

Community Assessment Report
For Mackinac County 2022

MACKINAC COUNTY
COMMUNITIES
THAT CARE



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Community Assessment Report Outline

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I. Executive Summary

This report describes the results of the 2021 youth behavior needs assessment completed as part of Mackinac County's *Communities That Care* effort. The *Communities That Care (CTC)* system is a way for community members to work together to prevent youth problem behaviors, including substance use, delinquency, teen pregnancy, school drop-out and violence. This system was developed by Dr. David Hawkins and Dr. Richard Catalano of the University of Washington. It is based on their research, which identifies risk factors that predict youth problem behaviors and protective factors that buffer children from risk and help them succeed in life.

A key goal of the CTC is to identify which risk factors, protective factors and resultant problem behaviors are prevalent in our community and implement evidence-based programs that address our community's unique profile. To that end, the Data Work Group of the Mackinac County CTC Coalition collects survey data from Mackinac County youth and reviews the analyzed data every two years. Data collection began in 2015. The assessment is completed using the CTC *Needs Assessment Survey* and publicly available data. The survey is administered to students in grades 6, 8, 10 & 12 in schools in Mackinac County every other fall. The results discussed in this report cover data from three survey years: 2017, 2019 and 2021. The Mackinac County School Districts support the CTC's efforts and allow us to gather data from the students on a biannual basis.

Using data from the 2015 survey, the Data Work Group initially identified risky youth behaviors to target, prioritized causative risk factors to address, and named community strengths on which to build upon. The Mackinac County CTC Coalition implemented evidence-based protective strategies designed to target the prioritized risks and behaviors in 2017 (implementation was delayed due to personnel changes within the coalition in 2016).

Shortly after the 2019 data was collected, the COVID-19 pandemic was upon us, and many programs done with fidelity prior to the pandemic faced major challenges in 2020 and 2021. Thus, we are not surprised that the survey data from 2021 shows little improvement in risk factors and a decline in protective factors.

In terms of the many changes that may be in correlation with the pandemic, there have been conflicting reports from different researchers regarding the use of alcohol and drugs by youth during the 2020-2021 pandemic years. The 2021 Monitoring the Future ([Monitoringthefuture.org](https://www.monitoringthefuture.org)) youth survey done in the United States reported a substantial decrease among youth reporting ever having tried alcohol. In contrast, a study done by Jones et al. (Jones et al., 2021) reported increased usage of both alcohol and marijuana by youth globally. There are also consistent findings reporting increased stress among parents with youth less than 18 years of age (Gadermann et al., 2021), The increased stress led to higher levels of drinking among adults and a greater number of reports of domestic violence.

There are consistent findings that support a decrease in mental health among youth during the pandemic. A number of studies show that youth reported increased conflict with parents and higher levels of stress, anxiety and depression (Jones et al., 2021; Magson, et al., 2021;

Gadermann et al., 2021). A hopeful sign regarding the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on the family has been some positive effects in increased closeness and support between children and parents. The contradictory findings being reported by researchers suggests that the results we report here for the 2021 CTC Survey of Mackinac County youth are not surprising.

Based on 2021 data analysis and community input, the Mackinac County CTC Coalition identified certain behaviors and risk factors it will continue to prioritize, including the behavior of youth binge drinking and the risk factors of youths' low perception of risk of drug use, lack of commitment to school and symptoms of depression. Additionally, the CTC Coalition will monitor risk factors within the family domain. These risk factors are significantly elevated throughout Mackinac County. Research shows they contribute to the high levels of risky alcohol use identified among Mackinac County youth.

The 2021 data also revealed some strengths. For example, the CTC *Youth Survey* revealed that students are motivated to follow society's expectations and standards. They reported high levels of the protective factor "Belief in the Moral Order."

Additionally, following the 2019 surveys, there was concern that the level of marijuana use might be increasing. That was included as a behavior to monitor. The good news is that the 2021 data indicates that marijuana use is not a problem among Mackinac County youth.

II. Introduction

A. The Mackinac County *Communities That Care* System

About Communities That Care

In the fall of 2015, Mackinac County began implementing the *Communities That Care (CTC)* prevention planning system. Developed by Dr. David Hawkins and Dr. Richard Catalano of the Social Development Research Group in Seattle, Washington, the *CTC* system is a way for members of a community to work together to efficiently and effectively promote positive youth development and prevent youth problem behaviors such as substance use, delinquency, teen pregnancy, dropping out of school and violence.

Mackinac County implemented the *CTC* process to achieve the community's vision that all young people in Mackinac grow up supported and nurtured by their families, schools and community, and become healthy adults who contribute positively to society.

Key accomplishments

Since our last report in 2019 our coalition structure has had its ebbs and flows. At the beginning of the pandemic we switched to virtual meetings and saw an increase in workgroup participation from agencies across the county. At the same time, we saw a decrease in meeting participation from community members such as parents, grandparents, or other general public representation.

We were able to maintain workgroup meetings, and the general efforts from the coalition, but focused much of our efforts on supporting programming that was already going on virtually like 4-H programs through MSU Extension, virtual program offered through St. Ignace Public Library, and early childhood play groups through Great Start Collaborative.

We also successfully worked with Moran Township 5-8th graders to complete some social norms posters to display around schools. Six posters were selected for distribution and the students who created those posters were awarded prizes. We also successfully created a 30-second PSA video bringing awareness to the number of Mackinac Students who were NOT partaking in risky behaviors like vaping, marijuana and drinking.

The following are accomplishments for evidence-based programming that continued to the best of our abilities through the pandemic.

1. Botvin LifeSkills Training (LST):

LST is an evidence-based substance abuse and violence prevention program that is uniquely designed to be flexible and interactive. The LST program has been extensively tested and proven effective at reducing tobacco, alcohol, opioid, and illicit drug use by as much as 80%. (<https://www.lifeskillstraining.com/program-structure/>)

The LST program has been implemented in every school in Mackinac County (except Bois Blanc Pines) beginning with the 2017-2018 school year. As of the 2019-2020 school year, all schools were successfully completing level 1, with level 2 being implemented in St. Ignace, Gros Cap, and Engadine. During the 20-21 school year, because of COVID closers and virtual teaching only, the following schools were able to complete a modified LST that was implemented virtually or hybrid: Gros Cap Level 1 in 5/6 grade, Level 2 in 7/8 grade, LST Elementary in 3/4 grade; Mackinac Island Level 2 in 8th grade; Engadine Level 2 in 7/8 grade.

2. Positive Action is another prevention strategy that is designed for K-12. It is described as:

A modular social and emotional learning program that embeds academic content in lessons designed to develop an intrinsic interest in learning and promote pro-social behavior.
(<https://www.positiveaction.net>)

This strategy was selected and supported because it addresses two key issues with our students: 1) Low Commitment to School and 2) Prosocial activities and rewards. It was scheduled to begin in the St. Ignace Elementary School in 2020 but due to personal changes and the pandemic this program has not yet been implemented

3. Guiding Good Choices (GGC) is another strategy, defined as:

A family competency training program for parents of children in middle school that gives parents the skills needed to reduce their children's risk for using alcohol and other drugs.
(<https://www.blueprintsprograms.org/guiding-good-choices-ggc/>)

This strategy was delivered 100% Upper Peninsula. Mackinac County CTC offered incentives to entice parents to enroll in the 6-week workshop series. Since the shift to virtual delivery, our participation across the Upper Peninsula has greatly increased between September of 2020 and January 2022, however we have only had two Mackinac County families complete the series in that time frame.

