

# Youth Substance Use Implementation Guide: Central Virginia



## Project Background

In 2022, the Office of Child and Family Services (OCFS) contracted with OMNI Institute to conduct a needs assessment of adolescent substance use services across Virginia. The assessment results, which included primary and secondary data, highlighted the need for a capacity assessment and strategic planning process to transform the substance use system of care for Virginia adolescents and their families. In partnership with OCFS, OMNI began that process in March of 2023. During that time, OMNI has facilitated six working groups (one for each DBHDS region and one made up of state-level agency representatives) to complete the capacity assessment process, which highlighted the strengths, gaps, and barriers for each region and the state as a whole. The capacity assessment was followed by a strategic planning process with each group, which identified the key areas for change across each region and the state.

Needs Assessment



Capacity Assessment



Strategic Plan



Implementation Plan

To better understand what is needed to successfully implement the regional adolescent substance use strategic plans, OMNI consulted the working groups in each region of Virginia. Workgroup members, who work in various sectors of the adolescent substance use system of care, participated in a 90-minute facilitated meeting in which existing regional resources were discussed, as well as what resources may be needed to support implementation (see the following pages). To supplement the resource needs identified by the experts, OMNI conducted background research to identify best practices for implementing the selected strategies. This document provides a summary of the implementation planning meetings and outlines the resource needs and recommendations for each strategy area.

## How to Use this Guide

The purpose of this guide is to offer a simple, straightforward set of recommendations that can be used by organizations, local governments, or other regional partners to transform the substance use system of care in Central Virginia. Ensuring the successful implementation of each listed strategy requires adaptation to the region's specific needs. Additionally, ensuring community and provider buy-in, as well as sustainable resources and funding streams, are key to the success of the strategic plan. Therefore, this guide is written to be broadly applicable to a changing landscape as funding and programs shift in time or by location.

This guide focuses on the three main strategies identified by the Central Virginia working group. These strategies are:



**Increase access to care by placing qualified behavioral health providers in school settings**



**Implement an evidence-based peer recovery support model to strengthen the likelihood of long-term recovery**



**Increase access to medication-assisted treatment and opioid overdose reversal drugs to reduce the potential for fatal overdoses in youth**

On the following pages, each of these strategies is further broken down into key steps for implementation. Then, we outline the existing resources in Central Virginia that are relevant to that strategy, the gaps identified by the experts in the working group, best practice recommendations to keep in mind throughout implementation, and existing or developing efforts within the region or elsewhere in the Commonwealth that could serve as a model or provide support to the development of services in the region.



This section provides an overview of the identified resources and needs for implementation. Please note that new needs may be identified during the implementation process. These needs were identified through facilitated discussion with regional working group members as well as through background research into best practices for each of the selected strategy areas.

## Availability of Qualified Providers in School Settings

The following steps were identified as key steps in the implementation of this strategy for Central Virginia:

1. **Conduct an environmental scan of current school-based providers**
2. **Convene a workgroup to build buy-in for school-based services**
3. **Develop an incentive program to recruit providers**



### Existing Resources Identified

- ✓ Hanover Public Schools follows a substance use prevention model and has intervention counselors that provide intervention and prevention services to middle and high schools
- ✓ Chesterfield County has developed Chesterfield Recovery Academy for students in Region 1 to support youth in early recovery from substance use and ensure the successful completion of their high school education
- ✓ Hanover County is currently considering developing a recovery classroom in one of its juvenile detention facilities
- ✓ In 2024, [The Right Help Right Now](#) plan has designated \$15 million to expand mental health programs in elementary, middle, and high schools and \$9 million to expand tele-behavioral health programs in public schools and on college campuses



### Resource Needs Identified

- ⚠ Funds are needed to ensure the development and expansion of school-based providers and programs
- ⚠ There is a need to hire specialized school-based providers, rather than requiring school counselors who may not have the bandwidth or qualifications to engage in substance use disorder-related services
- ⚠ Language assistance and translation services for materials are crucial in ensuring access to care

### Relevant Best Practice Recommendations for Implementation

- *Facilitate care coordination and electronic record connections between school-based and community providers*
- *Ensure proper space and facilities within schools to support school-based service*
- *Identify student needs to determine staffing and program requirements*
- *Develop funding channels that draw upon state and county funds, as well as billing resources, such as Medicaid*
- *Evaluate school-based services to determine effectiveness and program expansion needs*
- *Train staff on assessment and intervention tools, such as the Youth Screening, Brief Intervention and Referral to Treatment (ySBIRT) approach*
- *Utilize funding streams, such as opioid settlement dollars and Commonwealth funds, to support the development and expansion of school-based services*



# Implement an Evidence-Based Peer Recovery Support Model

The following steps were identified as key steps in the implementation of this strategy for Central Virginia:

1. **Identify existing youth peer support services in the region**
2. **Identify organizational readiness to implement adolescent peer support**



## Existing Resources Identified

- ✓ Chesterfield Recovery Academy has been able to engage with young adult peer recovery specialists through Recovery Corps (a peer support specialist and resource navigation group)
- ✓ DBHDS currently conducts an adult peer recovery training program and is considering piloting a youth-based program in 2025
- ✓ Virginia Commonwealth University's (VCU) [Rams in Recovery](#) program conducts Recovery Ally training to support stigma reduction efforts
- ✓ VCU Rams in Recovery program has a wide range of services that may be extended to adolescents
- ✓ The [National Family Support Technical Assistance Center](#) provides an eight-hour training on becoming a family peer specialist
- ✓ Region 10 CSB implements the strategy *Teen Intervene* which incorporates Y-SBIRT approach and could serve as a model for services in other areas
- ✓ DBHDS has approved a peer partnership curriculum to aid in the training of peer recovery specialists



## Resource Needs Identified

- ⚠ The state/region is lacking a formalized program to train local young adults on being peer support specialists for youth
- ⚠ Community education needs to involve more people in recovery to normalize the recovery process
- ⚠ More providers, including pediatricians and general practitioners, need to be trained on adolescent substance use to increase comfort in referrals to recovery programming

## Relevant Best Practice Recommendations for Implementation

- *Develop a formal training program to train youth and young adults to become peer support specialists*
- *Ensure that resources are in place to support the professional development and emotional well-being of peer support specialists*
- *Develop a mentorship program for peer support specialists that pairs them with a more senior peer support specialist that helps them navigate their role*
- *Create a peer advisory council to provide oversight and guidance for peer support specialists and peer programming*
- *Promote connection and collaboration between peers and local services to support warm handoffs and referrals*
- *Develop a telephone or virtual support network to increase the hours of availability between peers and youth*
- *Create an evaluation framework that includes evaluation tools, data collection and storage procedures, and a data analysis plan to continually ensure the effectiveness of the programming*



# Increase Access to Medication-Assisted Treatment and Overdose Reversal Drugs

The following steps were identified as key steps in the implementation of this strategy for Central Virginia:

