



Listening to Our Young People

Results of the *Ohio Youth Survey* in Clinton and Warren Counties



September 2010



Listening to Our Youth

Have you ever wondered what the youth in our community do in their spare time? If they use alcohol, tobacco, or other drugs? How they feel about school? What their future plans are? We—the Clinton County Family and Children First Council, the Warren County Family and Children First Council, and Mental Health Recovery Services of Warren and Clinton County—did.

So we asked the public junior and senior high schools in Clinton and Warren Counties to administer the Ohio Youth Survey to 6th–12th graders during the 2008–2009 school year. A total of 7,969 students responded. Of these, 3,345 were Clinton County students and 4,624 were Warren County students.

The youth who responded to the survey were almost evenly split with regards to sex, and race and ethnic identification reflected the demographics of the community: over 93% were white, non-Hispanic youth. The average age was 14 years old, with a range of 11–18+ years. Two-thirds of the respondents live with two parents, but a substantial percentage (37%) report a variety of other arrangements, including living with just one parent, splitting time between parents, living with grandparents, or some other arrangement.

The survey asked youth how they spend their time, how they feel about certain issues and risks, and how they feel about their community. We wanted to find out whether our youth have the internal and external factors that are critical in providing a strong foundation for youth. These factors—also known as the developmental assets—can be strengthened by family, school, and community support. Research has shown that youth with more of these assets are less likely to drink alcohol, drop out of school, and demonstrate other risky behaviors. For more information about the assets, please visit the Search Institute’s web site at www.search-institute.org.

The beliefs and experiences shared by these Clinton and Warren County youth demonstrate many strengths in our communities, but they also identify areas that need more attention. For example, the

youth feel very connected to their community. Just over 8 in 10 youth said they would miss the neighborhood they live in if they had to move.



At the same time, however, more than 3 out of 10 students have already moved 4 or more times in their lifetimes.



The effect of frequent moves has been researched extensively and proven linkages have been established with:

- negative changes in a child’s learning, including academic routine, potential success, and school performance
- early substance abuse
- violent behavior
- sexual intercourse at an earlier age
- suicide attempts

Connection to the community and frequent moves are just two of the things we learned by listening to our youth. This summary presents an overview of what the youth in Clinton and Warren County are telling us, with comparisons to national data from the CDC’s *Youth Risk Behavior Surveillance System* (YRBSS; available at www.cdc.gov/HealthyYouth/yrbs/index.htm) when available.

Topics covered in this summary include:

Parental Support	pg. 3
Alcohol, Tobacco, and Other Drug Use	pg. 4
Peer and Community Influences.....	pg. 6
How Youth Spend their Leisure Time.....	pg. 7
Mental Health	pg. 8
Exposure to Violence	pg. 9
Attitudes about School.....	pg. 10
Resources	pg. 11

Parental Support



Family is the most important influence in the lives of our youth. Parental and family support can be a protective factor that has a lasting effect for a child's success in school and in the future. Parents who pay attention to their children give the message of interest, investment, and interaction. The vast majority of Clinton and Warren County youth supported by their parents, as 94% said their parents would help them a lot or some if they needed it.



But only just over 2 in 3 youth reported that their parents told them they'd done a good job or were proud of them often or all the time. Having their good work recognized is critical for a young person's self-esteem and sense of value.



Youth also recognize the role their parents take in checking on progress in school. Just over half of students reported that their parents check on whether they had done their homework often or all the time.



Family expectations are important contributors to a child's behavior. Parents who set rules, explain them, and enforce them in a supportive manner increase the chances of their children following those expectations. Over 8 in 10 youth agreed or strongly agreed that their parents have clear rules of what they can or can't do.

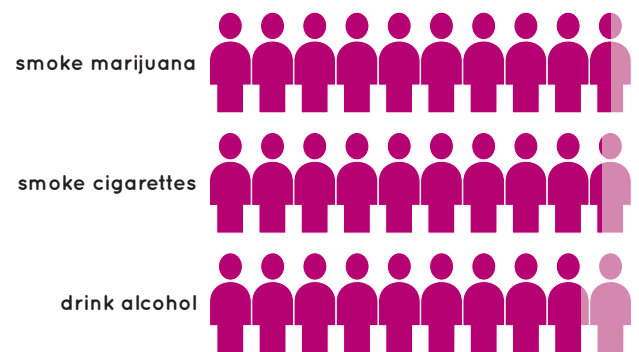


Setting limits is a parental role that can have a positive effect on young people. Limits can help youth feel safer and more secure and help them develop positive habits and life skills. However, only about 1 in 3 Clinton and Warren County youth reported that their parents limited how much time youth watched TV or spent with friends on school nights.