B. The Community Assessment

Drs. Hawkins and Catalano have identified a number of risk factors that predict problem behaviors in youth, and protective factors that help protect young people from those risks. By addressing risk and protective factors, communities can help prevent adolescent problem behaviors and promote positive youth development. A key goal of the CTC system is for communities to develop a profile of the problem behaviors among youth and the risk factors in the community that lead to these risky behaviors. A community profile was outlined in 2015 and a plan was developed to address the risk factors that were most elevated while enhancing protective factors. The data collected since 2015 have reinforced the initial findings. The past two years have been very disruptive so the 2021 data are not useful for evaluation but do provide a reflection of how COVID-19 impacted the youth of Mackinac County. Future data collection will be important as a means to assess and evaluate the prevention strategies that have been or will be implemented. This report reflects on the latest data and how these data contribute to the prevention plan.

Data collection methods

The *CTC Youth Survey* was administered for the first time in Mackinac County in fall 2015 and repeated in 2017, 2019 and 2021. Mackinac County includes six school districts: Engadine, Les Cheneaux, Mackinac Island, St. Ignace, Moran Township and Bois Blanc Pines. Bois Blanc Pines district has fewer than five students in all grades and is difficult to visit, so they were not included. All students in grades 6, 8, 10, and 12 were asked to participate. In total, 261 students completed the survey in 2021, a 73% response rate of the 356 students enrolled in those grades. This sample size is almost 20% fewer than the responses in 2017 (320) and 2019 (318). It is not possible to determine the exact cause of the lower response rate, but surveys were done in the school so students taking classes virtually or out for COVID-19 quarantine would not have been included. The complete results are provided in the *Mackinac Communities That Care Youth Survey* report. All data listed in this report come from that document prepared by Bach-Harrison L.L.C

How the priorities were identified

The Data Work Group analyzed the data to identify which risk factors are most elevated in Mackinac County. This initial short list of priorities was presented to the Coalition Board, which discussed other considerations, such as the community's ability to have an impact on certain risk factors at this time. By consensus, the Community Board then selected the final priorities for prevention action in Mackinac County.

C. Report Overview

The next sections of the report provide detailed information and analysis of the problem behaviors identified in Mackinac County students and the risk factors that foster substance use in Mackinac County. The conclusion presents the final list of priorities and recommendations for future action.

III. The Community Assessment Data

The CTC survey asked youth about students' use of alcohol and drugs, antisocial behaviors and gambling. It is important to note that there will always be some problem behaviors among community youth, so in order to determine if levels of these behaviors are significantly elevated and of high concern, we compare Mackinac County data to that obtained from youth all across the United States. Monitoring the Future (MTF) is a survey conducted by researchers at the University of Michigan every year. It has been ongoing since 1991 and provides a very large and well-validated comparison.

It was interesting and positive to note that county youth have a much lower rate of gambling than youth across the country. This was also seen for violence, where the levels for violence in all grades were substantially lower than the U.S. norms. However, much of the data supports the conclusion that alcohol use is an issue among teens and drug use is a potential issue due to use in the adults of Mackinac County. For instance, 45.9% of the youth reported that one or

more of the adults they know used marijuana or other drugs (66.1% of 12th graders, 55.6% of 10th graders, 38.3% of those in 8th grade and 18.9% of 6th graders) and one-quarter of all students (25.2%) know adults who sell drugs (44.1% of seniors, 29.0% of 10th graders, 15.5% of 8th graders and 9.6% of 6th graders).

A total of 261 students from Mackinac County completed the 2021 CTC Needs Assessment survey. This is the smallest number of participants to date. The first Needs Assessment Survey in 2015 was completed by 349 students (Table 1). Females made up slightly more than half of all the student respondents in 2021 at 52% vs 48% males. The respondents identified as 54.9% White, 13.8% American Indian or Alaskan Native, 24.1% multi-racial, 4.3% African American and 2.8% of other race/ethnicities. The 10th grade cohort is the largest group of students in the county and represents almost 30% of the survey responses (76 students). The other three grades are similar in size with either 61 or 62 students in each (Table 1).

Student Totals								
Total Students	Mackinac County							
	2015		2017		2019		2021	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
	349	100	320	100	318	100	261	100
Grade								
6	82	25.6	88	27.5	69	21.7	61	23.4
8	101	28.9	65	20.3	97	30.5	62	23.8
10	87	24.9	87	27.2	84	26.4	76	29.1
12	79	22.6	80	25	68	21.4	62	23.8
Gender								
Male	179	51.4	164	51.6	145	46.2	123	48.0
Female	169	48.6	154	48.4	169	53.8	133	52.0
Ethnicity								
Native American	58	16.9	56	17.5	50	16.1	35	13.8
Asian	0	0	1	0.3	1	0.3	2	0.8
African American	12	3.5	14	4.4	9	2.9	11	4.3
Pacific Islander	1	0.3	2	0.6	3	1	0	0.0
Hispanic	4	1.2	6	1.9	5	1.6	5	2.0
White	229	66.8	189	59.1	177	56.9	139	54.9
Multi-racial	39	11.4	52	16.3	66	21.2	61	24.1

A. Problem Behaviors

Key Targets

Thorough review of the survey data for 2021, assessment of the trends seen from 2015 and consideration of the difficult community and school conditions due to COVID-19 over the past two years led to the recommendation that the following risky behavior remains the target for change. This will be addressed through the continued use of evidence-based prevention strategies, implementation of which was interrupted during 2020 and 2021.

1. Binge drinking in the previous two weeks: As seen in previous surveys, recent binge drinking is much higher in Mackinac County youth when compared to nationwide, so this remains a behavior targeted for change.

Supporting Data

The biggest risk with alcohol use is a pattern of use labeled binge drinking, defined as consuming five (5) or more drinks in a row. Binge drinking is a concern for all persons who drink but particularly for youth. There is a lot of data showing that young people who binge drink are at a high risk of developing an alcohol use disorder as an adult (Newton-Howes et al., 2019; Hu et al., 2017).

It can be seen in Figure 1 that no one in the 6th grade and only 3% of 8th graders reported binge drinking, however, 18.4% of 10th graders and one-fourth of the 12th graders reported drinking five (5) or more drinks at one time in the past two weeks. The red columns in the chart below reflect the results from the Monitoring the Future 2020 (MTF) youth survey. All graphs displayed in this report show Mackinac County Data from 2017, 2019 and 2021 compared to National MTF data from 2020.

