



COMMUNITY ASSESSMENT AT A GLANCE NOVEMBER 2010

Coalition Name: CAST

Location: Upper Merion, PA

I. Community Description:

- § The Community Alliance for a Safer Tomorrow (CAST) is a community of individuals and organizations focusing on all youth in the Upper Merion area by reducing risk factors and increasing protective factors.
- § Geographically it includes the areas of Bridgeport, Upper Merion and West Conshohocken in Montgomery County in southeastern Pennsylvania. The Upper Merion Area School District is composed of these areas.
- § In 2009 the total population is 32,492 divided in the following manner: Bridgeport = 4,401; Upper Merion = 26,591; and West Conshohocken = 1,500.
- § The ethnic breakdown for the total area is: 86% White, 5% African American, 8% Asian, and 1% Other.
- § The student population at UMASD in 2009-2010 is 3,486. The student population in private/parochial schools within district boundaries is 1,301.
- § In the late 1970s, Upper Merion Area School District was listed as the number one drug school in the magazine "High Times".

II. Community Needs: In 2010, the CAST Risk and Resource Assessment Committee collected and analyzed area data and identified priority risk factors. Data were collected for at least 2 indicators for each of 20 risk factors in four domains: Community, Family, School, and Peer/Individual, as well as behavioral problems. The assessment was completed using the Pennsylvania Youth Survey (PAYS) and archival data. The 2009 PAYS was administered in November 2009 to all 6th, 8th, 10th & 12th grade students in the Upper Merion Area School District. Areas surveyed were: 1) use of alcohol, tobacco & other drugs; 2) frequency of antisocial behavior; and 3) knowledge of effects of ATOD use.

Some indicators are measured by a PAYS Scale Score. They are measured against a normative database and are considered percentile scores that range between 0 and 100. A score of 50, which matches the normative median, indicates that 50% of the respondents in the sample reported a score that is lower than the average UMASD score.

Data from areas of concern leading to chosen problem areas are:

- § 6th & 12th grade students reported 30-day alcohol use increasing from 2.1% to 5.7% and 41.8% to 44.3% respectively.
- § 12th grades students reported 30-day marijuana use increasing from 17.8% to 20.9%.
- § 6th & 8th grade students reported 30-day inhalant use increasing from 1.7% to 5.7% and 1.1% to 6.7% respectively.
- § 6th grade students reported lifetime marijuana use increasing from 0.9% to 2.9%.

§ 6, 8th & 10th grade students reported lifetime usage of inhalants increasing from 6.8% to 9.6%; 6.6% to 12.8%; and 2.5% to 8.3% respectively.

Other significant data are:

- § 6th and 10th grade students reported higher Family Management Scale Scores increasing from 38 to 46 and 40 to 46 respectively. Lower scores indicate less family management problems.
- § 6th and 8th grade students reported higher Laws and Norms Favorable to Drug Use Scale Scores increasing from 48 to 51 and 46 to 52 respectively, exceeding the state median. Lower scores indicate less laws and norms favorable to drug use.

III. Community Resources

The PAYS also gives scale scores for protective factors, which are things that buffer children from risk and help them succeed in life.

UMASD had scores higher than total Pennsylvania scores on most of those factors including:

- § School Rewards for Prosocial Involvement – scale score of 69
- § School Opportunities for Prosocial Involvement – scale score of 66
- § Belief in the Moral Order – scale score of 61

IV. Community History

- § Upper Merion Township's incorporation dates to 1713 when the King of Prussia Inn, the Bird-In-Hand Inn in Gulph Mills, and later the Swedes Ford Inn were required to pay 6 shillings to the Legislature for licenses. The King of Prussia Inn, built in 1709, captures the historical flavor of the township. It was named by a Prussian immigrant in honor of Frederick the Great, but became known during the Revolutionary War as a center of food and drink. An alternate story says the Inn, first called Berry's Tavern, got its name to lure in Prussian mercenaries who spent freely.
- § The King of Prussia Mall in Upper Merion, opened in 1963, is the largest shopping mall on the East Coast of the United States and the largest shopping mall in the United States of America in terms of leasable retail space. The mall is a prominent tourist destination in the Philadelphia area, with an estimated 20-25% of visitors as tourists.
- § West Conshohocken Borough was incorporated October 6th, 1874 from land taken almost equally from the Townships of Lower and Upper Merion. As a river borough, there existed a large number of mills and other industries utilizing water power. The Dougherty Quarry was a prosperous business, producing stone of superior quality known as *Conshohocken* or *Merion Blue*. It was much sought after for public buildings, and was shipped by rail throughout the East before supplies were exhausted in the mid-twentieth century. Today, with its proximity to highways PA-76 and I-476 (Blue Route), this small borough has experienced moderate office and retail development.
- § Bridgeport was incorporated in 1851.

V. Problem / Goal Statements

- § Underage drinking.
 1. By June 2012, decrease overall 30-day use of alcohol by 15% from 20.9% to 17.8%.
- § Marijuana use.

1. By June 2012, decrease overall 30-day use of marijuana by 25% from 9.0% to 6.7%.
2. By June 2012, decrease overall lifetime use of marijuana by 20% from 17.1% to 13.7%.

§ Inhalant Use

1. By June 2012, decrease overall 30-day use of inhalants by 25% from 4.3% to 3.2%.
2. By June 2012, decrease overall lifetime use of inhalants by 15% from 9.0% to 7.65%