

**Adolescent
Risk and
Protective
Factor
Assessment**

2007



ARMSTRONG COUNTY

Communities That Care



ARMSTRONG COUNTY Communities That Care

A Piece of the Puzzle

Putting together a puzzle requires all the pieces to fit together, starting with the frame and working inward with all the interlocking pieces until the puzzle takes shape and the picture emerges.

Raising healthy children requires all the pieces of their life to fit together as their individual picture emerges.

The puzzle pieces in the life of a child are family, community, friends, and school. We must all work together to help our children succeed.

The Armstrong County Communities That Care initiative is about bringing all the puzzle pieces of a child's life together.

Our vision is to foster the development of an environment where families, schools, agencies, and the community work together to provide children with the skills necessary to maximize their potential to become competent, caring, healthy, responsible adults.

ABOUT ARMSTRONG COUNTY COMMUNITIES THAT CARE

Communities That Care (CTC) is a nationwide prevention initiative that tackles the adolescent problems of substance abuse, delinquency, pregnancy, violence, and school dropout. In Armstrong County, the Communities That Care initiative is a group of concerned citizens who want to make a difference in the lives of our youth. Members come from all walks of life and include representatives from social service agencies, healthcare organizations, schools, the criminal justice system, businesses, and the faith community. Members also include parents, grandparents, and teens.

The philosophy of Communities That Care is that it is wise for communities to invest in the prevention of human problems. The first step of the CTC process is to conduct a study of local adolescent problems. This study includes a risk and protective factor assessment and serves as the basis for planning services for adolescents.



EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Armstrong County Communities That Care (CTC) study was completed in the fall of 2007. The goal of the study was to examine the adolescent problems of substance abuse, delinquency, violence, pregnancy, and school dropout in Armstrong County. The study also included an investigation of the twenty risk factors that contribute to the problems. In addition to the risk factors, the protective factors were also examined.

Data Sources

Data for this study was collected through the use of archival records and the 2007 Pennsylvania Youth Survey. Archival data was collected by members of the Community Prevention Board for Communities That Care and compiled by the consultant, Joseph J. Whalen, Jr., PhD under the direction of ARC Manor. The Key Leaders reviewed and edited the document.

Study Participants

There were 292 Armstrong County youth who participated in the youth survey. Fifty-three percent were females and 47% were males. The youth were from five of the seven junior/senior high schools in Armstrong County. Students were in grades 8, 10 and 12. They were required to obtain active written parental consent in order to participate in the survey.

The Pennsylvania Youth Survey (PAYS) was utilized for this study. The survey was sponsored by the Pennsylvania Commission on Crime and Delinquency (PCCD). The PCCD contracted with Westat, Inc. to conduct the survey and the initial report was prepared by Rothenbach Research Consulting, LLC.

The survey was administered in the classroom and required approximately one class period to complete. Students were assured that their participation was voluntary and the survey was anonymous and confidential.

This Publication

Due to the large volume of data included in the Risk and Protective Factor Assessment, the data presented in this publication is only a portion of the data collected. The data was chosen because it supports the conclusions of the study. Full copies of the study with complete data are available from the Armstrong Indiana Drug and Alcohol Commission at 724-354-2746.

ADOLESCENT PROBLEMS AND RISK FACTORS

After reviews of the data collected for the study, the Key Leaders and Community Prevention Board decided that the two most significant adolescent problems in Armstrong County were SUBSTANCE ABUSE and DELINQUENCY. For purposes of this study, delinquency includes behaviors such as vandalism, thefts, drug offenses, and assaults.

