



Prevention works.
Treatment is effective.
People recover.

2022 was a year of transformation for the Division of Substance Use Programs (DSU). From addressing stigma by removing “abuse” from our name and integrating harm reduction services to receiving authority to expand Medicaid eligibility and anticipating the impacts of retail cannabis, DSU enhanced services, messaging and workforce skills to support and care for Vermonters.

In our first full staff planning meeting since before the COVID-19 pandemic, DSU came together virtually and in-person at Kingsland Bay State Park to reconnect and engage in a change management best practices workshop led by Greg Hessel of Regeneration Resources to prepare for, facilitate and optimize the changes that lay ahead.

This year also marks my last as Division Director. I am proud of all that DSU has been able to accomplish in the past 8 years due to the dedication and commitment of our staff. I am humbled to be a part of it and know this work will continue, steadfast in my absence.

**CYNTHIA SEIVWRIGHT, MA, LCMHC
DSU DIRECTOR, SSA**

Thank you, Cindy!

**DSU’S DIVISION DIRECTOR, CINDY SEIVWRIGHT,
WILL BE RETIRING FROM STATE SERVICE
IN JANUARY 2023.**

Cindy’s career with the State of Vermont has spanned over 22 years, serving at the Departments of Health, Mental Health and Vermont Health Access.



Prior to joining the state, Cindy was a practicing mental health clinician. She has led DSU since 2015, where she built a very strong team and oversaw innovations in substance use prevention, harm reduction, treatment and recovery. She has also served on national groups, including the Board of Directors of the National Association of State Alcohol and Drug Abuse Directors, New England Behavioral Health State Leaders and SAMHSA, and was appointed to the Department of Health and Human Services Interdepartmental Substance Use Coordinating Committee.

DSU staff want to recognize Cindy for her commitment and leadership and wish her a happy retirement.

2020-2022 DSU strategic plan

The content of this year's DSU Annual Overview aligns with the priorities, strategies and measures included in the division's **Strategic Plan 2020-2022**. While the COVID-19 global pandemic posed significant challenges throughout the timeline of the plan, DSU remained agile and managed to make significant progress in addressing priorities.



Priorities:



Enhance existing efforts to prevent and reduce stigma



Incorporate harm reduction practices into service provision



Improve efficiency of operations



Invest in prevention services that build community capacity and connection



Support state and community efforts to address root causes of addiction with enhancements to DSU's youth and family initiatives



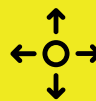
Invest in recovery supports in the community



Build wrap-around services to support people in treatment and recovery



Improve equitable access to services



Increase capacity of treatment system to treat substance use disorder & co-occurring disorders



Provide access to workforce development opportunities



Strengthen public information and messaging to reach high need audiences and enhance program delivery



Reducing the stigma of substance use disorder

In May, the Governor signed Act 115, which officially updated the name of this division to the Division of Substance Use Programs (DSU). In an effort to reduce stigma associated with substance use disorder, the term 'abuse' was removed from the division's name.

"Our new name, the Division of Substance Use Programs, reflects our commitment to offering a continuum of services that address all substances and their negative health impacts. Our new name is a subtle, but significant, reminder that all Vermonters deserve responsive and respectful services that meet their needs."

– Cindy Seivwright,
Division Director

TOGETHER
TO END ADDICTION STIGMA

End Addiction Stigma campaign

- **End Addiction Stigma** featured perspectives from a health care provider, with the goal of providing education that substance use disorder is a health condition to be treated with compassion. Social media ads with this message were especially engaging, with a video feature local provider, Dr. Mark Depman, producing the most reactions and shares.
- A *Seven Days* marketing piece written in coordination with DSU and featuring Dr. Mark Depman was the 2nd most popular of this type of article since *Seven Days* began this program in 2020.
- The campaign was submitted to the Bureau of Justice Assistance's Comprehensive Opioid, Stimulant, and Substance Abuse Program Resource Center (**COSSAP**) to be made available nationally as a stigma-reduction resource.
- A county health department in Ohio connected with DSU at CDC's National Conference on Health Communication, Marketing and Media to gather information about our approach to substance use disorder stigma reduction, particularly highlighting the End Addiction Stigma campaign.
- Marketing led to 21,700+ web visitors learning about addiction, treatment, recovery, support services and why language matters.

