

# Influence The Choice

## Five Year Community Report

### 2013 - 2018



# Our Mission and Values

Influence the Choice **promotes the physical, mental and social wellness of youth in our community.** As Influence the Choice – Drug Prevention Alliance for Youth, we work to reduce youth alcohol, marijuana and prescription drug abuse. We recognize that prevention of substance abuse is interconnected with the mental health, physical wellness, financial security and social support of community youth.

Influence the Choice accomplishes its mission through **community resource networking and strategic action planning** aimed at changing community norms.

We believe **the community itself**, including community youth, can learn about, understand and solve problems collaboratively. We seek to empower youths as leaders, citizens and positive contributors to the health of our community and nation.

# From Our Leadership

Influence the Choice is composed of members representing at least twelve sectors of the community. We include youth representatives in all of our deliberations and activities. We are proud of our grass roots connections, and work hard to represent our community's values and priorities. We welcome anyone interested in youth wellness and health to join us!

Executive Committee and Staff  
Influence the Choice



2017-2018 Executive Committee and staff (l to r) Barbara de Michele, Grant Writer; Ina Ghangurde, Vice-Chair and Parent Representative; Jerry Blackburn, Chair; M Haynes, Secretary and Youth Representative; Judy Brewer, Treasurer; Andie Adee, Project Director. Pictured left, Katie Moeller, Special Projects Coordinator.

# It All Starts With Community

**From the beginning, Influence the Choice** has been a grassroots, community-driven organization focused on youth health and wellness. Starting as a sub-committee of Issaquah Community Network, a state-supported agency with a focus on at-risk youth, nine citizens concerned about youth alcohol and drug use came together in 2011. Our original name was Drug Free Community Coalition. By 2012, DFCC grew to forty members, all working together to develop a strategic community plan to reduce youth substance use and abuse.

In 2013, DFCC was awarded a federal Drug Free Community grant funded through the White House **Office of National Drug Control Policy** and monitored by the **Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration** (SAMHSA). The grant provides \$125,000 per year for five years, with an option to apply for a second, or continuation, grant in 2018. The grant allowed us to hire staff members and provided funding to implement our strategic plan. Elements of the plan, and community results, are detailed in this report.



Cleaning up the old Issaquah skate park and Rainier Trail was an early activity of the Drug Free Community Coalition.

In 2014 we changed our name to **Influence the Choice** in recognition of our mission **to positively influence young people to choose healthy lifestyles**. We also merged with the Issaquah Schools Foundation, which provided us with our non-profit status, and financial and personnel support.

# A Continuing Conversation

**Influence the Choice is all about listening** to our community through conversations, followed by collaborative action on identified goals. To engage our community in an on-going dialogue about youth health and wellness issues, we have hosted forums, youth panels, discussion groups, focus groups, and one-on-one conversations. Two examples:



In 2014 and 2015, Influence the Choice partnered with the City of Issaquah, the City of Sammamish, the City of Newcastle, the Issaquah School District, the Issaquah Schools Foundation and the Issaquah, Sammamish and Newcastle Chambers of Commerce to host four **Community Conversations about Drug Abuse**. Over 200 community leaders participated.



Every other year, Influence the Choice co-hosts the Action Forum for Youth with the Issaquah Schools Foundation, the Issaquah School District and, in 2017, the Lake Washington School District. Students and adults gather to discuss the most recent Healthy Youth Survey results in the areas of substance use, mental health, school satisfaction, bullying and safety.

Activities like these help Influence the Choice to **develop a community profile**, to **focus effective community action**, to **identify emerging trends** among youth, and to understand **root causes** of both positive and negative behaviors.

# What Have We Learned?

## Our Community

The primary characteristic of the greater Issaquah community is **persistent change**. New neighborhoods, more people, new schools, new landmarks, more traffic – all have been constants for thirty years. Our diverse neighbors value the environment, good schools, strong families, efficient governments and a high quality of life. Parents, educators and youths themselves have high expectations for student achievement, performance and success.