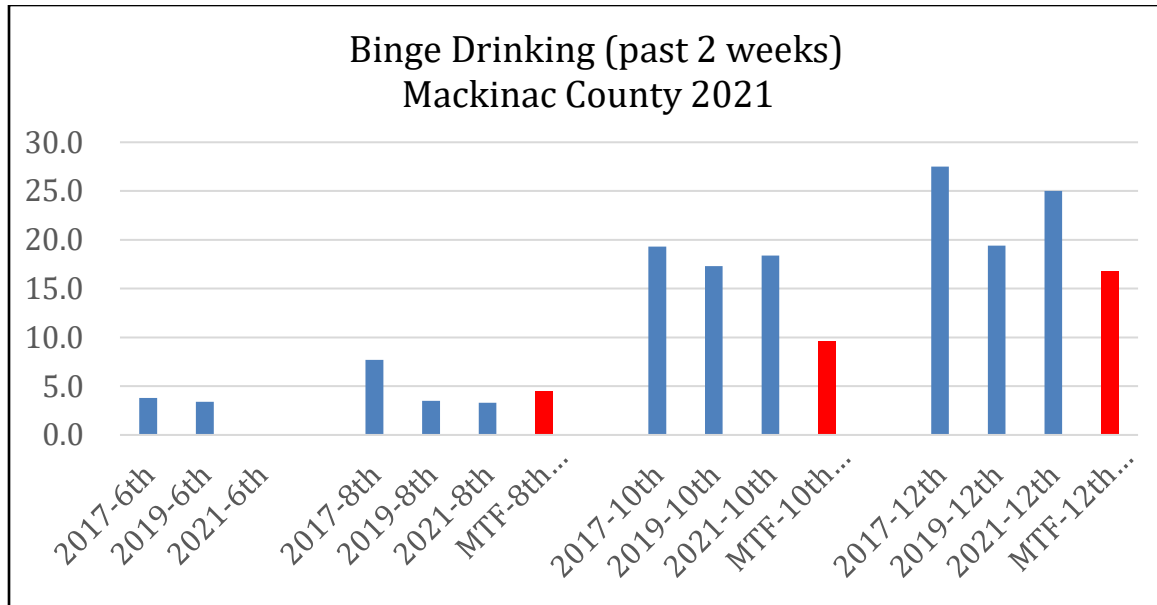


Figure 1

The MTF is conducted using a large sample of students from across the country. This is a very good way to get an average of behaviors among youth nationwide. It is seen that Mackinac County youth misused alcohol at a higher rate than the MTF national wide 2020 rate. In addition to those comparisons, the 2021 MTF data has just been released and nationwide, researchers found a decrease in drug use from 2020, including binge drinking. In contrast to Mackinac County youth, the MTF 2021 data showed only 2% of 8th graders, 5.4% of 10th graders and 15.5% of 12th graders reported binge drinking in the previous two weeks.

Students who reported drinking were asked how old they were when they first used alcohol. There were 37.1% of all students who answered this question and the average age was 12.8 years. To prevent underage drinking, it is important to understand where the youth get their alcohol and where they drink it. Among the students who reported drinking, 44.9% of them reported they got the alcohol "At a party," slightly up from the 37.7% reported in 2019. This was the top answer particularly in the older grades, 10th (47.4%) and 12th (57.7%). The second most popular method was to get it from "someone I know age 21 or older" as reported by 35.7% of the students. It was of great concern, and perhaps an indication of the isolation required due to COVID, that 28.6% of all students reported "I got it from home with my parents' permission." This was 36% higher than the 21.1% reported by students in 2019. To get the alcohol from home without parental permission was the primary method for those in the 8th grade at 33.3%, similar to 2019.

Marijuana use in the previous 30 days appeared to increase somewhat between 2017 and 2019; this was presumed to be related to the legalization of recreational marijuana use. A positive finding for 2021 was that the level of use has not changed in most grades between

2019 and 2021 and almost one-third fewer 10th graders reported use. There was no use reported among 6th graders in either year, 3% of 8th graders reported use in 2019 and 2021. Use among 10th graders decreased from 22.5% in 2019 to 14.7% in 2021, and 25.9% use was reported among seniors in 2021 compared to 26.9% in 2019.

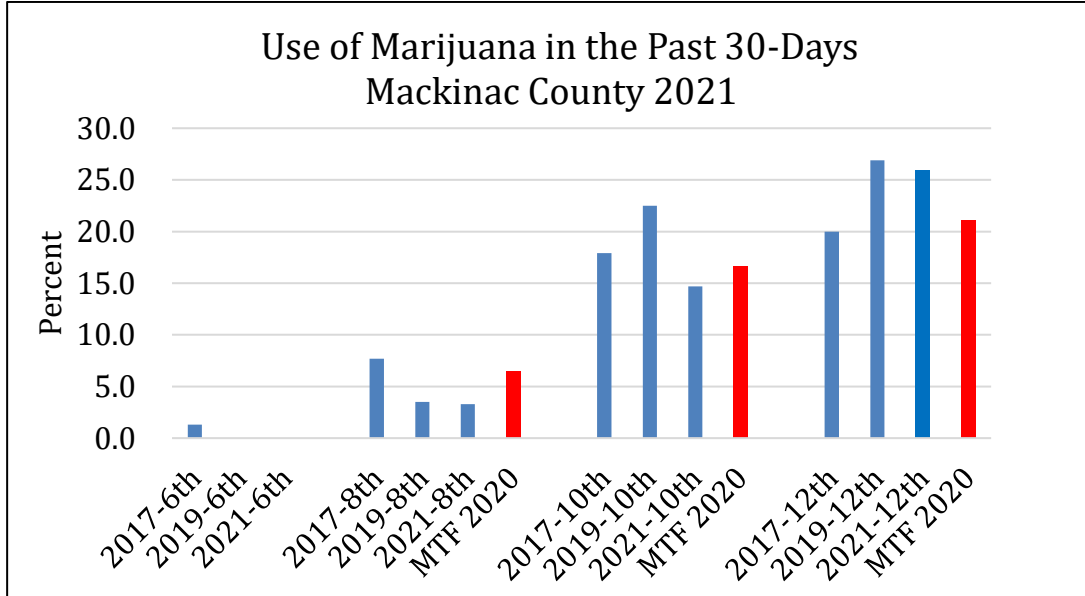


Figure 2

The use of electronic cigarettes (e-cigarettes) was not measured on the CTC youth survey until 2019 but it is gratifying to see that, overall, use among the Mackinac County youth has decreased and is similar to that seen on the MTF 2020 survey. The exception is among 8th graders where 14.8% reported using e-cigarettes in the past 30 days compared to 12.5% nationwide.