1. **Conduct a landscape analysis to identify services and providers for medication for opioid use disorder**
2. **Collect data from providers and harm reduction staff to understand barriers to treatment for youth**
3. **Maintain collaboration with providers and organizations to reduce barriers to services**



## Existing Resources Identified

- ✓ Narcan has been widely distributed by Community Service Boards to local school systems
- ✓ Community Service Boards have certified Narcan trainers that offer training to the public free of charge
- ✓ Vivitrol has been receiving increased support from prescribers as a method to treat adolescent substance use
- ✓ The Hanover Opioid Taskforce will begin providing naloxone by mail in January 2025 to help reduce fatal overdoses in the county
- ✓ [Senate Bill 726](#), passed in January 2024, requires school boards to develop and implement a plan to stock naloxone in all public schools around the state



## Resource Needs Identified

- ⚠ There is an additional need to offer other withdrawal support tools, such as nicotine lozenges
- ⚠ Greater education for the public and providers is needed to increase support for medication-assisted treatment and opioid overdose reversal medications

## Relevant Best Practice Recommendations for Implementation

- *Develop policies aimed at supporting pediatricians and other providers in prescribing and administering medications for opioid use disorder*
- *Provide education to providers to increase awareness of adolescent opioid use disorder and support screening and intervention for active opioid use*
- *Increase funding for the purchasing and supplying of opioid overdose reversal medication in areas frequented by youth (e.g., schools, shopping areas, libraries)*
- *Develop standardized procedures to assess patient progress*
- *Enhance adolescent mental health services to support mental health treatment alongside the administration of medications to treat opioid use disorder*
- *Establish continuity of care networks to support adolescents in treatment in situations where provider or billing coverage may change*
- *Develop case management structures and processes to ensure the successful completion of treatment protocols*

This implementation guide, alongside the previous capacity assessment and strategic planning documents, provides an outline for strengthening the adolescent substance use systems of care within the Central region of Virginia. These plans reflect guidance by local experts and best practices in substance use care. As the adolescent substance use landscape is continually changing, it is important to regularly assess regional needs and tailor programming and approaches to account for the needs of youth.



# Youth Substance Use Implementation Guide: Virginia Statewide



## Project Background

In 2022, the Office of Child and Family Services (OCFS) contracted with OMNI Institute to conduct a needs assessment of adolescent substance use services across Virginia. The assessment results, which included primary and secondary data, highlighted the need for a capacity assessment and strategic planning process to transform the substance use system of care for Virginia adolescents and their families. In partnership with OCFS, OMNI began that process in March of 2023. During that time, OMNI has facilitated six working groups (one for each DBHDS region and one made up of state-level agency representatives) to complete the capacity assessment process, which highlighted the strengths, gaps, and barriers for each region and the state as a whole. The capacity assessment was followed by a strategic planning process with each group, which identified the key areas for change across each region and the state.

Needs Assessment



Capacity Assessment



Strategic Plan



Implementation Plan

To better understand what is needed to successfully implement the regional adolescent substance use strategic plans, OMNI consulted the working groups in each region of Virginia. Workgroup members, who work in various sectors of the adolescent substance use system of care, participated in a 90-minute facilitated meeting in which existing regional resources were discussed, as well as what resources may be needed to support implementation (see the following pages). To supplement the resource needs identified by the experts, OMNI conducted background research to identify best practices for implementing the selected strategies. This document provides a summary of the implementation planning meetings and outlines the resource needs and recommendations for each strategy area.

## How to Use this Guide

The purpose of this guide is to offer a simple, straightforward set of recommendations that can be used by organizations, local governments, or other regional partners to transform the substance use system of care in Virginia. Ensuring the successful implementation of each listed strategy requires adaptation to the state's specific needs. Additionally, ensuring community and provider buy-in, as well as sustainable resources and funding streams, are key to the success of the strategic plan. Therefore, this guide is written to be broadly applicable to a changing landscape as funding and programs shift in time or by location.

This guide focuses on the three main strategies identified by the Statewide Virginia working group. These strategies are:



**Strengthen the workforce through innovative recruitment and retention strategies**




**Expand school-based comprehensive health clinics to all regions**



**Implement an evidence-based peer recovery support model in each region**

On the following pages, each of these strategies is further broken down into key steps for implementation. Then, we outline the existing resources in Virginia that are relevant to that strategy, the gaps identified by the experts in the working group, best practice recommendations to keep in mind throughout implementation, and existing or developing efforts within the region or elsewhere in the Commonwealth that could serve as a model or provide support to the development of services in the region.



This section provides an overview of the identified resources and needs for the implementation of the statewide strategic plan. These needs were identified through facilitated discussion with regional working group members as well as through background research into best practices for each of the selected strategy areas. Please note that new needs may be identified during the implementation process.

## Strengthen the Workforce Through Recruitment and Retention Strategies

The following steps were identified as key steps in the implementation of this strategy for Virginia:

1. **Conduct a survey of providers to identify retention needs across the state**
2. **Develop a streamlined service delivery training system for providers**
3. **Develop an incentive program to aid in recruitment and retention of service providers**
4. **Create a technical assistance (TA) support system to aid the adolescent substance use service provider workforce with their needs**



### Existing Resources Identified

- ✓ DBHDS conducted a workforce engagement survey several years ago to understand the needs of the workforce
- ✓ DBHDS has provided clinical supervision for mental health professionals providing substance use services, allowing them to pursue state licensure (i.e., LCPC or LCSW)
- ✓ American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) funds are being used to coordinate technical assistance and training to support the workforce
- ✓ The Virginia Department of Medicaid Assistance Services (DMAS) and the Department of Behavioral Health and Developmental Services (DBHDS) are working together as a part of a Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) collaborative to address adolescent substance use disorder needs
- ✓ [Youth Mental Health Corps](#) is a program within AmeriCorps that is focused on enabling people to receive training as a behavioral health technician prior to obtaining their master's degree
- ✓ [VCU's Center for Evidence-Based Partnerships](#) is tracking evidence-based mental health practitioners and could expand to substance use providers



### Resource Needs Identified

- ⚠ There is a need to ensure that compensation rates are increased for services outside of direct treatment as recovery and prevention compensation can be low
- ⚠ There is a need to emphasize loan repayment and remote work opportunities to increase retainment options

### Relevant Best Practice Recommendations for Implementation

- *Assess exit survey information being gathered by providers and service Boards in collaboration with local, regional, and state providers to aid in understanding the greatest retention needs statewide*
- *Continue to provide retention and training support services, such as clinical supervision, at the state level to help retain providers of clinical services*
- *Establish a recruitment consortium that can aid in identifying and pooling recruitment and retainment resources*
- *Expand recruitment pathways through state universities to develop a local workforce*
- *Develop work experience opportunities and financial support for high school and college students including internships, scholarships, loan forgiveness, and matching programs*
- *Expand flexible work options to accommodate in-person, remote, and hybrid workplace models*



## Expand School-Based Health Clinics to All Regions

The following steps were identified as key steps in the implementation of this strategy for Virginia:

