

Let's Talk: Underage Substance Use in Marin

A Community Health Improvement Plan (CHIP) priority

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Marin County Public Health

protects our community by promoting health, preventing disease, and preparing for public health emergencies.



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The most important message tonight

Parents have more influence than you think.

1

Start early

Talk before you think there is a problem.

2

Be clear

Say what you expect about alcohol, cannabis, nicotine and other drugs.

3

Stay connected

Know the people, places, plans and rides in your teen's life.

4

Keep talking

Many small conversations matter more than one "big talk."

Communication + clear expectations + connection + monitoring are protective factors that parents can strengthen.



- 01** What Marin youth data tell us
- 02** What raises risk and why early use matters
- 03** What parents can do at home
- 04** Fentanyl, overdose risk and where to get help
- 05** Three things to do this week





WHY THIS MATTERS

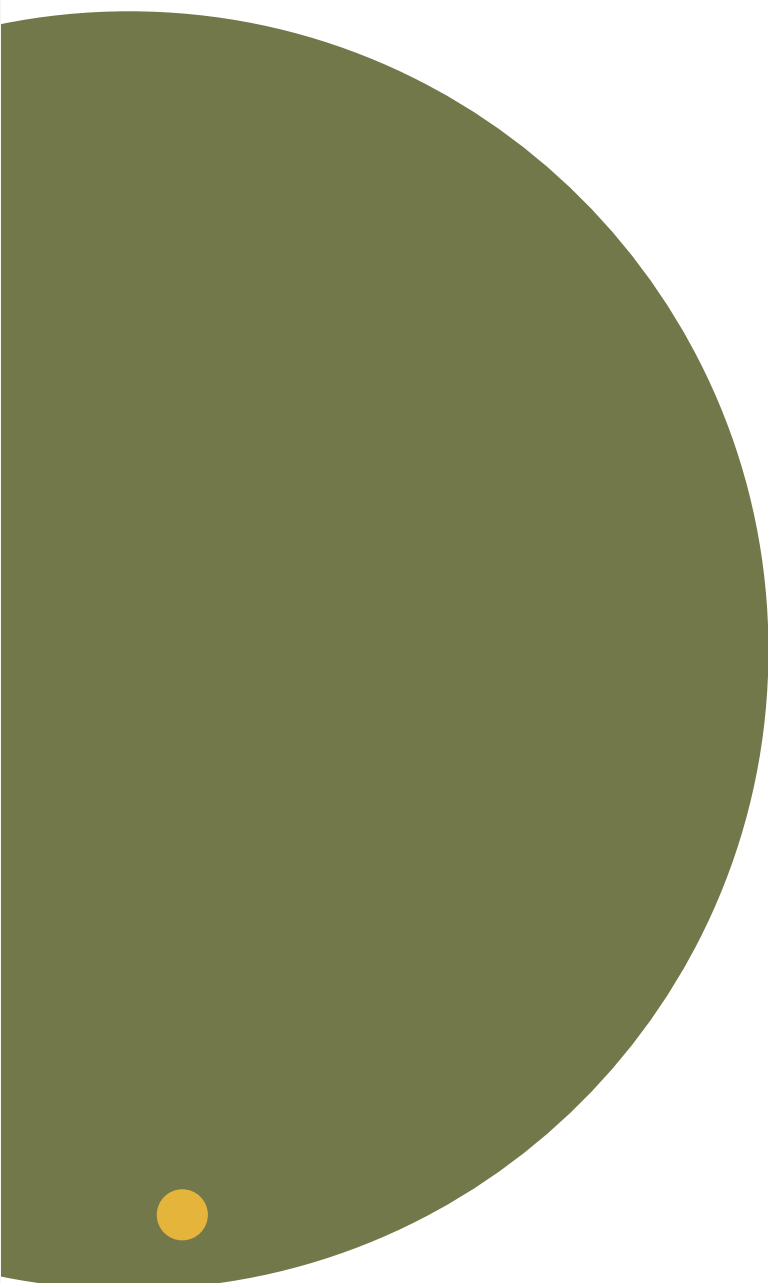
A County Health Priority

Part of Marin's Community Health Improvement Plan

- **Countywide roadmap:** Healthy Marin Partnership (HMP) launched the **2026-028 Community Health Improvement Plan (CHIP)**, guided by the 2025 Community Health Assessment (CHA).
- **Two priorities, one issue:** Behavioral Health and Adolescent Health are both county priority areas, and underage substance use sits at their intersection.
- **Prevention starts at home:** Informed, engaged parents are one of the strongest protective factors this plan can build on

