

## Sussex County: Needs Assessment

Delaware is a small state, consisting of only three counties. Because it is a small state, the population tends, on average, to be fairly similar across all three counties both demographically and behaviorally. It is not unusual for a resident of the northern counties to travel to the beaches in the southernmost, and it is not unusual for a resident of the more rural southern counties to travel to events or appointments in the northernmost county. Many families in the northern counties own summer homes at the beaches in the southern county. Family members may live in one county and work in another. Two of the larger communities—Smyrna and Milford—are located on the boundary dividing two counties. Because of this interactive homogeneity, it frequently appears that there are not significant differences in behaviors or attitudes across the three counties. While differences may exist between specific communities and sub-populations within counties, differences are generally not significantly large between the counties as a whole. However, in some cases, there may be small differences, possibly not statistically significant in and of themselves, which occur consistently.

Much of the information found in this needs assessment is based on analyses of the 2012 Delaware School Survey (DSS), an anonymous youth survey administered annually in public school 5<sup>th</sup>, 8<sup>th</sup>, and 11<sup>th</sup> grade classrooms and supported by the Delaware Department of Health and Social Services Division of Substance Abuse and Mental Health and the State Health Fund, and the 2011 Delaware Youth Risk Behavior Survey (YRBS), which is based on and supported by the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention’s (CDC) biennial survey. Information pertaining to the adult population comes from another CDC sponsored survey, the Delaware Behavior Risk Factor Survey (BRFS), as well as from the National Survey of Drug Use and Health (NSDUH) and other data collected at the state and county level by the Delaware Drug and Alcohol Tracking Alliance (DDATA), supported by funds from the Strategic Prevention Framework-State Incentive Grant (SPF-SIG).

### The Environment:

Sussex is the southernmost county in Delaware, bordering on Maryland on the south and west, Pennsylvania and New Jersey (across the Delaware River) on the north and the Atlantic Ocean on the east. The population of Delaware is predominantly white (71.4%) with 22% Black, 9% Hispanic and 4% Asian, with a distribution of approximately 461 persons per square mile.

	STATE	KENT COUNTY	NEW CASTLE COUNTY	SUSSEX COUNTY
White	71%	69%	68%	<b>82%</b>
Black	22%	25%	25%	<b>13%</b>
Hispanic	9%	6%	9%	<b>9%</b>
Population density	461/sq. mi.	277/sq. mi.		<b>211/sq. mi.</b>
Under age 18	22%	24%	23%	<b>20%</b>
Bachelor’s Degree	28%	20%	33%	<b>22%</b>

Homeownership rate	73%	72%	70%	<b>80%</b>
Persons per household	2.6	2.7	2.6	<b>2.54</b>
Median household income (2007-2011)	\$59,317	\$54,783	\$64,158	<b>\$53,215</b>
Per capita income	\$29,659	\$24,374	\$31,988	<b>\$27,580</b>
Persons below poverty level (2007-2011)	11%	12%	11%	<b>12%</b>
Travel time to work	25 minutes	25 minutes	25 minutes	<b>24 minutes</b>

For U.S. Census purposes, all of Sussex County is included in the Seaford Micropolitan Statistical Area, with Seaford being the most populous city entirely within the boundaries of the county. It is the largest county in Delaware in area, at 938 square miles. It was first settled by Europeans in the early 1600's, having been previously inhabited by the Lenape and Nanticoke tribes, who continue to live in Kent and Sussex counties in the general populace as the tribes are not Federally recognized and have no land designated as theirs. While the western side of Sussex County is primarily rural and communities small and discrete, the eastern side abuts the Atlantic Ocean and is more heavily populated. The industry of west Sussex is primarily agricultural (Sussex County produces the most poultry of any county in the country), while the primary industry of eastern Sussex is tourism. Western Sussex is more conservative than most other regions of the state, while eastern Sussex is more liberal. Higher education options in Sussex County consist of a county branch of Delaware Technical and Community College and extensions of colleges and universities based elsewhere in the state—Wesley College, University of Delaware, Delaware State College, and Goldey-Beacom College. County governance is by County Council and County Administrator. There is also a county-wide Interagency Council with a diverse membership which meets to discuss emerging issues and resources which impact the population and their efforts to serve the population—this council holds no power, but is nevertheless a networking resource.