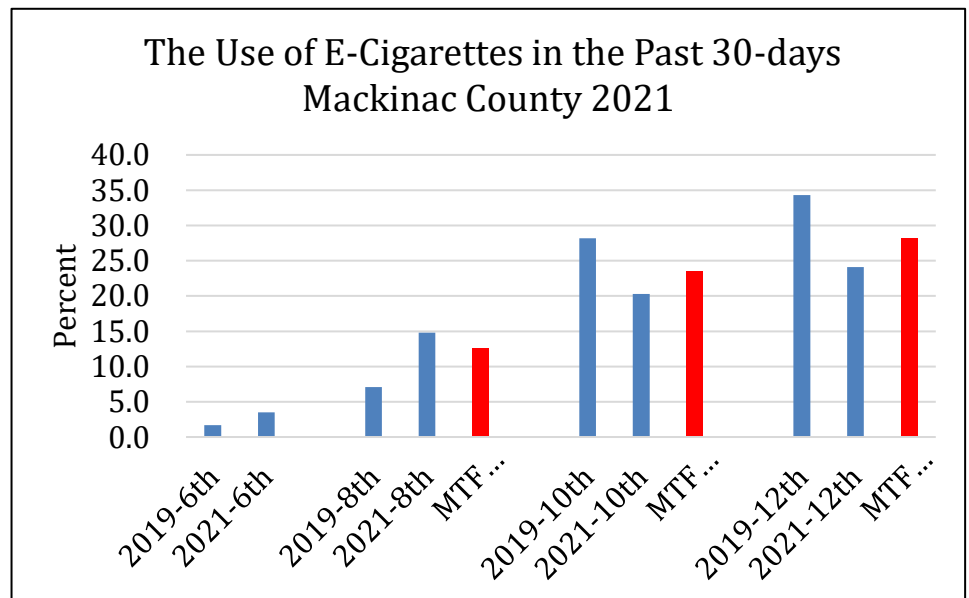


Figure 3

Cigarette smoking in the past month remained below nationwide rates in 8th and 12th grades and decreased to below nationwide among 10th graders. Use of cigarettes in the past 30 days, as reported by 10th graders, showed a decline of more than 80%, from 8.5% reporting recent

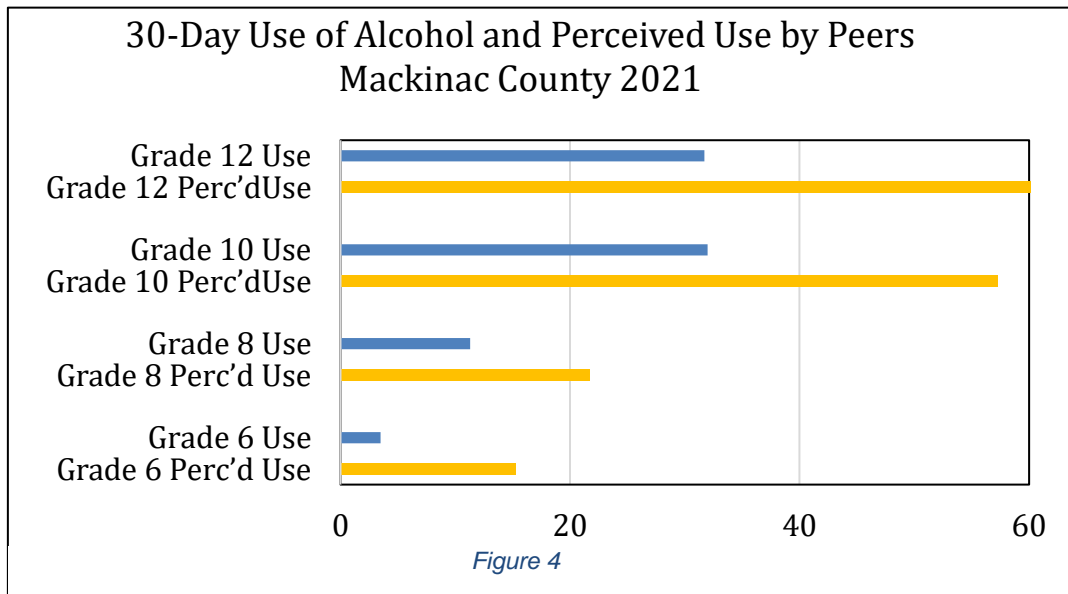
smoking in 2019 to 1.4% in 2021. The use of e-cigarettes was also lower than the nationwide rates in the older grades with the 8th graders showing 14.8% smoked vs 12.5% nationwide.

An interesting finding from the CTC youth survey was that all students believed that more of their classmates used drugs and alcohol than actually do. The problem with this incorrect perception is that if students believe “everybody is smoking or drinking or using a drug” they are more likely to participate.

The perception of frequent use among peers leads to a decreased perception of risk associated with drug and alcohol use – a belief that if everyone is doing it, it must not be so bad – and as noted in the next section, the students of Mackinac County have a low perception of risk associated with drug use.

The data in Table 2 shows the actual measured prevalence of use of a substance by grade together with what students estimated was the percentage of use among their classmates.

Table 2. Percentage of Students Who Used ATODs During the Past 30 Days Compared to Perceived Use*, 2021								
	Grade 6 Use	Grade 6 Perc'd Use	Grade 8 Use	Grade 8 Perc'd Use	Grade 10 Use	Grade 10 Perc'd Use	Grade 12 Use	Grade 12 Perc'd Use
Alcohol	3.5	15.3	11.3	21.7	32.0	57.3	31.7	62.3
Cigarettes	6.9	6.8	12.9	8.2	14.7	21.3	28.3	31.1
Marijuana	0.0	5.3	3.3	13.1	14.7	43.8	25.9	55.7
Other illegal drug	3.6	0	3.2	3.3	8.0	8.2	13.6	13.3



Universally, the perception of use was substantially higher than the measured use. The perceived use of both alcohol and marijuana was more than double the actual prevalence in the 10th and 12th grades and almost double in the younger students. This is an important misconception that should be targeted for change.

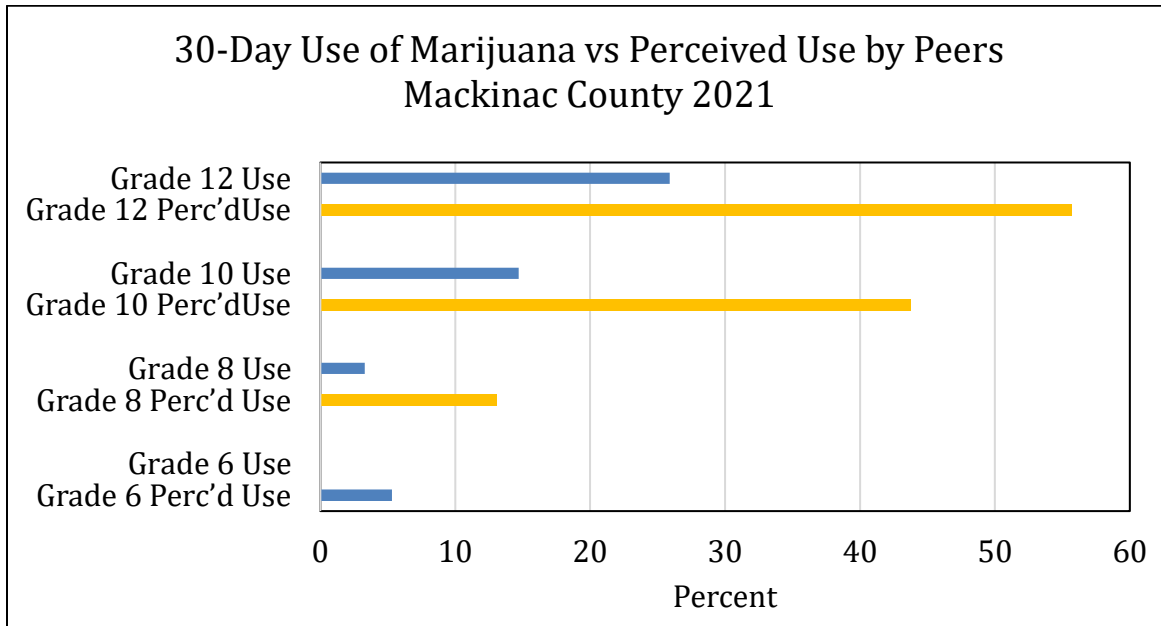


Figure 5

B. Risk Factors of Concern

Many factors influence a person’s chance of developing a pattern of risky substance use and / or a mental health issue. Effective prevention identifies the risk factors that negatively affect youth and focuses on reducing those risk factors. In addition, prevention efforts identify what factors in a child’s life are protective and work to strengthen those.

