your local data in one, easily-printable, 30-page report. Reports are available at the school and school district level, as well as for all Maine counties, the three OSA regions and statewide. These reports include trends in the use of alcohol, tobacco, marijuana and other selected substances as far back as 2000, and highlight results that are significantly different from State results. They also contain recent data on risk and protective factors. (Note: Access codes for school and district data are sent to participating superintendents, principals and MYDAUS/YTS school contacts. We request that others wishing to access local data get written permission from the district superintendent before contacting OSA.)

"[We have used MYDAUS data in] generating support for preventing youth substance use. At our Summit on Underage Drinking and Drugs held in March, we used the MYDAUS data throughout our community presentation. We actually presented the County data, but then did the math to demonstrate how many kids in our local high school the numbers could have actually referred to - it was a very 'personal' way to present the data, and it would not have been possible without the MYDAUS data."

Wendy Tardif
Community Health Manager
Healthy Androscoggin

2.

“We plan to use MYDAUS data to build support within our community for our Policy/Environmental Strategy to lower the number of alcohol and tobacco ads targeting adolescents in point-of-purchase sites in a designated Aroostook County community.”

Jack Foster
Coordinator
Aroostook Teen
Leadership Camp

Determine Your Audience: Who Needs to Know This Information?

To mobilize your community to support critical prevention strategies, community members need to understand why alcohol, tobacco and other drug use is a problem and what they can do to be a part of the solution. The issue of substance abuse must be addressed early and often to avoid increasingly negative consequences: addiction, violence, health problems and other issues that impact individuals, families and communities. Build broad support by involving local leaders, institutions and community groups in the process. Recognize what is being done well in your community as you address areas for improvement.

RECOGNIZE YOUR COMMUNITY RESOURCES

Community: Contact the leaders of your local government (Mayor or Town Manager, and Selectmen), local social service organizations, civic groups (such as the Lions Club, Rotary), youth groups, parent groups, faith groups, local business professionals and law enforcement.

School: Increase communication of your message by getting students and school staff on board. Some key staff members include administrators, teachers, support staff, counselors and local health professionals who work in the schools. Involve student groups in your efforts and don't forget about school board members as potential partners.

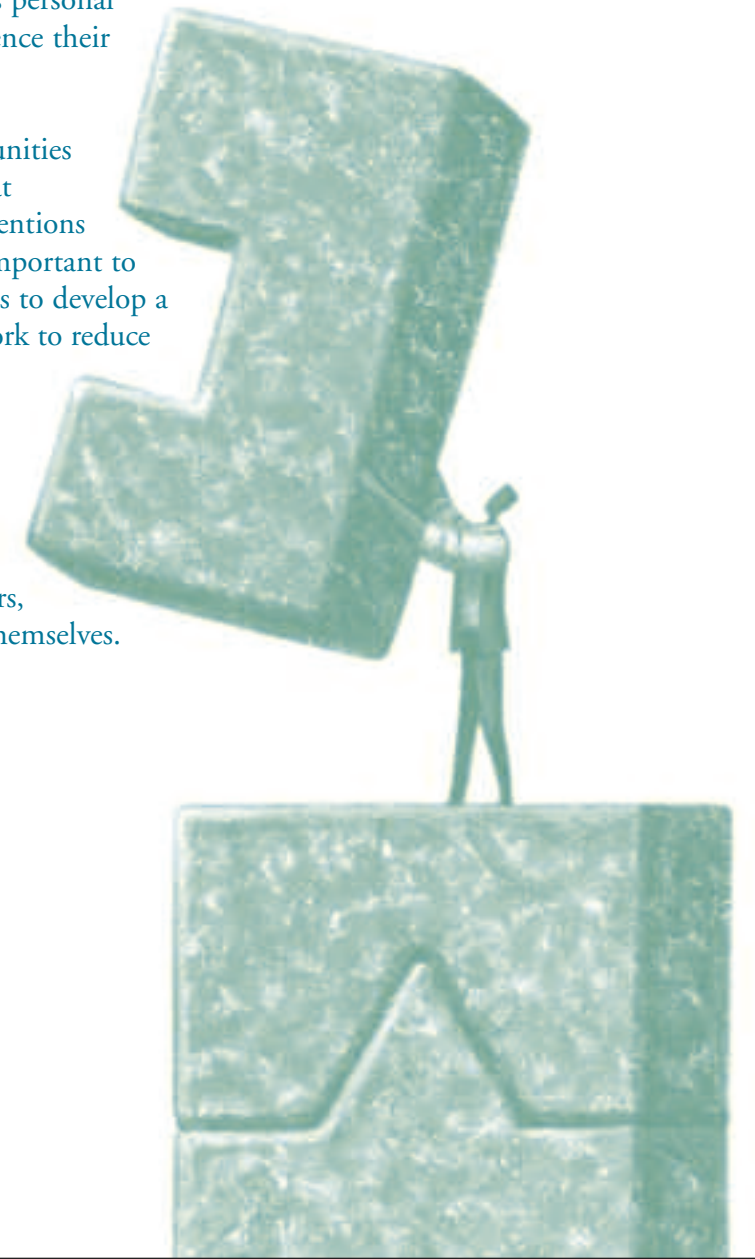
Media: Media can help reinforce your message to the community at large. Consider utilizing daily and weekly papers, local advertisers, local television and radio, community calendars and school newsletters. Keep the media informed about your community issue and develop relationships with your local media contacts, so you can learn about the options for getting your message out.