#### Adult Substance Use

According to the 2010 Behavior Risk Factor Survey, Sussex County adults are less likely to report drinking within the past 30 days (53%) than adults in New Castle County (64%), and are similar to adults in Kent County (50%). Kent County, like Sussex County, is predominantly rural, but differs in that it also contains the State capital and the Dover Air Base. Sussex County adults are also less likely to report binge drinking (17%) than New Castle County adults (21%) and more similar to Kent County (14%). Heavy drinking, defined as more than two drinks per day for a male and more than one for a female, is similar across all three counties (New Castle, 6%; Kent, 4%; and Sussex, 6%). Adults in Delaware

continue to drink over the life span—it is only after age 65 that less than half of Delawareans report having drunk in the past month. Binge drinking also persists. It is highest for 18-34 year olds, but even through age 54, one in five Delaware adults reports engaging in binge drinking in the past month. It can be noted that the highest rates of binge drinking occur during the ages when adults are most likely to be parenting and providing role models for their children.

Responses to the National Survey of Drug Use and Health for 2008-2010 also provide evidence that there may be slightly less substance use and abuse in Sussex County than in the other counties, although the differences may not be statistically significant.

<b>NSDUH Ages 12 and up</b>	<b>STATE</b>	<b>KENT COUNTY</b>	<b>NEW CASTLE COUNTY</b>	<b>SUSSEX COUNTY</b>	<b>Wilmington</b>
Past month cigarette use	25%	27%	23%	<b>27%</b>	28%
Past month alcohol use	31%	31%	33%	<b>29%</b>	25%
Past month binge alcohol use	21%	20%	23%	<b>19%</b>	16%
Past month use of illicit drugs	8%	8%	8%	<b>7%</b>	12%
Past month illicit drug use other than marijuana	4%	4%	4%	<b>3%</b>	5%
Past month marijuana use	7%	7%	7%	<b>6%</b>	10%
Past month cocaine use	2%	2%	2%	<b>2%</b>	2%
Past year non-medical use of pain relievers	5%	6%	5%	<b>5%</b>	5%

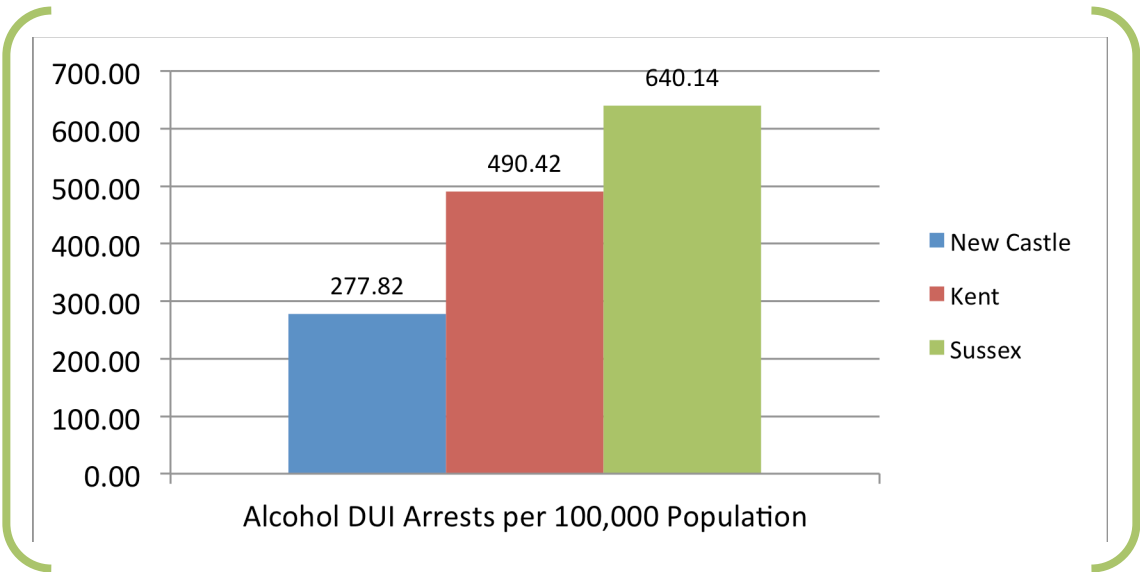
Indicators of abuse, dependence and need for treatment are also not significantly different for Sussex County.

