



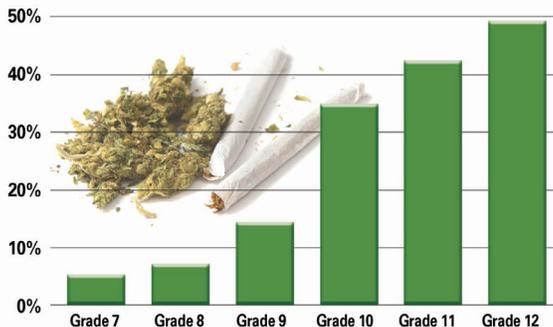
REACHING OUT

# Family Conversations

The real solution to current widespread marijuana and alcohol use among Portsmouth teens.

So whether you're a parent, a kid, a grandparent, an uncle, an aunt or a cousin, if you agree that underage marijuana and alcohol use is harmful to teens, families and our community, let's start the conversation — based on facts we learned from The [Portsmouth Health and Wellness Survey](#), administered by the Portsmouth Prevention Coalition to 1,200 Portsmouth students in grades 7 through 12 in May 2013. *We hope you agree that we've got a lot to talk about.*

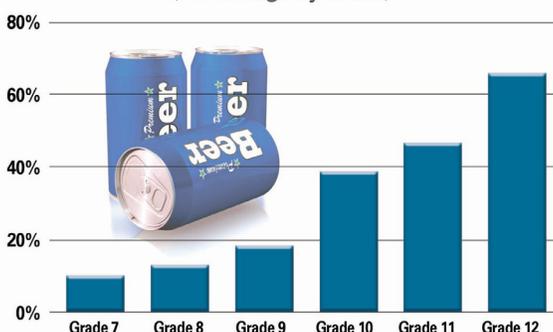
**Portsmouth Students Past 30-Day Marijuana Use**  
(Percentage by Grade)



## Key Findings: Marijuana

- ▲ More than one-quarter of students in grades 7 through 12 reported smoking marijuana in the previous 30 days. Some Portsmouth teens who smoke marijuana reported they started at age 12.
- ▲ Nearly 50 percent of PHS seniors reported past 30-day marijuana use.
- ▲ Marijuana use increases at each grade level. About 6% of middle school students; 14% of freshmen; 34% of sophomores; 42% of juniors and 49% of seniors reported using marijuana.

**Portsmouth Students Past 30-Day Alcohol Use**  
(Percentage by Grade)



## Key Findings: Alcohol

- ▲ Underage drinking starts in 7th grade or earlier!
- ▲ 65% of PHS seniors reported drinking alcohol during the previous month.
- ▲ 20% of students who do drink reported that they started at age 10 or younger.
- ▲ From 8th to 9th grade, alcohol use doubles. From 9th to 10th grade it more than doubles again.

*Start the conversation*



*“America’s drug problem is not going to be solved in courtrooms or legislative hearing rooms by judges and politicians. It will be solved in living rooms and dining rooms and across kitchen tables – by parents and families.”*

Joseph A. Califano, Jr.,  
former Secretary of Health, Education, and Welfare

## Family Conversation Starters

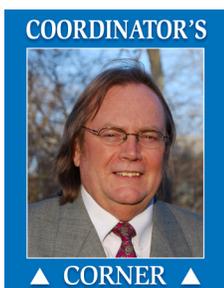
**1** More than 40% of all Portsmouth students and more than 60% of high school juniors and seniors do not think smoking marijuana is very harmful. Check out [Understanding The Big Deal: How Marijuana Harms Youth](#). What does your family think?

**2** More than 50% of Portsmouth students say marijuana is “sort of” or “very” easy to get. Most “get it from friends.” Some “buy it from strangers.” Others buy it from “student dealers.” Are there ways to reduce teen access to marijuana in Portsmouth, where eighth graders have already started smoking weed?

**3** Most Portsmouth students who drink alcohol say they started around the age of 14. About 20% say they started at 10! [National Institute on Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism](#) reports that young people who start drinking before age 15 are significantly more likely to develop alcohol use disorders as adults. What can be done to make sure kids in your family don’t drink?

## Tips for Teens

## Tips for Parents



There’s a serious teen substance abuse problem in the town of Portsmouth — mostly alcohol and marijuana but also prescription drugs, synthetic drugs, molly and heroin. It’s dangerous and even deadly territory that can cause unimaginable consequences. Some you’ve heard about some you haven’t. It’s serious stuff.

This past summer, teachers, counselors, parents, students, administrators, school committee and Prevention Coalition members began to map out a strategy to address the widespread use of alcohol and marijuana by Portsmouth teens. We are exploring new school and athletic policies; new ways to provide students, parents and the community with information; and new ways to give more positive attention to the majority of Portsmouth students who choose NOT TO use these substances.

There is no one assembly or class or program or policy or law that will change this problem. It takes a community. That’s what Reaching Out is all about: engaging the community to address this problem together — starting with honest, open family conversations about the issue of teen marijuana and alcohol use in Portsmouth. I hope every family who receives this first issue of *Reaching Out* joins the conversation.

On behalf of all the members of the Portsmouth Prevention Coalition I wish you the very best during this 2013-2014 school year and we look forward to working with you. Only by working together can we make Portsmouth a safer, healthier place to live and raise families.



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