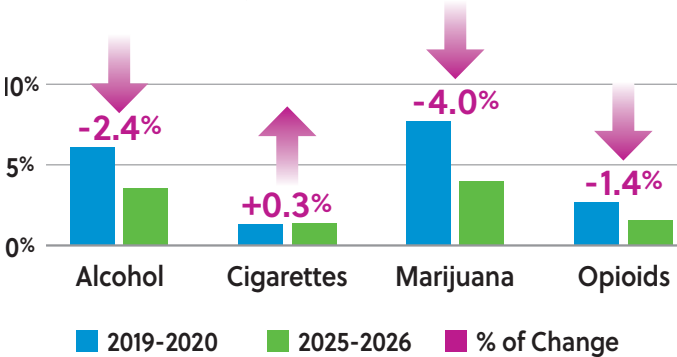


Prevention a Community-Wide Effort (continued)

30-Day Use

Prevalence of use trends have been on the decline for youth in 7th-10th grades for alcohol, marijuana, and prescription drug use since 2018- 2019; however, cigarette use has increased slightly. ⁽¹⁾



Perceptions of Disapproval

Youth who perceive parents and peers who disapprove of their substance use increased for every substance since 2019, but perception of peer disapproval decreased since the last survey for all substances except opioids. Perception of parent disapproval stayed about the same except decreased for opioids since the last survey.

Perception of Parent Disapproval

Alcohol	97%	+3.1%
Cigarettes	97%	+2.7%
ENDS	97%	+6.9%
Marijuana	94%	+5.2%
Opioids	98%	+3.8%

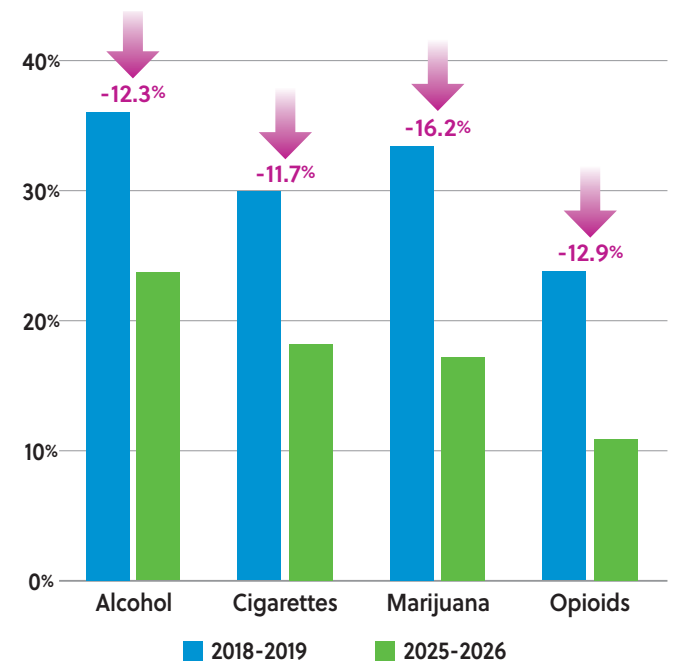
Perception of Peer Disapproval

Alcohol	91%	+9.1%
Cigarettes	89%	+1.3%
ENDS	90%	+20.7%
Marijuana	85%	+13.2%
Opioids	92%	+4.2%

(1) Warren Health and Wellness Survey, 2018-2019 through 2024-2025.

Perceptions of Easy Access

Youth perceive most substances to be more difficult to access; this has increased each year since 2018-2019 for all substances, with the exception of ENDS. ⁽¹⁾



Community RESOURCES

East Bay Community Action Program (EBCAP)
100 Bullocks Point Ave., Riverside, RI 401) 437-1000

East Bay Center 2 Old County Rd., Barrington, RI
(401) 246-1195

East Bay Recovery Center 31 Railroad Ave., Warren, RI
(401) 302-6231 or 401-289-2055

BH Link Hotline — (401) 414-LINK (414-5465)
24/7 – help with a behavioral healthcare crisis.

