



**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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## **NEWS RELEASE**

### **Youth Substance Use in Wayne and Holmes Counties**

Millersburg, OH –

In Wayne and Holmes Counties, teenagers are more likely to use tobacco and alcohol than other substances. The Ohio Healthy Youth Environments Survey (OHYES) (2021) found that of past 30-day usage, 7% of Wayne and Holmes Counties students in grades 7-12 reported using any form of tobacco product, 13.1% reported having at least one alcoholic drink, and 3.8% reported marijuana use. An additional 1.5% reported past- year usage of an illicit substance.

No tobacco or nicotine product is safe for youth. Cigarettes contain over 7,000 chemicals, including chemicals that are toxic and can cause cancer. E-cigarettes and smokeless tobacco have less chemicals than cigarettes, but still contain many of the same toxic, cancer causing chemicals. Furthermore, nicotine, the addictive chemical found in all tobacco products, is especially risky for youth, as the brain is not fully developed until age 25. As a result, nicotine can harm the parts of the brain that control attention, learning, mood, and impulse control. Using nicotine and tobacco products during adolescence also increases the risk of future addiction to other drugs. According to the OHYES survey regarding past 30- day use of tobacco products, 12.3% of youth in Wayne and Holmes Counties used e-cigarettes, 5.2% used cigarettes, and 3.8% used smokeless tobacco.

Alcohol is the most used substance among youth in the United States. According to the Center for Disease Control and Prevention, underage drinking is associated with unintentional injuries, changes in brain development that may have life-long effects, poorer performance at school, legal problems, alcohol-related motor vehicle crashes, alcohol poisoning, and misuse of other substances. The risks of developing these problems are more likely to occur in teenagers that binge drink. It is considered binge drinking when within a couple of hours, a woman consumes four or more alcoholic drinks, or a man consumes five or more alcoholic drinks. Among Wayne and Holmes Counties youth reporting past month alcohol use in the OHYES survey, 43.9% reported at least one day of binge drinking in the past month.

Addiction and substance use disorders are rooted in underage use. Parents and other caring community members can greatly reduce the risk of underage alcohol, nicotine, and other drug use by beginning the conversation with their ten-year-old child about the risk and harm of drinking, vaping, and other drug use and to keep the conversation going throughout the middle and high school years.

According to the results of the OHYES survey, a little over half of students in Wayne and Holmes Counties reported discussing the dangers of tobacco, alcohol, and other drugs with a parent or guardian in the past year. Talking to kids about substance use is not a one-time event but a series of discussions that evolve as children grow and encounter new situations. It's about creating an open channel where questions and concerns about alcohol and other drugs can be discussed freely and honestly. Engage with your children by asking them what they've heard about these substances, sharing your knowledge on the subject, and explaining why you're against underage use for their well-being.

Resources about underage drug use are available to guide parents and other caring adults. These include The Partnership to End Addiction [www.drugfree.org](http://www.drugfree.org), the National Institute on Drug Abuse, as well as school health teachers, guidance counselors, your local health department, and behavioral health providers such as Anazao Community Partners, who developed the *Keep the Conversation Going* campaign used in Holmes County.

An additional resource available is My Life, My Quit, which is a free and confidential program for teenagers in Ohio that want help quitting tobacco. It includes five one-on-one coaching sessions that help teens develop a quit plan, identify triggers, practice refusal skills, and receive ongoing support. To enroll, text "start my quit" to 36072.

Written by Kelly Dremann (Holmes County General Health District) and J Greg Morrison (Anazao Community Partners).

