



Substance use often begins in middle school and worsens through high school. Nationwide, 18 percent of students report having used a prescription drug for a non-medical reason by their senior year of high school, and nearly 90 percent of smokers start by age 18. In a 2017 survey of Central Indiana high school seniors, 11 percent reported smoking cigarettes; 23 percent reported using e-cigarettes; 33 percent reported drinking alcohol; 20 percent reported using marijuana; and 5 percent reported misusing prescription drugs in the past 30 days.

Parents want what is best for their children, and prevention is an effective long-term strategy to stop substance use and save lives.

What's more, research shows that substance use in adolescence increases the likelihood of addiction later in life – a problem that is made even more urgent by high rates of fatalities from drug overdoses and smoking-related illnesses in Indiana. **Parents want what is best for their children, and prevention is an effective long-term strategy to stop substance use and save lives.**

Schools have a vital role to play to help address this public health issue and put students on a path for success in school and beyond. Schools are students' home away from home, making the classroom the ideal venue to deliver proven prevention programming. These programs equip students with skills that not only help them avoid drugs but can also help improve their academic achievement, attendance, classroom behavior and social and emotional well-being. They can also help reduce bullying and violence.

Despite these many benefits, only 11 percent of Marion County schools report using an evidence-based prevention program. Of the schools that do not have evidence-based programs in place, many cited insufficient time during the school day and lack of funding as key barriers to implementation. Schools need support to find the evidence-based program that works best for their students.

That is why the Richard M. Fairbanks Foundation is launching **Prevention Matters**, a new grant initiative. Through **Prevention Matters**, the Foundation will award up to \$12 million over the next three years to Marion County schools to reduce students' substance use. This initiative will give schools the opportunity to access resources to identify evidence-based prevention programs that are right for their students and bring them to life in classrooms. **Parents can feel confident knowing the programs schools select can and will work.**

Prevention Matters offers schools an opportunity to access the resources they need to set their students on a path for success in school and in life. The result will be engaged students who avoid substance use – and, in turn, stronger, safer schools and communities that lead to a brighter future for our families, city and state.

Visit RMFF.org/PreventionMatters to learn more and download the **Prevention Matters** Communications Toolkit, which contains resources such as social media posts to help parents raise awareness about the importance of evidence-based prevention programs in schools.

You can be a part of the effort to address substance use by:



Raising awareness among other parents about the need for proven school-based prevention programs.



Encouraging your local school to apply for a *Prevention Matters* grant at RMFF.org/PreventionMatters.



Supporting your school's administration as they work to identify and implement substance use prevention programs with a strong evidence base.