## Substance Abuse and Mental Health\*

- Students report **alcohol** use lower than their statewide peers through the 10<sup>th</sup> grade. Twelfth grade students, however, report alcohol use significantly higher than average in the areas of 30-day use, binge drinking and problem drinking.
- **Marijuana** use is below state-wide averages in all grades, but still concerning at approximately 23% of 12<sup>th</sup> graders.
- Use of **prescription drugs to get high**, although rare, is concerning due to the lethality and life-long impacts of opioid addiction. In focus groups, students consistently express concerns about student use of **prescription drugs to enhance performance** in academics and sports.
- In recent years, **vaping and juul** use among teens has substantially increased.
- Eighth, 10<sup>th</sup> and 12<sup>th</sup> grade students report high levels of **anxiety and stress** when compared to statewide peers.
- By 10<sup>th</sup> grade and continuing through 12<sup>th</sup>, about a third of students report periods of **sadness and depression** lasting more than two weeks.
- Although mental health and substance abuse **treatment services** are increasingly available in schools and the community, there is a continuing concern about access to resources to meet the needs of youth.

## Financial Security

About eight percent of community students qualify for Free and Reduced Lunch services. However, **food insecurity** varies greatly by school and region, with pockets of great need occurring in every part of our community. The **affordability of housing, adequate medical care and transportation** is an increasing concern for many members of our community in the midst of rapid and continuous growth.

\*Healthy Youth Survey statistics can be found on the Issaquah School District website ([www.issaquah.wednet.edu](http://www.issaquah.wednet.edu)) and the Lake Washington School District website ([www.lwsd.org](http://www.lwsd.org)). Additional school district demographic information can be found at Washington State Report Card (<http://reportcard.ospi.k12.wa.us>).

# Positive Community Norms

**Based on our community's profile**, Influence the Choice selected Positive Community Norms (PCN) as our preferred strategy for changing our community environment. Based on 30 years of research and practical applications, PCN works to correct misperceptions about youth alcohol and drug use, to support positive messaging that correctly identifies that the majority of students in our community are making healthy choices, and to reinforce positive parenting habits. Communities that adopt the PCN strategic framework have seen dramatic reductions in youth alcohol and drug use over time.



## How does it work?

- **Using local data**, Influence the Choice identifies areas in which students, parents and adults **misperceive** actual youth alcohol and drug usage rates.
- Through a **sustained media campaign**, students, parents and adults are gradually made aware of the reality of drug use in their community. Most often, drug use is **LOWER** than perceived.
- As awareness builds in the community, youth, parents and other adults find it easier to adopt the majority “norm.” Over time, the number of people **choosing healthy options increases**.

## What actions have we taken?

- **Provided extensive training** for fifteen Influence the Choice school and community leaders; educated partner organizations.
- **Partnered** with the Issaquah School District to bring a PCN campaign to Issaquah High School. The campaign just completed its third year.
- **Infused** every Influence the Choice activity and event with Positive Community Norms messaging.

# Positive Change: Student Video Contest



Influence the Choice hosts a Student Video Contest to **provide a platform for youths** to research and express their ideas about substance abuse prevention and behavioral health. Over the last six years, about 800 students participated in the creation of 500 videos. Each year, adult and student judges choose ten or more winners and one grand prize winner. Contest sponsors include the Issaquah Arts Commission, Issaquah and Sammamish Rotary Clubs, Issaquah and Sammamish Kiwanis Clubs, King-5 TV and high school and middle school video production teachers. Winning videos are distributed to municipal and high school TV stations, and presented at civic events. **All winning videos can be viewed on our website at [www.influencethechoice.org](http://www.influencethechoice.org).**



A variety of techniques including documentary style, claymation and animation were used in these winning videos.



