



# RESEARCH SOLUTIONS

June 2025 Newsletters

Region 4- Regional Prevention Professionals| Research Solutions Inc.

"Building safer, stronger communities through education and prevention."

## **Featured This Month: The Power of Prevention Starts Early!**

### Why Early Prevention Education Matters

Prevention is most effective when it begins early. Research consistently shows that prevention education in elementary and middle school can significantly reduce the risk of substance misuse and risky behaviors later in life. When we teach children healthy coping skills, self-awareness, and refusal strategies early on, we lay a strong foundation for mental wellness and lifelong success. At Research Solutions Inc., we can provide free resources and tips for families and educators that will allow for the opportunity to incorporate age-appropriate activities, conversations about stress, peer pressure, and choices into everyday life. Small talks make a big difference!

Early prevention education is crucial in shaping positive behaviors and reducing the likelihood of substance use and other risky activities among youth.

Programs that start in elementary and middle school have

been shown to decrease the onset of substance use, improve academic performance, and enhance social skills. Implementing evidence-based curricula that focus on decision-



making, emotional regulation, and peer resistance skills can lay a strong foundation for healthy development.

## **June 26: International Day Against Drug Abuse and Illicit Trafficking**

International Day Against Drug Abuse and Illicit Trafficking – June 26

Each year on June 26, the United Nations observes the International Day Against Drug Abuse and Illicit Trafficking, which is a global call to action to strengthen efforts in combating drug-related challenges and promoting health and safety in communities worldwide.

### **Why This Day Matters**

Substance abuse continues to be a pressing public health issue, and recent trends highlight both progress and ongoing concerns. In Arkansas, the opioid crisis, particularly involving fentanyl, has had a devastating impact. According to the Arkansas State Crime Lab, drug overdose deaths in the state reached 496 in 2021, with fentanyl involved in 59% of those cases. This represents a significant increase from 4% in 2016.

However, there is encouraging news. Preliminary data from the CDC shows that overdose deaths in Arkansas dropped to 388 in 2024, down from 538 in 2023. Nationally, overdose deaths also declined, falling nearly 27% from an estimated 110,037 in 2023 to their lowest level since 2019.

### **What's Behind the Decline?**

Several key factors have contributed to this positive trend:

**Wider Access to Naloxone:** Naloxone (brand name Narcan), a life-saving medication that reverses opioid overdoses, became available over the counter in 2023. It is now a standard issue for first responders and is accessible in many public spaces.

**Fentanyl Test Strips:** These strips help detect fentanyl in illicit drugs, reducing the risk of accidental overdose from counterfeit pills.

**Community-Based Prevention:** Education, outreach, and treatment programs are playing a vital role in prevention and recovery efforts.

### **Taking Action in Arkansas and Beyond**

On this international observance, communities are encouraged to:

Promote drug-free youth leadership programs, Distribute evidence-based prevention materials in schools, Host community awareness events, and Naloxone training sessions, Support access to treatment and recovery services

By raising awareness and expanding access to resources, we can continue to reduce the harm caused by drug abuse and illicit trafficking.

Let's use this opportunity to recommit to prevention efforts that reach all corners of our community.

### **June is National Safety Month**

A Time to Prioritize Safety at Home, Work, and in Our Communities

Observed every June and led by the National Safety Council, National Safety Month is dedicated to raising awareness about the leading causes of preventable injuries and deaths. It's a time to take proactive steps to protect ourselves and those around us—whether at work, on the road, or in our homes and neighborhoods. Engage children and teens in safety drills, interactive workshops, and educational games to build lifelong safety habits.

 From our local Prevention Specialists:

National Safety Month is also a great opportunity to address safety through a prevention lens: Secure harmful substances: Lock up medications, alcohol, and vaping products to prevent underage access. Promote digital safety: Encourage healthy screen time and teach online safety practices. Assess environmental risks: Identify and mitigate factors that may contribute to substance misuse or injury.