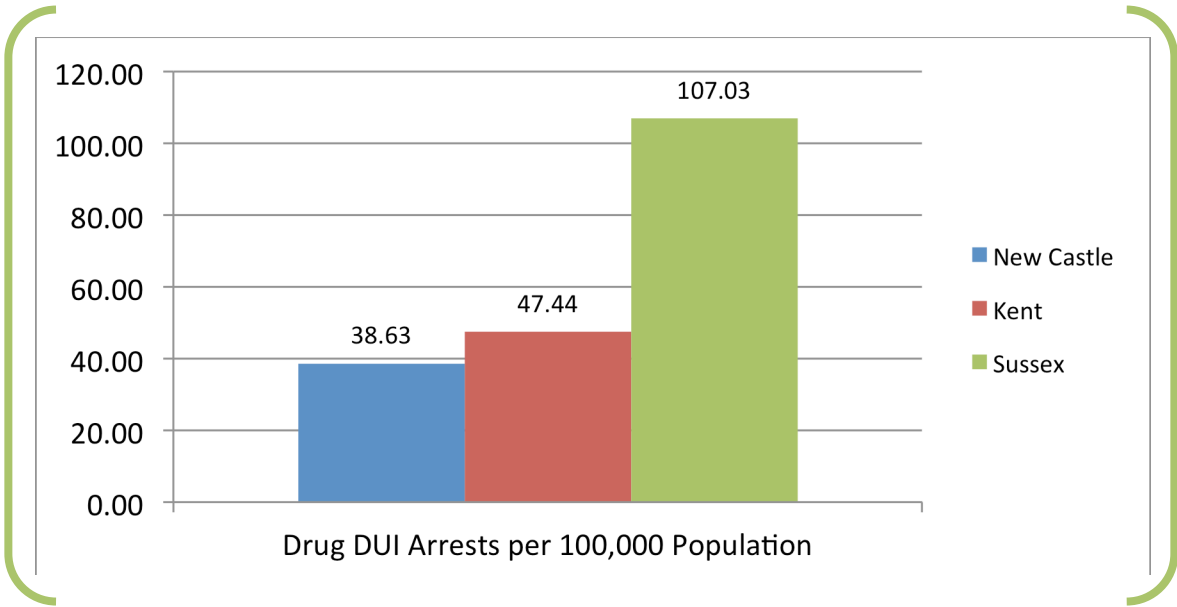
<b>NSDUH (ages 12 to 20)</b>	<b>STATE</b>	<b>KENT COUNTY</b>	<b>NEW CASTLE COUNTY</b>	<b>SUSSEX COUNTY</b>	<b>Wilmington</b>
Past year alcohol dependence	3%	3%	3%	<b>3%</b>	4%
Past year illicit drug dependence	2%	2%	2%	<b>2%</b>	2%
Past year					

alcohol dependence or abuse	7%	7%	7%	<b>7%</b>	8%
Past year drug dependence or abuse	3%	3%	3%	<b>2%</b>	3%
Past year needing but not receiving treatment for alcohol	7%	7%	7%	<b>6%</b>	7%
Past year needing but not receiving treatment for illicit drug use	2%	3%	2%	<b>2%</b>	3%