St. Mary of the Bay Food Pantry
645 Main St., Warren RI (401) 245-7000 ext 19

Warren Health Equity Zone (HEZ)
790 Main St., Warren RI (401) 486-5195

For information, contact Ann Marie Roy(ARoy@townofwarren-ri.gov) or Maria Ursini (Mursini@townofwarren-ri.gov).
Funding for this newsletter from SAMHSA's Drug Free Communities Program (DFC) and Legislative Funding.
warrenprevention.com

Prevention Through Connection



Promoting Health & Wellness through prevention in our Community

Looking at National Trends for Youth Mental Health During 2025

Current youth mental health trends reveal a mixed picture: increased rates of anxiety and depression persist, fueled by social media, economic stress, and climate concerns, with marginalized youth facing disproportionate challenges. Some data shows slight improvements in certain areas, suggesting potential impact from increased awareness and early interventions, but a significant gap in preventive care and systemic support remains.

As we approach the new year, it can be a challenging time for many young people. Far too many teens and young adults are struggling with their mental health: In 2024, a quarter of young people ages 10 to 24 said they did not feel supported by family, 45% reported struggling with their mental health within the past two years, and 29% had engaged in or considered self-harm, according to the Youth Mental Health Tracker (YMHT), a study released last month by Surgo Health.

And yet, rays of hope shine through: young people making their voices heard, schools and community organizations prioritizing youth mental health, policy makers expanding what's possible in addressing the needs of young people, cultural icons breaking down barriers around seeking support for mental health, and caring adults focused on helping the young people in their lives in any way they can.

Continued Reasons for Optimism

There are many promising signs for the future of youth mental health, and we have every reason to expect those to extend into this new year and beyond. The YMHT found that 95% of youth ages 10 to 24 believe there are people in their lives who really care about them, 76% feel a sense of belonging with a group such as their friends or school, and 83% express that they are optimistic about their future.



The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's Youth Risk Behavior Survey (YRBS) shows the percentage of high school students who felt persistently sad or hopeless within the past 12 months dropped slightly from 2021 to 2023 (42% to 40%) after years of growth. For girls, who have had some of the highest rates in this category, the decrease was even greater, from 57% to 53%. And rates of high schoolers drinking and using drugs continue to decrease, according to the YRBS.

Big Challenges Remain

Despite those hopeful signs, far too many young people continue to struggle with mental health challenges. Although the numbers have improved, four in 10 high schoolers in 2023 still experienced persistent feelings of sadness or hopelessness over the past year and two in 10 seriously considered suicide, according to the YRBS. And, the YMHT found, a majority of young people ages 10 to 24 who struggled with mental health within the previous two years did not receive the full care they needed — and a third didn't seek care at all.

The problems are even more pronounced among populations with limited access to resources. Young people from households experiencing financial difficulties consistently

(Continued on page 2)

Looking at National Trends (continued)



report poorer mental health statuses than their peers without such challenges, according to the YMHT and other sources. These are only a few of the concerning statistics that remind us of the immense need that remains.

Grappling With Artificial Intelligence

In 2025, the use of artificial intelligence (AI) continued to grow throughout virtually all areas of society, including education and mental health. So, too, are questions and concerns about AI’s impact on youth. How effective is AI software that aims to identify students at risk of self-harm? What about bots that serve as virtual best friends — or therapists — listening to the innermost thoughts of a young person seeking support? What impact will AI have on the job market for new high school and college grads?

As AI becomes more ubiquitous, we must continually work to understand its evolving implications for young people and how to support them effectively. And it is imperative that discussions of ethics remain central to the conversation about AI and that regulatory policy catches up to the technology, even as AI continues to evolve, improve, and be adapted at breakneck pace.

Making Social Media Safer

Social media provides young people valuable connection points for friendship, support, information, and even health care. At the same time, the risks of social media are well documented, including exposure to harmful content and cyberbullying. Important discussions about young people’s use of social media and digital technology will continue to occupy educators, parents, mental health practitioners, and others throughout this year.



It is past time for tech companies to prioritize the safety and emotional well-being of their youngest users, and for regulators to establish guardrails protecting youth from the harms of social media.

While the trends mentioned in this article from the JED Foundation looked at data on National level, understanding what mental health challenges our youth face can help the Warren Prevention Coalition and it’s community partners develop programs and education focusing a healthy community.

Adapted from an article by John MacPhee of JED Foundation– Jan. 2025.

What Warren Students Say About Their Mental Health & Wellness

Taken from the Warren Prevention Coalition Drug-Free Communities Survey Report 2025

What worries or stresses you most?