# Positive Change: Advocacy



Providing **healthy alternative activities for youth** is a well-researched strategy for preventing substance abuse and promoting mental health. For this reason, Influence the Choice and many of our community partners strongly advocated for the construction of a new Issaquah skate park in a new location. The City of Issaquah responded by building a \$500,000 facility in a highly visible location adjacent to the Issaquah Transit Center. The skate park opened in 2017. **Youth members of Influence the Choice** served on the city's Skate Park Advisory Committee, testified at public meetings, raised funds for the new park, and joined the ribbon-cutting ceremony.

Other advocacy activities:

- Influence the Choice members participated in meetings and testified before the King County Board of Health regarding **a county-wide system for safely disposing of opioid and other prescription medications**. The county initiated the project in 2017.
- Working with the Issaquah and Newcastle police departments, Influence the Choice provided **secure drop-boxes** for opioid and other prescription medications at two central locations.
- Influence the Choice brought attention to the need for **additional surveillance and lighting along the Rainier Trail**, located near several public schools and the Issaquah Community Center. Again, the city responded positively by designating the Rainier Trail as a public park, cleaning up brush, and providing increased police presence in the area.

# Positive Change: Youth Opposed to Drug Abuse (YODA)



In 2015, Influence the Choice launched its first **youth affiliate group**. Members promptly named themselves Youth Opposed to Drug Abuse, or YODA. In just three years, these dynamic young leaders have:

- Participated in three **Community Assessment of Neighborhood Stores (CANS)** surveys to assess marijuana and alcohol advertising aimed at youth. With the consent of store owners or managers, students photograph advertising messages and placement and provide suggestions for positive changes to the store owners.
- **Met with state elected officials** to discuss school and community resources for youth substance abuse prevention and mental health services;
- Developed a panel presentation called **“How To Talk To Your Parents About Drugs,”** and presented the information at the 2016, 2017 and 2018 State of Mind conferences at local high schools. It’s a big hit!
- Participated in **youth panel discussions** before many community groups;
- Organized and presented two middle school **Youth Leadership Summits** focused on substance abuse prevention;
- Organized and presented Influence the Choice student video contest **Awards Ceremonies;**
- Participated in the **State of Washington Prevention Conference** at Great Wolf Lodge, winning kudos for their stellar presentations.

# Positive Change: Parent Awareness



In 2016, Influence the Choice launched a **social media campaign** urging parents to talk with their children about family values related to underage alcohol use. Over a six month period, the campaign reached 200,000 viewers. Other parent awareness efforts:

- Three **“Marijuana and Your Teens” forums** held at Skyline, Issaquah and Liberty High Schools following legalization of marijuana in Washington State. Over 200 parents attended.
- At high school and middle school Curriculum Nights, **about 24,000 brochures** distributed in partnership with the Issaquah PTSA Council. Topics covered social hosting, facts about marijuana and teens, and what to do when a child exhibits signs of substance abuse.
- In 2017 and 2018, four **“Hidden In Plain Sight”** exhibits at Liberty High, Inglewood Middle School, Issaquah High and Central Washington-Sammamish to inform parents about the signs of youth substance abuse, including presentations by law enforcement, counselors and school officials. Over 500 parents attended.
- An **all-Spanish Family Night**, held in the spring of 2016, drew 50 families for a community dinner and information about preventing youth substance abuse. A second **Family Night dinner and forum**, held in the fall of 2017, drew 200 families to a back-to-school discussion on youth substance abuse prevention.

# Positive Change: Five Year Results

**Influence the Choice thanks our community partners** whose dedicated efforts have contributed to these positive results. Statistics come from Issaquah School District Healthy Youth Survey results for 2010 and 2016 (the latest available).

