



# Winooski Partnership for Prevention

Education | Awareness | Engagement

**Substance Abuse Assessment Report for Winooski, Vermont**  
DRAFT Report Produced February 2018 by Winooski Partnership for Prevention  
\*Updated June 2018, with 2017 YRBS Data



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## TABLE OF CONTENTS

Introduction: Purpose and Goals	3
What is substance abuse prevention?	3
Why try to prevent substance abuse?	4
Methodology	4
Social and Economic Environment	6
Youth Substance Use: The Local Scope	6
Parental Empowerment	12
Impacts of substance abuse in Winooski	12
Environmental Risk Factors	13
Risk Factors	
Availability of substances	14
Promotion of substances	15
Accessibility of substance	15
Cultural norms	16
Other unique factors	18
Protective factors	18
Environmental	18
Individual	19
Conclusions	20
Opportunities	20
Acknowledgments	22
Contact us	22

## **Introduction: Purpose and Goals of the Winooski Substance Abuse Prevention Assessment**

The purpose of carrying out this assessment was to better understand the local conditions and root causes of substance abuse or misuse present in the city of Winooski, Vermont. A better understanding of these conditions is necessary in helping us direct our programming and interventions to protect our youth as they grow and develop into self-sufficient and fulfilled adults.

By providing the results of this work to local leaders and community members, we hope to empower evidence-informed action to be taken to reduce substance abuse.

A word about what we mean when we refer to root causes: some may believe that the root causes of substance abuse are either the result of an individual who lacks the moral fortitude to resist the “easy way out,” or the result of a tragically flawed individual who simply has been overwhelmed by his/her/their life’s circumstances. Both of these views focus on the user, and assume that the central reason someone uses substances is that they consciously choose to. Substance abuse prevention science tells a more interesting story.

When viewing a community as a whole, scientists have seen that we function much the same way an organism functions, interconnected, living and working together in the same spaces each day, exchanging products and services for money, and ideas and behaviors, as well. Humans are at their core social beings who are continually receiving and interpreting ideas and feelings from each other and environments.

With this in mind, we can understand how to impact the health of many people in the same environment at the same time. By delving into root causes, the sources and factors that contribute to substance abuse that are specific to a particular community, also known as “risk” and “protective” factors, we can also understand how to intervene in a way that has the greatest positive impact on the largest number of people.

## **Substance Abuse Prevention: What is substance abuse prevention?**

Organizations like the Winooski Partnership for Prevention are mostly focused on efforts to prevent substance abuse by changing the conditions in a community, including physical, social, or cultural factors that may lead to substance use. In other words, preventing substance abuse requires that we create the right conditions for youth to thrive, because we can’t ultimately decide for others what s/he/they will do with their bodies. So, in addition to working to change the physical, social, and or cultural factors present around youth in our community, we also inform and empower individual youths in a program setting. By directly helping a specific group of youth to develop relevant knowledge, attitudes, and skills, we empower them to lead community changes themselves. Empowerment also acts as a “protective factor” for those individuals.

Substance abuse prevention is not treatment and recovery, though many people think of them as the same. Therefore, one of our goals for this report is to clarify the work we do to prevent, rather than treat, substance abuse, and in so doing, differentiate between the two interventions.

Substance abuse prevention is a science. As we know and experience, every community is both unique and similar to other communities across the globe. In that light, prevention science has identified a comprehensive, research-based list of both protective and risk factors related to substance abuse that are common across communities. This allows us to determine which factors are present locally and to develop strategies to address the particular array of risk and protective factors present in our community.<sup>1</sup>

Additionally, research tells us that not all risk and protective factors have equal bearing on substance abuse rates. For example, frequent exposure to product placement and ads for tobacco, in convenience stores, is a stronger predictor of youth experimentation than what peers think or do<sup>2</sup>. We know that family norms around substance use/abuse are very influential, as well.<sup>3,4</sup>

## Why try to prevent substance abuse?

By preventing substance abuse, what we want for our communities and our children is possible. It also saves communities money, lives, and we know it works<sup>5</sup> because the nation has witnessed dramatic reductions in substance use by youth since the 70s in both alcohol and tobacco use. By making the environment and programs available to youth that promote health, rather than substance use, we can ensure a more equitable start for the children in the community.

The Winooski Partnership for Prevention believes that a healthy start in life should be available to all youth, and **should not, “depend [on] where you live,”** (2018 Winooski High School focus group).

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<sup>1</sup> Substance Abuse and Mental Health Administration. “Prevention”. <https://www.samhsa.gov/prevention>

<sup>2</sup> *JNCI: Journal of the National Cancer Institute*, Volume 87, Issue 20, 18 October 1995, Pages 1538–1545, <https://doi.org/10.1093/jnci/87.20.1538>. “Influence of Tobacco Marketing and Exposure to Smokers on Adolescent Susceptibility to Smoking”. Nicola Evans, Arthur Farkas, Elizabeth Gilpin, Charles Berry, John P. Pierce.

<sup>3</sup> National Institute on Drug Abuse. “Prevention Drug Use Among Children and Adolescents (In Brief), What are risk and protective factors?” October, 2003. <https://www.drugabuse.gov/publications/preventing-drug-abuse-among-children-adolescents/chapter-1-risk-factors-protective-factors/what-are-risk-factors>

<sup>4</sup> The National Center on Addiction and Substance Abuse at Columbia University. “Family Matters: Substance Abuse and The American Family, A CASA White Paper”. March, 2005. <file:///C:/Users/katen/Downloads/Family-matters-substance-abuse-and-the-american-family.pdf>

<sup>5</sup> The Surgeon General’s Report on Alcohol, Drugs, and Health. 2016. Chapter 3: Prevention Programs and Policies. <https://addiction.surgeongeneral.gov/chapter-3-prevention.pdf>

**Community-based prevention benefits greatly from an informed public. Understanding that 99% of substance abuse starts before age 21<sup>6</sup> is key to understanding the strategies we undertake to delay experimentation, and prevent disorders, as long as possible. Profits from substance industries are dependent on people who have use disorders and dependency.** 73% of the profits from the alcohol industry are from people with dependency and addiction to alcohol<sup>7</sup>. The tobacco industry also depends on addiction and early experimentation for their revenues<sup>8</sup>. The marijuana industry is not far behind, making use of a slow regulatory response, low community awareness of its dangers, and advertising to children while making unsupported claims about supposed health benefits of their product.