Although prevention has traditionally targeted youth, adults have an equally important role in preventing underage substance use. Youth learn many of their opinions and attitudes from the adults in their lives and make decisions about substance abuse in an environment that is driven by adult attitudes and actions. Until adults fully understand the issues surrounding alcohol, tobacco and other drug use, the effort to decrease the problems that substance use causes for our youth will be hampered.

Environmental strategies, which have been a focus of tobacco prevention and other public health efforts for over a decade now, are increasingly recognized as an important component to underage/high risk alcohol use prevention. Effective environmental strategies focus on changing community norms and policies, and reducing access rather than focusing solely on changing an individual's personal characteristics, attitudes or beliefs to influence their behavior.

The MYDAUS/YTS data can help communities examine the environmental risk factors that impact substance abuse and develop interventions that reduce those risks for all youth. It is important to involve many different community partners to develop a comprehensive set of strategies that will work to reduce substance abuse from all directions.

Your MYDAUS/YTS data can help capture the attention of the various partners in your community who will be important to this effort: parents, law enforcement, retailers, policymakers, school administrators, civic organizations and, of course, youth themselves.



3.

“I think the biggest thing the MYDAUS data did for our prevention effort is to get the law enforcement on board much stronger than ever before... Once we got the Sagadahoc County Sheriff on board as recognizing that it was easy in our communities for kids to get alcohol, the other police forces in our area were also brought in...to partner together to begin to do community Shoulder Tap exercises together. This was really successful, and they continue to work together in all three communities to make access to alcohol more difficult for teens.”

Patricia Conner
Director of EAP and
Substance Abuse Prevention
Mid Coast Hospital

Match the Message to the Audience: Which Audiences Need Which Information?

In addition to data on the percentage of students who use various substances, some additional MYDAUS/YTS questions are of particular interest to different audiences. Be sure to incorporate information that will capture the attention of the particular groups and individuals you are trying to engage. Here are some questions that you may wish to address when you are designing your message for a particular audience:

Audience	Questions of particular interest (by MYDAUS/YTS category) ²
Parents	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • If you wanted to get some {alcohol}, how easy would it be for you to get some? (<i>Community</i>) • How wrong do your parents feel it would be for you to: [drink {alcohol} regularly; smoke cigarettes; smoke marijuana]? (<i>Family</i>) • If you drank some {alcohol} without your parents' permission, would you be caught by your parents? (<i>Family</i>) • My family has clear rules about alcohol and drug use. (<i>Family</i>) • When I am not at home, one of my parents knows where I am and whom I am with. (<i>Family</i>)
Law Enforcement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • If a kid [drank alcohol, smoked marijuana] in your neighborhood, would he or she be caught by the police? (<i>Community</i>) • If you wanted to get some [alcohol; marijuana; cigarettes; drug like cocaine, LSD or amphetamines], how easy would it be for you to get some? (<i>Community</i>)
School Personnel	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How many times in the past year have you been drunk or high at school? (<i>Individual/Peer</i>) • I feel safe at my school. (<i>School</i>) • My teacher(s) notices when I am doing a good job and lets me know about it. (<i>School</i>) • In the past year, how often did you... [enjoy being in school? hate being in school? Try to do your best work in school?] (<i>School</i>)

² To see MYDAUS/YTS data for these questions, go to: www.maine.gov/maineosa/survey/home.php then select “Results for each survey question.” On that page, select the dropdown category of the question: Individual Attitudes/Peer Influences; School Influences; Family Influences; Community Influences, Tobacco Use/Attitudes or Other Substance Use.

- The school lets my parents know when I have done something well. (*School*)
- There are lots of chances for students in my school to talk with a teacher one-on-one. (*School*)

Youth

Use data on percentage of students who use substances to make the point that most youth do NOT use. This approach helps youth realize that the impression they have that ‘everyone is doing it’ is actually not the norm. This misperception is often exaggerated by media. It is also inadvertently supported by the way adults and youth talk about alcohol in particular and sometimes other drugs too. Providing data to counter that misperception can help youth who don’t use see that they aren’t alone.

- On how many occasions have you [smoked cigarettes, had alcohol, used marijuana, used inhalants to get high, prescription drugs not prescribed for you, etc.] during the past 30 days? (*Tobacco Use/Attitudes, Other Substance Use*)
- On how many occasions have you [had alcohol, used marijuana, used inhalants to get high, prescription drugs not prescribed for you, etc.] in your lifetime? (*Other Substance Use*)
- How many times [over the past two weeks] have you had five or more alcoholic drinks in a row [binge drinking]? (*Other Substance Use*)

Community Organizations & Civic Groups

Depending on the demographics of the group, some of the items listed for other audiences above may be useful as well as:

- How wrong would most adults in your neighborhood think it is for kids your age to: [drink alcohol; use marijuana; smoke cigarettes]? (*Community*)
- About how many adults (over 21) have you known personally who in the past year have [used marijuana, crack, cocaine or other drugs; sold or dealt drugs]? (*Community*)

TIP:

Sometimes combined 6–12th grade data isn’t the most compelling because low rates in some grades balance the high rates in other grades. Presenting specific results by grade can often capture people’s attention in a way that the overall averages might not. For example, the overall rate for 30 day alcohol use (MYDAUS 2006) for grades 6 – 12 is 29.0%; however, 6th grade use is at 5.9% and 12th grade is 49.1%.³ This approach should be used with careful attention to sample size; see Limitations for further information.

³ Maine Youth Drug and Alcohol Use Survey 2006 Executive Summary.

4.

“Here in MSAD#29 (Houlton), I got technical support from a staff member who converted 19 pages of our district report that contained graphs to a PowerPoint presentation. She took the tables off each page and enlarged the graphs. I added one slide to highlight the strengths - things that we should be pleased about - and areas of concern. I will be presenting it to the School Board to raise awareness and to get their feedback.”

Lynn Brown
MSAD#29
School Health Coordinator

Deliver Your Message: How to Reach Your Audiences

You can communicate your message to a broader audience through community activities using presentations and other materials (e.g., brochures, posters). Opportunities include town meetings, outreach to local nonprofit and youth groups, and local special events such as fairs, sporting events, school events and concerts.

Presentations are an effective education tool because your message can reach a large number of people in a group setting.