15 million

AD VIEWS AND 25,000 WEB
SESSIONS FROM CAMPAIGN
MESSAGING

1 million

SOCIAL MEDIA CLICKS, VIEWS,
LIKES, SHARES AND COMMENTS



Thank you, lost my son
last year to addiction
pls help them.

1 HOUR AGO LIKE REPLY ❤️



Incorporating harm reduction practices

In 2022 SAMHSA provided funding, for the first time, for harm reduction activities that supported strategies beyond naloxone distribution.

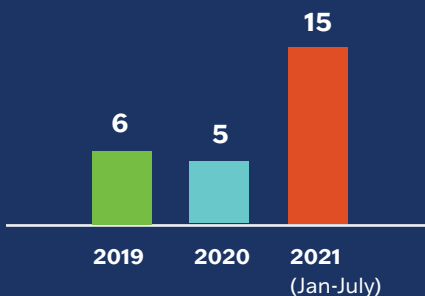
This included purchasing materials for infectious disease prevention, safer sex supplies, and HIV and hepatitis C screening. This was developed in partnership with the CDC and reflects strong federal partnerships to address drug overdose fatalities.

CDC's Overdose Data to Action (OD2A) grant

provides Vermont with funding to support overdose prevention and harm reduction efforts, including the inter-agency **Social Autopsy report** that examined where people who died of an opioid overdose had contact with state systems to identify potential trends and areas for enhanced overdose prevention education and intervention support.

Xylazine involvement in fatal opioid overdoses has increased from when it was first detected in a fatal overdose in 2019

Xylazine is a sedative used in veterinary medicine for large animals and is not approved for human use. Naloxone, a medicine that can reverse an overdose, may not be as effective when xylazine is present, meaning there is a higher risk of death.



DSU established grants with each of the state's four syringe service programs (SSP) to enhance their capacity for community outreach, which led to:

- 21 overdose prevention outreach workers recruited and trained
- Services provided in each of the 14 counties
- 1,200+ Vermonters provided overdose prevention education and resources such as naloxone and fentanyl test strips, 20% of whom had not interacted with these services before
- 3,600+ (7,200+ doses) naloxone kits distributed

Opioid-related fatal overdoses have increased

- Fentanyl is currently the most prevalent substance involved in opioid-related deaths. In 2021, it was found in 93% of opioid-related fatal overdoses and has increased each year since 2011 (9%). Deaths involving fentanyl could include prescription and/or illicit fentanyl and fentanyl analogues.
- Cocaine was involved in more 2021 opioid-related fatal overdoses (48%) than any other drug besides fentanyl. The number of cocaine involved opioid overdose deaths steadily increased since 2015.
- The most common combination of substances among people who died in 2021 was fentanyl and cocaine, which accounted for nearly half (46%) of all opioid-related fatal overdoses.



Improving efficiency

to support investing in services

- 360+ grant and contract agreements were executed with 114 partners to support local and regional substance use services.
- Agreement invoice processing was improved to reduce processing times and increase transparency.



One More Conversation **Can** Make the Difference

The One More Conversation resource, designed to help health care providers discuss substance use with patients who are pregnant or breastfeeding, was enhanced to include connections to treatment and recovery resources.

School grants were provided to 14 local school districts and supervisory unions to enhance substance use prevention and early intervention.

4,700+

students participated in substance use education

600+

students participated in peer leadership groups

700+

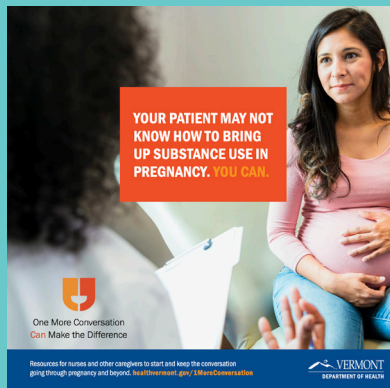
students were screened for substance use problems and referred to services if needed

1,200+

parents participated in substance use education

3,200+

parents were reached through messaging



27
thousand

WEB VISITS AND 404,000
SOCIAL MEDIA CLICKS FROM
ONE MORE CONVERSATION
MESSAGING

117%
increase


IN DOWNLOADS OF THE ONE MORE CONVERSATION PROVIDER TIP SHEET FROM THE SAME TIME PERIOD PRIOR TO MESSAGING, HELPING PROVIDERS SUPPORT THEIR PERINATAL PATIENTS.