“The ability to attract new smokers and develop them into a young adult franchise is key to brand development,” states a 1999 Philip Morris report.

Recent studies of use rates of marijuana indicate that the percentage of controlled (weekend) users is extremely low, and belies the claim that a drug can be used casually by most people. Only a startling 2% of users of marijuana reported using the substance only on weekends; the remainder of users consumed marijuana daily and near-daily.<sup>9</sup>

In sum, because a single individual comes into contact with multiple environments on any given day, every partner in this endeavor has an important role to play and opportunity to make a positive impact. To achieve our goals of reducing substance abuse, we provide this report especially to our community partners to aid in our ability to take coordinated action, leveraging local knowledge and expertise to further delay the onset of use and prevent addiction in adulthood.

## Methodology

This report was developed using qualitative and quantitative data, and data collected by national, state, and local agencies and organizations, including the Centers for Disease Control, the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration, the National Institutes of Health, the National Institute on Drug Abuse, Campaign for Tobacco-Free Kids, Johns Hopkins Center on Alcohol Marketing and Youth, the Vermont Department of Health’s Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System (BRFSS),

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<sup>6</sup> The National Center on Addiction and Substance Abuse. “Teenage Substance Use”. CASAColumbia. (2011). *Adolescent substance use: America’s #1 public health problem*. <https://www.centeronaddiction.org/addiction-prevention/teenage-addiction>

<sup>7</sup> The Guardian. “Problem drinkers account for most of alcohol industry sales, figures reveal”. 22 January 2016. <https://www.theguardian.com/society/2016/jan/22/problem-drinkers-alcohol-industry-most-sales-figures-reveal>

<sup>8</sup> Gawker. “Who Drives the Alcohol Industry? Alcoholics. 26, September, 2014. Nolan, Hamilton. <http://gawker.com/who-drives-the-alcohol-industry-alcoholics-1639454291>

<sup>9</sup> Caulkins, Jonathan, presentation, “Options for Vermont after legalization,” December 20, 2017.

Youth Risk Behavior Survey (YRBS), Vermont Tobacco Control Program, and Vermont League of Cities and Towns, among others.

Members of the Winooski Partnership for Prevention staff and board also interviewed unique local stakeholders, including a focus group of local high school student participants, a survey of parents of middle and high school students, as well as “key informants,” people who have a perspective we are unlikely to get from other data. **Special thanks to the Winooski Police Department, the Winooski School Based Health Center, and the Winooski School District leaders and incredible staff and other local leaders for their time and contributions to the information used in this report.**

## **The Social and Economic Environment of Winooski, Vermont**

Winooski, Vermont is home to 7,128 residents (latest United States Census). 18 percent of the people in Winooski are under 18 years old, and 10% are over 65. 82.6% of the population is white. 15.3% speak a language other than English at home (12.1% in South Burlington). Winooski has 38.9% owner-occupied housing. 26.1% people live in poverty, and about half of all residents living below 250% of the federal poverty level. As of 2015, slightly more than half of the Winooski School District’s student population was a racial or ethnic minority. Only 11% of students reported that a college degree is the highest level of education their mothers held, with the most reported level high school or less.

The median household income in Winooski is \$45,974 and for comparison, in neighboring South Burlington it is \$65,840.<sup>10</sup> Winooski has the lowest income in Chittenden County. Winooski ranks 215 out of 251, whereas Burlington is in 54th position. Shelburne and Charlotte are 2d and 3d richest, respectively.

Winooski houses several hundred college students within Spinner Place (312 beds), and in addition, many graduate students live in private residences<sup>11</sup> in Winooski. Hundreds of young adults attend Community College of Vermont’s Winooski campus daily, many of whom are 18 or 17 years old<sup>12</sup>.

## **Youth Substance Use in Winooski**

In the following section, we share key pieces of data related to current substance use rates and risk factors specific to Winooski from the YRBS, including multiple-year trends.

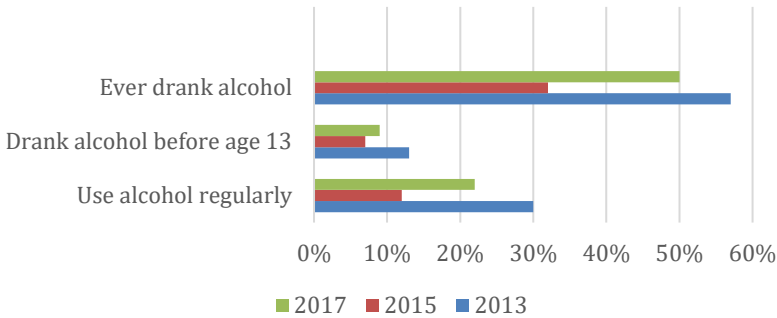
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<sup>10</sup> United States Census Bureau. <https://www.census.gov/>

<sup>11</sup> University of Vermont. Allen & Brooks Residential Report: Student Housing. March 2011. <https://www.uvm.edu/~plan/attachmenti.pdf>

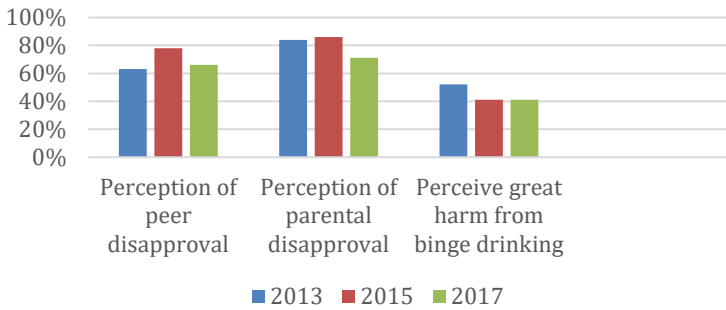
<sup>12</sup> Community College of Vermont, Winooski Campus. <http://ccv.edu/location/ccv-winooski/>

### Alcohol Use Among Winooski 11th/12th Graders over Time



(Above) an ATI (Above the Influence) student participates in the annual “Sticker Shock” event that helps raise awareness of the consequences of providing alcohol to minors.