At the same time, youth are getting a clear message from their parents that it's wrong for them to use alcohol, tobacco, and other drugs.

my parents think it's very wrong or wrong for me to...





Alcohol, Tobacco, and Other Drug Use

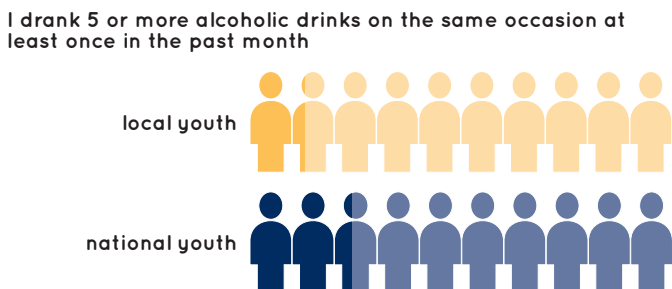
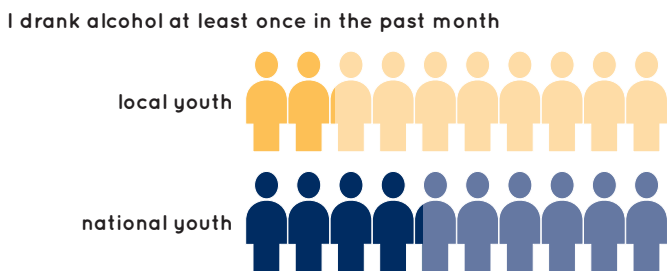
Young people need to be part of the ongoing conversation about the legal, health, and social reasons to avoid alcohol, tobacco, and other drugs. What parents say about risky behaviors can set a positive example, create clear expectations, and show concern. However, only about half of Clinton and Warren County youth reported that they had talked with at least one of their parents about the dangers of alcohol, tobacco, and other drugs in the last year.



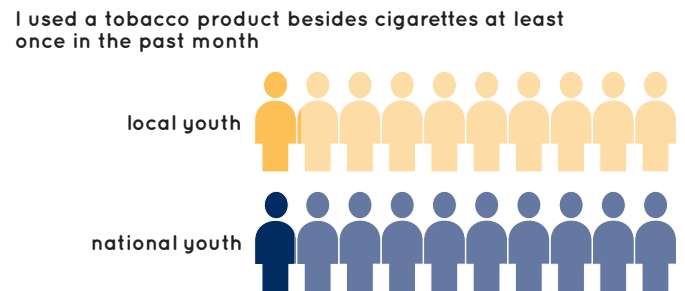
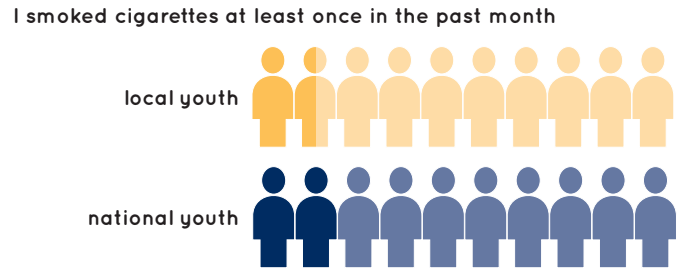
Youth are also seeing and hearing ads in the community about the prevention of substance abuse.



Although 2 in 10 Clinton and Warren County youth drank alcohol in the past month—far fewer than the national average—even more concerning is that just over 1 in 10 youth in our region binge drank, or had 5 or more alcoholic drinks on one occasion.



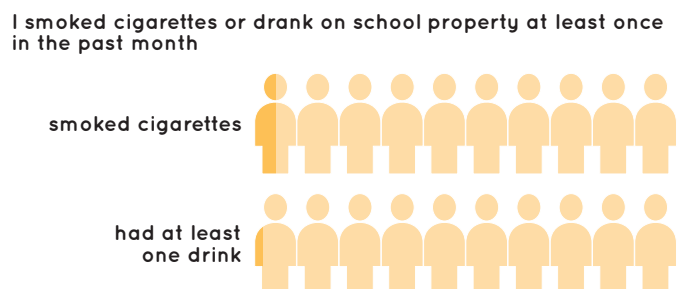
Slightly fewer youth in our region smoke than youth across the country, but use of other tobacco products (snuff, chewing tobacco, tobacco from a pipe) is slightly higher.