1. **Conduct an environmental scan to identify current school-based health clinics and determine regional needs and capacity to grow substance use services in schools**
2. **Convene a working group of professionals to work with school and district leadership to establish buy-in for school-based services**
3. **Assess readiness for implementation across schools/school districts and identify areas of need**
4. **Recruit and retain personnel for school-based clinics**
5. **Provide comprehensive substance use training to school staff**



### Existing Resources Identified

- ✓ Virginia is working with some schools across the state to create and expand mental health clinics and is funding them as federally qualified health centers
- ✓ DBHDS has provided some initial funding and infrastructure to aid in developing and expanding school-based health clinics
- ✓ Virginia is evaluating children's mental health rehabilitative services to identify what resources are currently available and what licensing requirements are needed to expand services
- ✓ In 2024, the [Right Help Right Now](#) plan has designated \$15 million to expand the mental health program in elementary, middle, and high schools and \$9 million to expand tele-behavioral health programs in public schools and on college campuses



### Resource Needs Identified

- ⚠ Short-term funding is available to assist in the development of health services, but long-term funding streams need to be developed

### Relevant Best Practice Recommendations for Implementation

- *Conduct an assessment of the existing school-based health clinics to determine regional needs and identify current resource streams*
- *Evaluate the policy landscape in Virginia to determine the need for expansion of policies to support school-based health clinics*
- *Identify statewide and regional sponsors that can aid in establishing clinics and hiring qualified staff members*
- *Collaborate with schools who have identified needs to determine whether existing facilities can support a health clinic*
- *Identify existing funding streams and leverage billing options such as Medicaid*
- *Engage with school leadership and staff to establish buy-in and develop processes for the identification and referral of students in need*
- *Publicize the developed health clinics so that students and families are aware of their service offerings*

# Implement an Evidence-Based Peer Recovery Support Model in Each Region

The following steps were identified as key steps in the implementation of this strategy for Virginia:

1. **Identify existing youth peer support services available across Virginia**
2. **Conduct a literature review to identify best practices in youth peer support and identify existing evidence-based models**
3. **Identify state and organizational readiness to implement adolescent peer support services in new and existing programs**



## Existing Resources Identified

- ✓ One-time funds are being provided to three CSBs for peer services
- ✓ DBHDS is generating funds to support twenty peer individuals across twenty CSBs for 2025
- ✓ DBHDS has approved a peer partnership curriculum to aid in the training of peer recovery specialists
- ✓ VCU [Rams in Recovery](#) and other collegiate recovery programs could serve as models and partners for expanding peer support services and increasing social connections among those in recovery



## Resource Needs Identified

- ⚠ Organizational and state readiness needs to be assessed using evidence-based assessment tools prior to implementing an adolescent peer recovery program
- ⚠ One organization, team, or individual should take ownership and spearhead the identification of state challenges associated with adolescent programs

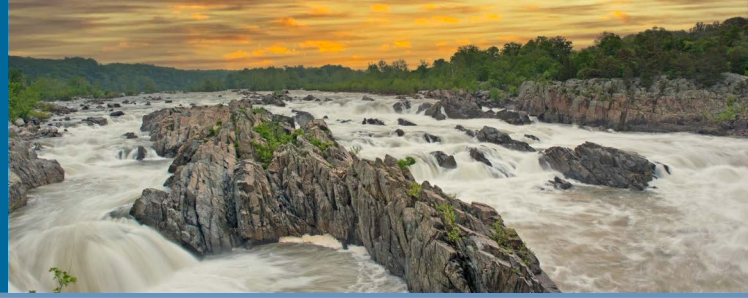
## Relevant Best Practice Recommendations for Implementation

- *Develop a formal training and certification program to train youth and young adults on becoming peer support specialists*
- *Ensure that resources are in place to support the professional development and emotional well-being of peer support specialists*
- *Develop a mentorship program for peer support specialists that pairs them with a more senior peer support specialist to help them navigate their role*
- *Create a peer advisory council to provide oversight and guidance for peer support specialists and peer programming*
- *Promote connection and collaboration between the peers and local services to support warm handoffs and referrals*
- *Develop a telephone or virtual support network to increase the hours of availability between peers and youth*
- *Create an evaluation framework which includes evaluation tools, data collection and storage procedures, and a data analysis plan to continually ensure the effectiveness of the programming*

This implementation guide, alongside the previous capacity assessment and strategic planning documents, provides an outline for strengthening the adolescent substance use systems of care within the Commonwealth of Virginia. These plans reflect guidance by local experts and best practices in substance use care. As the adolescent substance use landscape is continually changing, it is important to regularly assess regional needs and tailor programming and approaches to account for the needs of youth.



# Youth Substance Use Implementation Guide: Northern Virginia



## Project Background

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Needs Assessment



Capacity Assessment



Strategic Plan



Implementation Plan

To better understand what is needed to successfully implement the regional adolescent substance use strategic plans, OMNI consulted the working groups in each region of Virginia. Workgroup members, who work in various sectors of the adolescent substance use system of care, participated in a 90-minute facilitated meeting in which existing regional resources were discussed, as well as what resources may be needed to support implementation (see the following pages). To supplement the resource needs identified by the experts, OMNI conducted background research to identify best practices for implementing the selected strategies. This document provides a summary of the implementation planning meetings and outlines the resource needs and recommendations for each strategy area.

## How to Use this Guide

The purpose of this guide is to offer a simple, straightforward set of recommendations that can be used by organizations, local governments, or other regional partners to transform the substance use system of care in Northern Virginia. Ensuring the successful implementation of each listed strategy requires adaptation to the region's specific needs. Additionally, ensuring community and provider buy-in, as well as sustainable resources and funding streams, are key to the success of the strategic plan. Therefore, this guide is written to be broadly applicable to a changing landscape as funding and programs shift in time or by location.

This guide focuses on the three main strategies identified by the Northern Virginia working group. These strategies are:



**Develop a system for organizations to share and access real-time information about treatment service availability**



**Identify and implement the use of a culturally responsive resource hub for care coordination**



**Design a culturally responsive and comprehensive prevention plan**

On the following pages, each of these strategies is further broken down into key steps for implementation. Then, we outline the existing resources in Northern Virginia that are relevant to that strategy, the gaps identified by the experts in the working group, best practice recommendations to keep in mind throughout implementation, and existing or developing efforts within the region or elsewhere in the Commonwealth that could serve as a model or provide support to the development of services in the region.



This section provides an overview of the identified resources and needs for implementation of the strategic plan for Northern Virginia. Please note that new needs may be identified during the implementation process. These needs were identified through facilitated discussion with regional working group members as well as through background research into best practices for each of the selected strategy areas.