### Risk Factors for Alcohol Use Among Winooski 11/12th Grades over Time

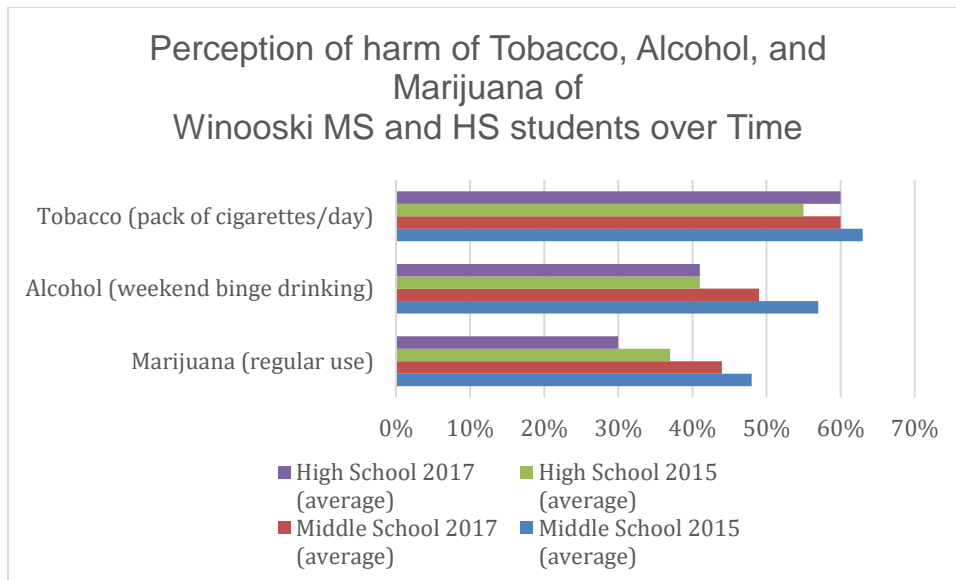


Risk factors that contribute to substance use include perceptions of peer disapproval, parental disapproval, as well as how harmful youth believe the substance is or would be to them. After reviewing our data, it appears that local cultural norms around alcohol use combined

with lack of support and awareness among parents and others who directly interact with youth on a regular basis may be contributing to decreases of perception of harm and increases in use among youth in our community.

**“Underage drinking is a big problem we have,”** --a physician resident who sees both Winooski and neighboring Burlington youth said in a recent interview with the Winooski Partnership for Prevention. The informant also mentioned that kids are more likely to speak openly when their parents aren’t in the room, and then they find that, **“A lot of kids say they have tried alcohol.”**<sup>1</sup>

The chart below shows trends in how harmful Winooski middle and high school students believe alcohol, marijuana, and tobacco to be over time. This has decreased for alcohol and marijuana, the direction that indicates increased use is likely to follow, without intervention. On the positive note, it appears that perception of harm of tobacco use has increased among high school students.



More students than not believed it would be easy to get alcohol, and most students do not believe there would be legal consequences for getting caught drinking at a party.<sup>13</sup>

**“[He] does not respond to big underage drinking parties, which he said means that it may be more concealed, or there is less going on,”** Winooski law enforcement officer, 2017.

Additionally, more youth perceive that it would be easy to obtain these substances than did in 2015, across middle school and high school students.

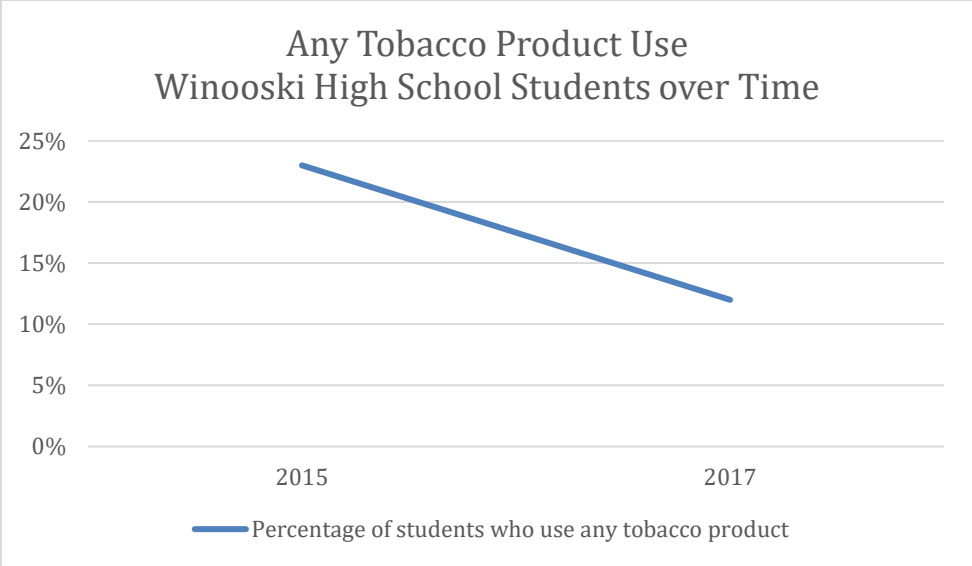
Young adult use is also relevant to our work. Around 2000 young adults attend college in Winooski, some of whom are dual-enrollment students and under age 18. Other Burlington college students find housing here in dedicated apartment buildings and private residences. In marketing materials, these large apartment complexes [show young adults using alcohol as part of a normal social experience](#). **Among Chittenden County young adults, rates of alcohol use are startling high. 71% report underage drinking, over half report binge drinking during the last month, and just under half report binge drinking in the last week<sup>14</sup>.** The vast majority of young adults report obtaining alcohol from an unrelated adult 60%, 28.5% from other underage adults, and 23.4%, at a social gathering.

In addition to recent decreased regulation, increased promotion, and inclusion of alcohol in daily life, there has also been a rise of new tobacco product delivery devices, namely, e-cigarettes, and subsequently, increases in use of any tobacco products among youth, nationally and locally.

