

Washington Healthy Youth (WHY) Coalition

Overview

The Washington Healthy Youth (WHY) Coalition represents more than 15 state agencies and organizations.

Historically the WHY Coalition had focused exclusively on underage drinking prevention. However, in 2014 the group added focus on underage cannabis use prevention in response to the statewide legalization of cannabis use for persons 21 and older.

The coalition focuses on:

- Promoting changes in industry policy and practices by intentionally using data to inform strategies and tactics
- Educating policy makers on prevention issues and best practices to better inform decision making
- Monitoring impacts of policy on prevention by addressing emergent issues
- Supporting prevention efforts through development and distribution of educational materials and resources
- Increasing statewide education, collaboration, and partnerships to reduce youth access to alcohol and cannabis use

Coalition members share information about environmental and policy changes in schools and communities regarding minors' access to, and use of, alcohol and cannabis which legalized recreational cannabis use. For example, since 2019 the coalition promoted prevention practices by providing feedback to the Washington State Liquor and Cannabis Board regarding cannabis packaging and labeling and the potential impact on children and youth. The coalition has considered data available regarding the effects of COVID-19 mandates and allowances regarding increased youth exposure to alcohol and cannabis. The WHY Coalition's Cannabinoid Workgroup continues to meet and review relevant trends which include Delta-8 and other hemp-derived cannabinoids.

More about this program

In the winter and spring of 2022, coalition members revisited the coalition's strategic action plan and outlined action items organized into one goal, to support the group's purpose:

Reduce the percentage of 10th graders reporting they drank alcohol and/or used cannabis in the past 30 days.

The activities to support the goal were organized into four main objectives with related strategies, responsible WHY groups, tactics, and desired outcomes. Those objectives are:

- Provide valuable educational tools and resources for parents, guardians, other prevention focused coalitions, prevention partners, influential adults, and other community members.
- Expand membership for the broader Coalition and related workgroups with attention to diverse and inclusive membership.
- Intentional use of data to inform our strategies and tactics.
- Education and information sharing among Coalition members to activate stakeholder/partner engagement.

Members agreed that the Communications Workgroup will collaborate with other agencies to continue the work set out by the State Prevention Enhancement Consortium.

The website [Start Talking Now](#) is maintained by the WHY Coalition Communications Workgroup and is a substance use disorder prevention resource for parents and other adult influencers. The team continues to review and update the website's data including updating the website to include translations to several languages commonly spoken in Washington to ensure diversity, equity, and inclusion. The WHY Communications Workgroup also continues to maintain and update as needed, a prevention brochure for parents, which was redesigned in 2021 based upon feedback from providers.

The Communications Workgroup has served as an advisory team for the Department of Health (DOH) Youth Marijuana Prevention and Adult Influence

campaign, the Rethinking College Drinking and the Health Care Authority / Division of Behavioral Health and Recovery (HCA / DBHR) Underage Drinking Prevention media campaigns.

The WHY Coalition's Start Talking Now Facebook page is managed by the Communications Workgroup and is currently managed by GMMB, a media company on contract.

In May 2019, the Communications Workgroup at the direction of DOH and HCA, collaborated with GMMB, to create a new website focused on youth alcohol and cannabis prevention. The Not a Moment Wasted website includes youth faced information on health and lifestyle, alcohol, and cannabis as well as help and resources. Since this website's inception, the information and resources shared have continued to expand and grow.

Staff support

The Washington Healthy Youth Coalition is not funded.

Oversight

HCA provides reports regarding the efforts of WHY as part of reports related to underage drinking and/or cannabis use and convenes monthly coalition meetings.

Coalition members

The statewide Washington Healthy Youth Coalition is co-chaired by the Liquor and Cannabis Board and HCA. Coalition members include the Department of Health, Educational Service Districts, Washington Association for Substance Misuse and Violence Prevention, Northwest High Intensity Drug Trafficking Areas, Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction, Washington Traffic Safety Commission, Department of Licensing, Washington Poison Control, Foundations for Healthy Generations, Washington State Patrol, Washington Association of Juvenile Court Administrators, and Seattle Children's Hospital.

For more information

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Websites:

- <https://www.hca.wa.gov/about-hca/programs-and-initiatives/behavioral-health-and-recovery>
- <https://www.starttalkingnow.org/>
- <https://notamomentwasted.org/>