- Begin your presentation with an ice breaker to get the audience engaged. One example is quizzing the audience on alcohol, tobacco and other drug use related facts that might surprise them. Use your local MYDAUS/YTS results to challenge some common misconceptions.
- PowerPoint presentations can be an effective method to deliver your message. Remember to keep presentations clear and concise, emphasizing your message with key points from your MYDAUS/YTS data.
- End your presentation with a challenge to the audience. Provide suggestions of how they can act on what they have learned. Sometimes simply asking the audience what they plan to do next can prompt them to make personal commitments.

You can also submit a media release to local newspapers. Cover the main points of your message; be brief and to the point. Tie in statistics from your current MYDAUS/YTS data and possibly trends over recent years. **Highlight positive results as well as areas that need attention.** If possible, connect your press release to a timely event, such as a school health event or town meeting.

One effective strategy for community mobilization is ‘community conversations’ that lead to the development of an action plan. These community conversations can be called *Town Hall Meetings, Summits, Forums* or any other name that will engage people. They can be organized in neighborhoods and/or by institutions such as businesses, civic groups, law enforcement, schools, congregations and youth-serving organizations, to bring both youth and adults to the table to discuss the MYDAUS/YTS results and their concerns about these issues. These conversations can be co-led by youth and adult facilitators and can serve as the first step toward developing a community prevention plan.

OSA PowerPoint Website

www.maineosa.org/prevention/provider/powerpoints

Leadership to Keep Children Alcohol-Free: What You Can Do

www.alcoholfreechildren.org/en/act/index.cfm

Underage Drinking Summit Materials

www.maineosa.org/prevention/community/summit.htm

Focus on Prevention

http://download.ncadi.samhsa.gov/prevline/pdfs/FocusOn_Layout_OPT.pdf

Community Anti-Drug Coalitions of America (CADCA)

<http://cadca.org>

“Community Voices used MYDAUS data on two bulletin boards that it operates. One bulletin board is in Town Hall which has two messages on it every two weeks. The other is in the high school. MYDAUS data has been put on these boards for the general public as well as the school community to see.”

Tom Saladino
Director
Community Voices



MANAGING NATURAL REACTIONS TO THE DATA

As people look at MYDAUS/YTS data, there are some common reactions to the results. These reactions are normal, but it is important to be prepared for them and know how to diffuse them or clarify misinterpretations. By being prepared, you can more quickly move your audience toward effective action planning.

1) Denial of the Results

One of the most common reactions to presentations of MYDAUS/YTS data is that “you can’t trust those results because kids lie on surveys.” Students sometimes argue that the survey results are an underestimate of youth usage because they think everybody else is using. However, students often overestimate the use rate among their peers, so it is not surprising that the results are sometimes lower than they might have expected. Adults sometimes think the results look worse than they expected. Although reliability of data is always a concern for researchers, the MYDAUS/YTS is designed to minimize inaccurate results by utilizing several methods to increase the accuracy of results. While there will always be a few students who are not honest or do not take the survey seriously, overall we have a high level of confidence in the results.

Research shows that students are more honest if they believe the survey is confidential; the MYDAUS/YTS protocol and reporting conventions are designed to protect student confidentiality.

Some examples of methods used are:

- On the day of the survey, monitors are asked to remain at the front of the room so they cannot see students’ answers.
- Completed surveys are placed in a blank envelope, which are then sealed by a student.
- The MYDAUS/YTS does not ask for the students’ names or birthdates, and reporting by racial or ethnic group is strictly limited.
- Data are not reported on schools or individual grades when fewer than 20 students participated in the survey to avoid potential for an individual’s answers to be identifiable in the data.

Another technique to help with reliability is the use of an “honesty profile” which is run on the data set before the data are analyzed. This process includes checking for substance use that is impossibly high as well as other indications of dishonest responses. Statewide, about 4 percent of the surveys are excluded because they fail the honesty profile; the data that is released does not include these surveys.