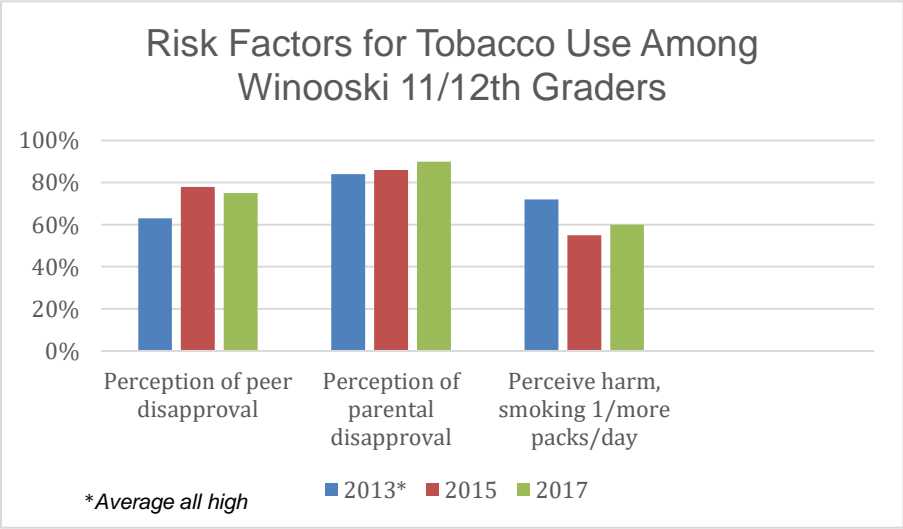
<sup>13</sup> 32% of 11<sup>th</sup> and 12<sup>th</sup> graders in Winooski who **believe that a party with alcohol would be broken up by the police**

<sup>14</sup> Vermont Young Adult Survey, 2016. Vermont Department of Health. Chittenden County. Survey.



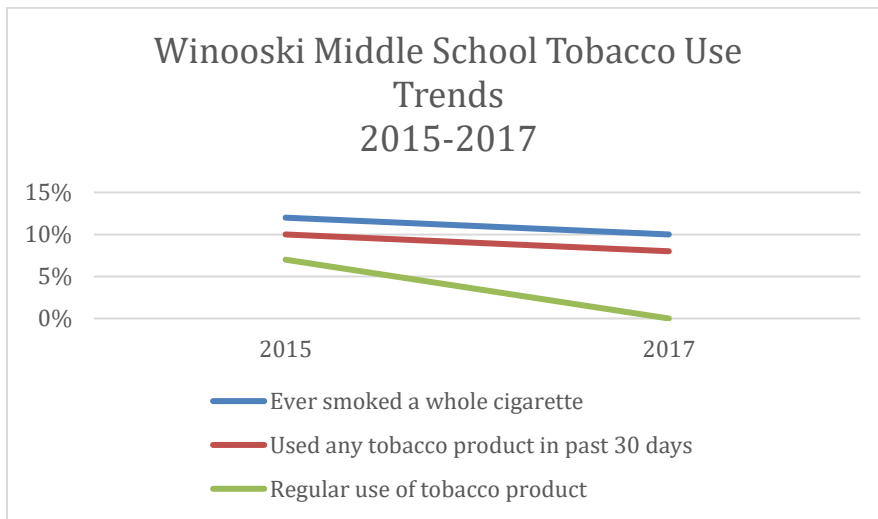


Risk factors that contribute to tobacco use among youth, similarly to alcohol, include how students perceive their peers and parental expectations, as well as how harmful they themselves perceive substances to be.



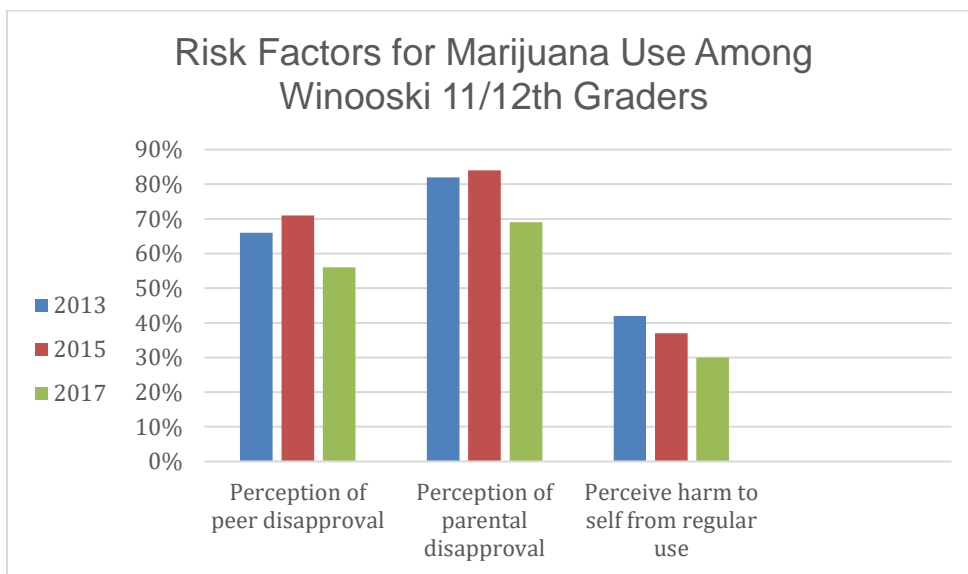
It appears that more youth perceive that their parents would not want them to use tobacco since 2015, which also correlates with an increase in their perception of the harm of tobacco use. This seems like good news, since we know parents are the most important influence on youth’s decisions about using substances. In addition, since 2015, there has been a reported increase in the number of students being asked by a healthcare provider if they used tobacco (from 44% to 50%).

Winooski, VT middle schoolers in the 2015 YRBS in general reported higher smoking rates than other kids of the same age within the State of Vermont and within its own county (Chittenden County). **Since 2015, however, we see some positive changes in the same data. This is also the age group that the Winooski Partnership for Prevention focuses on with its after-school programming.**



Local substance abuse prevention policies have been shown to mitigate health disparities where poverty exists, extending lifespans, which is an important role the Winooski Partnership for Prevention can play in a community that faces more poverty than others in Chittenden County.

Finally, in looking at risk factors related to marijuana, we see the following trends over the past three YRBS reports:



**These trends are a cause for concern<sup>15</sup>.** Even more alarming, among the same group of students in our focus group who showed clear awareness of the dangers of prescription drug misuse (78%), there

<sup>15</sup> Vermont Department of Health. “Youth Risk Behavior Survey (YRBS)”. Survey. 2011-2017. <http://www.healthvermont.gov/health-statistics-vital-records/population-health-surveys-data/youth-risk-behavior-survey-yrbs>

was no recognition of a risk of great harm from regular marijuana use<sup>16</sup>. Use rates are also similarly apportioned; only 4% of Winooski High School students reported misusing **prescription stimulants drugs**, 2017, which is down from 10% in reported in 2015. 4% ever used a prescription that wasn't prescribed to them, down from 5% in 2015<sup>17</sup>.

We believe this is the result of ambivalence and lack of education in the larger community regarding the dangers to the developing brain posed by marijuana use—and success in getting a clear message to parents and youth about the dangers of prescription drug misuse. We need to address this.