Risk factors are characteristics that are associated with a higher likelihood of negative outcomes such as substance use or violence. Protective factors are characteristics that have been found to be associated with a lower likelihood of negative outcomes. Risk and protective factors are found in different areas of a young persons’ life and are cumulative, i.e., the more risk factors a student has the greater their risk for negative behaviors. Identified factors have been categorized into “domains” that represent different areas of a youths’ life. The four key domains are:

1. Community of residence,
2. Family,
3. School and
4. Peer and Individual characteristics

The CTC Needs Assessment Survey is a validated way to identify which risk and protective factors are having an impact in Mackinac County. When reviewing the identified levels of risk factors, it is helpful to compare the level of risk in Mackinac County to that within a larger population in order to assess which ones have the greatest negative impact on youth behaviors. As with problem behaviors, we use a large pool of data collected from schools all across the United States as a comparison. For risk factors – the higher the level, the greater the problem associated with that factor.

Key Targets

When the data from the 2021 Mackinac County surveys were compared to the average levels for youth nationwide, three risk factors continue to show increased levels in Mackinac County so will be targeted for improvement. In addition, several factors within the Family Domain show a concerning increase, such as Poor Management, Family Conflict and Parental Attitudes that Favor Antisocial Behavior. These will be monitored to determine if this is a true finding or due to the impact of COVID-19 and will reverse by 2023. The factors to be targeted are:

1. Low Perceived Risk of Drug Use within the Peer and Individual Domain
2. Low Commitment to School in the School Domain
3. Presence of Depressive Symptoms in the Peer and Individual Domain
4. Family Domain Risk Factors: to be monitored

Supporting Data

1. Risk Factor – Peer and Individual Domain: Low Perceived Risk of Drug Use

Young people who do not perceive substance use to be risky are far more likely to engage in such use. It has been found that the belief in risks to health and safety, and/or trouble with parents and police, is associated with lower levels of use of drugs and alcohol because of fear of consequences. In the CTC Needs Assessment Survey, students were asked how much they felt people risked harming themselves when using different drugs. The defined risk factor named “Low Perceived Risk of Drug Use” is an average figure that represents the prevalence of a low belief in harm associated with cigarettes, marijuana and alcohol use. Specifically, students were asked to indicate how much risk for harm, physically or other, they thought was associated with:

1. Smoking one or more packs of cigarettes a day?
2. Using marijuana once or twice?
3. Smoking marijuana regularly?
4. Drinking one or two alcoholic drinks daily?

Among Mackinac County students, this risk factor score was noticeably higher than the average level in similar students all over the United States in 2021 (66.2% with low perceived risk vs 47.5% nationwide) (Figure 6). This indicates that the students do not see much danger

associated with drug use. It is encouraging, and perhaps a result of the prevention strategies ongoing in the Mackinac County schools, that, although, this risk factor remains higher in county students than nationally it has been decreasing since 2015. This indicates that the perceived level of risk associated with drug and alcohol use is increasing among the students.

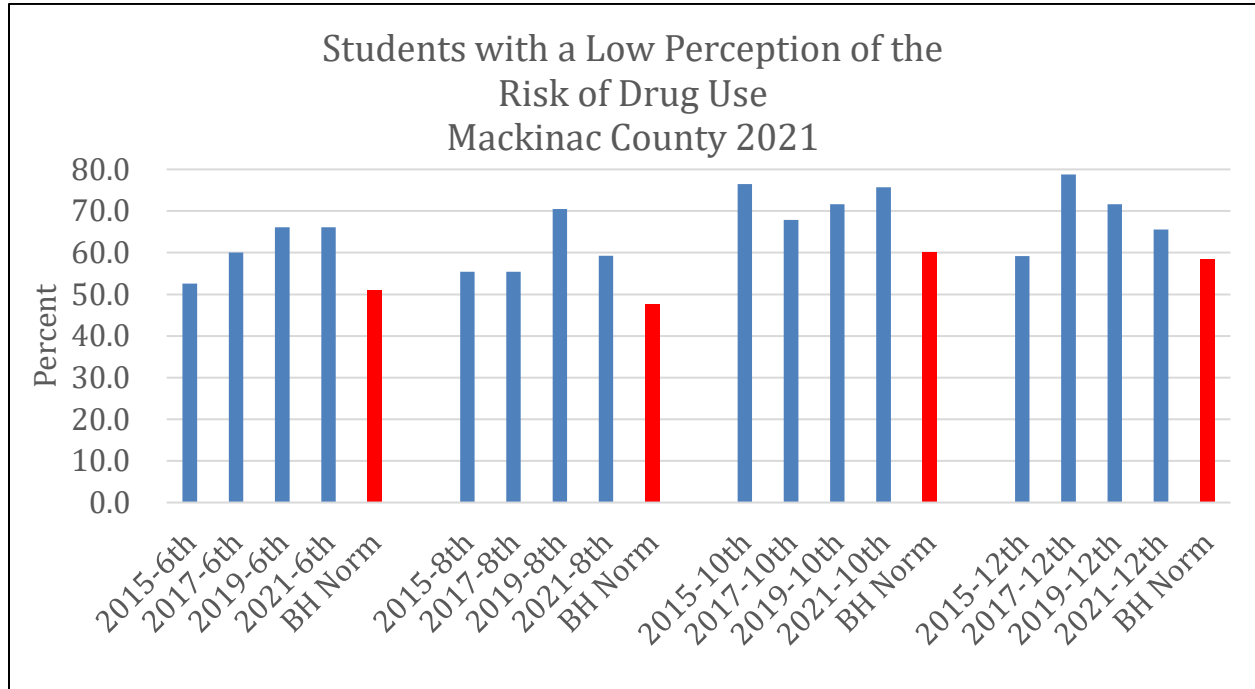


Figure 6

**Note –for risk factors, levels higher than the norm indicate higher risk*

Students reported their perception of harm for each of the drugs in question. It was unfortunate that the students do not associate great harm with binge drinking -- our targeted behavior. In 2021, 72.4% of 8th graders believed they were at moderate to great risk if they drank five or more drinks at one sitting. This was seen in 72.4% of 8th graders but only 65.8% and 65.5% of 10th and 12th graders, respectively.

The perceived risk increases somewhat when asked about regular marijuana use among middle school students. Among 6th graders 83.6% of 6th graders see moderate to great risk with regular use, 79.3% of 8th graders agree but only 51.4% and 52.5% of 10th and 12th graders reported moderate or great risk with regular marijuana use.