Data from this survey is analyzed in a multitude of ways to help us understand substance abuse patterns in Maine. There is no evidence that dishonesty in the responses is a significant issue, nor is it one that decreases the value of the MYDAUS/YTS as one tool to help communities in their prevention efforts.

2) Blame

Substance abuse is a complex problem with complex causes that shouldn’t be blamed on any one sector of the community. The MYDAUS/YTS results should not be used as a report card for school performance. Data for the MYDAUS/YTS are collected through Maine schools because schools are the most accessible and cost-effective avenue for capturing the opinions and behaviors of adolescents. Data from the MYDAUS/YTS is a reflection of the entire community and should not be viewed as a school problem. Likewise, the data should not be used to argue that parents or police are not doing an effective job. Blaming one portion of the community is unfair and counterproductive. Conclusions of why results are as they are (positive or negative) need to be carefully considered within the context of the whole community and other variables that affect students. If people are caught up in the “blame game,” remind them of the goals they all share and try to lead the discussion toward potential solutions and next steps.

3) Comparison to Other Communities

If a particular indicator is worse than the State average or neighboring communities, some people may jump to the conclusion that this indicator is a priority target for action. It may or may not be, depending on the rest of the data. The data set as a whole needs to be considered before targeting any one area of concern. Conversely, if a particular item is lower than the State or county average, people may conclude that this factor is low priority. It may help to remind people that just because a particular rate is better than average does not mean you should assume it is not a problem – you still need to ask yourself if that rate is too high (or too low if you are looking at a protective factor) for your community.

4) Magic Bullet Solutions

Single, simplified solutions to a complex problem are not possible. A clearly articulated strategic plan can demonstrate how multiple strategies work together. If people are blinded by the appeal of a single solution, try acknowledging the idea as a viable part of the solution, and then discuss what other components may be necessary.

REMEMBER, YOU DON'T HAVE TO 'GO IT ALONE'. CONNECT WITH OTHER COMMUNITY COALITIONS AND SHARE IDEAS.

Community Contacts <http://www.maineosa.org/prevention/communitycontacts.htm>
Includes links to: Communities for Children; Healthy Maine Partnerships; and other coalitions, agencies and organizations.

Maine Association of Prevention Programs (MAPP) <http://www.masap.org/site/prevention.asp>
A grassroots advocacy network for substance abuse prevention.

Prevention Listserv <http://www.maineosa.org/prevention/provider/list.htm>
Designed to share information including funding opportunities, seek resources from colleagues and share ideas with providers in Maine.

IDENTIFY NEEDS AND RESOURCES AND DESIGN STRATEGIC PLANS

"We have found the results of MYDAUS to be very useful during our Community Prevention Plan Assessment Survey with CMCA/MCD. We identified how the trends and prevalence rates found in our survey matched up with MYDAUS results. We supported our findings using MYDAUS data during the Public Forum that followed. It helped shape our priorities and the structure for our prevention plan. We are currently using MYDAUS data with CMCA/MCD and other members of our coalition to formulate the Portland Community Prevention Plan."

Ronni Katz
Substance Abuse Prevention
Program Coordinator
City of Portland

The MYDAUS/YTS is a valuable tool that can provide a rich foundation for a community's needs and resources assessment and strategic prevention planning. In addition to increasing the understanding of substance abuse in your community, completing an assessment of needs and capacity will allow you to target available resources and maximize the impact of your prevention efforts.

For example:

- Are you targeting the appropriate age groups?
- Are there certain towns or other geographic areas on which you should focus?
- Are there certain substances of greater concern than others?
- Where and how could your efforts be more effective?

These questions are especially important given the scarce resources currently available for prevention.

A thorough assessment process can help collaborating organizations think more deeply about the specific strengths and needs in your area. It is also a great way to engage key partners in a dialogue about why the problems exist and how to best work together to address the issues.