**Young adult use of marijuana in Chittenden County in 2016 has also increased since 2014. Just under half of the respondents, 46.6% reported regular use. 43% used marijuana 2 out of 3 days, or 20 or more days in the past month.** With the modern marijuana market has come mass-produced “edibles,” which by law are intended to be sold commercially in Vermont only to medical patients; e-cigarettes have also been used to consume marijuana. Of the young adults who use marijuana, 96% reported smoking it, 23% consumed it in food, and 28% used it with a vaporizer. Over 18% report driving after using marijuana. **By comparison, 4% of young adults used a prescription pain reliever not prescribed to them, and less than 1% ever used heroin<sup>18</sup>.**

**Nationally**, we are seeing similar trends to what we are seeing in Winooski and Vermont (though Vermont's rates for marijuana and alcohol are some of the highest in the country). According to the most recent report (2017) from Monitoring the Future<sup>19</sup>, a national survey that monitors trends across the country in substance abuse among youth:

- **Marijuana use among youth showed the first significant increase in 7 years, across age ranges.**
- **Alcohol use, after falling steadily for years, remained flat.**
- **Opiate use remained low among adolescents**, while<sup>20</sup> in 2014, over 2 million Americans were dependent or abused prescription opioids<sup>21</sup>; in 2016, 46 adults died every day from prescription opioid overdoses.

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<sup>16</sup> Winooski Partnership for Prevention. Youth focus group and survey. 2016. Survey and Interview. Winooski School District, Winooski, VT 05404.

<sup>17</sup> Vermont Department of Health. “Youth Risk Behavior Survey (YRBS)”. Survey. 2011-2015. <http://www.healthvermont.gov/health-statistics-vital-records/population-health-surveys-data/youth-risk-behavior-survey-yrbs>

<sup>18</sup> Vermont Young Adult Survey, 2016. Vermont Department of Health. Chittenden County. Survey.

<sup>19</sup> National Institute on Drugs and Alcohol (NIDA). “Monitoring the Future”. Survey. December 2017. <https://www.drugabuse.gov/trends-statistics/monitoring-future/monitoring-future-study-trends-in-prevalence-various-drugs>

<sup>20</sup> Page 28-29: Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration. (2017). Key substance use and mental health indicators in the United States: Results from the 2016 National Survey on Drug Use and Health (HHS Publication No. SMA 17-5044, NSDUH Series H-52). Rockville, MD: Center for Behavioral Health Statistics and Quality, Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration. Retrieved from <https://www.samhsa.gov/data/>.

As may be evident from the data above, opiate addiction starts in youth, with tobacco, alcohol, and marijuana<sup>1-1</sup>. Communities, including ours, should see these trends above as cause to better address the promotion, availability, and normalization of the three most commonly used substances by youth, if we are to make better progress in preventing continued upward trends in opiate abuse among adults.

## Parental Empowerment

In a 2017, the Winooski Partnership for Prevention, in collaboration with the Winooski School District, carried out its first-ever survey of parents' attitudes and beliefs around substance use in Winooski. To date, we have reached a relatively small sample size.

We learned that:

- The vast majority of respondents said they knew where to look for information about how to talk to their kids about alcohol and other drug use.
- Respondents were split about evenly when it came to feeling that the Winooski School District provided support to parents.
- Fewer parents believed that using marijuana could hurt teens' brain development than other peoples' prescription medications (66% v. 79%)<sup>22</sup>. We saw this same disparity among youth around their perception of harm of marijuana use versus prescription drug misuse<sup>23</sup>.

Most respondents (about 2/3) reported never having any substances in their home. Of those who did, more parents make prescription drugs inaccessible, fewer make marijuana inaccessible, and even fewer make alcohol, including liquor and beer and wine, inaccessible (locking it up or storing it securely).

"You know, I think a lot of it stems from the parents and the people of influence. So if the parents are abusing drugs or alcohol, it's more likely that the child will because it's what they see and what they know," Winooski law enforcement officer.

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<sup>21</sup> Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. "Prescription Opioid Overdose Data". 1 August 2017. <https://www.cdc.gov/drugoverdose/data/overdose.html>

<sup>22</sup> Chittenden Prevention Network, Winooski Partnership for Prevention. "Parent Survey". Survey. 2016-2017.

<sup>23</sup> Winooski Partnership for Prevention. Youth focus group and survey. 2016. Survey and Interview. Winooski School District, Winooski, VT 05404.

## Impacts of Substance Abuse in Winooski

3.1 - 6 per 1000 emergency room visits from Winooski residents are related to alcohol, which is not as great as Burlington (6.1-9), but greater than the rest of Chittenden County (fewer than 3 per 1000). 1.61 to 3 per 1000 visits of Winooski residents are related to illicit drug use.

Winooski with a population of 7,128 had almost as many domestic disturbance calls to in 2013-2014 as neighboring Colchester with a population of 17,067, where Winooski saw 117 calls versus Colchester's 118, respectively<sup>24-25</sup>.

Local service providers show concern over this fact; it was recognized by local partners as an issue (*Winooski Promise Community* project proposal). Higher concentration of alcohol outlets has been established as a significant factor in higher rates of domestic violence (see study abstract [here](#)<sup>26</sup>), which, as we will show later, is an important and unique risk factor in Winooski.

In survey after survey, residents have spoken up about substance abuse as an issue that worries them. For example, 68% of Winooski survey respondents (CHIN)<sup>27</sup> said they saw drug and alcohol as a challenge in the community, compared to 52% of all people surveyed in Chittenden County and Grand Isle. In another survey carried out door-to-door, residents said they believed that the overall drug and alcohol problems were a reason that they saw people moving out of Winooski after a few years<sup>28</sup>.

Drug and alcohol abuse in Winooski costs the community in many ways, not least in terms of crime.

"I do feel that a lot of the misdemeanor crimes, thefts, entry into cars, even burglaries, it's all fueled for that obtaining money to obtain the drugs or the alcohol or whatever your vice happens to be," Winooski law enforcement officer.

## Environmental Risk and Protective Factors

This section will focus on environmental risk and protective factors unique to Winooski that we have found in our review of local data. Environmental risk factors include the physical, social, or cultural factors that may lead to substance use.

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<sup>24</sup> United States Census Bureau. <https://www.census.gov/>

<sup>25</sup> Domestic Violence Task Force Data (with specificity to Winooski). Chittenden County. FY 2014.