30-Day Alcohol use by Issaquah School District Students

Grade	2010	2016	Impact
12 <sup>th</sup>	43%	39%	4 pts and 9% reduction
10 <sup>th</sup>	27%	16%	11 pts and 40% reduction
8 <sup>th</sup>	8%	5%	3 pts and 37% reduction

30-Day Marijuana use by Issaquah School District Students

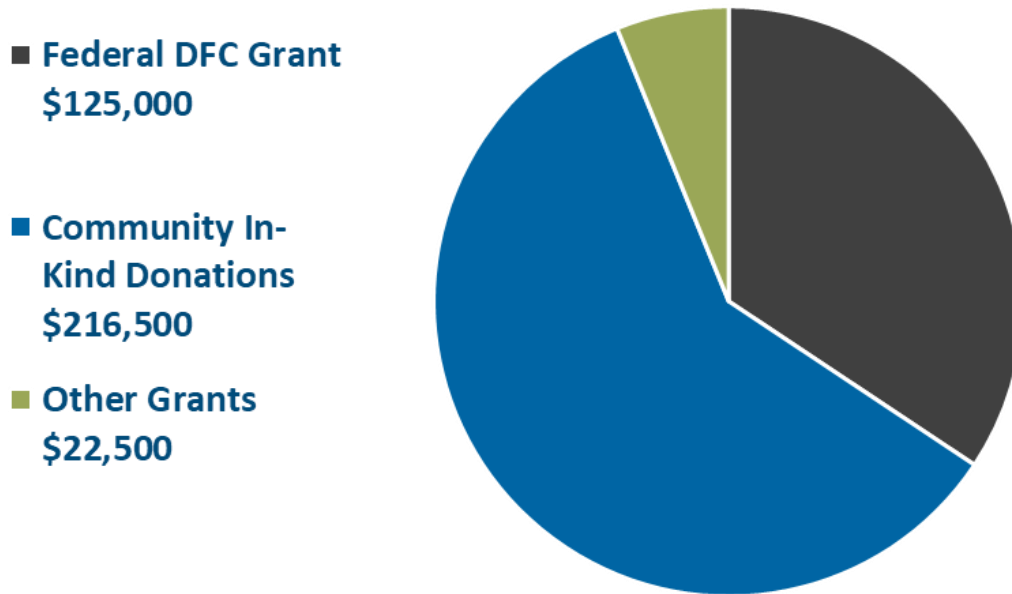
Grade	2010	2016	Impact
12 <sup>th</sup>	25%	23%	2 pts and 8% reduction
10 <sup>th</sup>	14%	10%	4 pts and 29% reduction
8 <sup>th</sup>	5%	1%	4 pts and 80% reduction

Use of Prescription Drugs to “Get High” by Issaquah School District Students

Grade	2010	2016	Impact
12 <sup>th</sup>	5%	4%	1 pt and 20% reduction
10 <sup>th</sup>	4%	2.5%	1.5 pts and 37% reduction
8 <sup>th</sup>	3%	1.3%	1.7 pts and 56% reduction

