



PACIFIC INSTITUTE FOR RESEARCH AND EVALUATION

Vermont Regional Prevention Partnerships Evaluation

Annual Evaluation Report
FY19 – July 2018-June 2019

Submitted to:

Vermont Department of Health
Division of Alcohol and Drug Abuse Programs

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Program Overview

FY19 was the third year of implementation for RPP grants. These grants were awarded by ADAP to community-based organizations representing 12 regions of the state. Funding is provided by the state's Partnerships for Success (PFS) 2015 grant from SAMHSA. The goals of the RPP project are to reduce underage and binge drinking among persons ages 12 to 20, reduce prescription drug misuse and abuse among Vermonters aged 12 to 25, reduce marijuana use among Vermonters aged 12 to 25, and increase state, regional and community capacity to accomplish these goals through a targeted regional approach. Six of the 12 regions were also funded for several years prior to RPP through the state's 2012 PFS grant, while the funding to the other six regions began with their RPP awards starting in FY17.

At the beginning of the state fiscal year, grantees were asked to submit implementation workplans which outlined the strategies they planned to implement during the year. For FY19, some slight changes were made to the list of strategies required for all regions to implement. These changes are noted after each applicable strategy. Required strategies for all regions included:

- Local policy enhancements to prevent underage drinking and marijuana use among youth and young adults
- Support of the Department of Liquor and Lottery's efforts to prevent underage drinking (this year grantees could choose one or more of four different options)
- Enhancement of local law enforcement efforts related to the prevention of underage drinking, prescription drug misuse and marijuana use (this year there was a required minimum of one meeting per quarter with local law enforcement to coordinate activities, but there was flexibility on which specific activities they worked on)
- Education and outreach to the community on proper storage and safe disposal of prescription medications (In previous years there was also a separate required strategy to do outreach to pharmacies and health care providers. This has now been included under this strategy.)
- Education and outreach to the community on youth marijuana use prevention (this is a new required strategy)

In addition to these required strategies, grantees could choose from a menu of additional prevention strategies and activities.¹ These included:

- Evidence-based classroom curricula addressing the prevention of substance use
- Support of peer leadership/youth empowerment groups in schools
- Support of Gay/Queer Straight Alliances in schools
- Evidence-based parent education programs
- Support of training of school or youth serving organizational staff in Youth Mental Health First Aid or Drug Impairment Training for Educational Professionals (DITEP)
- Electronic screening and brief intervention programs for college students (e.g. Alcohol Edu, eCheckup)
- Screening and referral to substance abuse and mental health services in schools
- Mentoring

¹ Decisions to implement optional strategies were based on numerous considerations, including whether certain strategies and activities were already in place through other funding mechanisms.

Process Evaluation

An estimated **530,703 Vermonters** were potentially exposed to RPP activity in FY19². Table 1 below summarizes process data collected during the year through the Community Grants Reporting System (CGRS).

Table 1. Summary of process data collected during FY19

Required Activities
<p>Local Policy Enhancements to Reduce Underage Drinking and Youth Marijuana Use (all 12 regions)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A total of 8 new policies were established during this past year including the following: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ A recreational soccer league in the Newport region adopted a new substance free policy. ○ Language about the importance of substance abuse prevention and including prevention measures in land use planning was added to the Essex Junction town plan. ○ The town of Hyde Park adopted a Healthy Community Policy that includes substance use prevention measures. ○ The town of Danville adopted a policy that banned all smoking, vaping, marijuana, alcohol and other substance use at the Danville Town Field recreational area. ○ The city of Winooski adopted a Master Plan that includes language that focuses on substance use prevention and partnership with the Winooski Partnership for Prevention as well as the importance of providing support to those struggling with substance use and/or mental health issues. ○ Bridgewater adopted a town plan that included a health chapter that addresses substance use prevention, including both alcohol and marijuana. ○ A non-profit organization in the Springfield region updated their employee policies to reflect the change in marijuana laws and explicitly state that it is a violation of organizational policy to use or be under the influence of marijuana at work. ○ The town of Dover approved an ordinance regulating marijuana dispensaries and public consumption.
<p>Support DLL and/or Local Retailers' efforts to prevent underage drinking (all 12 regions)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 7 regions supported 31 DLL in-person Responsible Beverage Service Trainings by securing locations, promoting with local merchants, sharing materials about local prevention resources, providing light refreshments, small incentives and/or acknowledgement to retailers for attendance. • 7 regions recognized 384 retailers for passing DLL Compliance Checks by sending letters of appreciation, providing certificates, and/or recognizing through local media.