Strategic planning makes it possible to effectively carry out the mission and vision of an organization or group. It keeps the group on track, helps people develop and implement prevention strategies that fit their priority needs, and outlines what everyone should be doing to move toward the stated goals. A good strategic plan will also provide a means for evaluating progress. Moreover, a strategic plan can furnish the tools for successfully recruiting the funding needed to carry out future work.⁴

For more detailed information on assessment and strategic planning, consult "Maine's Strategic Prevention Framework Guide to Assessment and Planning, August 2006." While the guide was developed on behalf of the Office of Substance Abuse for a subgroup of OSA grantees, it is a valuable resource for any group or coalition looking to carry out a thorough needs and capacity assessment and develop a strategic plan for substance abuse prevention.

⁴ Building Drug Free Communities: A Planning Guide. Alexandria, VA: Community Anti-Drug Coalitions (CADCA), 2001. p.56

Maine's Strategic Prevention Framework Guide to Assessment and Planning, August 2006

<http://www.maineosa.org/prevention/community/spfsig/projects/spep.htm>

Prevention Platform

<http://preventionplatform.samhsa.gov/>

Includes sites on Assessment, Capacity, Planning, Implementation, and Evaluation

Keep Kids Alcohol Free: Strategies for Action

<http://www.alcoholfreechildren.org/en/pubs/pdf/prevention.pdf>

"We used the MYDAUS data to target the risk factors which were of greatest concern to our community. Our enforcement strategies were developed with MYDAUS in mind - diversion program for violators, increased enforcement of liquor laws, compliance checks and investigative work relating to the furnishers."

Wendy Tardif
Community Health Manager
Healthy Androscoggin



TRACK TRENDS AND EVALUATE PROGRAMS AND STRATEGIES

"The Hermon School System reviews the MYDAUS data for trends as compared to previous years and relative to county and state-wide trends and adjusts programming accordingly. For example, we have recently directed our efforts in community educational offerings to target topics related to parenting strategies to mitigate youth perceptions of parental support for antisocial attitudes. In addition, we have relied on school system trends of reduced substance use, particularly alcohol and marijuana, to validate and celebrate the school's efforts academically, clinically and culturally to foster a safe and drug free academic site. Our belief is that to be most effective we need to 'stay in front' of the trends relative to our education and clinical offerings to the students."

Brent Scobie
Licensed Clinical Social Worker (LCSW)
Hermon School System

MYDAUS/YTS data can be very useful in tracking trends within your community. The following steps can be taken to look at how things have changed over time:

- 1) Review historical data from previous MYDAUS/YTS reports to obtain a sense of how behaviors and attitudes have changed (or stayed the same) in your community.
- 2) Decide which issues you want to track over time (typically related to those identified in your Strategic Plan). Choosing a few specific data items will allow you to better focus on selected issues and develop realistic plans to address them.
- 3) Identify your baseline using current MYDAUS/YTS data, so that you can monitor your progress over time.

MYDAUS/YTS data can also be used to help evaluate the programs implemented in your community. It can help you verify that community programs are aligned with current issues, revise established programs and strategies to reflect community needs, and monitor outcomes.

Caution:

Good evaluation is difficult. Please keep in mind these common issues:

Percent Variation

The MYDAUS/YTS results can vary a great deal from year to year depending on the size of your community. Because some communities are very small, percentages can change dramatically based on only a few individuals, exaggerating meaning of the changes. MYDAUS/YTS data are usually most stable at the county or state level.

Small Numbers

For communities with a small population, it may be more appropriate to use school and county data primarily for needs assessment and planning, rather than relying on this data for evaluation of local programs, unless you are working with an experienced evaluator. Please consult the Limitations page to learn more about the importance of statistical significance, which is difficult to achieve with small sample sizes.

Numbers Served

If your program works directly with only a small proportion of your school, then the MYDAUS/YTS data is NOT a good way to measure your program's impact. Data collected directly from or about the participants in your program would be more effective in this case. However, if your program targets the entire population of MYDAUS/YTS participants in your school district, then it can provide one set of indicators about your program's impact.