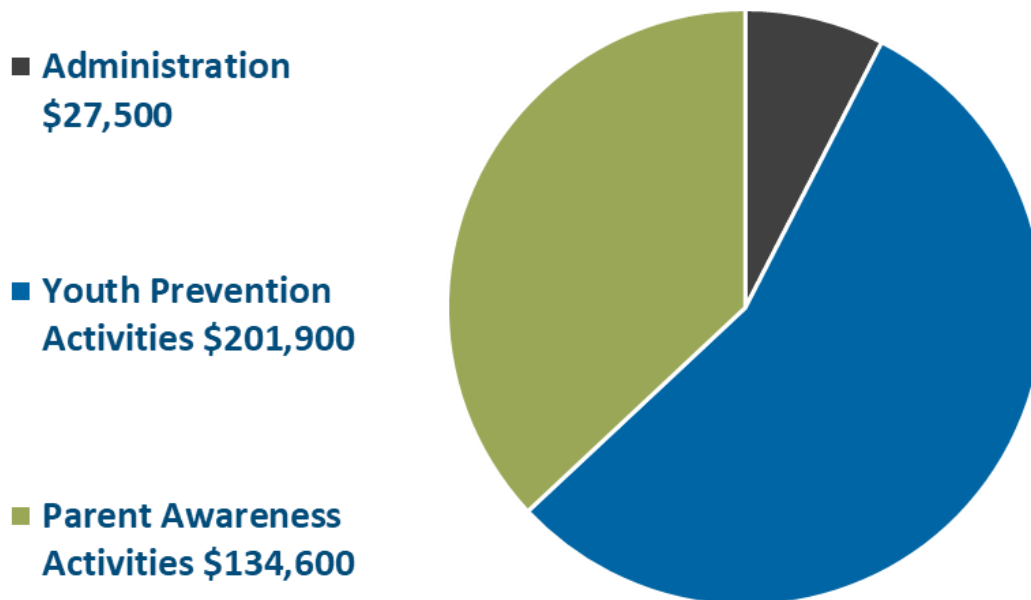
# Financial and Community Support

2016 - 2017 Funding and Resources

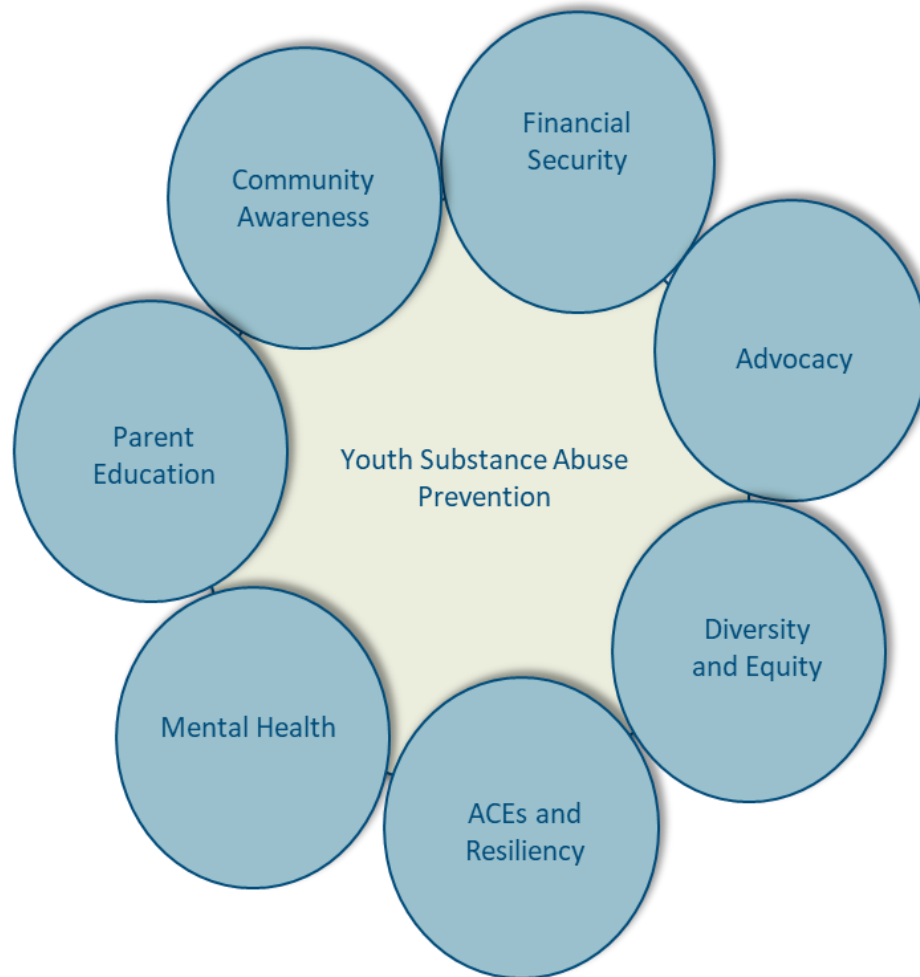


# How We Used Our Resources

2016 – 2017 Distribution of Resources



# Our Mission Is Growing



By 2019 Influence the Choice will become **an independent non-profit organization** focused on the promotion of youth mental, physical and social health. Our expanded mission recognizes the **complex dynamics and social stresses transforming the world for today's young people**. As we grow, our commitment to incorporating **youth's needs, values and aspirations** into our work will not change.

