

Adolescent engagement in risky behaviors, such as drug use and alcohol consumption, is occurring in many Vermont communities, as well as at the national level. The 2011 National Survey on Drug Use and Health (NSDUH) estimates that 3.5% of individuals aged 12 and older engaged in illicit drug use over the past month. Additionally, 23.5% of individuals 12 or older participated in alcohol binge drinking in the past month. Vermont ranks in the top fifth nationally for alcohol consumption, and has the highest rate of marijuana use among individuals between the ages of 18 and 25. As a result of such data, community outreach programs have been established to address these problems. Within some of these programs, youth work in conjunction with the organization to determine its role in the community. Ideally, this encourages youth to develop leadership skills and a sense of empowerment, confidence, and community. The purpose of this research study is to explore a possible connection between community outreach programs and their efficacy not only in reducing adolescent engagement in risky behaviors, but also in promoting positive youth development. This study, which uses qualitative research methods, includes a review of the relevant literature, an analysis of data collected from interviews with four youth about their participation in community outreach programs in Vermont, and implications and suggestions for additional research in this area.