Source: Healthy Marin Partnership, 2025 Community Health Assessment ([marincounty.gov](https://www.marincounty.gov))





MARIN YOUTH DATA

What does the data tell us

A current local benchmark: 22%

22%

of Marin 11th graders
reported past-30-day
alcohol or marijuana use

2023–2025

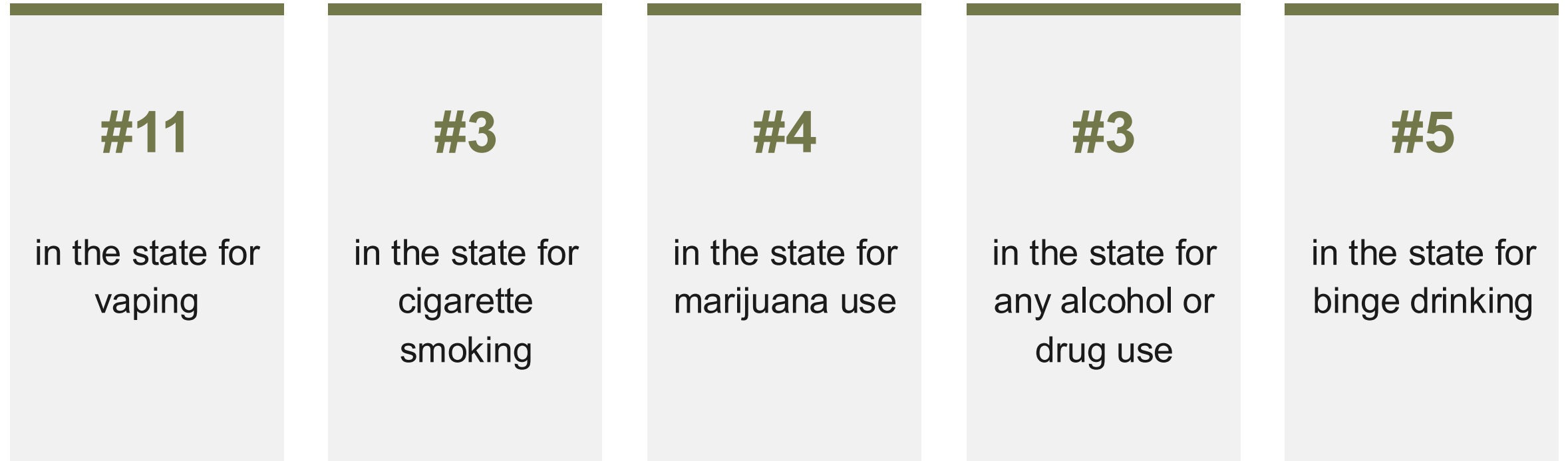
Why this matters for parents

- Substance use prevention is a behavioral health priority in Marin.
- The goal is not to wait for a problem. It is to **delay initiation and reduce risk**.
- Parents can influence the conditions that protect young people: **communication, clear expectations, connection, and monitoring**.

Source: Marin County Community Health Improvement Plan 2026–2028; California Healthy Kids Survey, 2023–2025.