## Develop a Service Availability Database

The following steps were identified as key steps in the implementation of this strategy for Northern Virginia:

1. **Conduct an environmental scan to identify treatment providers in Northern Virginia**
2. **Convene a consortium of treatment providers to work toward a unified service availability directory**



### Existing Resources Identified

- ✓ The [Virginia Mental Health Access Program](#) (VMAP) has infrastructure designed for families and primary care providers and could serve as a model to connect with substance use experts to support care coordination
- ✓ Healthy Minds Fairfax was recently awarded funds to develop a care navigation assistance tool and increased access to medications for opioid use disorder
- ✓ The [Curb the Crisis Campaign](#) provides a model where people can enter their zip code to find treatment and recovery options near them; [FindTreatment.gov](#) also provides a resource to find treatment
- ✓ Loudoun County Health and Human Services share substance use services and resources for REVIVE: Opioid Overdose Reversal Training and Fentanyl



### Resource Needs Identified

- ⚠ Increased funding streams (e.g. expanded Medicaid, opioid settlement dollars) are needed to support the growth and development of care access
- ⚠ More adolescent-focused service providers are needed in the region to support care navigation and increase access to care
- ⚠ Pediatricians and other youth-focused providers need further training on substance use to increase buy-in for referrals

### Relevant Best Practice Recommendations for Implementation

- *Consult existing programs, such as VMAP, to identify the potential for program expansion to support provision of substance use services*
- *Identify an organization that will be tasked with developing the service availability database*
- *Create a service availability reporting system which includes standardized reporting processes for organizations and a central database to store service information*
- *Develop a public-facing webpage to house real-time service availability information as well as contact information for available services*
- *Develop a technical assistance team to support the real-time submission of service data*



# Implement a Culturally Responsive Resource Hub for Care Coordination

The following steps were identified as key steps in the implementation of this strategy for Northern Virginia:

1. Convene a workgroup of partners to identify resources for the support and development of a resource hub
2. Develop a telephone- and online-based system that connects providers and families with adolescent substance use experts and care navigation services
3. Generate recurring funding streams that support the hiring and retention of care navigators and consultants



## Existing Resources Identified

- ✓ Northern Virginia Family Services have resource navigators that aid in connecting individuals in need to services
- ✓ Some schools in Northern Virginia have care coordinators staffed in the schools to support youth with substance use and mental health needs
- ✓ [Fairfax Prevention Coalition](#) has a 'general resources' page on its website as well as a 'regional resources' page
- ✓ [George Mason University's Student Support and Advocacy Center](#) provides services to university students and connects them with local resources outside of the university as well
- ✓ The [Curb the Crisis Campaign](#) provides a model where people can enter their zip code to find treatment and recovery options near them, [FindTreatment.gov](#) also provides a resource to find treatment



## Resource Needs Identified

- ⚠ More connections need to be made between schools and providers to support warm handoffs
- ⚠ First responders, including EMTs, fire departments, and the police need further education on substance use disorder services and warm handoffs
- ⚠ More funding, potentially through expanding Medicaid, is needed to support the development of a resource hub as well as care coordinator positions
- ⚠ The information available on the state and local government websites needs to be expanded and made clearer to families who are seeking services, resources, and support

## Relevant Best Practice Recommendations for Implementation

- Identify an agency that will maintain ownership over the system and its implementation
- Assess how existing services, such as the [Virginia Mental Health Access Program](#) (VMAP), can be expanded or leveraged as a model to support adolescent substance use service provision
- Develop a sustainability plan to ensure ongoing funding of care coordination services
- Develop standard operating procedures for care referral and reporting of service availability to the system
- Hire and train employees to staff the resource hub database and support warm handoffs to service providers
- Increase community awareness of the database through public education campaigns



# Develop a Culturally Responsive Comprehensive Prevention Plan

The following steps were identified as key steps in the implementation of this strategy for Northern Virginia:

1. Ensure that service providers across the continuum of care receive ongoing training regarding adolescent substance use with a focus on prevention and identification of risk factors
2. Identify and implement an upstream prevention curriculum designed for youth
3. Educate caregivers on youth substance use prevention



## Existing Resources Identified

- ✓ Several cross-agency prevention coalitions already exist in Northern Virginia including the [Fairfax Prevention Coalition](#) and the [Substance Abuse Prevention Coalition of Alexandria \(SAPCA\)](#)
- ✓ Primary healthcare providers and school districts are invested in strengthening youth prevention
- ✓ Strong data exists on youth substance use in Northern Virginia which can support prevention prioritization
- ✓ Alexandria City Public Schools provides substance use prevention and early intervention for schools k-12 including screenings, assessments, early intervention, case management, etc.
- ✓ Through DBHDS, Virginia has done some focused prevention efforts aimed at addressing adolescent marijuana usage using the Adolescent Community Reinforcement Approach (ACRA)
- ✓ The [VA Foundation for Healthy Youth \(VFHY\)](#) provides funding opportunities and a resource hub (e.g., lesson plans). They provide classroom-based prevention programs in public schools, after-school programs, and other community spaces and support prevention marketing campaigns
- ✓ Training on Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs) has begun around the state. More information is available [through VDH](#) and [DBHDS' Office of Behavioral Health Wellness](#)



## Resource Needs Identified

- ⚠ More efforts need to be made to increase school boards' support for prevention efforts in schools
- ⚠ Prevention planning needs to be comprehensive and include the entire family unit alongside the youth
- ⚠ Greater access to school substance use data is necessary to identify prevention needs within schools
- ⚠ All prevention planning must be culturally responsive to ensure buy-in from youth and families

## Relevant Best Practice Recommendations for Implementation

- *Assess the local adolescent substance use needs and identify the greatest risk and protective factors underlying substance use within the region*
- *Engage local community coalitions, service providers, and organizations to develop a prevention team*
- *Identify interventions that are feasible to the existing care system and support programs that provide culturally-specific services*
- *Monitor and evaluate the prevention strategies to identify strengths and areas for improvement*
- *Gather feedback from youth, families, and providers to better understand how prevention efforts can be made more culturally relevant*

This implementation guide, alongside the previous capacity assessment and strategic planning documents, provides an outline for strengthening the adolescent substance use systems of care within the Northern region of Virginia. These plans reflect guidance by local experts and best practices in substance use care. As the adolescent substance use landscape is continually changing, it is important to regularly assess regional needs and tailor programming and approaches to account for the needs of youth.



# Youth Substance Use Implementation Guide: Southwest Virginia



## Project Background

In 2022, the Office of Child and Family Services (OCFS) contracted with OMNI Institute to conduct a needs assessment of adolescent substance use services across Virginia. The assessment results, which included primary and secondary data, highlighted the need for a capacity assessment and strategic planning process to transform the substance use system of care for Virginia adolescents and their families. In partnership with OCFS, OMNI began that process in March of 2023. During that time, OMNI has facilitated six working groups (one for each DBHDS region and one made up of state-level agency representatives) to complete the capacity assessment process, which highlighted the strengths, gaps, and barriers for each region and the state as a whole. The capacity assessment was followed by a strategic planning process with each group, which identified the key areas for change across each region and the state.

Needs Assessment



Capacity Assessment



Strategic Plan



Implementation Plan

To better understand what is needed to successfully implement the regional adolescent substance use strategic plans, OMNI consulted the working groups in each region of Virginia. Workgroup members, who work in various sectors of the adolescent substance use system of care, participated in a 90-minute facilitated meeting in which existing regional resources were discussed, as well as what resources may be needed to support implementation (see the following pages). To supplement the resource needs identified by the experts, OMNI conducted background research to identify best practices for implementing the selected strategies. This document provides a summary of the implementation planning meetings and outlines the resource needs and recommendations for each strategy area.

