

## YHAC SURVEY PROJECT RESULTS SUMMARY

# Summer Time and the Buying's Easy:

## Findings on Youth Access to Alcohol, Tobacco, And Other Drugs in Marin County

The Youth Health Advisory Council (YHAC), concerned about the issues of access to and use of alcohol, tobacco and other drugs (ATOD) by their peers, conducted research to collect information, in order better understand the issues and to develop data-driven recommendations about how to address the ATOD issues in Marin County. Rather than focusing on what substances youth use and how often, YHAC approached their survey project from an environmental prevention perspective and focused on two key research questions: (1) *ATOD Messages*: What kinds of messages do young people see and hear about ATOD and where do those messages come from? (2) *ATOD Access*: How are young people able to access these substances, despite existing laws? Their goal was to collect data that would provide the community with information about how to address the ATOD issues and to make recommendations to key decision-makers.

*The Youth Health Advisory Council is a component of the Marin County Friday Night Live Partnership. Marin County Friday Night Live Partnership, a program of the Youth Leadership Institute, is funded by the Marin Community Foundation and the Marin County Department of Health and Human Services- Division of Alcohol Drug and Tobacco Programs.*

### Methodology

In partnership with adult allies from the Youth Leadership Institute, YHAC members created and administered a survey to 588 students in nine Marin County high schools from March through May, 2003. The sample was representative of high school students in Marin County.

### Summary of Key Findings

The results indicate that young people in Marin County are growing up in an environment saturated with messages about alcohol, tobacco and drugs and that provides them with fairly easy access to these substances.

#### Where Youth See and Hear ATOD Messages

- **Television is biggest influence.** Many youth reported that television is the primary source of messages about alcohol (58.9%), tobacco (26.7%), or other drugs (37.6%).

- **Newspapers, magazines and movies send ATOD messages.**

Newspapers and magazines were also reported as the primary source of messages related to alcohol (16.5%) and tobacco (41.0%), while movies were a common source for messages about other drugs (27.5%).

- **Family member ATOD use.**

Just under one third (32.1%) of youth reported that someone in their immediate family regularly uses tobacco in front of them. More than three quarters (79.7%) reported that they see family members use alcohol and 16.0% witness someone in their immediate family use other drugs.

#### Youth Perceptions About Why Young People Use ATOD

- **To relax and to deal with stress.**

Youth reported that most often they are trying to relax or deal with stress when they use tobacco (28.1%), alcohol (31.7%), or other drugs (34.8%).

- **To be cool or popular.**

Youth reported that most often it is for these reasons that youth use tobacco (31.7%), alcohol (27.2%), or other drugs (25.6%).



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- ***Most youth report that they do not feel pressure to use ATOD.***

While most did not report feeling pressure to use alcohol (69.4%), tobacco (88.8%), other drugs (76.2%), youth reported three times more pressure to use alcohol and two times more pressure to use other drugs than tobacco.

- ***Youth reported that pressure comes most often from friends and media.***

More than three-quarters of youth reported that pressure to use tobacco (71.4%), alcohol (78.8%), and other drugs (86.5%) comes from friends. Others reported that most of the pressure to use tobacco (17%), alcohol (10.5%), and other drugs (5.9%) comes from media sources (television, movies, radio).

### **Youth Access to ATOD**

- ***Members of the community***

4 in 10 youth reported that most often somebody goes into a store to buy alcohol (40.9%) or tobacco (40.8%) for young people. 3 in 10 reported that other people give alcohol (29.1%) or tobacco (39.3%) to them.

- Among tobacco users, over half reported that other people give them tobacco (52.7%), while 17.8% indicated that someone buys it for them.
- Among alcohol users, 1 in 4 (23.4%) reported that most often someone goes into a store and buys it for them and 6 in 10 young people (59.2%) reported that other people give them alcohol.

- ***Friends and family members***

More than three quarters of youth reported that friends are most often the source for ATOD, while 15.9% reported that family members are most often the source of alcohol.

- Among tobacco users, 52.7% reported that someone gives them tobacco; most often it is friends (87.2%) and family members (12.6%).
- Among alcohol users, 59.2% reported that other people give it to them, most often it is friends (82.6%) and family members (17.4%).
- Among drug users, 43.8% reported that other people give them drugs, most often friends (86.8%) and family members (9.2%). Just under half (49.4%) reported that they buy drugs from other people.

- ***Local merchants***

Tobacco users reported that gas stations (47.1%) and convenience stores (20.6%) are most often the access points for tobacco. Alcohol users reported that supermarkets (25.6%) and liquor stores (23.1%) are most often the points of access to alcohol.

- ***Underage purchases***

More than one quarter (26.4%) of tobacco users reported that they most often buy it from a store. Only 1 in 4 youth (27.7%) reported that they are consistently asked for their ID when they attempt to purchase tobacco. 16.9% reported that they are never asked. Less than half (45.5%) of youth reported that they are consistently asked for their ID when attempting an alcohol purchase. 1 in 10 (11.4%) reported that they are never asked.

### **Where Youth Most Often Use ATOD**

- ***Social events, parties & celebrations***

Youth reported that they most often use alcohol (75%), tobacco (54.4%) and other drugs (55.4%) at these types of social events.

- ***At school***

1 in 10 youth reported that they most often see young people use tobacco (11.1%) and other drugs (12.1%) at school. Similarly, 1 in 10 tobacco users (11.2%) and drug users (10.1%) reported that they most often use at school.

- ***At home***

1 in 10 (11.7%) youth who use alcohol, 14.4% of tobacco users and 16.9% of drug users reported that they most often use at home.

### **What Youth Most Often Use**

- ***Alcohol***

Youth who drink alcohol report most often using hard liquor (45.9%), beer (34.9%), and wine (7.5%). More than half (59.6%) of the youth who use alcohol reported that they drink alcopops (sweet flavored malt beverages that disguise the taste of alcohol).

- ***Tobacco***

Youth who use tobacco reported that most often they smoke cigarettes (49.2%), while another 21.2% reported using blunts most often (cigar paper that is hand rolled and contains a mixture of tobacco and marijuana), and 12.1% reported smoking cigars. The brands young people reported using most often are Marlboro (39.9%), Camel (22.5%), and Newport (15.2%).