The End Addiction Stigma campaign

featured perspectives from an employer and a health care provider with a goal of providing education around substance use disorder in the workplace and clinical environments



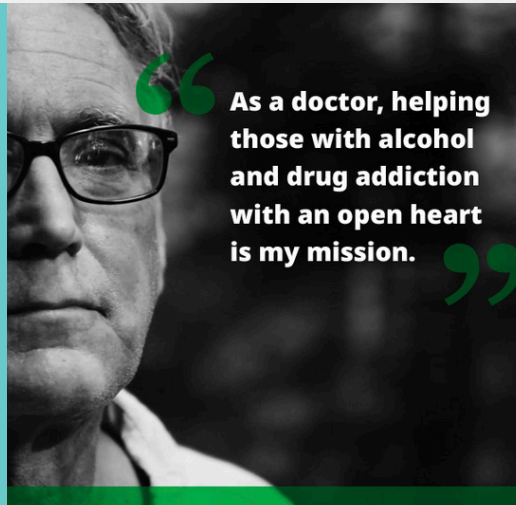
“Hiring people in recovery has affected our business in a positive way.”

A Seven Days marketing piece written in coordination with DSU was the #6 best-performing

out of 25 published since 2020.

16 hundred

SOCIAL MEDIA CLICKS
FROM THE END
ADDICTION STIGMA
MESSAGING



Vermont's 1115 Waiver extension was approved this year

This will expand eligibility for people with a substance use disorder, meaning more people will be covered by Medicaid for treatment and recovery services.

In coordination with the Department of Vermont Health Access (DVHA), Medicaid coverage of treatment for Hepatitis C has begun at opioid treatment programs in Vermont.

Other efforts include

- **HireAbility Opioid Project** partnered with DSU to assist people in recovery from opioid use disorder enter or re-enter the workforce and pursue high wage careers.
- Recovery Coaches (people with lived experience that utilize evidence-based techniques, such as motivational interviewing, to support people experiencing substance use concerns) are now embedded in all 14 Vermont emergency departments to help people experiencing substance use-related emergencies.
- Five new satellite locations were added to support the Recovery Center system across the state to make recovery supports accessible to more Vermonters.



Improving equitable access to services

- To promote the full range of service referrals available through **VT Helplink**, a marketing campaign featuring Syringe Service Program (SSP) partners and participants was launched in May 2022. These videos were viewed over 50,000 times.
 - New **KnowOD** messaging launched in June connecting people to **VT Helplink** services.
 - In the last quarter of 2022, 15 unique treatment provider locations offered 380+ hours of appointment time via VT Helplink, creating a streamlined way for people to make appointments.
 - 15,300+ doses of Narcan® were provided by DSU to organizations for community distribution.
-
- 91 prevention professionals attended two workshops supported by DSU (one which was coordinated with Outright Vermont) that provided training on developing inclusive strategies to support LGBTQ+ youth in Vermont.
 - Eight Cultural Brokers from Vermont’s Somali Somali/Somali Bantu, Nepali/Bhutanese, Central Africa/Congo, and Arabic Speaking communities act as liaisons with local schools, clinics, community agencies, medical providers, mental health agencies, and law enforcement.



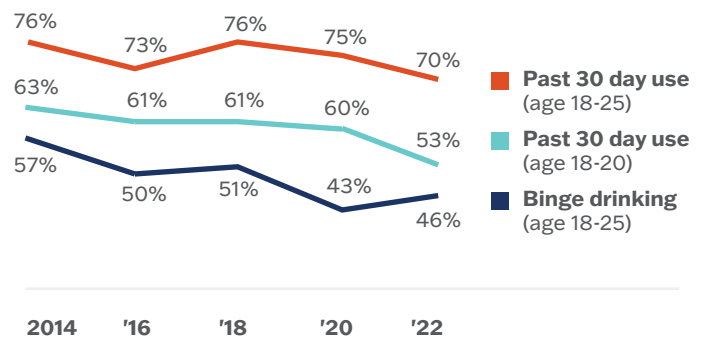
VT Helplink marketing led to:

- VT Helplink receiving 500+ calls, 22,400+ web visits and 3.5 million ad views
- * 51% increase in calls and a 700% increase in web visits over the prior four-month period.

