

Overview

Vermont's Strategic Prevention Framework State Incentive Grant (SPF-SIG) was a federally funded five-year initiative in which 24 community-based organizations received grants and training to address selected substance abuse problems shown below:

Priority	N of Communities addressing priority
1. Reduce underage drinking	All 24
2. Reduce high-risk drinking among persons < age 25	20
3. Reduce marijuana use among persons < age 25	4

Community grants were issued in Vermont in fall 2007. The SPF-SIG was a Department of Health and Human Services, Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration initiative. The Pacific Institute for Research and Evaluation (PIRE) conducted an independent evaluation of the SPF-SIG.

Implementation

Most of the funded organizations were community coalitions. All 24 communities successfully planned and implemented evidence-based strategies such as communication campaigns, enhanced enforcement of underage drinking laws or drinking and driving laws, strategies to change local or state alcohol policies, and prevention education programs. In addition, all grantees helped to promote two statewide media campaigns: one directed at youth in middle school (2008), and the other for parents (2010-2011). Community-level strategies were underway in the first few communities by the fall of 2008, and in most communities by the fall of 2009.

Building Organizational Capacity

Each organization conducted surveys of their members in 2008 and again in 2010 to measure organizational capacity, including features such as coalition structure and membership, leadership, community outreach, and sustainability. The average capacity across coalitions increased in all areas from 2008 to 2010.

Outcome Measures Statewide

The funded communities, all of which focused on underage drinking, cover 71 percent of the state's population, so the effects of the SPF-SIG in combination with other initiatives on underage drinking might be visible at the statewide level.

Statistically significant decreases between 2007 and 2011 did, in fact, occur for past-30-day alcohol use and binge drinking among high school students, as based on the Youth Risk Behavior Survey (YRBS) – see Figure 1¹. In contrast, marijuana use statewide has remained relatively stable from 2007 to 2011.

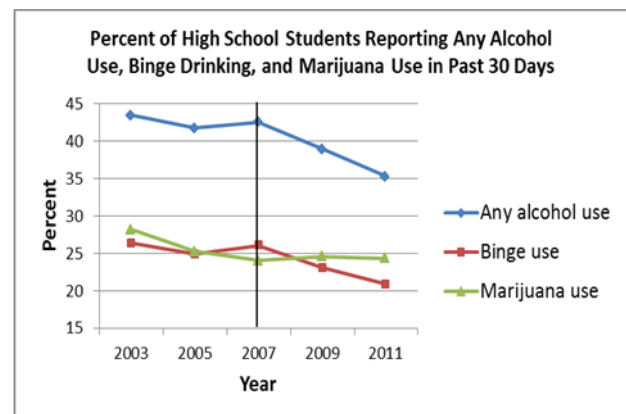


Figure 1

Source: YRBS

Data on young adults were available through the Vermont Young Adult Survey (YAS), a statewide mail and internet survey of Vermont residents aged 18 to 29 developed by PIRE and Health Department staff. Data were also collected from college students via the Core College Student survey. Both surveys were conducted in 2008 and again in 2010. The only statically significant change in the target population detected by either survey was a reduction in binge drinking prevalence among college students, from 58 to 54 percent ($p < .05$).

¹ The changes in underage drinking measures reflect a similar trend at the national level (based on data from the *Monitoring the Future* study), so attributing the positive change entirely to Vermont's SPF-SIG would not be justified. But it does appear to have contributed to the statewide decline in underage drinking.

SPF-SIG Communities Compared to Non-Funded Communities

Additional evidence of positive SPF-SIG effects can be seen through direct comparisons in the level of change on key outcome measures between funded communities and non-funded communities. Trends for any alcohol use, binge drinking, and marijuana use among high school students, for funded and non-funded communities, are shown in Figures 2 through 4. (For marijuana use, only the four communities that focused on marijuana prevention are included in the SPF-SIG group).

In conducting the statistical analysis of SPF-SIG effects, data from 2003 through 2007 were combined to provide a more stable and accurate reflection of pre-intervention levels of each outcome in the community subgroups being compared.

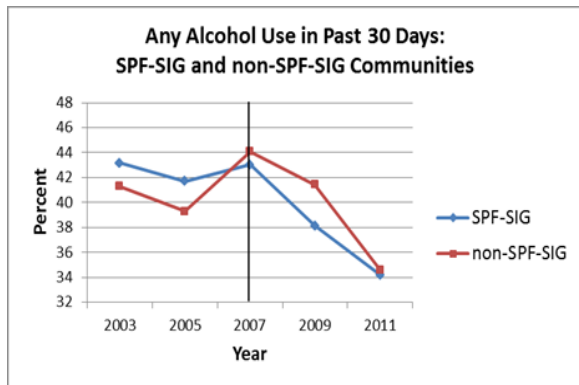


Figure 2 Source: YRBS

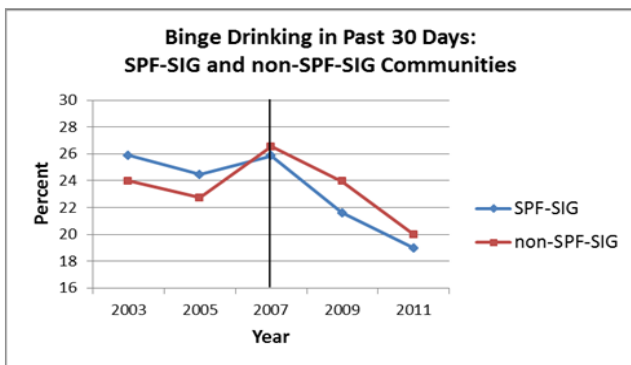


Figure 3 Source: YRBS

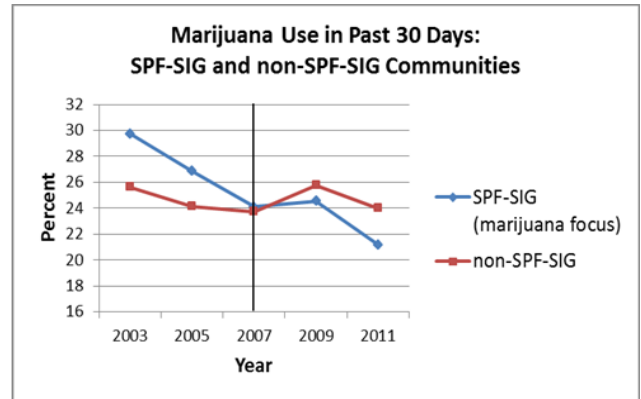


Figure 4 Source: YRBS

For binge drinking and marijuana use, the reductions between the pre-intervention years (2003 through 2007) and 2011 were significantly greater for the SPF-SIG communities compared to the non-funded communities. The prevalence on any alcohol use also declined more in the SPF-SIG communities, although the difference did not reach statistical significance.

Communities that showed larger decreases in underage and binge drinking shared the following characteristics.

Successful communities:

- implemented interventions well with high fidelity
- had higher organizational capacity scores
- implemented a greater number of interventions

Conclusions

The findings regarding the implementation and effectiveness of the Vermont SPF-SIG are very encouraging. All 24 communities successfully completed a prevention plan for their community and implemented one or more environmental prevention strategies aimed at changing population-level indicators of targeted substance use priorities.

Grantees also were generally successful in enhancing their organizational capacity for conducting and sustaining their community-based prevention efforts.

These efforts appear to have led to significant reductions (relative to non-funded communities) in binge drinking and marijuana use among high school students.