The greatest level of harm reported by students varies between using a prescription drug not prescribed to them and smoking one or more packs of cigarettes per day. Overall, use of prescription drugs was perceived as having moderate or great risk among 76.6% of all students, with a high of 84.5% in 8th graders and a low of 73.3% in 12th graders. Moderate or great risk was associated with smoking among 79.4% of all students with very little variation seen by grade (range 73.0-76.5%). It is unfortunate that the use of e-cigarettes or vaping is not seen to

be as risky as smoking cigarettes. Overall, 63.1% saw this as having moderate to great risk but this varied from 72.9% among 6th graders to only 52.7% in 10th graders.

**2. Risk Factor – School Domain:
Low Commitment to School**

Low commitment to school indicates the youth are not interested in the material, do not find it meaningful and do not feel they benefit from doing the work. Youth with a low commitment to school are at a higher risk for substance use, delinquency, teen pregnancy, school drop-out and violence. Students who like school and feel rewarded for doing the work are significantly less likely to use drugs and alcohol. Surveys of high school seniors also indicate that students who expect to continue some type of education are less likely to be using alcohol and drugs than among those who do not.

This risk factor is a score based on student responses to the following questions:

1. During the LAST FOUR WEEKS how many whole days of school have you missed because you skipped or “cut”?
2. How often do you feel that the school work you are assigned is meaningful and important?
3. How interesting are most of your courses to you?
4. How important do you think the things you are learning in school are going to be for your later life?
5. Now, thinking back over the past year in school, how often did you enjoy being in school?
6. Now, thinking back over the past year in school, how often did you hate being in school?
7. Now, thinking back over the past year in school, how often did you try to do your best work in school?

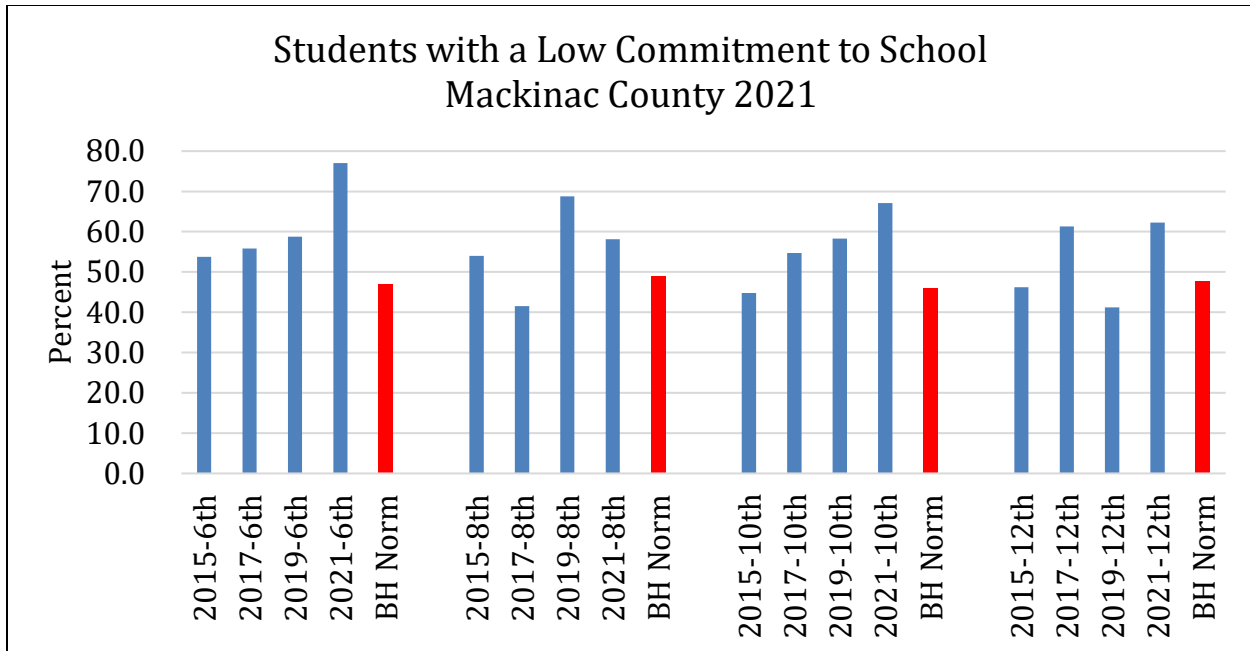


Figure 7

Mackinac County students continue to show a low commitment to school. The 8th graders improved from 2019 to 2021 with 58.1% at risk compared to 68.8% in 2019 but the other three grades reported increasing levels of risk. The senior group showed improvement in 2019 with only 41.2% reporting results that supported a lack of commitment but that figure increased to 68.8% in 2021. These results are very possibly a result of the difficult previous two years of schooling impacted by COVID-19. The schools were forced to change from in-person to virtual and back again several times during the pandemic, with virtual schooling lacking the interaction to peers that helps students enjoy their time in school.

3. Risk Factor– Peer and Individual Domain: Depressive Symptoms

The third risk factor found to be concerning was the prevalence of depressive symptoms among the youth of Mackinac County. Depression is a mental state that may be considered either the result of or a possible cause for substance use. There is a close association between these two issues, and persons who are depressed or anxious are substantially more likely to have a drug use problem and, vice versa, those who use drugs are more likely to have depression or anxiety. Depression can also lead to other problem behaviors that may result in involvement with the criminal justice system.

The CTC Needs Assessment Survey measures depressive symptoms through the use of four survey items:

1. Sometimes I think that life is not worth it.

2. At times I think I am no good at all.
3. All in all, I am inclined to think that I am a failure.
4. In the past year, have you felt depressed or sad MOST days, even if you felt OK sometimes?

Based on the responses to these questions, each student receives a score. The average scores by grade are compared to the national data to give an idea of the level of risk to our students related to depression.

As seen in Figure 8, there is a high number of students who are dealing with symptoms of depression. This has been a concern for Mackinac County students since it was first measured in 2015 and, similar to data reported nationally, the levels in most of the students surveyed increased again in 2021. This pandemic is probably responsible for some of the increase seen but there is no way to determine the strength of impact. The senior class showed the smallest change, increasing from 55.2% of students reporting depressive symptoms in 2019 to 57.4%. The 10th graders and 6th graders are of greatest concern with 73.0% of 10th graders and 63.2% of each class showing reporting high risk. This increase was seen in surveys nationwide such as the 2021 Monitoring the Future ([Monitoringthefuture.org](https://www.monitoringthefuture.org)).