Among proposals for future growth:

- **Expanding board and staff knowledge and practice** in the areas of organizational development, community engagement, cultural competency and racial equity;
- Integrating substance abuse prevention and mental health promotion into a **behavioral health model**.
- Further **integrating Positive Community Norms principles** into community and school practices.
- Continued expansion of **youth services and leadership development**;
- Continued expansion of **community awareness and parent education activities**;
- Ensuring a **sustainable future** for Influence the Choice.

# Thank You!

## 2018 Community Sector Representatives

Sector Representatives serve as Board members, **responsible for the programmatic and financial health** of Influence the Choice. They bring **community experience and wisdom** to planning discussions, sharing perspectives from diverse communities. They **support the mission** through direct action, and by informing others in the community about the importance of youth substance abuse prevention.

**M Haynes**, Youth (Gibson-Ek High School)

**Ina Ghangurde**, Parents (PTSA Council)

**Lisa Callan**, Schools (Issaquah School District)

**Ed Murphy**, Business (Costco Warehouse)

**Nicole Jennings**, Media (Pacific NW Today)

**Bernie Lucking**, Civic Organization (Rotary Club of Sammamish)

**Dave Mayer**, Organization Serving Youth (Sammamish YMCA)

**Judi Case**, Faith-based Organizations (Our Savior Lutheran Church and Passage Point)

**Sara Young**, Organizations Dealing with Substance Abuse (Friends of Youth)

**Lynne Handlos** - Government Agency Dealing with Substance Abuse (City of Sammamish)

**Ryan Smith**, Law Enforcement (Issaquah Police Department)

**Steve Westlake**, Health (Eastside Fire & Rescue)

## Our Community Partners in Action

**Over the past five years, the following organizations have contributed** volunteers, in-kind and cash donations, advocacy and advice, connections to the community, and support for our mission. Most importantly, they have enthusiastically embraced collaboration with others to promote the physical, mental and social wellness of youth in our community. **We cannot thank them enough.**

- Issaquah School District
- Issaquah High School
- Issaquah PTSA Council
- Issaquah Schools Foundation
- City of Issaquah
- City of Sammamish
- City of Newcastle
- Issaquah Police Department
- Sammamish Police Department
- Newcastle Police Department
- Eastside Fire and Rescue
- Friends of Youth
- Issaquah Arts Commission
- Issaquah Parks & Rec Department
- Sammamish Parks & Rec Department
- Sammamish YMCA
- Coal Creek YMCA
- Mountain Creek Christian Fellowship
- St. Michael's Episcopal Church
- Our Savior Lutheran Church
- Temple De Hirsch Sinai
- YWCA Passage Point
- Rotary Club of Sammamish
- Rotary Club of Issaquah
- Sammamish Kiwanis
- Issaquah Kiwanis
- Issaquah Press
- Issaquah-Sammamish Reporter
- King5 TV
- Issaquah Chamber of Commerce
- Sammamish Chamber of Commerce
- Newcastle Chamber of Commerce
- Downtown Issaquah Association
- Superior Seconds
- Costco Wholesale
- Issaquah Youth Advisory Board
- Sammamish Youth Board
- Swedish Hospital Issaquah
- Snoqualmie Valley Community Network
- King County Behavioral Health Division
- King County Marijuana Prevention Program

# How to Get Involved

How to Learn More about Us:

Website: [www.influencethechoice.org](http://www.influencethechoice.org)

Facebook: Influence The Choice

Instagram: influencethechoice

Twitter: @influencechoice

How to Contact Us:

Andie Adee, Project Director

[andie@influencethechoice.org](mailto:andie@influencethechoice.org)

How to Donate:

Use the donate button on the website

Use the donate button on Facebook

Mail donations to:

Influence the Choice

c/o Andie Adee

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Sammamish, WA 98075



Influence the Choice is a non-profit corporation (IRS status pending) licensed by the State of Washington. Our EIN is #82-3948931.