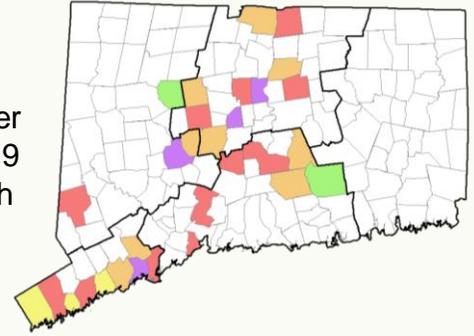


Funded by the Connecticut Department of Mental Health and Addiction Services (DMHAS), the Center for Prevention Evaluation and Statistics (CPES) conducted an assessment on alcohol and other drug use among Connecticut youth grades 6-12 during the COVID-19 pandemic. In December 2020, the team conducted focus groups with **134 youth from 16 communities** and **57 parents from nine communities** across Connecticut.



Themes from youth focus groups showed that during the pandemic, **alcohol and marijuana** remained the substances of choice for youth. Additionally, **social isolation** and the inability to physically be with peers for support has left many students feeling **“stressed, depressed, lacking motivation, and worried.”**

What youth are saying:

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- Youth reported **more alcohol use when they are alone**, rather than in social settings, in order to cope with **depression, anxiety, and boredom**.
 - Many youth reported that because their **parents were drinking more** at home, alcohol was **more readily accessible**, with or without their parents' permission.
 - Youth reported **increased use of marijuana** among themselves and their peers **as a coping mechanism** to combat increased stress and anxiety experienced during COVID-19.

What parents are saying:

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- Parents reported being more **stressed, anxious and depressed** as a direct result of COVID, and described feeling as if they are in “survival mode.”
 - Many parents reported **drinking more and having more alcohol at home**, but felt that their increased use was not affecting their children.
 - Parents recognize that during COVID-19, their high school-aged children and their peers had **widespread access to alcohol**.

These focus group results are being used to inform state and local prevention messaging, and will inform state and regional planning efforts. COVID impacts will continue to be monitored.