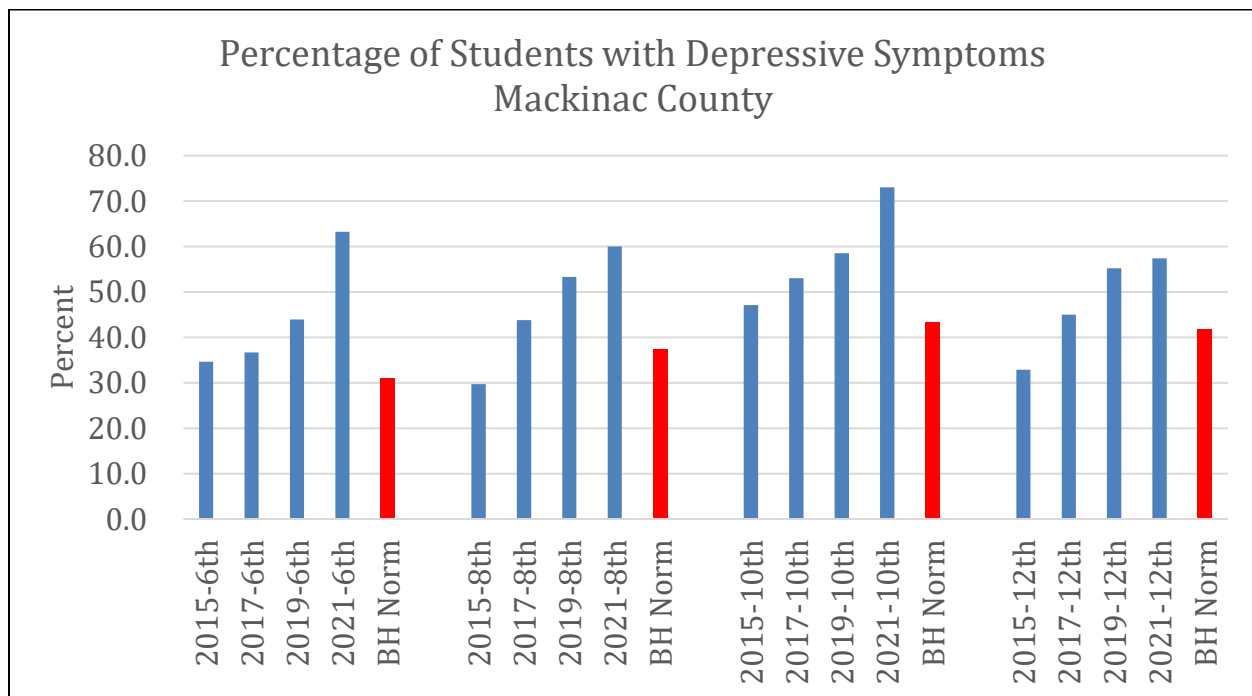


Figure 8

The CTC Youth Survey of 2021 asked students questions regarding suicide. It has been reported that thoughts of suicide are quite common during stressful times such as the COVID-19 pandemic (<https://www.health.state.mn.us/people/syringe/suicide.pdf>). A valid way to measure the risk associated with such thoughts is to determine whether or not an individual has

actually formulated a plan. The results from the 2021 youth survey of Mackinac County students indicate that almost one-fourth of all students (22.8%) had made a plan on how to attempt suicide within the past year.

Bullying

An important issue to consider when addressing the high presence of depressive symptoms is that of bullying. It is important to learn about the prevalence of bullying because of the short- and long-term effects. There is a lot of literature that shows that children / adolescents who are bullied experience negative physical, school, and mental health issues. These youth are more likely to experience such feelings as depression, anxiety, increased sadness and loneliness, all of which were elevated as seen in the risk factor Depressive Symptoms.

These issues may also persist into adulthood leading to additional health complaints, decreased academic achievement both in grade point average and standardized test scores, and finally dropping out of school all together. Beginning in 2019, the CTC Needs Assessment Survey included questions about bullying. These cover frequency of being bullied at school, being harassed through social media and how these might affect school attendance.

Bullying on student property is highest among the younger students. Of those in the 6th grade, 57.1% reported being bullied at least once on school property during the past year. This number decreased to 19.7% of the senior class (Figure 9). It is concerning that, as seen in Figure 9, about one-fourth of 6th graders reported being bullied on 6 or more days while at school.

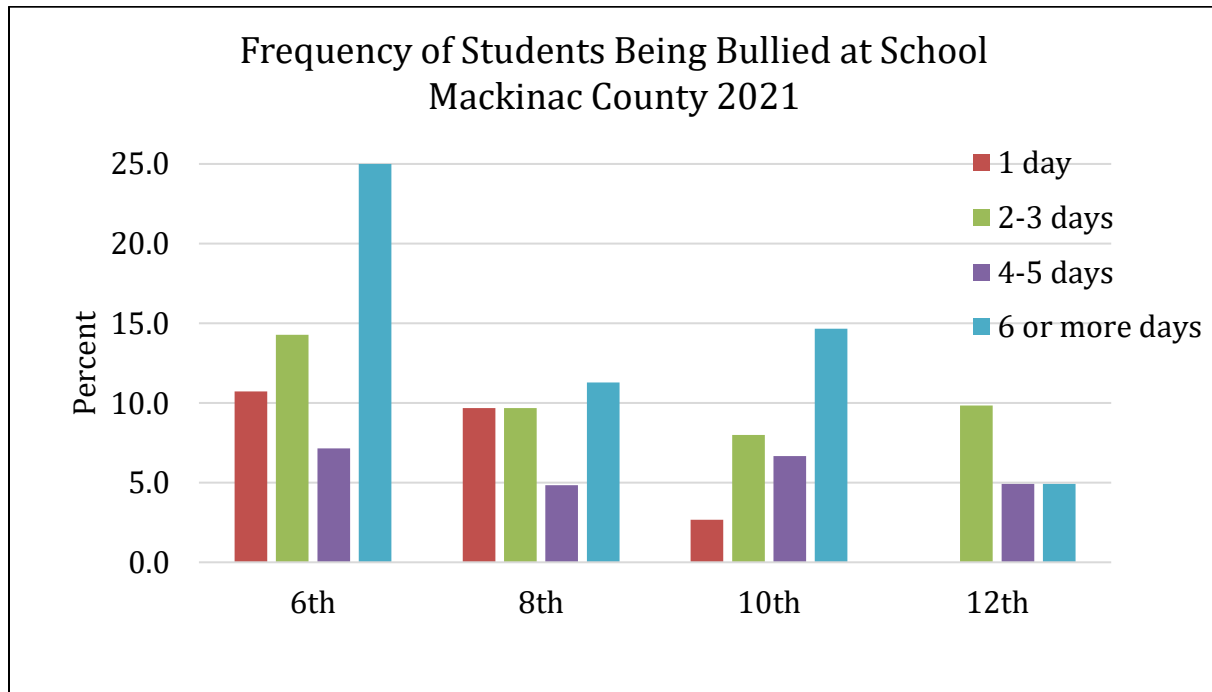


Figure 9

Among all students, one-fourth (24.8%) reported they had been “threatened or harassed over the internet, by email or cell phone”, almost double that seen in 2019 (13.1%). This proportion was fairly consistent across grades with the 10th graders reporting the highest level of harassment (29.2%). This is the same group of students who reported the highest levels two years ago when in the 8th grade, although the harassment has increased in frequency among these students, up from 17.3% two years ago.

In an attempt to measure how bullying affects students’ lives, they were asked whether or not they had ever stayed home from school because they felt unsafe either at school or on the way to school or home. Overall, 13.6% of students said they had missed at least one day of school in the past 30 days because of fear for their safety (Figure 10). The 10th graders were the most likely to report staying home at least once in the past month (9%).