<sup>26</sup> Wiley Online Library. "A longitudinal analysis of alcohol outlet density and domestic violence". Livingston, Michael. 14 February 2011. <http://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/10.1111/j.1360-0443.2010.03333.x/abstract>

<sup>27</sup> <https://www.uvmhealth.org/medcenter/Documents/About-Us/CHNA.pdf>

<sup>28</sup> Stroup, Clark, Houghton. May 2014. Survey.

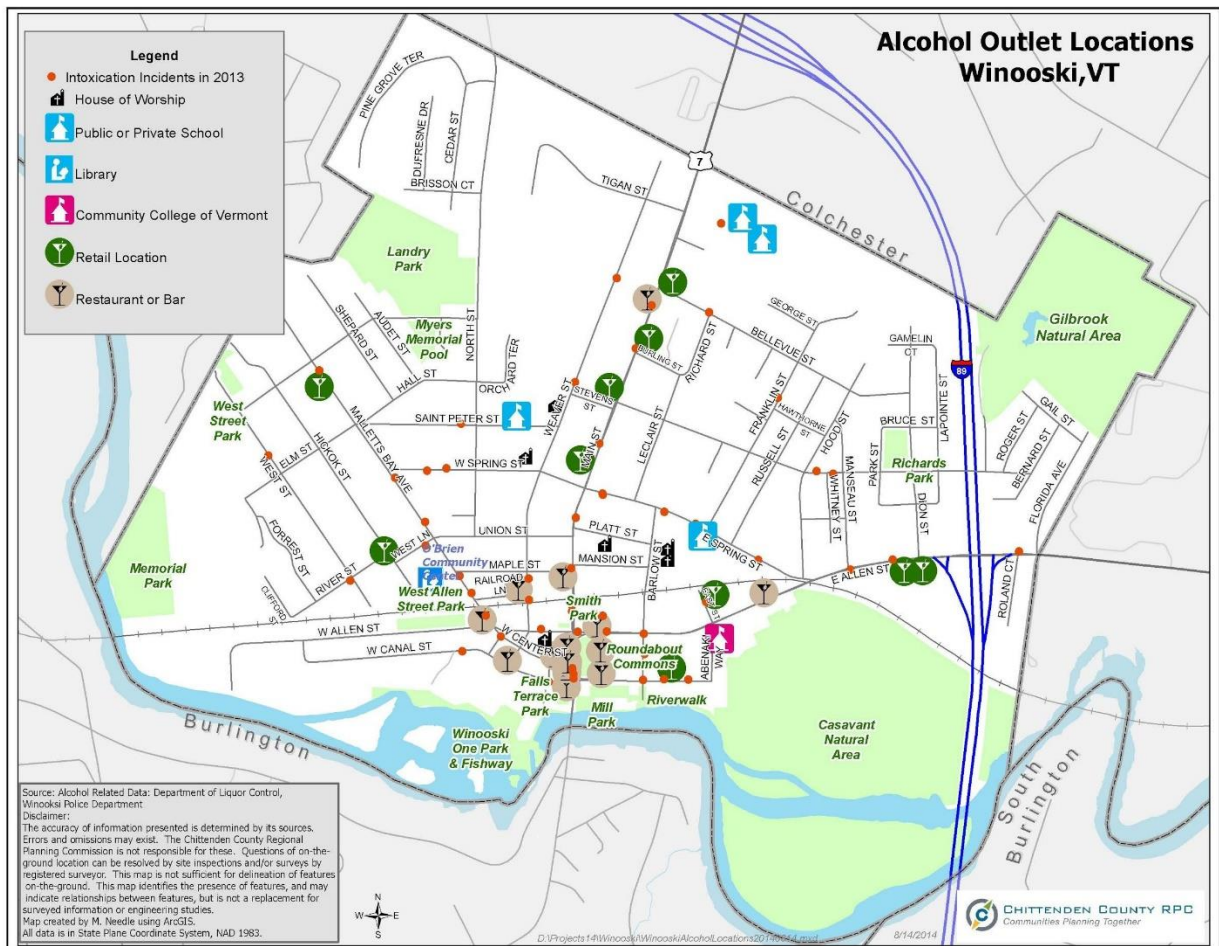
We also will review factors that are present that support individual youth in developing knowledge, attitudes, and skills needed to remain substance-free until adulthood.

**Please Note:** This section is meant to be as comprehensive as possible, specific to this topic, and we always **look forward to hearing more from our partners and community members.**

## RISK FACTORS

### Availability of Substances

Winooski has 13 tobacco retailers within its 1.43 square miles, 9 or 75% of them located in the lowest-income neighborhoods with a median household income of \$0-\$42,202<sup>29</sup>. Below is a map that shows alcohol retailers specifically, overlaid with alcohol-related crime reports.



<sup>29</sup> Chittenden County Regional Planning Commission.

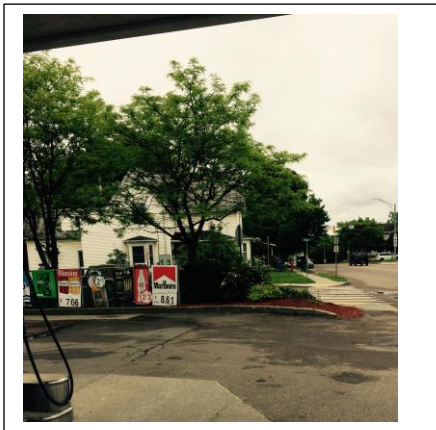
For comparison, neighboring South Burlington has 29 tobacco retailers within its 29.6 square miles, 14 or 48% of them located in the lowest-income neighborhoods. **Both communities’ most low-income areas host the vast majority of tobacco retailers.**

**“Alcohol, you can get alcohol practically anywhere,” 2017 high school student focus group respondent.**

## Promotion of Substances in Winooski

Research shows that promotion of substances, including prices and price discounts, have a disproportionate impact on decisions of youth to use.

**Tobacco** product promotion is commonplace among the majority of tobacco retailers in the city, most of which are convenience stores that are part of gas stations. Promotional signs are often placed on the edges of parking lots and in windows facing the street. Inside stores, flavored tobacco products and their packaging is viewable, including such flavors as “white grape” and “boozy mango”.



**Alcohol** promotion in Winooski is a similarly prominent feature of the human-created spaces people live, work, and recreate in. Eight restaurants and bars surround the central Winooski traffic circle, through which about 35,000 vehicles travel per. Alcohol and drink specials are consistently promoted on signs visible from the street.