Almost half of the youth in our region reported having fairly easy access to alcohol, and 2 in 10 don't see businesses asking for ID for alcohol or tobacco products.



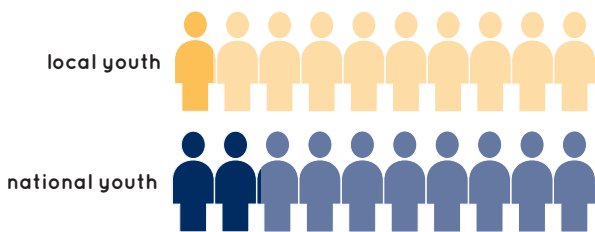
The youth in our region who use alcohol and tobacco are using it in the community, not at school. Youth often use alcohol and tobacco in private residences or in open areas, such as parks.





Fewer youth in our region also reported using marijuana or hashish than youth in the nation.

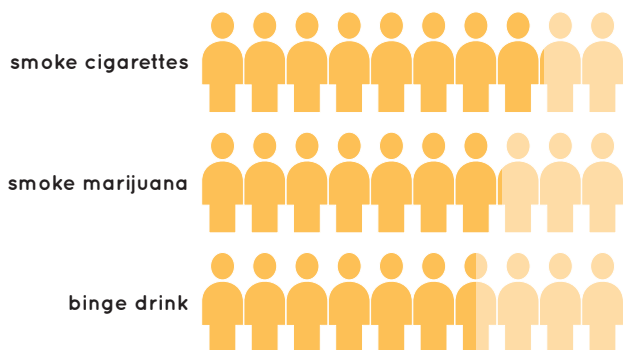
I used marijuana or hashish at least once in the past month



For all other drugs, non-medical use of prescription drugs—or using prescription medication that was not prescribed to you—was highest for Clinton and Warren County youth, with 7% of youth reporting use. Use of inhalants, such as aerosol air fresheners, cleaning products, or other sprays, followed at 4%. Between 1–3% of Clinton and Warren County youth reported using cocaine, designer or club drugs, downers, hallucinogens, heroin, steroids, or uppers or stimulants.

A concern is that a substantial number of Clinton and Warren County youth do not recognize the harm in smoking marijuana or binge drinking, although they do recognize harm from smoking cigarettes. Research has shown that when perceptions of harm are low, use goes up.

I think people have moderate to great risk of harming themselves physically or in other ways when they...



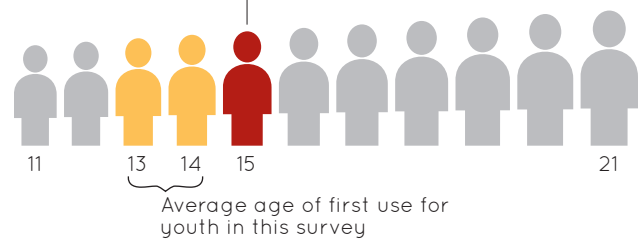
If youth don't recognize the harm in using substances, they may also make risky choices. Almost 2 in 10 Clinton and Warren County youth report that they have ridden in a vehicle in the past month with a driver who had been drinking. The question was not specific as to who the driver was; therefore, it could be a peer or sibling, or a parent or other adult.

I rode in a vehicle, at least once in the past month, that was driven by someone who had been drinking



The majority of Clinton and Warren County youth who use alcohol, tobacco, or other drugs reported they first tried any substance when they were 13–14 years old. This is key, as it identifies a time when prevention services are most crucial for the kids in our community. Additionally, research has shown that the earlier an individual begins using alcohol, the more likely they are to become dependent. Specifically, people reporting they first used alcohol before age 15 were more than 5 times more likely to report alcohol dependence or abuse than people who first used alcohol at age 21 or older.