## How to Use this Guide

The purpose of this guide is to offer a simple, straightforward set of recommendations that can be used by organizations, local governments, or other regional partners to transform the substance use system of care in Southwest Virginia. Ensuring the successful implementation of each listed strategy requires adaptation to the region's specific needs. Additionally, ensuring community and provider buy-in, as well as sustainable resources and funding streams, are key to the success of the strategic plan. Therefore, this guide is written to be broadly applicable to a changing landscape as funding and programs shift in time or by location.

This guide focuses on the three main strategies identified by the Southwestern Virginia working group. These strategies are:



**Implement an evidence-based prevention curriculum designed for youth**



**Develop a regionally relevant media campaign to reduce stigma**



**Increase access to treatment**

On the following pages, each of these strategies is further broken down into key steps for implementation. Then, we outline the existing resources in Southwestern Virginia that are relevant to that strategy, the gaps identified by the experts in the working group, best practice recommendations to keep in mind throughout implementation, and existing or developing efforts within the region or elsewhere in the Commonwealth that could serve as a model or provide support to the development of services in the region.



This section provides an overview of the identified resources and needs for the implementation of the strategic plan for Southwestern Virginia. Please note that new needs may be identified during the implementation process. These needs were identified through facilitated discussion with regional working group members as well as through background research into best practices for each of the selected strategy areas.

## Implement an Evidence-Based Prevention Curriculum Designed for Youth

The following steps were identified as key steps in the implementation of this strategy for Southwestern Virginia:

1. **Convene a working group to work with school/district leadership to establish buy-in for school-based prevention**
2. **Identify an evidence-based prevention curriculum that would meet the needs of the region**
3. **Implement the evidence-based prevention curriculum in schools and regularly assess the impact of the curriculum**



### Existing Resources Identified

- ✓ Some middle schools and high schools in Southwestern Virginia have implemented evidence-based prevention education which may serve as a basis for replication or expansion
- ✓ Local organizations receive training on Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs) which can be expanded to CSBs, families, local hospitals, and HeadStart. More information is available through the Virginia Department of Health and DBHDS' Office of Behavioral Health Wellness
- ✓ Through DBHDS, Virginia has done some focused prevention efforts aimed at addressing adolescent marijuana usage using the Adolescent Community Reinforcement Approach (ACRA)
- ✓ CSBs in the region already provide prevention trainings and programs at no cost. One example is Mount Rogers CSB who implements Family Empowerment, REVIVE!, Mental Health First Aid, Adverse Childhood Experiences, and Strengthening Families.
- ✓ The VA Foundation for Healthy Youth (VFHY) provides funding opportunities and a resource hub (e.g., lesson plans). They provide classroom-based prevention programs in public schools, after-school programs, and other community spaces and support prevention marketing campaigns
- ✓ Rural Health Information Hub has information on prevention programs for youth and families in rural areas of the region



### Resource Needs Identified

- ⚠ More after-school programs are needed to ensure that youth are consistently receiving prevention messaging
- ⚠ Prevention education needs to start being implemented in elementary schools to strengthen the messaging throughout their time in grade school

### Relevant Best Practice Recommendations for Implementation

- *Assess local substance use needs and identify the greatest regional risk and protective factors*
- *Communities That Care provides free materials on assessing needs in the community*
- *Data on substance use trends can be found on the Virginia Social Indicator Summary (VASIS) Dashboard*
- *Coordinate county and city officials to conduct a request for proposals for organizations to submit proposals for evidence-based prevention curriculum*
- *Convene a working group of community organizations, service providers, and community members to aid in growing school and community buy-in for programming*
- *Monitor and evaluate the impact of the curriculum on adolescent substance use and related harms*
- *Gather feedback from youth, families, and providers to better understand how prevention efforts can be improved to meet the needs of youth in Southwestern Virginia*



# Develop a Regionally Relevant Media Campaign to Reduce Stigma

The following steps were identified as key steps in the implementation of this strategy for Southwestern Virginia:

1. Design a campaign that considers the unique regional dynamics of Southwestern Virginia
2. Organize and host community workshops and events that provide education about substance use
3. Develop sub-region learning collaboratives to promote prevention and stigma reduction
4. Partner with local providers and community organizations to increase community outreach



## Existing Resources Identified

- ✓ The Appalachian Substance Abuse Coalition (ASAC) brings together ten substance use coalitions in Southwestern Virginia with the goal of reducing substance use and increasing access to care and may serve as a platform for sharing anti-stigma messaging
- ✓ ASAC holds meetings every other month to bring together prevention, treatment, and recovery specialists to discuss area needs and build awareness of services and resources
- ✓ Strong relationships have been built between local and regional service providers and organizations
- ✓ Prevention Technology Transfer Center (PTTC) has developed an [anti-stigma tool kit](#) for Virginia and other states in the region which can be used as a starting point
- ✓ [Youth MOVE \(Motivating Others through Voices of Experiences\) VA](#) serves youth in Virginia statewide and seeks to empower youth who have experienced substance use and adverse childhood experiences to share their stories of navigating systems of care
- ✓ Collaborating with local coalitions may help engage partner organizations to support the implementation of prevention strategies. One example coalition in the region is the [Roanoke Area Youth Substance Abuse Coalition](#), which has a range of partners such as law enforcement, health care, substance abuse treatment, and youth advocacy orgs, etc. that support the implementation of prevention strategies



## Resource Needs Identified

- ⚠ Funding is needed to promote the chosen media campaign, including funds for billboards, radio and television ads, and social media
- ⚠ There is a need for a communications expert to navigate the campaign promotion process and to support in developing campaign materials
- ⚠ The campaign needs to be conducted in partnership with local health departments to provide a unified anti-stigma message
- ⚠ Local media efforts need support from the state to increase buy-in and messaging outreach
- ⚠ Providers need more training on how to treat youth in a non-stigmatizing manner

## Relevant Best Practice Recommendations for Implementation

- Enlist local community organizations to support in developing and implementing the anti-stigma campaign
- Conduct a community assessment to identify existing perceptions and beliefs about adolescent substance use that could be incorporated into the anti-stigma campaign
- Involve community members in the development of the media campaign (e.g., written/spoken testimonials) to tie the campaign more closely to Southwestern Virginia
- Conduct a campaign rollout that is inclusive of media, community messaging, and school-based efforts
- Evaluate the impact of the media campaign by assessing providers and community members' perceptions of adolescent substance use and stigma





## Increase Access to Treatment

The following steps were identified as key steps in the implementation of this strategy for Southwestern Virginia:

1. **Conduct an environmental scan to determine ability to access services in Southwestern Virginia**
2. **Identify best practices to support the development of transportation services to improve access to care**
3. **Improve accessibility of provider locations by moving away from traditional office-based treatment settings**
4. **Reduce the costs of substance use treatment by working with providers to offer flexible payment options**