Causality

While MYDAUS/YTS data can provide a great snapshot of youth opinions and behavior at a given time, MYDAUS/YTS results do not establish causality between your efforts and the behaviors, attitudes and perceptions of the youth in your community. Instead, these data should be used as a tool to help with evaluation. One way to judge effectiveness of your program is to 'triangulate' three or more sources of information to measure the change you expect to see, using MYDAUS/YTS as one point of reference. In addition to reviewing the MYDAUS/YTS data, you might conduct interviews, focus groups, or other community surveys to gain other perspectives. If all sources of data point in the same direction, you still may not have proof that your program caused the change, but you will have evidence to support your case. (See Example on following page)

QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER THROUGHOUT THE PROCESS:

- Is the focus of your program consistent with the current needs of the community?
- Are the strategies being implemented in your community likely to change the things your data has indicated as priorities?
- Have your desired outcomes been achieved? Is there a current need to re-assess and modify your plan?

EXAMPLE:

To measure whether your program is successfully changing community norms regarding underage drinking, you might track the MYDAUS/YTS question, "How wrong do most adults in your neighborhood think it is for kids your age to drink alcohol?" You might then compare your local survey results with county-level and state-level results for the same question. If your local results show positive change that is different from what has happened at the county and/or state levels, then that is one indicator of possible success. However, you would want other sources of data to confirm it and to explore whether or not the change can be linked to your program's efforts.

Even if the MYDAUS/YTS data does not show change, this does not necessarily mean the program is ineffective. Sometimes, no change can be positive, (e.g., if statewide rates became worse and your community's data stayed the same). Interpretation of your data needs to be placed in a larger context.

It is important to perform some type of process evaluation. Some questions you may want to examine are: What other programs and prevention efforts are impacting students? Was your program implemented as it was intended to be implemented (i.e., with fidelity)? Did your prevention effort reach its intended population?

Community How to Guides: Coalition Building, Needs Assessment and Strategic Planning, Evaluation, Prevention and Education, Underage Drinking Enforcement, Public Policy Advocacy, Media Relations, and Self-Sufficiency.

http://www.nhtsa.dot.gov/people/injury/alcohol/Community%20Guides%20HTML/Guides_index.html

Extensive controls have been used to ensure that the data obtained through MYDAUS/YTS is accurate and representative of the intended population. For instance, we can be 95% certain that the population's true results for any given question lie within the confidence interval. There are, however, some limitations to the survey design.

Non-Response Bias

The purpose of a survey is to gather information about the opinions, behaviors and characteristics of a specific group of individuals, known as the "population." Although the MYDAUS/YTS attempts to capture the opinions of all 6th – 12th grade public school students in Maine, it is virtually impossible to reach every student. This raises the possibility that those individuals who did not participate in the survey are in some way different than the individuals who did. For example, students with high absenteeism are less likely to have participated in the survey because the survey is conducted at school during school hours. If students who have not participated in the MYDAUS/YTS are characteristically different from those who have participated, the results of the survey could be distorted. Administrators of MYDAUS/YTS attempt to limit this bias by following up with all students who are not able to participate in the survey during the initial administration.

Significance

One should use caution when comparing two data items (e.g., 2004 versus 2006 results, or local versus Maine results). Although numbers may appear to be different, the difference may not be "statistically significant." This means that the difference may be simply due to chance and not a real difference. Statistical significance depends upon a number of factors including the sample size. For example, in a small community, differences that appear to be quite large are often not statistically significant because the sample size is too small. For this reason, you should be cautious before assuming that apparent changes over time, either positive or negative, represent true change.

If the confidence intervals of the two data items do not overlap, the difference is **statistically significant**, which means we can be confident that the difference is real, and not simply due to chance. On the other hand, if the confidence intervals do overlap, the difference between them is not statistically significant; hence, the two data items are statistically the same and should not be considered different.

Communities with small populations will see more natural year-to-year variation in their MYDAUS/YTS results than larger communities and might find fewer statistically significant changes. Do not be discouraged if you do not see immediate results from your programs. Just keep an eye on long-term trends, and keep comparing your MYDAUS/YTS data to information from other sources.