Out of the twenty risk factors that contribute to adolescent problems, the top five risk factors for Armstrong County were determined to be the following:

- 1) AVAILABILITY OF DRUGS**
- 2) EARLY INITIATION OF THE PROBLEM BEHAVIOR**
- 3) COMMUNITY LAWS AND NORMS FAVORABLE TOWARD DRUG USE**
- 4) FAMILY HISTORY OF THE PROBLEM BEHAVIOR**
- 5) TRANSITIONS AND MOBILITY**

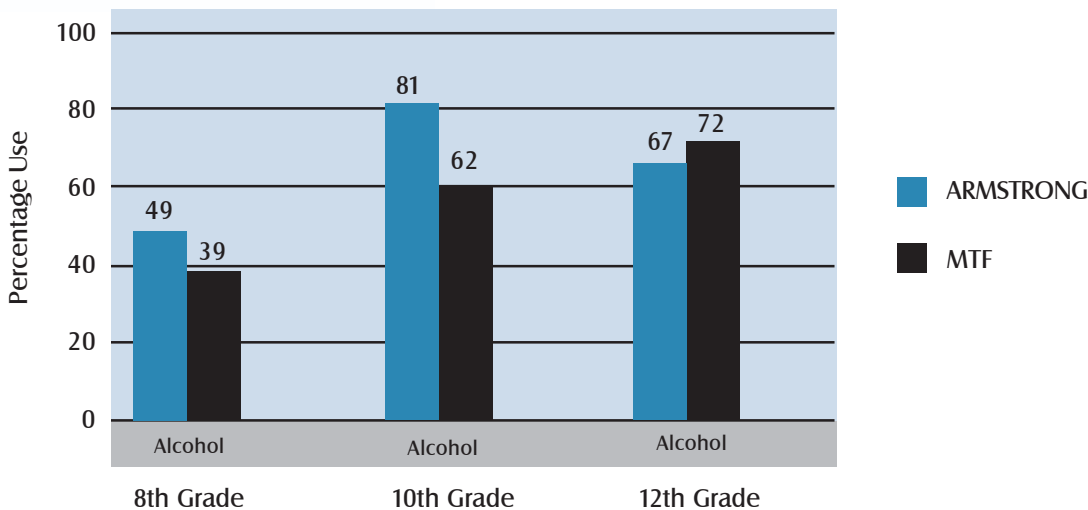


RISK FACTOR RESULTS

RISK FACTOR 1: AVAILABILITY OF DRUGS

The more available drugs and alcohol are in a community, the higher the risk that drug abuse will occur. Data from the Armstrong County Communities That Care survey are compared with data from the 2007 Monitoring the Future Study (MTF), a study conducted by the University of Michigan's Institute of Social Research since 1975. Thirty-day use is considered an indicator of regular use and lifetime use is considered an indicator of experimental use.

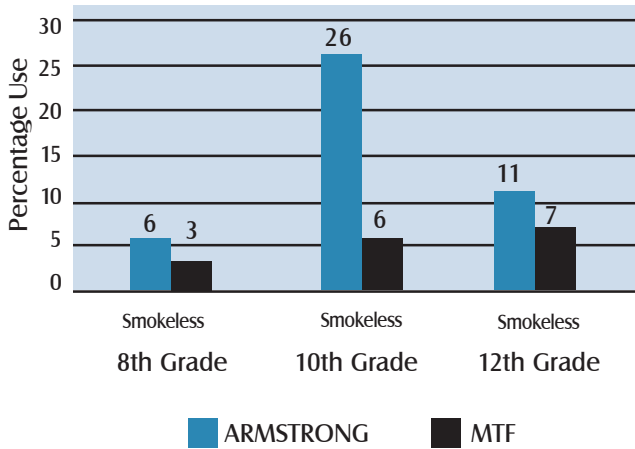
LIFETIME USE OF ALCOHOL - ARMSTRONG vs. MTF