²Based on census data for towns reached by active interventions that are designed to reach entire populations (i.e. community outreach and education, etc.).

- **7 regions conducted Sticker Shock** events at **38 businesses** with a total of **45 youth participating**.
- **1 region supported DLL's fraudulent ID enforcement checks** resulting in an additional 8 days of enforcement details leading to 8 citations for possession of a fake ID and 8 citations for attempted underage alcohol purchase.

Enhanced Local Law Enforcement Efforts to Prevent Underage Drinking and DUI (all 12 regions)

- **6 regions supported sobriety checkpoints** by sharing notices of upcoming checkpoints via social and traditional media, providing materials on prevention and local resources for officers to distribute to drivers during checkpoints, and/or providing funding.
- **7 regions supported saturation patrols** by planning with local law enforcement on key times for increased patrols such as prom and graduation, sharing information via social and traditional media on upcoming patrols, supporting collaboration between schools and local law enforcement to increase students' awareness of consequences for underage drinking and DUI, and/or providing funding.
- **All 12 regions supported DEA Drug Take Back Days** by reaching out to local law enforcement agencies to encourage participation, promoting Take-Back Day locations as well as permanent drug disposal sites through various media channels, posters and flyers, providing materials for local sites to distribute on safe medication storage and disposal, and/or providing coordination support to sites leading up to and on the day of events.

Education and Outreach to the Community on Proper Storage and Safe Disposal of Unused Prescription Drugs (all 12 regions)

- Outreach was done through the distribution of brochures, community events, ads in local newspapers, PSAs, and through social media and websites.
- All regions shared materials locally for the statewide campaign Do Your Part and also helped promote and distribute prescription mail back envelopes.
- Materials for patients on safe storage and proper disposal of prescription medications were shared with a total of **143 pharmacies and 246 health care providers**.

Education and outreach to the community on youth marijuana use prevention (all 12 regions)

- All 12 regions shared information about prevention of youth marijuana use through the distribution of brochures, community events, presentations to students, ads in local newspapers, PSAs, and through social media and websites.

Media Outreach (all 12 regions)

- All 12 regions have developed relationships with local media and submit press releases, op-eds and other types of outreach to media on prevention topics and activities. This resulted in a total of **302 instances of earned media** across the regions during the past year.
- 11 out of 12 regions met or exceeded the performance measure goal of reaching out to media at least twice every six months on the topic of prevention of prescription drug misuse. This measure is tracked on the VDH scorecard which can be found here: <https://www.healthvermont.gov/scorecard-alcohol-drugs>

Optional Activities

Evidence-based classroom curricula (2 regions)

- 1050 students participated in evidence-based curricula in schools with a primary focus of substance abuse prevention education

Support of peer leadership groups in schools (7 regions)

- 696 students participated in groups such as Dover Youth to Youth empowerment program, Above the Influence and Getting to 'Y'.

Support of Gay Straight Alliances (GSA) in Schools (2 regions)

- 160 students participated in GSAs.

Delivery of evidence-based parent and family prevention programs (1 region)

- 12 parents participated in Nurturing Parenting
- 16 parents and 12 youth participated in Strengthening Families

Support of Youth Mental Health First Aid (YMHFA) training and/or Drug Impairment Training for Educational Professionals (DITEP) for teachers and other youth serving staff (5 regions)

- A total of **209 staff** were trained in YMHFA.
- A total of **62 staff** were trained in DITEP.

Electronic screening and brief intervention programs for college students (e.g. Alcohol Edu, eCheckup) (2 regions)

- A total of **192 college students/young adults** participated in electronic screening and brief intervention.

Screening and referral to substance abuse and mental health services in schools (1 region)

- A total of **55 middle and high school students** were screened for substance abuse and/or mental health issues.

Mentoring (3 regions)

- A total of **49 youth** were matched with adult mentors in their communities.

Skills, Mastery and Resilience Training - SMART Moves (3 regions)

- A total of **226 youth** completed SMART Moves, a prevention and education program offered through local Boys and Girls Clubs.

Expand Permanent Safe Prescription Disposal Locations (3 regions)

- A total of **6 new prescription medication disposal kiosks** were established through the efforts of RPP grantees.

In addition to the quantitative data reported above, grantees also enter narrative on progress, successes and challenges in their quarterly reports. Below are some selected **successes** reported by RPP grantees in FY19.

The Winooski Prevention Coalition's work with the City to include a narrative describing substance use prevention in the built environment is a huge success and gives the coalition recognition as experts in this arena.

