

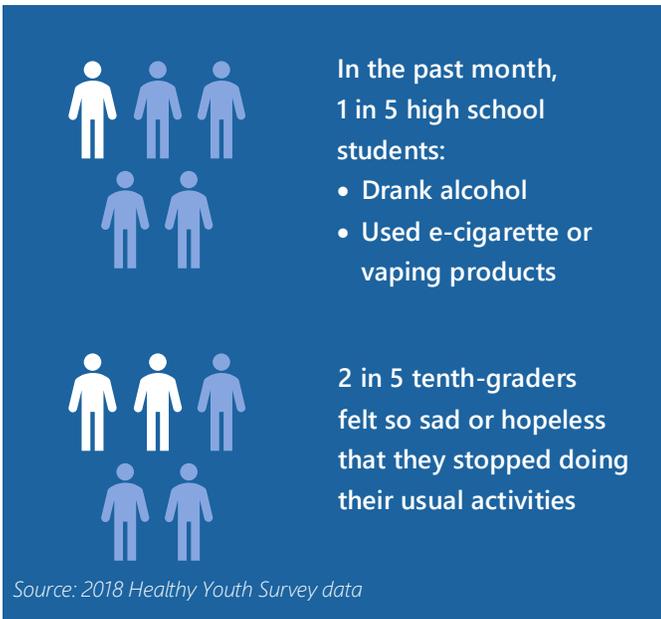
Smart Investment: Costs and Benefits of Substance Use Prevention and Behavioral Health Promotion



We can improve the lives of young people, their families, and communities – and save money – by investing in effective prevention.

Why It Matters

Every year, early substance use and mental health problems affect far too many people younger than age 21 in Washington State.ⁱ



These problems have a human toll in pain and suffering, and school, work, and leisure time lost to treatment services. They also have a statewide financial toll.

Treatment costs alone cost Washington State \$415,370,973 each year.ⁱⁱ Juvenile justice costs \$2,756,887,000.ⁱⁱⁱ

These costs can be reduced if greater investments are made 'up stream' in effective and cost-beneficial prevention programs that keep young people healthy and away from choices that may lead to harms.

Substance use and mental health problems in Washington's young people can be reduced through high-quality delivery of effective prevention programs and policies.

More than 70 prevention programs have been shown in high-quality research studies to reduce problems like substance use and mental health problems and to improve wellbeing.^{iv}

These programs can be offered to children, youth, and families in schools, community agencies, primary care, and other community-wide settings where they live, work, and play.

This brief was a cooperative effort between members of the Prevention Research Sub-Committee, University of Washington Social Development Research Group, the WSU IMPACT Research Lab and the Division of Behavioral Health and Recovery.

In SFY 18 and SFY 19, we estimate that our investments in these evidence-based programs led to more than \$124 million in benefits to society.					
					
Communities That Care	Community-based Mentoring	Family Matters	Strengthening Families	Good Behavior Game	Positive Action
NPV = \$2,617 BCR = \$5.20	NPV = \$7,297 BCR = \$3.91	NPV = \$1,460 BCR = \$8.08	NPV = \$2,540 BCR = \$5.36	NPV = \$9,913 BCR = \$62.80	NPV = \$30,096 BCR = \$29.32

Notes: Net Present Value (NPV) shows how much benefits exceed program costs per participant. Benefit-Cost Ratio (BCR) shows the return per \$1 invested per participant. Estimates are from wsipp.wa.gov.

Many effective programs are good economic investments for Washington State

Benefit-cost analyses by the Washington State Institute for Public Policy^v show that many effective **prevention programs produce economic benefits to Washington State that exceed the costs of offering them.**^{vi vii}

Short-term savings from:

- ✓ fewer discipline referrals & suspensions
- ✓ better grade retention
- ✓ less involvement in juvenile justice, behavioral/mental health & ER services

Types of longer-term benefits:

- ✓ increased employment and earnings
- ✓ reduced healthcare/public system costs

What Can Washington State Officials Do?

Dedicate funds to support proven-effective prevention

- When the state used tobacco tax revenues and Medicare Set-Aside (MSA) funds to support a comprehensive prevention, treatment, and control program, the state realized more than a \$5 to \$1 return on investment.^{viii}
- Partner with the prevention community to identify a short list of proven programs to

support with dedicated state and federal funding streams.

Support high quality implementation of proven prevention programs

- Support effective program training and implementation.
- Partner with the Washington State prevention community to establish appropriate evidence-based resources for the state.

Fund prevention programs in Washington’s most vulnerable communities to increase equity and reduce health disparities

- Work with Washington’s HCA and Division of Behavioral Health and Recovery to identify communities most in need of support for prevention programming through validated state youth and young surveys measuring health risk behaviors.

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ⁱ Health Care Authority, Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction, & Liquor and Cannabis Board. (2019). (rep.). *Washington State Healthy Youth Survey - 2018 Analytic Report*. Retrieved from <https://www.askhys.net/Docs/HYS%202018%20Analytic%20Report%20FINAL%2011-14-2019.pdf>

ⁱⁱ *Alcohol and substance abuse - dept of social and health services*. Office of Financial Management. (2021). Retrieved from <https://ofm.wa.gov/budget/state-budgets/gov-inslees-proposed-2019-21-budgets/agency-detail-budgets/300/070>.

ⁱⁱⁱ *Dept of Children, Youth, & families - current law. Office of Financial Management. (2021)*. Retrieved from <https://ofm.wa.gov/budget/state-budgets/gov-inslees-proposed-2019-21-budgets/agency-detail-budgets/cl/307>.

^{iv} Abuse, S., US, M. H. S. A., & Office of the Surgeon General (US). (2016). *Facing Addiction in America: The Surgeon General's Report on Alcohol, Drugs, and Health* [Internet].

^v Washington State Institute for Public Policy, WSIPP, www.wsipp.gov

^{vi} For example, Positive Action, a school-based program aimed at improving social and emotional learning and the school climate, returned \$29 in benefits per dollar invested because of reductions in anxiety, early substance use, and crime. The Good Behavior Game, another school-based program, returned \$63 per dollar invested.

^{vii} Washington State Health Care Authority. *Substance use disorder prevention programs funded by cannabis excise tax revenues*. March 2021. PowerPoint Presentation to the House Commerce & Gaming Committee.

^{viii} Dillely JA, Harris JR, Boysun MJ, Reid TR. Program, policy, and price interventions for tobacco control: quantifying the return on investment of a state tobacco control program. *Am J Public Health*. 2012;102(2):e22-e28. doi:10.2105/AJPH.2011.300506