People using alcohol before age 15 are 5 times more likely to report alcohol dependence or abuse

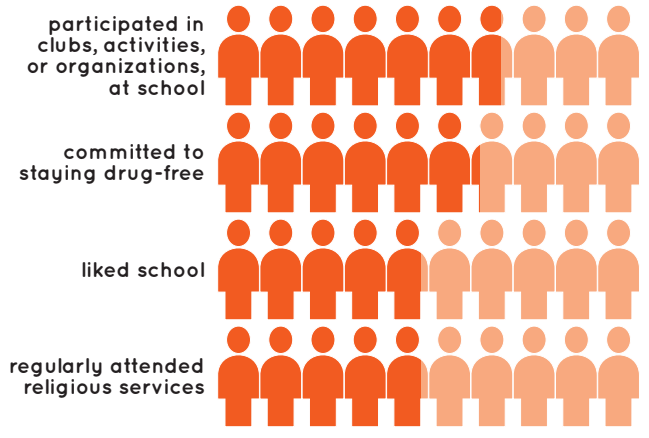




Peer and Community Influences

Youth have many people who affect their lives. Peers are a big influence, and it's important for parents to know who their children's friends are and where their children spend time. The majority of Clinton and Warren County youth reported having friends who could have a positive influence on them.

in the past year, my best friends have...

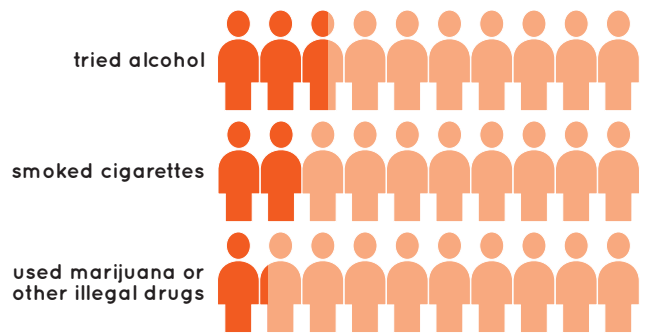


Clinton and Warren County youth also demonstrate positive values, with 2 in 3 reporting that it's important to be honest even if they would upset people or get punished.



Some youth reported having friends who could have a negative influence, which can lead to substance use, violence, and anti-social behavior. Less than 10% reported having friends who had been suspended from or dropped out of school, sold illegal drugs, stolen a car, or carried a handgun. However, slightly more youth reported that their best friends had used alcohol, tobacco, or other drugs.

in the past year, my best friends have...

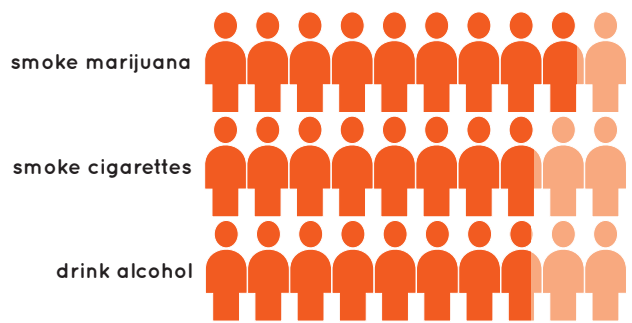


Adults other than parents also play a role in a young person's life. The support from a variety of adults is essential in raising healthy youth. Positive role models create a network of support and protection. The majority of Clinton and Warren County youth reported that there were adults in the community they could turn to for help.



Youth get the sense from adults in the community that it's wrong for youth to use alcohol, tobacco, and other drugs. However, youth don't see other adults' disapproval as being as strong as their parents' disapproval. In order to keep youth from using, it is essential for all adults in the community to express zero tolerance for use and to prevent young people from getting access to alcohol, tobacco, and other drugs.

adults in my neighborhood think it's very wrong or wrong for me to...



How Youth Spend their Leisure Time

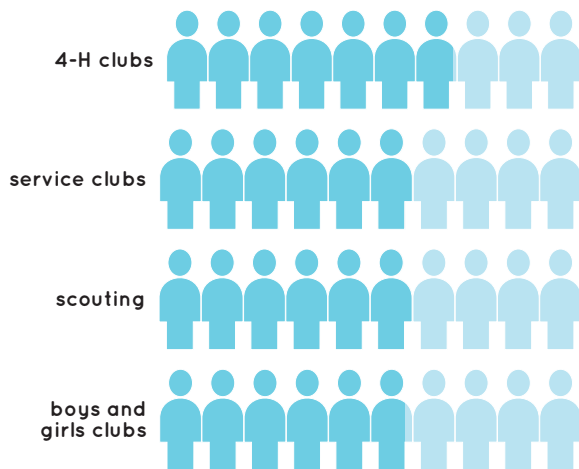


Almost all Clinton and Warren County youth (91%) see opportunities in their school to get involved in sports, clubs, and other activities.