### Existing Resources Identified

- ✓ CSBs in the region have sliding scale fees to support uninsured or underinsured youth and their families
- ✓ CSBs have established strong provider networks to increase referral opportunities when services are unavailable
- ✓ In 2024, the [Right Help Right Now](#) plan has designated \$15 million to expand mental health programs in elementary, middle, and high schools and \$9 million to expand tele-behavioral health programs in public schools and on college campuses



### Resource Needs Identified

- ⚠ Transportation services, particularly those covered by Medicaid, are needed to support those who have inconsistent transportation
- ⚠ Services, such as mobile treatment, must be developed to reach youth and families in the more rural areas of the region
- ⚠ Care coordination is needed to support mobile treatment dispatch and referrals to services

### Relevant Best Practice Recommendations for Implementation

- *When updating or designing a new transportation program to support access to services, determine whether that program will function based on a flat fee, sliding scale, or free of charge or be funded through an existing program, like Medicaid*
- *Ensure sustainable funding sources to maintain the wages of transportation and clinic staff, support maintenance of vehicles, and purchase fuel*
- *Employ dispatch software to help facilitate the scheduling of rides to and from services*
- *Strengthen collaboration between local partners to support care coordination*
- *Develop impact-tracking efforts to identify areas in the region that are in need of further transportation or mobile clinic services*

This implementation guide, alongside the previous capacity assessment and strategic planning documents, provides an outline for strengthening the adolescent substance use systems of care within the Southwestern region of Virginia. These plans reflect guidance by local experts and best practices in substance use care. As the adolescent substance use landscape is continually changing, it is important to regularly assess regional needs and tailor programming and approaches to account for the needs of youth.



# Youth Substance Use Implementation Guide: Shenandoah Valley



## Project Background

In 2022, the Office of Child and Family Services (OCFS) contracted with OMNI Institute to conduct a needs assessment of adolescent substance use services across Virginia. The assessment results, which included primary and secondary data, highlighted the need for a capacity assessment and strategic planning process to transform the substance use system of care for Virginia adolescents and their families. In partnership with OCFS, OMNI began that process in March of 2023. During that time, OMNI has facilitated six working groups (one for each DBHDS region and one made up of state-level agency representatives) to complete the capacity assessment process, which highlighted the strengths, gaps, and barriers for each region and the state as a whole. The capacity assessment was followed by a strategic planning process with each group, which identified the key areas for change across each region and the state.

Needs Assessment



Capacity Assessment



Strategic Plan



Implementation Plan

To better understand what is needed to successfully implement the regional adolescent substance use strategic plans, OMNI consulted the working groups in each region of Virginia. Workgroup members, who work in various sectors of the adolescent substance use system of care, participated in a 90-minute facilitated meeting in which existing regional resources were discussed, as well as what resources may be needed to support implementation (see the following pages). To supplement the resource needs identified by the experts, OMNI conducted background research to identify best practices for implementing the selected strategies. This document provides a summary of the implementation planning meetings and outlines the resource needs and recommendations for each strategy area.

## How to Use this Guide

The purpose of this guide is to offer a simple, straightforward set of recommendations that can be used by organizations, local governments, or other regional partners to transform the substance use system of care in Shenandoah Valley Virginia. Ensuring the successful implementation of each listed strategy requires adaptation to the region's specific needs. Additionally, ensuring community and provider buy-in, as well as sustainable resources and funding streams, are key to the success of the strategic plan. Therefore, this guide is written to be broadly applicable to a changing landscape as funding and programs shift in time or by location.

This guide focuses on the three main strategies identified by the Shenandoah Valley working group. These strategies are:



**Increase the availability of qualified providers in accessible settings**



**Develop and implement a regionally relevant anti-stigma campaign**



**Implement evidence-based prevention curriculum designed for youth**

On the following pages, each of these strategies is further broken down into key steps for implementation. Then, we outline the existing resources in the Shenandoah Valley that are relevant to that strategy, the resource needs identified by the experts in the working groups, best practice recommendations to keep in mind throughout implementation, and existing or developing efforts within the region or elsewhere in the Commonwealth that could serve as a model or provide support to the development of services in the region.

This section provides an overview of the identified resources and needs for the implementation of the strategic plan for the Shenandoah Valley. Please note that new needs may be identified during the implementation process. These needs were identified through facilitated discussion with regional working group members as well as through background research into best practices for each of the selected strategy areas.

## Availability of Qualified Providers in Accessible Settings

The following steps were identified as key steps in the implementation of this strategy for the Shenandoah Valley:

1. **Conduct an environmental scan to determine the availability of qualified providers in accessible settings**
2. **Identify schools willing to participate in school-based services**
3. **Educate school-based personnel on Youth Screening, Brief Intervention, and Referral to Treatment (YSBIRT) and best practices for early screening**



### Existing Resources Identified

- ✓ Valley CSB has school-based clinicians in Staunton, Waynesboro, and Augusta
  - ✓ Clinicians within the schools are experienced in serving youth and more individuals are working to earn licensure to serve youth
- ✓ Some providers in the area have received training on the Youth Screening, Brief Intervention, and Referral to Treatment (YSBIRT) tool, but it is not widely known
- ✓ [Valley Health Shenandoah Memorial Hospital Implementation Strategy Plan](#) (2023-2025) outlines strategies that may be helpful to consider
- ✓ The [United Way of Northern Shenandoah Valley](#) focuses on increasing the organized capacity of ‘people to care for another’ and has community needs assessments and a resource hub. They may have partners that can support this
- ✓ In 2024, the [Right Help Right Now](#) plan has designated \$15 million to expand the mental health program in elementary, middle, and high schools and \$9 million to expand tele-behavioral health programs in public schools and on college campuses



### Resource Needs Identified

- ⚠ Increased funding and support is needed to strengthen education and licensure for providers
- ⚠ Ongoing training is needed to ensure that providers are aware of the latest adolescent substance use trends and care
- ⚠ More efforts need to be made to retain current service providers
- ⚠ More resources are needed to support collaboration on cases between service providers

### Relevant Best Practice Recommendations for Implementation

- *Facilitate care coordination and electronic record connections between school-based and community providers*
- *Develop funding channels that draw upon state and county funds, as well as billing resources, such as Medicaid*
- *Identify adolescent needs to determine staffing and program requirements*
- *Evaluate existing school-based resources to determine effectiveness and identify potential areas for growth*
- *Train school clinicians and community providers on assessment and intervention tools, such as YSBIRT*

# Develop and Implement a Regionally Relevant Anti-Stigma Campaign

The following steps were identified as key steps in the implementation of this strategy for the Shenandoah Valley:

1. **Design a campaign that considers the unique regional dynamics of Shenandoah Valley**
2. **Organize and host community workshops/events that provide education about substance use**
3. **Develop and disseminate guidance on person-first language**
4. **Partner with local providers and community organizations to increase community outreach**