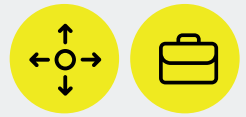
Alcohol remains the #1 substance of concern among VT Helplink callers.

Vermont’s alcohol use rates are consistently higher than national rates according to the **National Survey on Drug Use and Health**.

According to the **Young Adult Survey**, past 30-day alcohol use among 18-20 year olds and binge drinking among all young adults have decreased significantly from 2014-2022.



1,300+ people from immigrant and refugee communities were connected with Cultural Brokers for substance use screenings



Increasing treatment workforce capacity

- Sixty-one Vermonters attended the New England School of Addiction and Prevention Studies and the New England School of Best Practices in Addiction Treatment with scholarship support from DSU. Participation in this set of regional trainings continued to increase this year due to increased support from the State Opioid Response (SOR) grant and embracing of the virtual format.
- DSU offered a free clinical supervision training which provided in-depth learning on clinical supervision, defining primary goals of supervisory practice, identifying barriers to balancing roles and responsibilities, and understanding both the value of and ways of resolving conflict.
- DSU worked with the University of Vermont's cultural brokers program to increase staff awareness of health equity strategies in reaching people from immigrant and refugee communities living with or at risk for developing substance use disorder.
- DSU supported 119 core competency trainings to over 2,000 substance use professionals across the state. Ninety-five percent (95%) of these participants reported increased knowledge or skill in the presented topic.
- 130 opioid treatment professionals attended four learning collaborative webinars and four workshops on topics related to improved medication for opioid use disorder (MOUD) practices. These sessions featured national presenters and were developed in partnership with the Blueprint for Health and the Geisel School of Medicine at Dartmouth.

Learn more at healthvermont.gov/DSUworkforce

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PEOPLE ATTENDED SUBSTANCE-INDUCED PSYCHOSIS TRAININGS

to better identify and respond to these episodes, which are commonly seen in emergency and crisis settings.

“I learned more about interacting with someone who is experiencing psychosis, I now understand why its important to be calm, empathetic to what they are going through and to validate the persons experience as these things are real to them even if not to anyone else.”

SUBSTANCE-INDUCED PSYCHOSIS TRAINEE



Strengthening public messaging

Media performance metrics across campaigns have been successful in meeting or exceeding industry benchmarks for several key performance indicators (KPIs). These measures indicate effective delivery of messages that resonate with the intended audiences on their preferred channels.

Learn how DSU assesses substance use campaigns through the **Policy and Communication Evaluation (PACE) Vermont Study**.



Know OD campaign messaging led to 14x more web visitors

learning about the signs of an overdose and steps to prevent and reverse them



DSU coordinated with the Division of Health Promotion and Disease Prevention's Tobacco Control Program

to enhance their **UnHyped** vaping prevention campaign for teens. The new content expands on both the risks of vaping nicotine products as well as the potential harms of cannabis and THC use.



ParentUp's key messages include having open, honest and frequent conversations with your kid, which is proven to help kids make healthier choices. DSU optimized messaging and leveraged new digital channels to engage the parent and caregiver audience with tips on how to talk with youth about the risks of cannabis.



"Aging and mixing opioids and benzodiazepines"

This new brochure was developed and distributed through community partners to reach older Vermonters.

- In 2020, 71.5% of people who were prescribed opioids and benzodiazepines at the same time were adults age 55 and older.



New KnowOD messaging focused on knowing the signs of overdose, responding to overdose by using Narcan®, the presence of fentanyl and xyzazine in opioids (increasing the risk of overdose) and connecting people to VT Helplink.

- From campaign messaging, the KnowOD website received 10,800+ website visits from May through August, a 422% increase over the prior four-month period. The website received another 11,700+ visits and over 2.2 million social media clicks, likes, comments and video views from June through December from additional messaging.



Recognizing the trends of increased cannabis use, DSU has funded messaging to youth, adults and people who are pregnant and breastfeeding.

Ahead of cannabis legalization, Let's Talk Cannabis messaging for adults focused on understanding the health risks of cannabis use, protecting kids and pets by storing cannabis safely, and taking a break while pregnant and breastfeeding.