We must create inclusive and affirming spaces in schools and community programs for all ages. Train adults to recognize signs of distress, isolation, and substance use, and use affirming language and imagery in prevention campaigns.

### **Identifying Risk Factors Among LGBTQIA+ Youth**

LGBTQIA+ youth often face unique challenges that can increase their risk for mental health issues and substance use. Factors such as discrimination, family rejection, and lack of supportive environments contribute to these risks. In comparing 2019 data, A study in Northwest Arkansas highlighted that 82.5% of LGBTQ+ youth expressed a crucial need for confidantes, and 80.3% emphasized the importance of safety within their homes. Youth who identify as LGBTQIA+ often face unique challenges, including higher rates of bullying, social rejection, increased risk of depression and anxiety, as well as disproportionate exposure to substance use environments. Recent 2024 survey data reveal a troubling

reality: LGBTQ+ youth who are physically harmed or threatened because of their gender identity or sexual orientation are three times more likely to attempt suicide compared to their heterosexual and cisgender peers. This stark statistic underscores the urgent need for safe, affirming environments.

While the survey reflects how broader societal pressures and the national mood can influence mental health, especially anxiety and suicide risk, it also highlights a powerful truth: affirming, supportive spaces at home and in school can make a life-saving difference.

💬 Quote to Remember: "Being seen and supported is a protective factor in itself." – The Trevor Project

## Community Awareness and Involvement: Call to Action

To continue in our region's prevention efforts to bring prevention awareness to our communities,

Plan with us a 🌟 Prevention Day on Campus 🌟 at your school or organization— this is an exciting opportunity for students to LEAD, LEARN, and INSPIRE others around critical topics, We encourage Drug-Free Youth group leaders and/or student leaders interested in starting a drug-free youth group to start thinking of creative sessions you and your group can create!

Prevention Days on Campus at your school or with your organization will be more than just a day of learning — it's a platform to empower youth voices and spark peer-driven changes in schools and communities. Together, we can build a movement of student leaders promoting positive mental and Behavioral health and drug-free futures.

**Stay Informed, do your research. Here are some good References to get you started:**

<https://www.un.org/en/observances/end-drug-abuse-day>

<https://www.healthline.com/health-news/lgbtq-youth-mental-health-2024#How-the-2024-Survey-was-conducted-and-what-it-found>

[https://www.americashealthrankings.org/explore/measures/Depression\\_a/AR](https://www.americashealthrankings.org/explore/measures/Depression_a/AR)  
<https://www.arkansashouse.org/news/post/22966/mental-health-awareness-month>  
<https://www.cdc.gov/media/releases/2025/2025-cdc-reports-decline-in-us-drug-overdose-deaths.html>  
<https://www.dea.gov/press-releases/2024/12/16/overdose-deaths-decline-fentanyl-threat-looms>

## Insights from the Region 4 Arkansas Prevention Needs Assessment

The Arkansas Prevention Needs Assessment (APNA) provides valuable data on youth behaviors and risk factors. In Region 4, which includes Jonesboro and surrounding areas, the 2021 survey revealed:

A notable percentage of students reported experiencing depressive symptoms, indicating a need for enhanced mental health services. Substance use rates among youth highlighted the importance of early intervention and education programs.

The data underscores the necessity for community collaboration in addressing these issues. Utilizing this data can help tailor prevention strategies to meet the specific needs of our community.

### Region 4 Prevention Highlight

Our team distributed over 800 pieces of prevention literature this month and participated in 3 regional events promoting substance use awareness and mental health support. Thanks to our school and community partners for your continued engagement!

 Stay Connected for more information or to get involved:

[Research Solutions Inc. NEA CommUNITY Resource Center located at 2224 Conrad, Suite A, Jonesboro, AR](#)

Check out all of our newsletters, feel free to share with others, and stay updated on future events and prevention resources

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 Serving Clay, Craighead, Greene, Lawrence, Mississippi, Poinsett & Randolph Counties

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