## Existing Resources Identified

- ✓ Several community-based organizations in Shenandoah Valley serve teenagers of various demographic backgrounds
- ✓ Prevention Technology Transfer Center (PTTC) has developed an [anti-stigma tool kit](#) for Virginia and other states in the region which can be used as a starting point
- ✓ [Youth MOVE \(Motivating Others through Voices of Experiences\) VA](#) serves youth in Virginia statewide and seeks to empower youth who have experienced substance use and adverse childhood experiences to share their stories of navigating systems of care
- ✓ Collaborating with local coalitions may help engage partner organizations to support the implementation of prevention strategies. One example coalition in the region is the [Northern Shenandoah Valley Substance Abuse Coalition](#) which has a range of partners such as law enforcement, health care, substance abuse treatment, and youth advocacy orgs, etc. that support the implementation of prevention strategies



## Resource Needs Identified

- ⚠ There is a need to grow awareness in Shenandoah Valley of existing programs such as Youth MOVE VA
- ⚠ Further education needs to be provided to school officials about adolescent substance use and person-first language
- ⚠ Any new trainings for teachers and school staff need to be balanced with existing required in-service training

## Relevant Best Practice Recommendations for Implementation

- *Enlist local community organizations to support in developing and implementing the anti-stigma campaign*
- *Conduct a community assessment to identify existing perceptions and beliefs about adolescent substance use that could be incorporated into the anti-stigma campaign*
- *Involve community members in the development of the media campaign (e.g., written/spoken testimonials) to tie the campaign more closely to Southwestern Virginia*
- *Conduct a campaign rollout that is inclusive of media, community messaging, and school-based efforts*
- *Evaluate the impact of the media campaign by assessing providers and community members' perceptions of adolescent substance use and stigma*

# Implement an Evidence-Based Prevention Curriculum Designed for Youth

The following steps were identified as key steps in the implementation of this strategy for the Shenandoah Valley:

1. **Convene a working group of partners to work with school and district leadership to establish buy-in for school-based prevention programming**
2. **Identify evidence-based prevention curriculum that would meet the needs of the region**
3. **Implement evidence-based prevention curriculum in schools and regularly assess the impact of the curriculum**



## Existing Resources Identified

- ✓ Local organizations are already interested in implementing evidence-based prevention in schools
- ✓ Through DBHDS, Virginia has done some focused prevention efforts aimed at addressing adolescent marijuana usage using the Adolescent Community Reinforcement Approach (ACRA)
- ✓ The [VA Foundation for Healthy Youth \(VFHY\)](#) provides funding opportunities and a resource hub (e.g., lesson plans). They provide classroom-based prevention programs in public schools, after-school programs, and other community spaces and support prevention marketing campaigns
- ✓ Rural Health Information Hub has information on [prevention programs for youth and families](#) in rural areas of the region
- ✓ Local organizations have begun to receive training on Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs) which can be expanded to CSBs, families, local hospitals, and HeadStart. More information is available through the [Virginia Department of Health](#) and [DBHDS' Office of Behavioral Health Wellness](#)



## Resource Needs Identified

- ⚠ One organization needs to take ownership for building buy-in for implementation with schools and the community
- ⚠ The selected curriculum must use a long-term approach where it is implemented in elementary school and reiterated as students move into middle school and high school
- ⚠ Schools need more substance use and mental health providers that can aid in implementing the curriculum

## Relevant Best Practice Recommendations for Implementation

- *Assess the local adolescent substance use needs and identify the greatest risk and protective factors underlying substance use within the region*
  - [Communities That Care](#) provides free materials on assessing needs in the community.
  - Data on substance use trends can be found on the [Virginia Social Indicator Summary \(VASIS\) Dashboard](#)
- *Convene a working group of community organizations, service providers, and community members to aid in growing school and community buy-in for programming*
- *Coordinate county and city officials to conduct a request for proposals for organizations to submit proposals for an evidence-based prevention curriculum*
- *Monitor and evaluate the effectiveness of the prevention curriculum at reducing adolescent substance use and other related harms*
- *Gather feedback from youth, families, and providers to better understand how prevention efforts can be improved to meet the needs of youth in Shenandoah Valley*

This implementation guide, alongside the previous capacity assessment and strategic planning documents, provides an outline for strengthening the adolescent substance use systems of care within the Shenandoah Valley of Virginia. These plans reflect guidance by local experts and best practices in substance use care. As the adolescent substance use landscape is continually changing, it is important to regularly assess regional needs and tailor programming and approaches to account for the needs of youth.



# Youth Substance Use Implementation Guide: Eastern Virginia & Tidewater



## Project Background

In 2022, the Office of Child and Family Services (OCFS) contracted with OMNI Institute to conduct a needs assessment of adolescent substance use services across Virginia. The assessment results, which included primary and secondary data, highlighted the need for a capacity assessment and strategic planning process to transform the substance use system of care for Virginia adolescents and their families. In partnership with OCFS, OMNI began that process in March of 2023. During that time, OMNI has facilitated six working groups (one for each DBHDS region and one made up of state-level agency representatives) to complete the capacity assessment process, which highlighted the strengths, gaps, and barriers for each region and the state as a whole. The capacity assessment was followed by a strategic planning process with each group, which identified the key areas for change across each region and the state.

Needs Assessment



Capacity Assessment



Strategic Plan



Implementation Plan

To better understand what is needed to successfully implement the regional adolescent substance use strategic plans, OMNI consulted the working groups in each region of Virginia. Workgroup members, who work in various sectors of the adolescent substance use system of care, participated in a 90-minute facilitated meeting in which existing regional resources were discussed, as well as what resources may be needed to support implementation (see the following pages). To supplement the resource needs identified by the experts, OMNI conducted background research to identify best practices for implementing the selected strategies. This document provides a summary of the implementation planning meetings and outlines the resource needs and recommendations for each strategy area.

## How to Use this Guide

The purpose of this guide is to offer a simple, straightforward set of recommendations that can be used by organizations, local governments, or other regional partners to transform the substance use system of care in Eastern Virginia. Ensuring the successful implementation of each listed strategy requires adaptation to the region's specific needs. Additionally, ensuring community and provider buy-in, as well as sustainable resources and funding streams, are key to the success of the strategic plan. Therefore, this guide is written to be broadly applicable to a changing landscape as funding and programs shift in time or by location.

This guide focuses on the three main strategies identified by the Eastern Virginia and Tidewater working group. These strategies are:



**Develop a regionally relevant anti-stigma campaign**



**Implement an evidence-based prevention curriculum in schools**



**Create a regional resource hub for youth and families**

On the following pages, each of these strategies is further broken down into key steps for implementation. Then, we outline the existing resources in Eastern Virginia that are relevant to that strategy, the gaps identified by the experts in the working group, best practice recommendations to keep in mind throughout implementation, and existing or developing efforts within the region or elsewhere in the Commonwealth that could serve as a model or provide support to the development of services in the region.



This section provides an overview of the identified resources and needs for the implementation of the strategic plan for Eastern Virginia and Tidewater. Please note that new needs may be identified during the implementation process. These needs were identified through facilitated discussion with regional working group members as well as through background research into best practices for each of the selected strategy areas.