Many town select boards, policy makers and current senate and house candidates want to understand legalization better, understand gaps in the bill and prepare for the future in marijuana prevention especially in youth.

Orange county has been a large gap area for prevention in general but also had few medication return kiosks. Working with Gifford and Little River's partners there are now many options for returning medications.

In January, a person posted a message to a Facebook group called Brattleboro, VT looking for a way to get rid of prescriptions drugs [that are] out of date and/or no longer needed. A Google map popped up...showing three sites and 19 people responded within hours about four sites and mailing envelopes!

Our biggest success has been strengthening our relationship with local police departments and getting all departments and state police working collaboratively on prevention messaging, language and resources for students and families that they may come in contact with outside of the schools and prevention-events.

A struggling student was screened and referred to the appropriate services. The student connected with the provider and continues to receive services.

This quarter the RPP team is working with nine different schools and one non-profit organization who will be using the Dover's Youth 2 Youth Curriculum this year. Last year we only had one school, the turn around this year is phenomenal!

During the past quarter we were presented with the opportunity to bring 8 students to Washington DC to participate in the Community Anti Drug Coalitions of America [CADCA] Leadership Forum; students participated in a variety of workshops in both the youth and adult tracts, were able to hear the First Lady speak, made a connection with the US Surgeon General, and attended Capitol Hill Day as the youth voice of Franklin County. [Since returning] one of our students is in the process of becoming an intern at Senator Leahy's office; two have on their own initiative applied to the Youth Trainer Program as well as the [CADCA] mid year forum in Texas.

Challenges identified by grantees during FY19 included:

Policy work is about planting seeds. It goes at a slow pace.

We have found education related to marijuana to be the most nuanced community topic that we have dealt with. In addition to there being a lot of misinformation circulated and reinforced in both local and national media, the increase in CBD products in the area seems to make people even more confused about what is and is not safe/healthy.

Staffing... as the work grows so does the communities' desire for more good work...this is something that we will need to think strategically about as we move forward.

The police chiefs are very interested in being involved but the departments tend to be low on staff capacity with constant openings in positions. Connections tend to be made on a regular basis through email to compensate for this.

Recruitment of mentors is always a challenge, for every four persons interested one mentor will complete the training and make it to match.

Perception of harm is so low; teens do not have the most basic information about marijuana, and the public perception does not support caution, parents have marijuana growing and/or more visible and accessible in their homes.

Qualitative Assessment of Regional Prevention Capacity

The RPP represents the continuation and expansion of a new funding approach for Vermont's prevention system that uses VDH's existing health district structure along with a regional lead community-based partner agency as the primary mechanism to implement the RPP. In order to assess the goal of increasing state, regional and community capacity through this targeted regional approach, a qualitative study is underway that will explore the roles of different stakeholders within their regions, strengths and challenges of this model and recommendations for improving the regional structure and addressing identified challenges.

During FY19 qualitative data was collected from stakeholders involved in multiple levels of the RPP project through interviews and focus groups. Stakeholders included VDH District Directors and Prevention Consultants, and RPP coordinators and partner organizations from each region. Data analysis is underway and a report of the findings will be shared with ADAP in the fall of 2019. The findings are expected to help inform ADAP's future prevention infrastructure and implementation planning efforts.

Outcome Evaluation

The two primary sources for outcome data in evaluating RPP are the biannual statewide YRBS and a biannual statewide survey of young adults (i.e., the YAS) conducted by PIRE specifically for the purpose of evaluating RPP. The most recent data available from these two sources during FY19 were from the 2017 YRBS and the 2018 YAS. During FY19 PIRE analyzed these data to determine what progress has been made in achieving the outcome goals for RPP and its predecessor program, PFS. Due to the timing of these surveys in relation to the PFS and RPP-funded activities, it was not possible to clearly separate outcomes achieved through PFS versus RPP.

With that limitation in mind, findings from the analysis indicated that the apparent positive effects of PFS on high school student substance use outcomes previously documented (i.e., through 2015) were sustained through 2017, and could be attributed to strategies implemented through either the PFS or the RPP grants, or both. Findings from the YAS analysis suggested that the implementation of RPP-

funded activities in the regions that had not been funded by PFS has contributed to reducing the young adult outcome disparities between PFS and non-PFS regions that had been observed in the 2014 and 2016 YAS data.

A detailed report on the methods and findings from these analyses was submitted to ADAP in May 2019. An Executive Summary version of the report is available on the ADAP website.³

³ Interim Outcome Evaluation Report for Vermont's Regional Prevention Partnerships (RPP) Initiative: Executive Summary.