Marin 11th Graders Rank Among the Highest in California

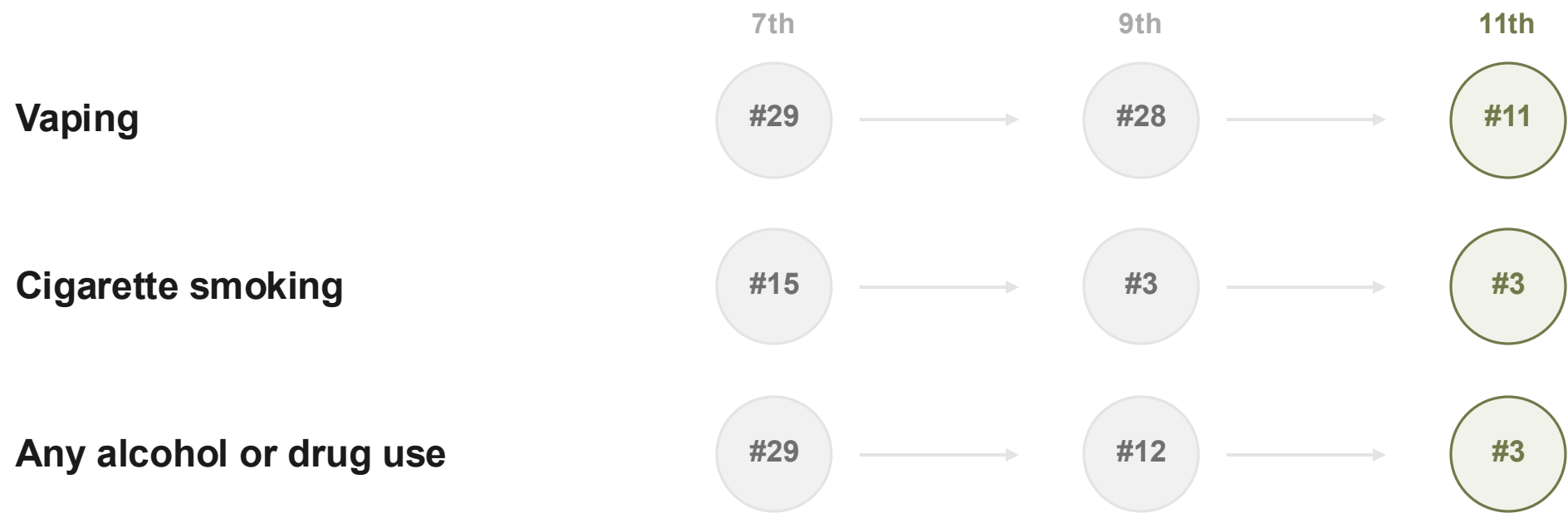


Source: California Healthy Kids Survey (CHKS), CalSCHLS System, 2021–23, WestEd / CA Dept. of Education



Prevention needs to begin before high school

In the 2021–23 CHKS cycle, Marin’s statewide rank rose sharply by 11th grade.



Parent takeaway: start the conversation in middle school before exposure and peer norms intensify.



Statewide rank among California counties/participants, 2021–23. Source: CHKS, CalSCHLS System, WestEd / CA Dept. of Education.

RISK + PROTECTION

What raises risk and what parents can influence



RISK FACTORS

What can increase a young person's risk?

1

Starting early + peer use

Earlier initiation and close peers who use can increase later risk.

2

Family history

Genetics and family environment can increase vulnerability.

3

Stress + adversity

Trauma, chronic stress, and major life disruption can increase risk.

4

Too little adult oversight

Knowing where teens are, who they are with and what the plan is can be protective.

Risk is not destiny. These are reasons to add support; not blame families.



Delaying initiation is a prevention goal

1

Later substance problems

Preventing or delaying initiation reduces later risk for substance use, substance use disorder and overdose.

2

Judgment + safety

Adolescence is a period of ongoing brain development; alcohol and other drugs can impair judgment and increase injury risk.

3

School + relationships

Substance use can be associated with academic, behavioral, and social problems

4

Mental health

Substance use and mental health symptoms can occur together and should prompt support rather than stigma

Bottom line: every year you can help delay initiation is meaningful.



THE NORM: MOST MARIN 11th GRADERS DON'T USE

Most Marin teens already abstain; it's not the exception.

ALCOHOL

69%

have never had a drink, or have done so fewer than 3 times

56%

never had a drink

13%

fewer than 3 occasions

MARIJUANA

73%

have never used marijuana, or have done so fewer than 3 times

65%

never used marijuana

8%

fewer than 3 times

WHY THIS MATTERS

Parents and teens tend to overestimate how many of their peers drink or use. Correcting that misperception and saying out loud that not using is normal is itself a protective factor worth reinforcing at home.



Source: California Healthy Kids Survey (CHKS), CalSCHLS System, California Dept. of Education / WestEd

MARIN COUNTY PUBLIC HEALTH

What makes the biggest difference at home?

