

The Power of Choice-High School Edition



'You Always Have a Choice' 2023-24 School Year Theme

Parents, grandparents, guardians, caregivers—all adults in a teenager's life—what would you say if your teen asks, "What's Power of Choice?" At orientations, open house, teacher-parent conferences, you and your teenager might notice Power of Choice posters on bulletin boards or TV monitors with positive messages about staying substance-free. In your own words, you can say: *Power of Choice is a campaign focused on resiliency to support all students to increase the number who prefer staying alcohol-, marijuana-, and vape-free. Despite perceptions to the contrary, most students are substance-free.* It is true! The posters share the facts, which take the pressure off students to worry less about fitting in, and be themselves. They might try getting involved, check out an activity. Coping with stress and having fun in healthier ways than using addictive substances increases the chances of paying attention in class. That can lead to finding at least one subject they're interested in. So, if your child asks about the Power of Choice, we've got you covered. Talking points in bold below.

Why have a substance use prevention communication campaign at school? Parenting is an important job. A caring adult in the home is a teen's main role model. Parents and educators can both be mentors. Both are all about helping teens go after their life's hopes and dreams. The reality is, whether curiosity, anxiety, depression, stress, or another reason, *all adolescents are at risk of substance use.* This includes alcohol, vaping, THC or another intoxicant. Many teens are unaware of the real risks of dependency, school problems, legal, health, and other consequences. Some struggle with mental health challenges. Others don't know what to do with expectations they perceive around them, that are about them. Too many of our kids just about give up entirely on the ideals they've held for their future, losing direction in a fog of substance use. Some give up on themselves. That's not OK.

The Power of Choice messages are shared widely so that as many students as possible see them. They provide subtle positivity and encouragement. The campaign's aim is to prevent use, and also reduce repeated use and harm for teens who want to quit. Teens who get this are fans of the campaign. Some even get involved in helping creating the Power of Choice campaign materials. They invite peers to join their Youth Advisory Committee (YAC) meetings, a Snowball Retreat, or a summer camp teen leadership training on a college campus. In fact, before school started, hundreds voted for their favorite Power of Choice designs and messages for the 23-24 school year. Throwback/retro designs and the theme, *you always having a choice*, won! The YAC high school students review and revise the Power of Choice campaign materials at their monthly meetings. If you have a student who might bring something or get something from the YAC group, email Sarah Indlecoffer at [Sindlecoffer@360youthservices.org](mailto: Sindlecoffer@360youthservices.org), or direct the student to the group's instagram [@yac_360](https://www.instagram.com/yac_360).

Who Is Behind the Power of Choice? For 20 years, trained prevention educators from 360 Youth Service power the campaign, in partnership with school districts 203 & 204, students, Naperville Police Department, KidsMatter, and parents. It's funded in whole or in part by the IL Dept of Human Services, Division of Substance Use Prevention and Recovery through a grant from the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration.

All High Schools Can Register for a 2024 IYS Testing Date

The Illinois Youth Survey (IYS) takes place statewide in private and public middle and high schools during second semester of the 2023-2024 school year.

360 Youth Services has been in touch with school administrators explaining the IYS and inviting them to register for their IYS survey date between January and June.

The survey is administered by the Center for Prevention Research and Development at the University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign. The anonymous survey takes about one class period to administer to 9th-12th graders. Its purpose is for schools, communities, the state and its grant-funded prevention projects such as the Power of Choice to gauge the prevalence of substance use and other attitudes and behaviors among young people and develop targeted prevention initiatives. Comparing the results every other year allows schools to evaluate, track and progress toward physical, social and mental health goals set by administrators. School climate, safety and bullying, feelings about school, their family support and rules about alcohol and marijuana use, are all factors that can contribute to risky behaviors and impede learning. By law, participation in the IYS is also tracked by the Illinois Report Card, the official source of information on school performance.

Registration is open in September to high schools who choose a date during the second semester for their students to participate in the IYS survey.

The First Poster Delivered Next Week!



Parent/Caregiver: a Teen's First Hero

Teenagers look up to caring adults at home as role models. A parent who prefers healthier ways than substance use to relax and cope sends a powerful message. Parents aren't Marvel movie superheroes. They are real life heroes! They give their family time and attention, and good things happen. Parents who recognize their own strength, can help their teenager to recognize theirs. As corny as it is, it's something to celebrate! Keep going for walks, playing with pets, try reading the same book, doing an art project, or take a rec class together. Finding ways of taking care of your health as an adult speaks loudly. When life gets hard, even heroes shouldn't have to figure it out alone. Seek help. Asking for help is a sign of strength! Parents, keep showing interest in things important to your teen to let them know they always have your love. And, let them know that they always have a choice.

Is It Working?

2003*	2022*
66% local teens <i>not drinking</i>	86% local teens <i>not drinking</i>
2009	2022
84% local teens <i>no marijuana use</i>	94% local teens <i>no marijuana use</i>

*Past 30-day use. Source: 2022 Illinois Youth Survey Community Report, 10,148 District 203 & 204 high school students anonymously surveyed in Spring 2022. Survey and data analysis provided by CPRD at the University of Illinois. The Power of Choice is a project of 360 Youth Services, Naperville School District 203, Indian Prairie School District 204, Naperville Police Department, KidsMatter, and District 203 & 204 parents. Funded in whole or in part by the Illinois Department of Human Services, Division of Substance Use Prevention and Recovery through a grant from the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration.

Connect With Us!

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