Campaign messaging led to:

- 7.7 million ad views
- 300,000+ clicks, views, likes, shares and comments
- Increased interest in information about the impact of parental THC use on a baby's physical development

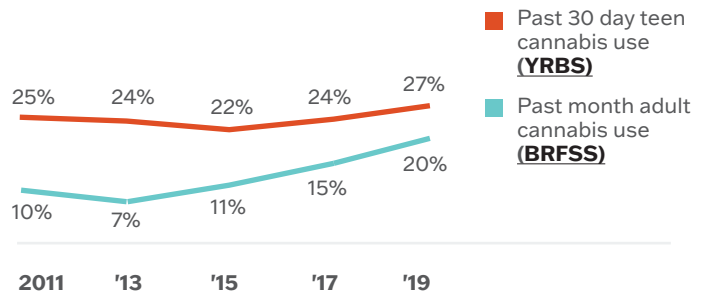


So glad to see VDH engage in this topic. In the campaign to legalize cannabis the dangers are minimized.

4 MINUTES AGO LIKE REPLY ❤️

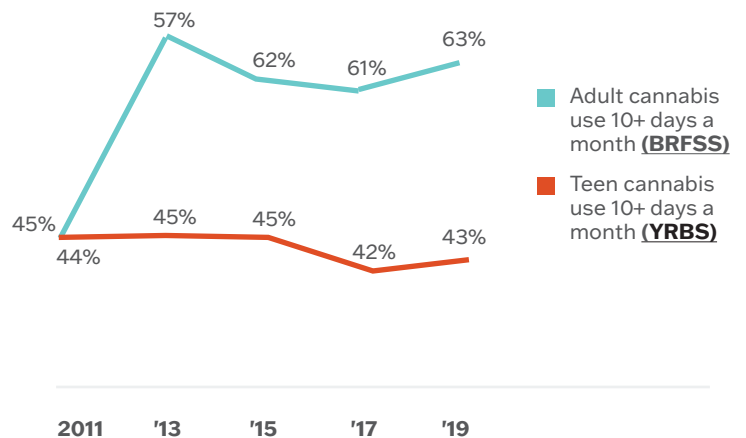
A higher percentage of Vermont teens use cannabis than adults.

Teen use has remained stable over the years; adult use remains lower, but has been increasing.



Adults who use cannabis have been using more frequently over the years.

Teens who use cannabis have been using cannabis less frequently over the same time period.



VERMONT ALCOHOL & DRUG INFORMATION CLEARINGHOUSE

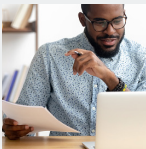
Visit healthvermont.gov/DSUmedia for more messaging campaigns. Order free materials through vadic.org

Informing strategies with data



National Survey on Drug Use and Health (NSDUH) 2019-2020 Vermont Findings

An annual survey conducted by the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) that provides nationally representative data on the use of tobacco, alcohol and illicit drugs; substance use disorders; receipt of substance use treatment; mental health issues; and the use of mental health services among people 12 and older.



Vermont Social Autopsy Report 2019-2020 Analysis

An analysis to identify trends in how Vermonters who died of a drug overdose interacted with state systems prior to death to identify opportunities for intervention.



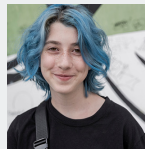
Vermont Young Adult Survey (YAS) 2022 Findings

A biannual (every 2 year) survey that focuses on substance use and perceptions related to substance use among Vermont residents aged 18 to 25.



Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System (BRFSS)

An annual survey that focuses on indicators of health status, chronic conditions, risk behaviors and preventative behaviors, and health screenings among Vermonters 18 and older.



Youth Risk Behavior Survey (YRBS)

A biannual (every 2 year) survey that focuses on health risk behaviors that contribute to the leading causes of death, disease, injury and social problems among youth in middle and high school.



Vermont Pregnancy Risk Assessment Monitoring System (PRAMS)

A survey of people who are pregnant and in the first few months after birth to identify health risks to monitor changes in population health, and to measure progress towards goals in improving the health of perinatal patients and infants.

For more information, visit healthvermont.gov/DSU

If you or a loved one is struggling with alcohol or drug use, visit VTHelplink.org or call **802-565-LINK** for free and confidential help.

Vermont Department of Health
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