District Level Results

When possible, use school level data rather than district level data. A random sample of schools was taken to assure that we get representative data at the county and state levels but neither the sample selection nor the weighting procedure were designed to assure representative data at the district level. Since every student within a participating school was invited to take the survey, school level results can be considered representative of the school population regardless of whether it was included in the random sample.

- **95% Confidence Interval:** We are 95% certain that the “true” value falls within the range of possible values called the “confidence interval.” The larger the sample size, the narrower the confidence intervals will be. The narrower the confidence interval, the greater the likelihood that the data point is an accurate reflection of the responses of the entire population.
- **Population:** The set of people to which findings are to be generalized. In the MYDAUS/YTS state-level reports, the population are youth in grades 6 through 12 attending Maine’s public and quasi-public⁵ schools.
- **Sample:** A subset of individuals in a population. Sample size refers to the number of people who took the survey.
- **Statistically significant:** A difference is said to be statistically significant if it is greater than what might be expected by chance alone. In the MYDAUS/YTS data, a difference between two percentages is considered statistically significant if the confidence intervals for the two percentages do not overlap. For example, if 30 day alcohol use among 6th graders changed from 12 percent in year A (confidence interval 10.5 – 13.0) to 10 percent in year B (confidence interval 9.1 – 11.1), the confidence intervals overlap. Thus we could not be certain that the difference is due to anything other than chance.
- **Survey:** A method of collecting information as reported by individuals. MYDAUS/YTS is a type of data collection known as self-report data, which means that individuals complete the survey themselves.

⁵ Private non-sectarian schools with more than 60% publicly funded students.

HOW TO OBTAIN MYDAUS/YTS INFORMATION

MYDAUS/YTS web-based reports system

<http://www.maine.gov/maineosa/survey/home.php>

What You Can Find on the MYDAUS/YTS Website

- New for 2006: Printable summary reports comparing local⁶ (school, district, or county) results to State results; includes trends back to 2000.
- Background information on the MYDAUS/YTS
- Tips on understanding the data
- Tips on printing the data from the website
- Information on changes in the survey protocols over time
- Definitions of risk and protective factors
- Results for each scale and question at the levels of school, district, county and state
- Trend data since 2000 for county and state level (and local level for schools who have taken the survey for multiple years)

MYDAUS/YTS Documents

These are available for download from the MYDAUS/YTS web at: www.maineosa.org/data/mydaus

MYDAUS Technical Report

A reporting of the MYDAUS data covering the topics of substance use, risk and protective factors, prohibited behaviors, and pro-social behaviors. Analyzed by grade, gender, county, and year of administration (1995 to 2006).

MYDAUS Executive Summary

A snapshot of 2006 data and trends since 2000 displayed in graphs and charts

The MYDAUS/YTS Guide

A practical guide to using MYDAUS/YTS data to build support for prevention efforts (this document).

MORE INFORMATION

Office of Substance Abuse Prevention

www.maineosa.org/prevention

Maine Center for Disease Control & Prevention

www.mainepublichealth.gov

Partnership for a Tobacco-Free Maine

www.tobaccofreemaine.org

Prevention Centers of Excellence

<http://www.maine.gov/dhhs/osa/prevention/community/spfsig/about/pcoe.htm>

⁶ Passwords for school or district data are provided to school administrators. Community members interested in the local level data should contact their school superintendent or principal. It is important that community members wishing to access local data understand the ways that student survey data has sometimes been used to blame schools unfairly for social problems. For this reason, school administrators are sometimes hesitant to release MYDAUS/YTS results publicly. We encourage you to discuss these potential issues with your local school administrators and, together, develop a plan for how to communicate and use the results constructively and effectively. For a sample MYDAUS Data Use Agreement, go to: <http://www.maineosa.org/prevention/community/spfsig/projects/spcp.htm>