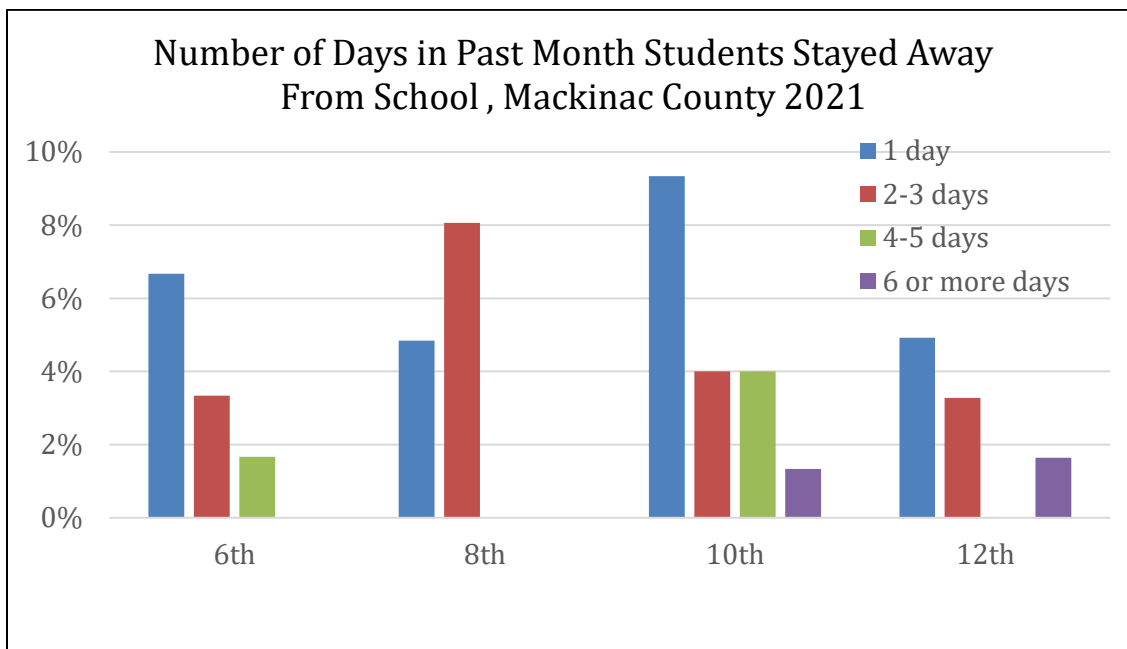


Figure 10

4. Risk Factor: Family Domain

Factors within the Family Domain can impact risky behaviors among youth. As mentioned earlier, the pandemic that occurred during 2020 and 2021 had a large impact on the mental health and well-being of families. As seen in the 2021 Mackinac County CTC youth survey, many students reported an increase in poor family management and family conflict. In addition, the difficulties faced by families led to more acceptance of antisocial behaviors, which includes substance use.

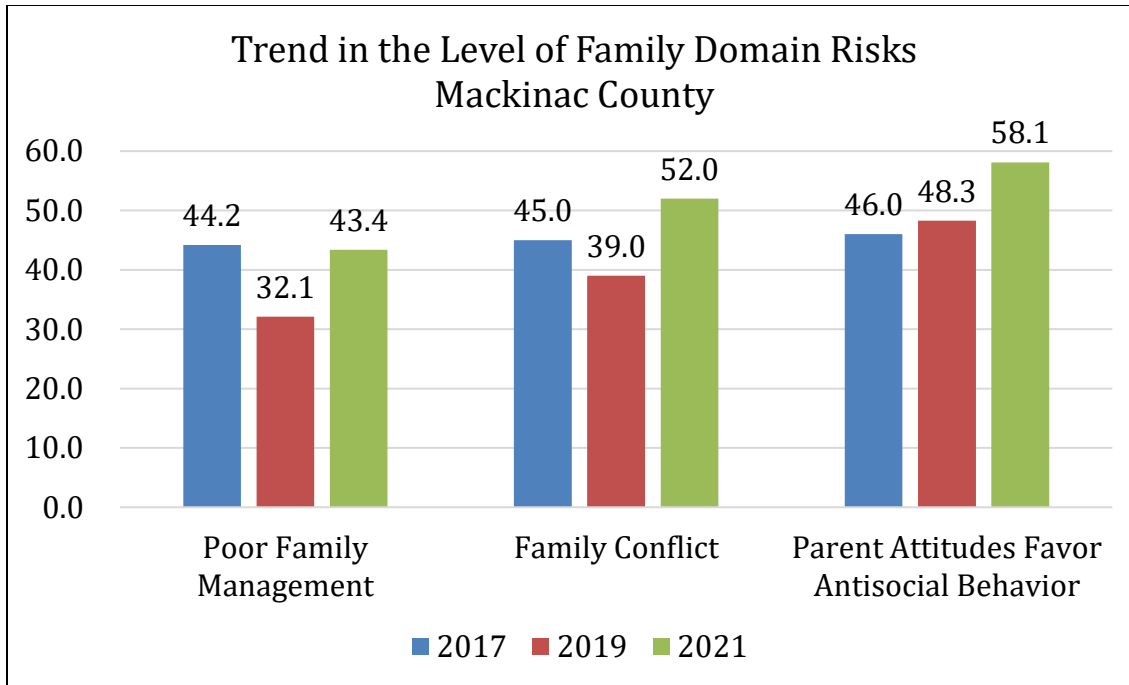


Figure 11

As seen in Figure 11, students reported increases from 20% (Attitudes Favor Antisocial Behavior) to 35% (Poor Family Management) in risky family characteristics from 2019 to 2021, after showing improved levels from 2017 to 2019. Antisocial behaviors are defined as those that show no regard for other people and are disruptive to others and society. Although the increase is not as great for the factor regarding antisocial behaviors, it is unfortunate that 58% of students describe their parents as favoring behaviors that are outside societal norms.

These risk factors will be monitored over the next two years in hopes that they will improve as the pandemic subsides and family life returns to a more normal pattern.

IV. Conclusion and Recommendations

The Mackinac County CTC Needs Assessment has provided much needed data to help professionals identify issues that impact youth development and lead to risky behaviors. The Mackinac County School Districts have been extremely helpful and supportive of the CTC efforts, allowing us to gather data from the students on a biannual basis. Prevention efforts have been initiated and were ongoing prior to 2020 but are coordinated and completed within the schools. Therefore, the disruption due to COVID-19 affected the conduct of the prevention strategies. Because of the inability to implement the programs as required to obtain the modification of behaviors and opinions, it is not surprising that the 2021 data still support the

following behaviors and risk factors as important issues that plague our county and should continue to be targeted with evidence-based prevention efforts.

- Behavior: Binge drinking by Mackinac County youth
- Risk Factor: Low Perception of Risk of Drug use
- Risk Factor: Lack of Commitment to School
- Risk Factor: Depression
- Risk Factors in Family Domain to be monitored

The 2021-2022 school year has seen improvement in the successful implementation of the strategies outlined in this report. It is hoped that when school begins again in the fall of 2022, prevention efforts will be implemented in all schools with fidelity and further evaluation will identify improvements in behaviors and levels of risk factors.

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