18 additional alcohol retailers exist in Winooski, including bars, convenience stores, and one grocery market, several within a half mile (walking distance) of the public K-12 school, as well as the churches, private school, and senior center.

## Accessibility and Promotion of Other Drugs

In community events and surveys, residents have repeatedly expressed concern about the number of hypodermic needles they come across in the community. Professionals working with the school have said that the students ask what to do when they see a needle on the ground.

There have been several high-profile cases in the west side of the city in the past several years where multiple people in multiple residences have been arrested for drug trafficking. In March 2016, the discovery of a Butane-Hash Oil lab, a product of marijuana, above one of the apartment complexes in the downtown area halted traffic for several hours while law enforcement and community officials were needed to address the health risk and legal ramifications. While these events do not represent promotion of these substances, per se, they may be an indication and a contribution to normalization and cultural acquiescence.

## Cultural Norms around Substance Use in Winooski: Local Conditions

In this section, we will discuss some of the cultural norms that are present in Winooski around substance use that impact the views of youth. To assess this, we observed what is promoted and used--how, when, and where. For example, what is promoted by a business can be an indication of what the business feels will be appreciated and accepted by its customers (which may or may not be true). In turn, customers and others get the impression that what is promoted is at least of interest to enough people to warrant the resources of the business being used to promote it. This leads to the behavior becoming normalized, which in turn, tends to increase the behavior.

In a marketing brainstorming document of a tobacco corporation that was discovered during the lawsuits in the 90s, for example, one marketing strategy was to litter empty packs of cigarettes around to increase the perception of use.

Below is an example of social media marketing from a bar that is within a half-mile of a vulnerable population center promoting binge drinking.



Downtown businesses in Winooski frequently promote drink specials, new breweries and what's on tap at specific bars. In local business newsletters, events at the senior center, parks, and free youth meals are promoted alongside local drink specials and drinking-focused events. Other promotions include specially-priced drinks, gift certificates from bars as raffle prizes, and holiday temporary markets that provide a variety of free alcohol at all vendors, including non-bar/restaurant vendors, with messaging that encourages binge drinking. Within the promotion of other events, there have also been raffles for free tickets to alcohol-based events.

The attitude observed by our law enforcement key informant was that culturally, people view alcohol use by youth as normal experimentation and something that “just happens,” and “is what it is.”

**“There are bars. You have a bunch of them downtown. It’s celebrated, alcohol is meant for celebration, so if you want to reward yourself for getting that job, or being on vacation,” Winooski High School 2017 focus group participant.**



In addition, alcohol is being incorporated into new types of events. In nearby Burlington, Vermont, the Parks and Recreation eatery at the public lakeside beach last year began selling alcoholic drinks. In Winooski, alcohol is being promoted and incorporated into social sports. In neighboring South Burlington, as well, the Parks and Recreation Department has started offering “Paint and Sip” events, encouraging consumption of alcohol along with public art classes. First Night, an event that began as an alternative to the binge drinking happening on New Year’s Eve in many cities around the country, has now begun to promote and include alcohol in places like Boston.

Alongside an explosion in alcohol promotion and use in recent years has coincided with an increase in college attendance<sup>30</sup>, where many young adults tend to be targets of the alcohol industry as they solidify their consumer and substance use habits. Myths about alcohol use abound, such as that parents who consume alcohol with their kids help prepare them to “drink responsibly,” when they arrive at college<sup>31</sup>. The myth that prohibiting use by law or rule actually causes more drinking to occur is also a commonly-held belief among college-educated adults, even though no research supports this view, and in fact, there is overwhelming research showing the opposite<sup>32</sup>. Moreover, the industry has helped create divisions among caring community members, painting use of their product as part of showing that you are educated and independent, and anyone who challenges any reduction in regulation is painted as a “prohibitionist,” or someone who deserves to be isolated from society”.

Spearheaded by national retail chains wanting to sell more alcohol, this cultural shift in how alcohol is viewed in our daily lives has resulted in the relaxing of many restrictions that were once in place and that limited use of alcohol, which protected the public from more of its harms, such as the “blue laws” in Massachusetts<sup>33</sup>.

Tobacco and alcohol industries have regarded women and other minority population segments, groups beginning to assert their rights in the public sphere, as prime targets and new frontiers for a future customer base. Understanding these groups’ desire to create identities and exhibit independence as the culture changes and glass ceilings are cracked and broken, these industries align images of their products with values held by these groups. Ads encourage women and minorities, as their purchasing powers increases, to use their products in order to make visible their newfound power<sup>34</sup>. Promotion for electronic

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<sup>30</sup> National Center for Education Statistics: U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics. (2016). *Digest of Education Statistics, 2015* (NCES 2016-014),

<sup>31</sup> ScienceDaily. “Parental provision of alcohol to teenagers does not reduce risks, compared to no supply, Australian study finds”. 25 January 2018.

<https://www.sciencedaily.com/releases/2018/01/180125161255.htm>

<sup>32</sup> New York Times. “Opinion: Actually, Prohibition was a Success”. Moore, Mark H. 16 October 1989. <http://www.nytimes.com/1989/10/16/opinion/actually-prohibition-was-a-success.html>

<sup>33</sup> <https://www.npr.org/templates/story/story.php?storyId=141531406>

<sup>34</sup> World Health Organization (WHO). “Gender, Women, and the Tobacco Epidemic: Why Women and Girls Use Tobacco”.

[http://www.who.int/tobacco/publications/gender/en\\_tfi\\_gender\\_women\\_marketing\\_tobacco\\_women.pdf](http://www.who.int/tobacco/publications/gender/en_tfi_gender_women_marketing_tobacco_women.pdf)

cigarettes is rampant and makes dubious claims that the tobacco industry itself admits are untrue<sup>3536</sup> (that their goal is to help smokers stop using tobacco). Promotion of alcohol, often paired with images that objectify women, can be seen on TV at all times of the day. Indeed, the latest YRBS data shows the striking disparity between substance use rates among straight/CIS gendered and LGBTQ youth.

## **Other Unique Risk Factors in Winooski**

- 1 in 17 children in Vermont has at least one incarcerated parent, according to the National Survey on Children’s Health, 2011-2012<sup>37</sup>, which is considered to be an adverse childhood experience that increases the risk for youth of developing substance use disorders. We have found this to be a significant factor for youth in the community in Winooski recognized by local partners.
- About 70% of the student population at Winooski School District qualify for free and reduced lunch. Winooski’s relative poverty to the rest of the state increases its risk for substance abuse.
- In addition, among service providers we interviewed, there is a perceived lack of things for youth to do in Winooski. This perception may be supported by the fact that several youth-serving programs and facilities have closed down in recent years including the city’s after school Teen Center, the public outdoor pool, and the YMCA, which even before it closed had repurposed its indoor basketball court that had been made available to and popular with many youth.