How I Look.....	35.2%
Social Issues.....	32.4%
Education	32.3%
Finance/Money	28.1%
Family Problems	28.0%
Health of Loved One	26.5%
Political Climate.....	17.1%
My health/Healthcare	16.7%
Climate Change.....	16.2%
My Safety.....	15.6%

What are ways you cope with stress?

Listen to Music.....	69.4%
Watch TV	60.0%
Talk to Friend/Family	55.7%
Video Games.....	47.6%
Exercise.....	39.0%
Deep Breaths.....	34.7%
Eat	32.4%
Walk in Nature/Hike	25.1%
Pray	22.3%
Read.....	19.9%

What do you do to stay healthy?

Regular Exercise	78.5%
Socialize	74.6%
Avoid Alcohol & Drugs	73.5%
Sports	66.3%
Visit Doctor.....	64.6%
Healthy Diet	63.9%
Mindfulness	26.4%
Limit Sugar & Salt.....	21.6%
Count Calories.....	16.1%
Meditation	11.9%
Other	5.7%

Thanks to Our Partners, Prevention is a Community-Wide Effort

The Warren Prevention Coalition believes prevention is a community-wide responsibility and we are dedicated to providing leadership, resources, education and programming for our young people in Warren. It is our community partners that make this possible through collaboration, cooperation and support.

The Coalition’s focus is to empower our community in the prevention of substance misuse among youth by raising awareness, using evidence-based programs, advocating for policy change, and implementing environmental strategies.

We are able to achieve this through the valuable community partners that include the Warren Health Equity Zone (HEZ.) This resident-led effort was created to reduce and eliminate health disparities and barriers to wellness. Funded by the Rhode Island Department of Health, the Warren HEZ, is supported by East Bay Community Action Program (EBCAP) as its backbone agency.



Another community organization the Coalition works closely with is the East Bay Recovery Center (EBRC). The Coalition has been working with the EBRC since it opened in July of 2019. Past collaborations included Town employees receiving Narcan and mental health training. The EBRC also partners with the Coalition on the Candlelight Vigil held each year on August 31 as well as many other community events.



Local businesses also do their part to help in our prevention efforts by better understanding our local ordinance and state laws around alcohol and tobacco products. In collaboration with the Warren Police Department, compliance checks are conducted to monitor alcohol and tobacco product sales by local businesses in the community that hold a license. This allows the town of Warren to make sure businesses are following local and state laws to ensure public safety.



Warren Schools Support Remains Valuable

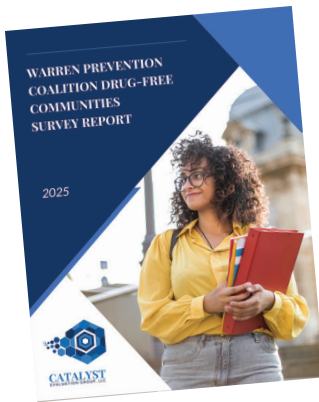
Of course, the strong support the Coalition receives from the Warren school administration and school committee plays a key role in understanding the areas we need to focus on to keep the kids in our community healthy and safe. Working along with our schools, we strive to support and nurture youth leadership, raise awareness of the effects of substances within the schools curriculum and teacher practices, with a special focus on student mental health. We currently have a Student Assistance Counselor in place at Mount Hope High School and School Resource Officers at both the MHHS and Kickemuit Middle School.



Data plays an important part in the programs and initiatives we introduce in the schools. The Coalition administers the Health & Wellness Survey and focus groups on a yearly basis and the State RISS (Rhode Island Student Survey) every 2 years. These surveys/focus groups help us secure funding with the federal government. We provide presentations on prevention, alcohol, nicotine, bullying, mental health awareness and helping our youth make good, healthy decisions.

What Our Survey Data Shows

In October 2025, the Warren Prevention Coalition conducted a community survey targeted to adolescents between grades 6 and 12. The survey asked Drug-Free Communities Core Measures around prevalence of use, perception of harm and perception of both peer and parental disapproval.



The survey generated 1,031 total responses. Responses with inadequate sample sizes and indication of not answering honestly on the survey were removed for a final total of 880 responses for analysis. Responses were weighted by grade response. These findings will help inform strategies to address youth substance use in the community.

Perception of Moderate or Great Risk
Perception of great or moderate risk increased across all substances among youth between 2019 to 2025, most notably for ENDS, which results in stronger protection against initiation of use; however, reductions in perception of risk decreased between 2023 and 2025.⁽¹⁾