## Develop a Regionally Relevant Anti-Stigma Campaign

The following steps were identified as key steps in the implementation of this strategy for Eastern Virginia:

1. **Design a campaign that considers the unique regional dynamics of Eastern Virginia**
2. **Organize and host community workshops/events that provide education about substance use**
3. **Partner with local providers and community organizations to increase community outreach**



### Existing Resources Identified

- ✓ Local social services departments have been making efforts to reduce the stigma associated with substance use and the need for services
- ✓ Prescribers are more aware of the dangers of overprescribing and are engaging in more client education
- ✓ Prevention Technology Transfer Center (PTTC) has developed an [anti-stigma tool kit](#) for Virginia and other states in the region which can be used as a starting point
- ✓ [Youth MOVE \(Motivating Others through Voices of Experiences\) VA](#) serves youth in Virginia statewide and seeks to empower youth who have experienced substance use and adverse childhood experiences to share their stories of navigating systems of care
- ✓ Collaborating with local coalitions may help engage partner organizations to support the implementation of prevention strategies. One example coalition in the region is the [Norfolk Prevention Coalition](#), which has a range of partners such as law enforcement, health care, substance abuse treatment, and youth advocacy orgs, etc. that support the implementation of prevention strategies



### Resource Needs Identified

- ⚠ To grow support for stigma reduction efforts from communities of color, the workgroup identified a need to involve the local faith-based organizations and other community hubs in anti-stigma efforts
- ⚠ The campaign needs to be eye-catching and focused on providing information through multiple channels (e.g., television, radio, billboards, and social media) to gain buy-in with youth and families

### Relevant Best Practice Recommendations for Implementation

- *Enlist local community organizations to support in developing and implementing the anti-stigma campaign*
- *Conduct a community assessment to identify existing perceptions and beliefs about adolescent substance use that could be incorporated into the anti-stigma campaign*
- *Involve community members in the development of the media campaign (e.g., written/spoken testimonials) to tie the campaign more closely to Eastern Virginia*
- *Conduct a campaign rollout that is inclusive of media, community messaging, and school-based efforts*
- *Evaluate the impact of the media campaign by assessing providers and community members' perceptions of adolescent substance use and stigma*



# Implement an Evidence-Based Prevention Curriculum in Schools

The following steps were identified as key steps in the implementation of this strategy for Eastern Virginia:

1. **Convene a working group of partners to work with school and district leadership to establish buy-in for school-based prevention programming**
2. **Identify evidence-based prevention curriculum that would meet the needs of the region**
3. **Implement evidence-based prevention curriculum in schools and regularly assess the impact of the curriculum**



## Existing Resources Identified

- ✓ 2024 state budget allocations have provided \$30 million to support the expansion of school-based health clinics that will provide mental health services. An additional \$1.5 million have been allocated for the establishment of recovery high schools
- ✓ Local providers recognize the need for prevention-focused education at early ages
- ✓ Through DBHDS, Virginia has done some focused prevention efforts aimed at addressing adolescent marijuana usage using the Adolescent Community Reinforcement Approach (ACRA)
- ✓ The [VA Foundation for Healthy Youth \(VFHY\)](#) provides funding opportunities and a resource hub (e.g., lesson plans). They provide classroom-based prevention programs in public schools, after-school programs, and other community spaces and support prevention marketing campaigns.
- ✓ Rural Health Information Hub has information on [prevention programs for youth and families](#) in rural areas of the region
- ✓ Local organizations have begun to receive training on Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs) which can be expanded to CSBs, families, local hospitals, and HeadStart. More information is available through the [Virginia Department of Health](#) and [DBHDS' Office of Behavioral Health Wellness](#)



## Resource Needs Identified

- ! There is a need to increase buy-in with school leadership to add prevention education into the already full list of topics that schools are required to cover
- ! Ongoing efforts to engage school leadership should continue with the goal of getting them to acknowledge the substance use issue occurring in schools and get their buy-in for services in schools

## Relevant Best Practice Recommendations for Implementation

- *Assess the local adolescent substance use needs and identify the greatest risk and protective factors underlying substance use within the region*
- [Communities That Care](#) provides free materials on assessing needs in the community
- Data on substance use trends can be found on the [Virginia Social Indicator Summary \(VASIS\) Dashboard](#)
- *Convene a working group of community organizations, service providers, and community members to aid in growing school and community buy-in for programming*
- *Coordinate county and city officials to conduct a request for proposals for organizations to submit proposals for an evidence-based prevention curriculum*
- *Monitor and evaluate the effectiveness of the prevention curriculum at reducing adolescent substance use and other related harms*
- *Gather feedback from youth, families, and providers to better understand how prevention efforts can be improved to meet the needs of youth in Eastern Virginia*



# Create a Regional Resource Hub for Youth and Families

The following steps were identified as key steps in the implementation of this strategy for Eastern Virginia:

1. Convene a working group of partners to identify resources for support and development of a resource hub
2. Develop a telephone- and online-based system that connects providers and families with adolescent substance use experts and care navigation services
3. Generate recurring funding streams that support the hiring and retention of care navigators and consultants



## Existing Resources Identified

- ✓ Local providers engage in efforts to connect youth and families to care even if it falls outside of the scope of their services
- ✓ The [Curb the Crisis Campaign](#) provides a model where people can enter their zip code to find treatment and recovery options near them, [FindTreatment.gov](#) also provides a resource to find treatment
- ✓ Localities within Eastern Virginia have resource hubs that can provide a starting point for the development of a larger resource hub focused on youth substance use services
  - ✓ Greater Hampton Roads has a [Community Indicators Dashboard](#) that provides community data, information on initiatives, and community resources
  - ✓ The City of Virginia Beach [human services website](#) outlines available services, including trainings
- ✓ Hampton and Peninsula Health Districts support [Project LEAD](#) which provides naloxone training and distribution and referrals to other resources



## Resource Needs Identified

- ⚠ There is a need to develop virtual treatment and support options to increase the number of services available and reduce wait times for services
- ⚠ More information needs to be made available to families about the process for seeking and accessing treatment and other services

## Relevant Best Practice Recommendations for Implementation

- *Identify an agency that will maintain ownership over the resource hub and its implementation*
- *Assess how existing services, such as the Virginia Mental Health Access Program (VMAP), can be expanded or leveraged as a model to support adolescent substance use service provision*
- *Develop a sustainability plan to ensure ongoing funding of care coordination services*
- *Develop standard operating procedures for care referral and reporting of service availability to the system*
- *Hire and train employees to staff the resource hub database and support warm handoffs to service providers*
- *Increase community awareness of the database through public education campaigns*

This implementation guide, alongside the previous capacity assessment and strategic planning documents, provides an outline for strengthening the adolescent substance use systems of care within the Eastern region of Virginia. These plans reflect guidance by local experts and best practices in substance use care. As the adolescent substance use landscape is continually changing, it is important to regularly assess regional needs and tailor programming and approaches to account for the needs of youth.