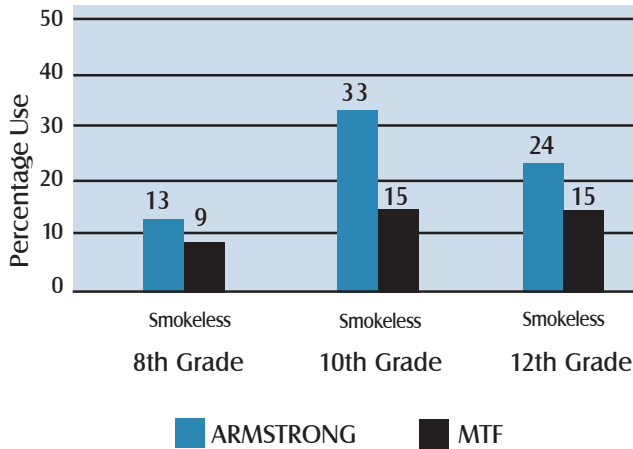
Armstrong County 8th and 10th graders are above the national sample for experimentation (lifetime use) and 12th graders are slightly below the national average. SOURCE: Armstrong County 2007 Youth Survey Report.

SMOKELESS TOBACCO USE - 30 DAY AND LIFETIME USE

SMOKELESS TOBACCO - 30 DAY USE - ARMSTRONG vs. MTF



SMOKELESS TOBACCO - LIFETIME - ARMSTRONG vs. MTF

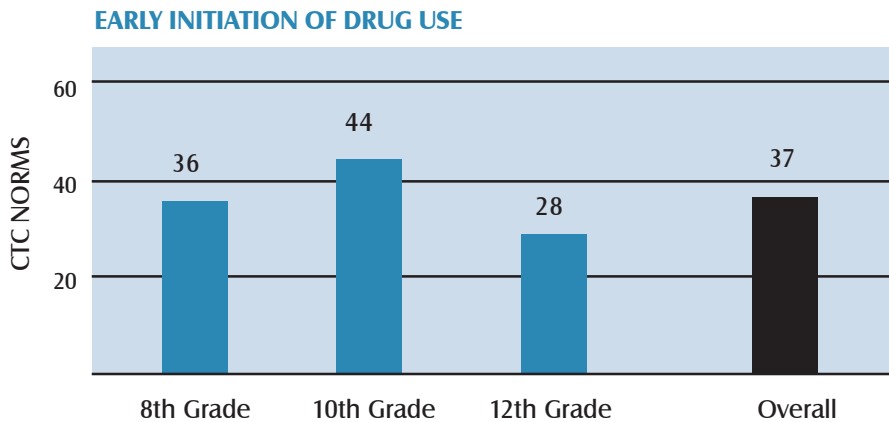


Armstrong County students reported higher lifetime and regular use of smokeless tobacco when compared with the national rates. SOURCE: Armstrong County 2007 Youth Survey Report.

RISK FACTOR RESULTS

RISK FACTOR 2: EARLY INITIATION OF THE PROBLEM BEHAVIOR

The initiation of alcohol, tobacco or other drug use at an early age is linked to a number of negative outcomes. The earlier that experimentation with drugs begins, the more likely it is that experimentation will become consistent, regular use. Early initiation may lead to the use of a greater range of drugs, as well as other problem behaviors. This scale is measured by the PAYS survey items, that ask when drug use began.



Overall, Armstrong County students received a percentile score of 37 on the Early Initiation of Drug Use Scale, 13 points lower than the normative average of 50.

Across grade levels, percentile scores for Early Initiation Of Drug Use range from a low of 28 among 12th graders to a high of 44 among 10th graders.

SOURCE: Armstrong County 2007 Youth Survey Report.