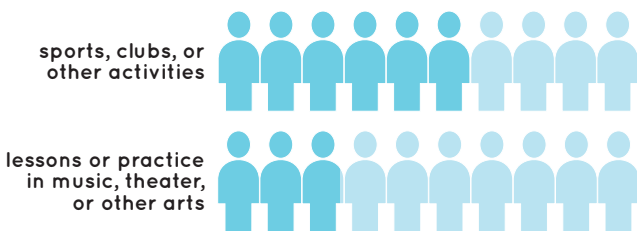
Over half are aware that 4-H clubs, service clubs, scouting, and boys and girls clubs are available for people their age in the community.

the following activities are available in my community



Many Clinton and Warren County youth take advantage of available opportunities and participate in sports, clubs, and organizations in school and the community. However, only about half as many participate in activities in the arts or in religious institutions.

I spend 3+ hours a week in...

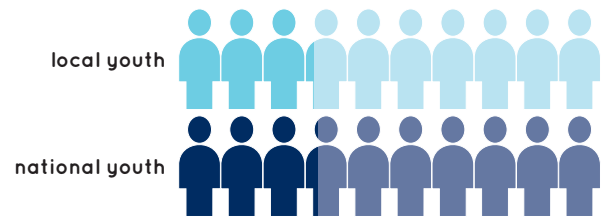


I spend 1+ hours a week in...

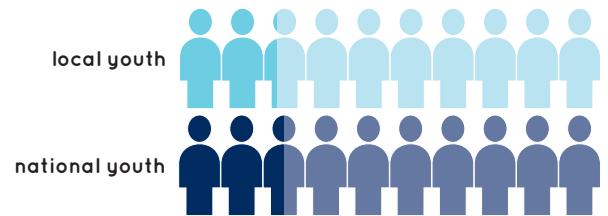


But while they spend time in the community, they also spend a good deal of time in front of a TV or computer. About one-third of Clinton and Warren County youth spend 3 or more hours a day watching TV and 3 or more hours a day playing video games or being on a computer other than for school work. While this is high, it is slightly below the national average for youth.

I spend 3+ hours a day watching TV



I spend 3+ hours a day playing video or computer games or using the computer other than for school work



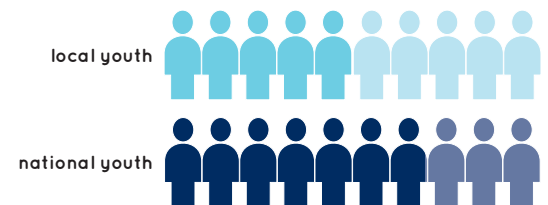
All this time spent participating in activities, watching TV, and being on the computer leaves little time for homework. Less than 1 in 4 youth reported spending more than 5 hours a week on homework.

I spend 5+ hours a week on homework



Given how busy local youth report being, it's not surprising that half reported getting less than 7 hours a sleep a day. An adequate amount of sleep is necessary for to promote good health, growth, development, and learning. It is recommended that adolescents get 8-9 hours of sleep a day.

I sleep 7 hours or less a day



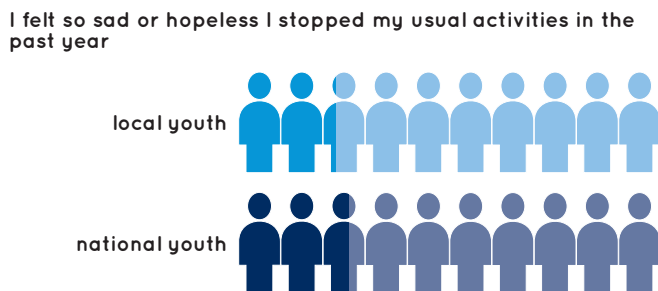


Mental Health

Being an adolescent can be hard, and there are many things that affect the moods and mental health of youth. Although we didn't ask youth in Clinton and Warren County specifically what was worrying them, we did ask if they had trouble relaxing or were sad. One in four Clinton and Warren County youth reported they had trouble relaxing during the last month.