## **PROTECTIVE FACTORS**

### **Environmental**

- The city, with support from the Winooski Partnership for Prevention, initiated and implemented a tobacco-free parks policy in 2016 which covers three of its five major parks.

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<sup>35</sup> Campaign for Tobacco-Free Kids. “Starting This Week, Tobacco Companies Must Run Court-Ordered Ads Telling the Truth about Their Lethal Products”. 20 November 2017.

[https://www.tobaccofreekids.org/press-releases/2017\\_11\\_20\\_corrective\\_statements](https://www.tobaccofreekids.org/press-releases/2017_11_20_corrective_statements)

<sup>36</sup> Campaign for Tobacco-Free Kids. “The Philip MORris-funded Foundation for a Smoke-Free World”. <https://www.tobaccofreekids.org/what-we-do/industry-watch/pmi-foundation>

<sup>37</sup> Data Resource Center for Child and Adolescent Health. “National Survey on Children’s Health”. Survey, 2011-2012. <http://www.childhealthdata.org/browse/data-snapshots/state-snapshot?geo=47>

- The city has also reduced the possible amount of tobacco and alcohol advertising in the downtown by way of content-neutral signage restrictions that prevent entire windows from being covered with product-related advertising.
- The city has instituted a registration process for groups using Landry park for private functions, including an application to serve alcohol at such events.

## Individual

### Resources for Children and Youth in Winooski

In 2016, according to the [National Survey on Children’s Health](#), about 23.2 percent of parents in Vermont surveyed reported that their child between the ages of 6 and 17 has some or a lot of difficulty making friends.

In Winooski, opportunities to learn social skills for all ages exist to varying degrees for various age ranges. The **Winooski Family Center** located at Elm Street, serves children from birth through preschool age with regular playgroups for parents and young children, as well as a part-time preschool that serves, at capacity, 20 children per year.

- **Winooski School District** educates about 870 children ages 5 through 25, including a half-year health class.
- **Guidance and health teachers** support the interest of Winooski School District students
- **Winooski’s Parks and Recreation and Community Services**, serves 88 youth in soccer, 64 youth in basketball, offers skiing and football at low cost.
- The Winooski School District offers **after-school programming** related to a wide range of interests.
- **CenterPoint Adolescent Treatment Services** provides a substance abuse counselor to the school, and runs an additional specialized therapeutic school in Winooski.
- **Landry Park**, located on the west side of the city, includes basketball courts, a playground, a skate park, and trails, and is tobacco-free.
- The city’s **Winooski Memorial Library** allows youth to congregate after school and also access free and reduced meals, homework help, and other programming, and serves roughly 95 youth per year.<sup>38</sup>

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<sup>38</sup> <https://www.winooski.vt.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/03/FY-14-15.pdf>

- The **Winooski Partnership for Prevention**, in collaboration with the Winooski School District, offers a weekly after school prevention leadership skills program, and serves around 11 students each week.

## CONCLUSIONS

There is much opportunity for both city, school, and community involvement to expand and strengthen environmental (social, economic) conditions to increase the likelihood for healthier outcomes for our youth and young adults.

- There are strong partnerships among agencies and leaders in Winooski.
- Overall, there is cultural acceptance of substance use in Winooski.
- Youth and young adults are aware of the promotion and availability of substances.
- Promotion and availability of substances in Winooski represents a significant risk factor for youth and young adult substance use.
- Parents' use and positive attitudes and beliefs around substance use is a significant risk factor in Winooski.
- Youth are accessing drugs and alcohol from adults, friends, and other people they know.
- There is a high rate per capita of domestic violence in Winooski, when compared to surrounding cities and towns.
- Winooski has a higher concentration of alcohol retail than any other type of retail in its downtown and beyond, with roughly 26 retailers in 1.4 square miles. In other words, there is 1 retailer for every 197 people over age 18. There is one coffee shop in the city, by comparison.
- The amount of poverty in Winooski is higher than that of any surrounding Chittenden County city and town, and significant still in Vermont.

## OPPORTUNITIES

- Institutionalize education and empowerment around substance abuse and advocacy at every point where parents and children encounter services and amenities. Provide training for staff, connection, signage, and support at all stages of parents' lives.

- Ensure staff and leaders providing youth-serving programs are educated about the impacts of substances on the developing brain and skilled in promoting preventative messaging.
- Work toward a balance of retail that includes other products besides alcohol and tobacco.
- Encourage “limiting” messaging, rather than “responsibility” messaging around substance promotion and use among adults.
- Provide activities and events that celebrate and embrace sobriety as part of wellness and health.
- Celebrate and normalize struggle and negative emotions as a part of life that makes us human and enables us to experience positive emotions and hope.
- Share facts about substances.
- Adults can share stories of self, groups, and community that promote hope and possibility. Don’t promote “war stories” that glorify drug and alcohol use.
- Reduce, limit, or eliminate advertising of products that is visible from the street.
- Limit consumption of substances in public spaces.
- Require stores that sell alcohol, tobacco, and drug paraphernalia physically separate and keep out of sight their adult-only products from other products.
- Continue to enforce existing laws around public consumption of alcohol and tobacco.
- Continue to enforce existing laws around underage use of alcohol and tobacco.
- Consider adopting a Tobacco-21 local ordinance or recommendation.
- Consider a local tax increase on alcohol. Cost increases have an immediate impact on dependent and addicted alcohol users, and a negligible impact on occasional users.
- Consider adopting a local ordinance prohibiting price discounts on tobacco.
- Consider adopting a local ordinance prohibiting flavored tobacco products.
- Local health care professionals consistently incorporate discussions around substance use with their pediatric patients.

**The Winooski Partnership for Prevention thanks the following institutions and people who carry out the important daily work that keeps our community safe and healthy.**

**Thanks to these partners for their help in the preparation of this report:**

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The City of Winooski

The Winooski Police Department

Representative Clem Bissonnette

Representative Diana Gonzalez

The Vermont Department of Health

Chittenden Prevention Network

The Winooski Partnership for Prevention Board of Trustees

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