1

Stay connected

Maintain warmth, trust and regular contact

2

Set clear expectations

Say directly what you expect about alcohol, cannabis, nicotine and other drugs.

3

Know what is happening

Know the people, places, parties, rides and plans.

4

Keep talking

Have many small conversations instead of one big “drug talk.”

5

Be consistent

Follow through on boundaries while keeping communication open.



Questions parents often ask

“Wouldn’t it be safer if they drink at home?”

Providing alcohol does not protect teens from risky drinking later. Set a clear no-use expectation and do not supply alcohol for teen gatherings.

“They’re going to try it anyway; does delaying really matter?”

Yes. Preventing or delaying initiation reduces later risk for substance use, substance use disorder and overdose.

“How do I talk about alcohol if adults in our family drink?”

Acknowledge the difference between adult and adolescent risk. Be honest, model the behavior you want to see, and keep the expectation clear.

The goal is not a perfect answer. The goal is a clear, calm, ongoing conversation.



What do I actually say?

MIDDLE SCHOOL

“Our family rule is no alcohol, cannabis, nicotine or other drugs. If you’re ever around it, you can always call me.”

HIGH SCHOOL

“You may be around alcohol or drugs even if you don’t use them. Have a plan to leave and you can always call me for a ride.”

WHEN YOU ARE WORRIED

“I’ve noticed some changes lately. I’m not here to accuse you. I want to understand what’s going on and make sure you’re okay.”

Ask first. Listen longer. Keep your tone calm enough that your teen can keep talking.



OVERDOSE PREVENTION

Fentanyl changes the risk

A National Crisis, A Local Picture

- National trend: Adolescent overdose deaths rose sharply nationwide between 2019 and 2023, driven largely by fentanyl.
- A different curve: Marin's youth overdose deaths spiked in 2020, but, unlike national trends, did not continue rising through 2023.
- 911 calls for non-fatal opioid overdoses: Elevated 2020–2023 (peak in 2020), declined in 2024; youth were 12–15% of all such calls, 2021–2025.

Sources: CDPH EpiCenter; California Injury Data Online; Marin County Public Health, 2019–2024



Today's drug supply makes experimentation more dangerous

COUNTERFEIT PILLS

You cannot tell by looking whether a pill is legitimate.

Only take medication prescribed to you and dispensed by a licensed pharmacy.

What the local picture shows

- Among Marin residents ages 9–25, there were **fewer than 10 fatal overdoses each year from 2019 to 2024**. More than three-quarters were accidental, and **fentanyl** was involved in at least two-thirds of the deaths.
- In July 2026, Marin County Public Health issued a community-wide advisory after an increase in suspected opioid overdoses.
- **Naloxone** can rapidly reverse an opioid overdose and is available through local overdose-prevention resources.

Parent takeaway: make “no unknown pills” an explicit family rule.

Sources: DEA One Pill Can Kill; CDPH EpiCenter; Marin County Public Health, 2019–2024 and July 2026 advisory.

When you are concerned, act early

1

Start with curiosity

Describe what you are noticing. Ask what is going on. Listen before you lecture.

2

Bring in support

Contact your child's pediatrician, primary care clinician, school support team or a behavioral health professional.

3

Know the overdose response

If opioid overdose is suspected: give naloxone, call 911 and stay with the person.

MARIN RESOURCES

OD Free Marin

Naloxone • fentanyl test strips • treatment locator • trainings

BHRS Access Line

888-818-1115 • 24/7

Information, screening, assessment and referrals

Crisis: call/text 988 • Immediate danger: 911

Search "OD Free Marin" or "Marin behavioral health services"



Three things to do this week

1

Talk

Ask what your child is seeing among peers — not just whether they are using.

2

Set expectations

Be clear about alcohol, cannabis, vaping, unknown pills and other drugs.

3

Stay connected

Know the people, places, parties, rides and plans in your teen's life.

You do not need to have the perfect conversation. You just need to keep having it.



Part of Marin’s 2026–2028 Community Health Improvement Plan

BEHAVIORAL HEALTH

Substance use prevention is a shared community responsibility.

Marin’s CHIP aligns Public Health, Behavioral Health, schools, healthcare, community organizations and residents around measurable behavioral health goals, including youth substance use and overdose prevention.

Healthy Marin Partnership

Thank You

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