JUVENILE ARRESTS FOR ARMSTRONG COUNTY YOUTH

Data from the Uniform Crime Reporting System (UCRS) shows that there was a slight increase in the number of juvenile arrests from 2005 to 2006. Not all police departments report arrests into the UCR system, so it is likely that the actual arrests could be higher. SOURCE: Uniform Crime Reporting System

JUVENILE ARRESTS FOR ARMSTRONG COUNTY YOUTH		
OUTCOME MEASURE	2005	2006
Juvenile Drug Sale Arrests	11	13
Juvenile Drug Possession Arrests	1	5
Juvenile Liquor Law Arrests	37	33
Total	49	51

Data submitted by the Armstrong County Probation Department for juvenile arrests per 100,000 population shows that some categories are higher than PA and US rates for 2005. The categories that exceeded the state and national levels are juvenile property arrests, juvenile vandalism, juvenile drug related, and juvenile alcohol related offenses. SOURCE: Armstrong County Probation Department



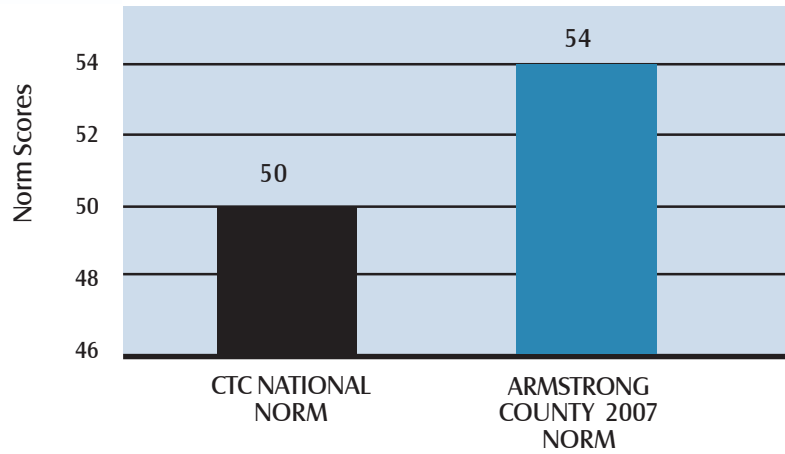
RISK FACTOR 3: COMMUNITY LAWS AND NORMS FAVORABLE TOWARD DRUG USE

The data suggests that the attitudes and policies a community holds (community norms) in relation to drug use, violence and crime are communicated through laws, policies, practices and expectations. When laws, tax rates and standards are favorable toward or unclear about substance abuse, violence or crime, young people are at risk.

LAWS AND NORMS FAVORABLE TO DRUG USE AND HANDGUNS

Risk factors above the CTC national norm of 50 are cause for concern. The Armstrong County score for community laws and norms favorable to drug use is above the CTC norm.

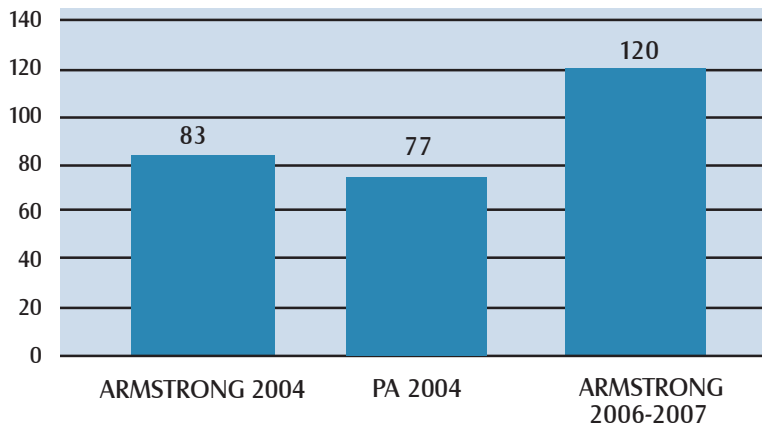
SOURCE: 2007 Armstrong County Youth Survey Report



RISK FACTOR 4: FAMILY HISTORY OF THE PROBLEM BEHAVIOR

When children are raised in a family with a history of addiction to alcohol or other drugs, the risk of them having such problems themselves increases.