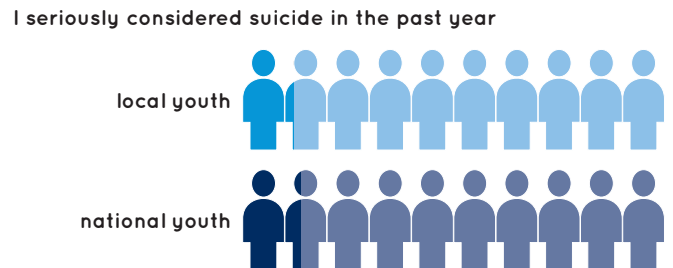


Another 2 in 10 reported that they had been so sad or hopeless for two weeks in a row that they stopped doing their usual activities at some point in the past year.

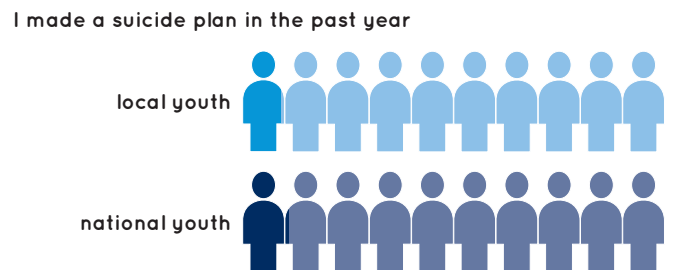


The considerable amount of stressors adolescents experience can contribute to feelings of desperation and being overwhelmed. It is important to recognize and acknowledge signs of depression among young people. These problems are real and can be severe. Depression, coupled with the impulsivity common in youth, can lead to devastating consequences. Mental health problems can be treated successfully, and parents and other adults in the community can help youth get that treatment.

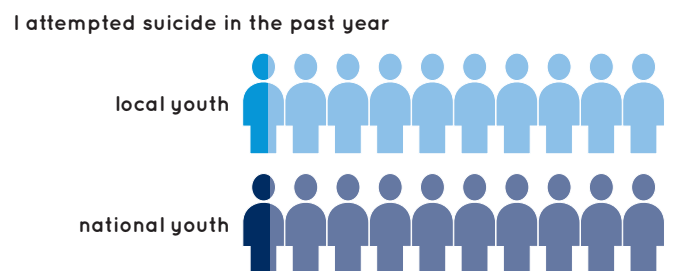
Suicide is a big concern among youth and adolescents, and students in Clinton and Warren County are no exception. Results showed that 12% of students seriously considered suicide in the past year, slightly lower than the national rate.



In the last year, over 700 Clinton and Warren County students—or about 1 in 10—made a plan about how they would attempt suicide.



Most alarmingly, 6% of Clinton and Warren County students—or about 450 kids—admitted to attempting suicide at least once in the last year.



Exposure to Violence



Violence among youth is a serious concern and can range from shootings to physical fights, from verbal threats to harrasment via text messaging or social media. Victims of bullying have been shown to be at increased risk for depression, anxiety, and suicide attempts; physical aggression, at times involving weapons; poor peer relations; and poor bonding with school staff.

Three in ten Clinton and Warren County students reported being in a physical fight at least once in the past year, which is comparable to national statistics. Students report other types of violence, too, including having property stolen or damaged or being threatened with or injured by a weapon.



Dating violence is also a concern, with nearly 500 Clinton and Warren County youth—or just under 1 in 10—reporting being in an abusive relationship. Teens often conceal dating violence due to being inexperienced at relationships, wanting independence from parents, or feeling peer pressure.



The fear of violence leads some students to skip school. Nearly 600 Clinton and Warren County students—or 1 in 14 students—did not attend school at least 1 day during the prior 30 days due

to feeling unsafe either at school or on the way to school.



While some youth do not feel safe at school, Clinton and Warren County youth felt safe in their neighborhoods and the community in general.



With the level of violence reported, it is a concern that 1,030 Clinton and Warren County youth—or just over 1 in 10—report carrying a weapon during the past month. Even more alarming is that 2 in 10 indicate they have easy access to a handgun. Ready access to firearms leads to concerns regarding potential violence, crime and suicide.



Still, Clinton and Warren County youth recognize that it is wrong to attack someone with the intent to hurt them, or to carry a handgun to school.

I think it is very wrong or sort of wrong for someone my age to...





Attitudes about School

Youth in Clinton and Warren Counties have generally positive thoughts about school, with almost 7 in 10 reporting that they enjoyed being in school. They also felt it was wrong for people their age to skip school.



They also reported getting good grades in general, as almost 8 in 10 said they got mostly As and Bs.



