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## **TOGETHER WE CAN STOP SUBSTANCE ABUSE BEFORE IT STARTS**

The *Burlington Partnership for a Healthy Community* has launched a new program, **ParentIN**, designed to empower parents and guardians of middle school students help their children make healthy decisions, especially pertaining to substance abuse.

Before age 13, **fewer than 1 in 10** Burlington students report using alcohol in the past 30 days, but by 12<sup>th</sup> grade **6 in 10** students reported using alcohol in the same amount of time. <sup>1</sup>

Of students in 6<sup>th</sup> and 7<sup>th</sup> grades, **too few to collect data on** report binge drinking (more than five drinks at once) in the past 30 days, however reported binge drinking increases to **one in five** Burlington 12<sup>th</sup> graders in the same amount of time. <sup>1</sup>

Among Burlington 6<sup>th</sup> graders who do report recently using alcohol, nearly half of them say they don't feel valued by their community. <sup>2</sup>

Talking early and often to kids about the risks of drugs and alcohol can stop substance abuse before it starts. However, many parents in Burlington are not sure when or what to say to their preteen, or how to find necessary information and support.

*Burlington Partnership for a Healthy Community* Director, Mariah Sanderson, says the coalition created ParentIN to create a community for parents to share challenges, get advice, and help support youth in Burlington make healthy choices. "Research shows that focusing on substance abuse prevention efforts can decrease the rate of substance use disorders and improve positive outcomes for our youth and community. We know that parents are still the number one influence on whether or not a child will use substances so it was important for our coalition to include supports for parents and guardians. Parenting preteens can be tough, but getting support shouldn't be."



Interested participants will receive weekly educational tips, inspirational stories from fellow parents in our community, as well as the opportunity to engage in regular meet-ups facilitated by licensed clinicians.

ParentIN encourages all parents to get support, before they think they need it. Danielle Jatlow, Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Director at Centerpoint Adolescent Treatment Services, explains: “We find that seeking support sooner than later can often make a big difference for new parents of adolescents. It’s never too early to learn and practice how to start and continue difficult conversations, set age-appropriate limits and boundaries, and stay connected as adolescents seek more and more independence. Often, connecting with other parents going through similar issues can be tremendously affirming and helpful as parents are just starting to navigate the waters of adolescence. We also know there isn’t a “one size fits all” strategy for accessing support. We work with parents to determine what type of support is going to be the best fit for them and their family.”

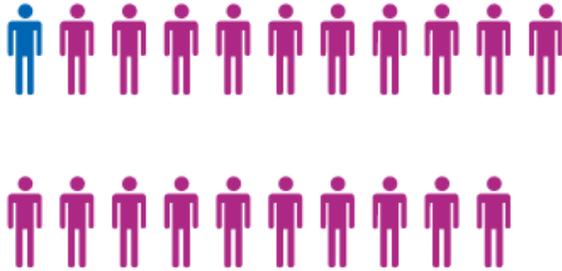
Burlington-area parents and guardians of middle-school students are also invited to participate in the “We are IN this together” project – featuring dozens of community members all striving to raise their children substance free.

One participant, Heather Danis, Health Services District Director at Vermont Department of Health, said she uses teachable moments from daily life to start difficult conversations with her son, “Living in downtown Burlington, my son sees negative impacts of substance use first hand. From a young age we’ve talked about why people choose to use substances, even when they have such a negative impact. I use those moments to initiate discussion about how he will respond when he or his friends are faced with the choice to use substances. I know that day will come and I want us both to be prepared.”

The axiom, “An ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure” is certainly true of substance abuse. Joining together as a community to bolster children’s confidence and demolish pressure to use substances will create profound, lasting change. Hence, the ParentIN tagline – “We are IN this together!”

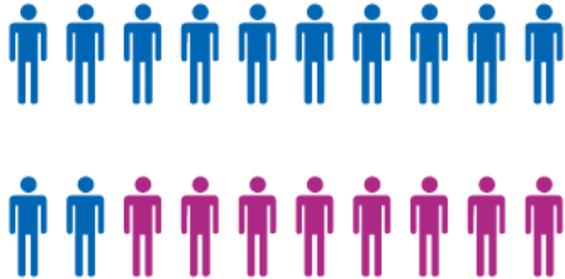
1. 2015 Youth Risk Behavior Survey
2. 2017 Burlington CORE Survey

Students age 13 or younger alcohol use (past 30 days)



■ Reported drinking (4.76%) ■ No reported drinking (95.24%)

12th grade students, alcohol use (past 30 days)



■ Reported drinking (60%) ■ No reported drinking (40%)

6th and 7th grade students, binge drinking (past 30 days)



■ Reported binge drinking (0%)  
■ No reported binge drinking (100%)

12th grade students, binge drinking (past 30 days)



■ Reported binge drinking (20%)  
■ No reported binge drinking (80%)



# iNvolved

“ I was raised in Africa at a time when you are not only raised by your parents, but the entire neighborhood. Drugs, alcohol and disrespect were not tolerated.

Being raised here, in a single family home, David has more challenges fitting in, staying away from alcohol, drugs, bullies, and dealing with racism.”

~ Blandine Comlan & David Abesa

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ParentIN is a program by Burlington Partnership for a Healthy Community



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BURLINGTON

## TIPS:

Set clear rules about not drinking alcohol while underage or using other substances and establish firm consequences for drinking or using.

High expectations, positive adult role models, and neighbors taking responsibility for monitoring young people's behavior are other key assets for healthy development.\*

\*Search Institute's "40 Developmental Assets"



# iNvested

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I use those moments to initiate discussion about how he will respond when he or his friends are faced with the choice to use substances. I know that day will come and I want us both to be prepared.”

~ Heather Danis & Ren Anaquim

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**TIPS:** Teens who feel close to their parents are less likely to use substances. Parents are the most important influence on their child's decision making.

Create opportunities for discussion about drug and alcohol use.

Discuss real situations where he or she might be encouraged to use drugs or alcohol. Brainstorm and practice ways to say no or get out of the situation.