ALL ADMISSIONS FOR SUBSTANCE TREATMENT (Per 10,000)



This figure illustrates that the number of admissions for treatment has increased in Armstrong County since the 2004 results. Although parents seeking treatment is considered a positive step toward change, when considering risk factors, the results suggest that the high number of adults with a history of problem behavior is a concern for Armstrong County youth. SOURCE: The 2007 Communities That Care Risk and Protective Factor Assessment Study

RISK FACTOR 5: TRANSITIONS AND MOBILITY

According to the CTC, even normal transitions can predict increases in problem behaviors. When children move from elementary to middle school, or middle to high school significant increases in drug use, school drop-out, and anti-social behavior may occur.

Members of the Community Prevention Board expressed concern for children who move frequently within the county, or from county to county. These moves may be prompted by family problems, economic hardship, and other difficulties. Based on the experience of human service agency members who deal directly with these families, they believe that these children are at particularly high risk for developing problems.

PROTECTIVE FACTORS

Protective factors, also known as asstes, are conditions that buffer children and youth from exposure to risk by either reducing the impact of the risks or changing the way that young people respond to risks. Protective factors identified through research include strong bonding to family, school, community, and peers. These groups support the development of healthy behaviors for children by setting and communicating healthy beliefs and clear standards for children's behavior. Young people are more likely to follow the standards for behavior set by these groups if the bonds are strong. Strong bonds are encouraged by providing young people with opportunities to make meaningful contributions, by teaching them the skills they need to be successful in these opportunities, and by recognizing their contributions.

PROTECTIVE FACTOR SCORES

Community Domain	Armstrong 2007
Community Opportunities for Prosocial Involvement	62
Community Rewards for Prosocial Involvement	58
Family Domain	
Family Attachment	58
Family Opportunities for Prosocial Involvement	58
Family Rewards for Prosocial Involvement	60
School Domain	
School Opportunities for Prosocial Involvement	56
School Rewards for Prosocial Involvement	56
Individual/Peer Domain	
Religiosity	54
Belief in the Moral Order	68

For Armstrong County youth, percentile scores across the nine protective factor scales range from a low of 54 to a high of 68, with an average score of 59, which is nine points higher than the normative range of 50. The three lowest overall scores were for the following protective factor scales: Religiosity, School Rewards for Prosocial Involvement, and School Opportunities for Prosocial Involvement. The three highest overall scores were for the following protective factor scales: Belief in the Moral Order, Community Opportunities for Prosocial Involvement and Family Rewards for Prosocial Involvement.

The Community Prevention Board selected School Opportunities for Prosocial Involvement and School Rewards for Prosocial Involvement as the two priority protective factors.



ACKNOWLEDGMENTS AND CREDITS

The Armstrong County Communities That Care initiative is a bold prevention effort with high expectations and hopes for far reaching impact. In order for this initiative to have come this far, many individuals and organizations have contributed to the success.

First, we thank the Pennsylvania Commission on Crime and Delinquency for the grant that supported the completion of this study.

Second, we thank the members of the Community Prevention Board for volunteering to serve so that we can make a difference in the lives of our youth.

Third, administration of the Pennsylvania Youth Survey would not have been possible without the support and cooperation of Armstrong School District and Leechburg School District superintendents, principals, teachers, parents and students.

Fourth, we thank Dr. Joseph Whalen, Jr. for his work as our data consultant.

Lastly, as Key Leaders, we want to thank the agencies and organizations for their support of this project. The agencies and organizations are the following:

- ARC Manor Addiction Recovery Center
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- Armstrong County Children Youth and Family Services
Dennis Demangone
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Cassandra Nuzzo
- Armstrong County Probation Department
J. David Hartman
- Armstrong School District
Dr. James Gaggini
- Armstrong Family Resource Network; Armstrong-Indiana Intermediate Unit 28
Kathy Shick
- Harvest Community Church
Robert French
- Leechburg School District
Matthew A. Kruluts



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The Armstrong County Communities That Care group is only as strong as all the pieces of the puzzle fitting together. The last piece of the puzzle is YOU! We need you to be involved. Join with us to help our youth.

Contact Armstrong County Communities That Care for information at 724-354-2746