Positive attitudes about school reflect a positive school environment, which is in part affected by relationships between students and teachers. Almost 90% of youth reported their teachers would help them if they needed it, and over 80% reported that teachers are willing to talk one-on-one with them.



Students in Clinton and Warren Counties have less positive thoughts about homework, with only 4 in 10 saying that school work is "often" or "almost always" meaningful and important.



Some students may, though, be discouraged that their parents don't hear enough good things about how they are doing in school. Recognition of good work is important for a young person's self-esteem and sense of value. Just under 60% of students feel schools provide positive feedback to their parents.



Still, students perceive very strong support from their families to stay in school.



This is evident in the future plans of Clinton and Warren County students. The vast majority of students surveyed said they would "definitely" or "probably" attend college in pursuit of a 4-year degree, and more than half said they would "definitely" or "probably" go on to graduate or professional school.

in the future, I will definitely or probably attend...





While this is not an exhaustive list, the following organizations can help address the issues identified in this summary.

Mental Health and Substance Abuse

- Mental Health & Recovery Centers of Clinton County
937-383-4441
<http://thecenteroh.community.officelive.com>
Wilmington: 953 S. South Street
- Mental Health & Recovery Centers of Warren County
800-932-3366
<http://communitymentalhealthcenters.org>
Lebanon: 204 & 212 Cook Road, 513-695-1357
Mason: 201 Reading Road, 513-398-2551
Springboro: 50 Greenwood Lane, 937-746-1154
- Cincinnati Children's Hospital, Behavioral Medicine and Clinical Psychology Department
513-636-6800
www.cincinnatichildrens.org/svc/alpha/b/behavioral-psych/default.htm
Mason: 9560 Children's Drive
- Coordinated Care
513-695-2311
www.warren.k12.oh.us
Lebanon: Warren County Educational Service Center, 320 E. Silver Street
- Linder Center of HOPE
513-536-HOPE (4673)
www.lindnercenterofhope.org
Mason: 4075 Old Western Row Road
- LifeSpan
513-641-9377
www.lifespanohio.org
Mason: 5750 Gateway Boulevard
- Talbert House, Warren Outpatient Services
513-932-4337
www.talberthouse.org/services/warrenoutpatientservices.html
Lebanon: 759 Columbus Avenue

Violence and Abuse

- Abuse Rape Crisis Shelter of Warren County (ARCS)/Violence Free Coalition
513-695-1985
<http://arcshelter.com>
Lebanon: 27 N. East Street (administrative office)
- Alternatives to Violence (Highland and Clinton Counties)
800-339-5066 or 866-296-5415
<http://avconline.us>
- Child Advocacy Center
513-261-6031
www.cacwarrencounty.org
Franklin: 100 Campus Loop Road, Suite A
- Clinton County Child Protective Unit
937-382-5935 or 937-382-2449
http://co.clinton.oh.us/childrens_services
Wilmington: 1025 S. South Street, Suite 300
- Warren County Children's Services Agency
513-695-1546 or 513-695-1600
www.co.warren.oh.us/childrenservices
Lebanon: 416 South East Street, 3rd Floor

Support and Information

- ASAP Center (information on substance abuse prevention and youth assets)
888-310-4904 or 513-458-6640
www.asapcenter.org
- Mental Health America, Southwest Ohio, Support Group Clearinghouse
513-721-2910
<http://mhaswoh.org>
- National Alliance for the Mentally Ill (NAMI), Warren County Chapter
513-695-3650 or 937-425-3650
www.nami-wc.org
- Search Institute (information on assets)
800-888-7828
www.search-institute.org
- United Way Information and Referral
211 (from any landline and most cellular phones)



We would like to thank the administrators, teachers, school staff, and students of the Clinton and Warren County schools who participated in the Ohio Youth Survey. Additionally, we appreciate the partnership of Minuteman Press of Lebanon in the printing and The Health Foundation of Greater Cincinnati in the design of this Executive Summary.

Contributors: Patti Ahting, Associate Director, Mental Health Recovery Services of Warren & Clinton Counties; www.mhrsonline.org

Sandy Smoot, Coordinator, Warren County Family and Children First Council; www.co.warren.oh.us/fcfc

Marsha Wagstaff, Coordinator, Clinton County Family and Children First Council; www.co.clinton.oh.us/family-and-children-first-council

For more information about the survey, including highlights on specific topics, please visit www.mhrsonline.org/ohioyouthsurvey or call 513-695-1695.