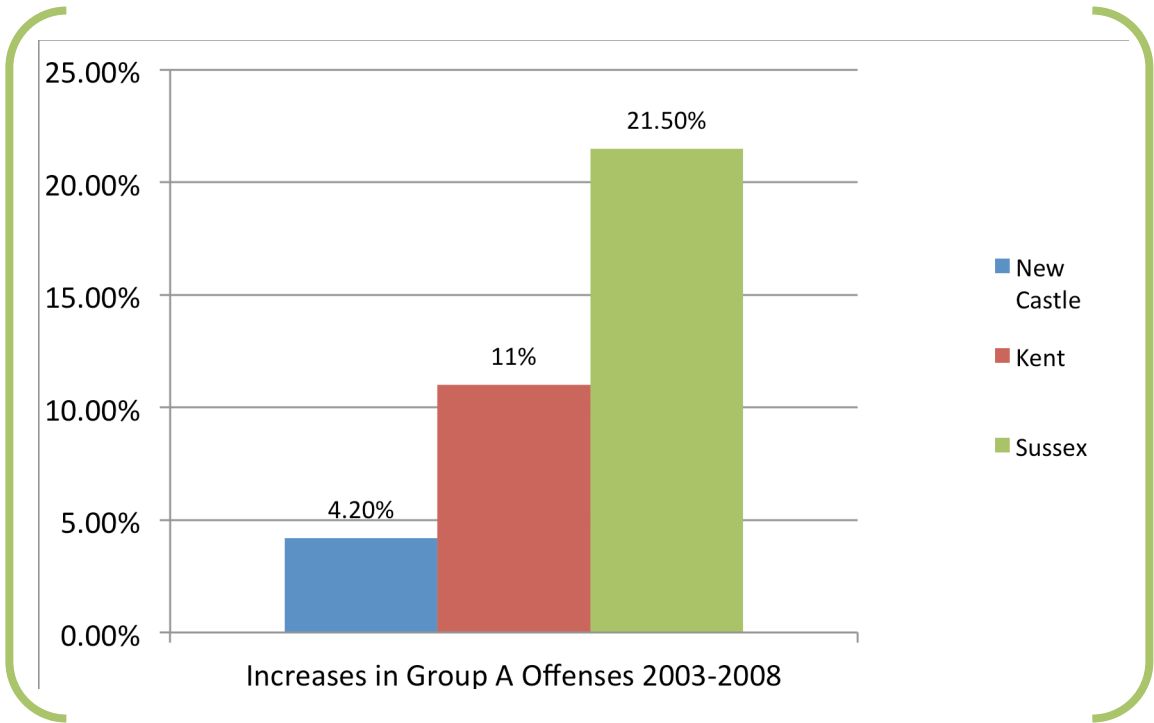
Consequences of Substance Use in Sussex County

While substance use and need for treatment may not appear significantly different for Sussex Countians, some of the consequences of abuse may be higher. Alcohol and drug arrest rates (per 100,000 population) exceed those of other counties. This could be a function of differences in enforcement policy and practice.

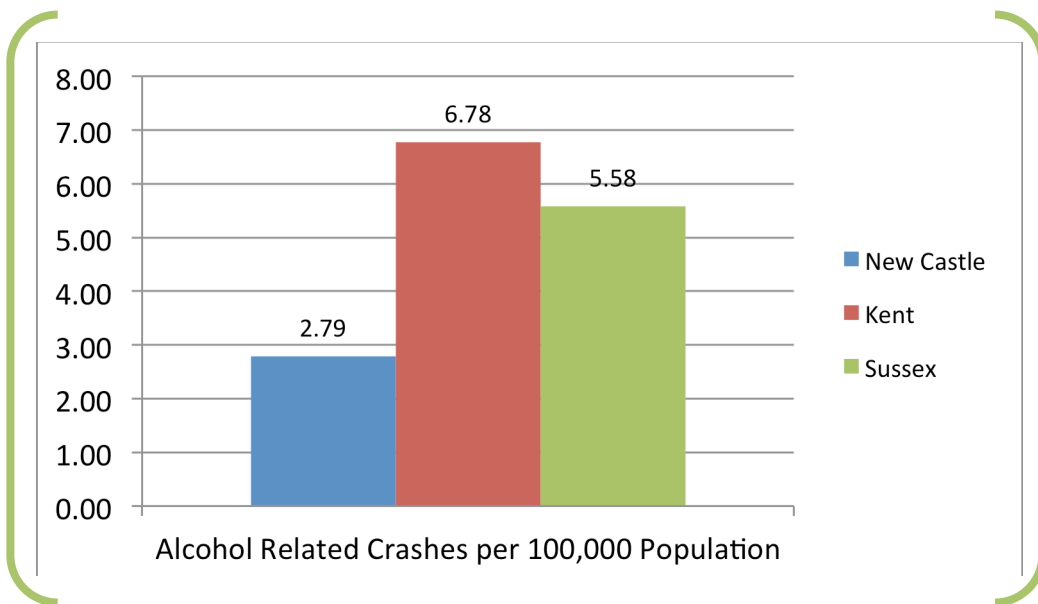
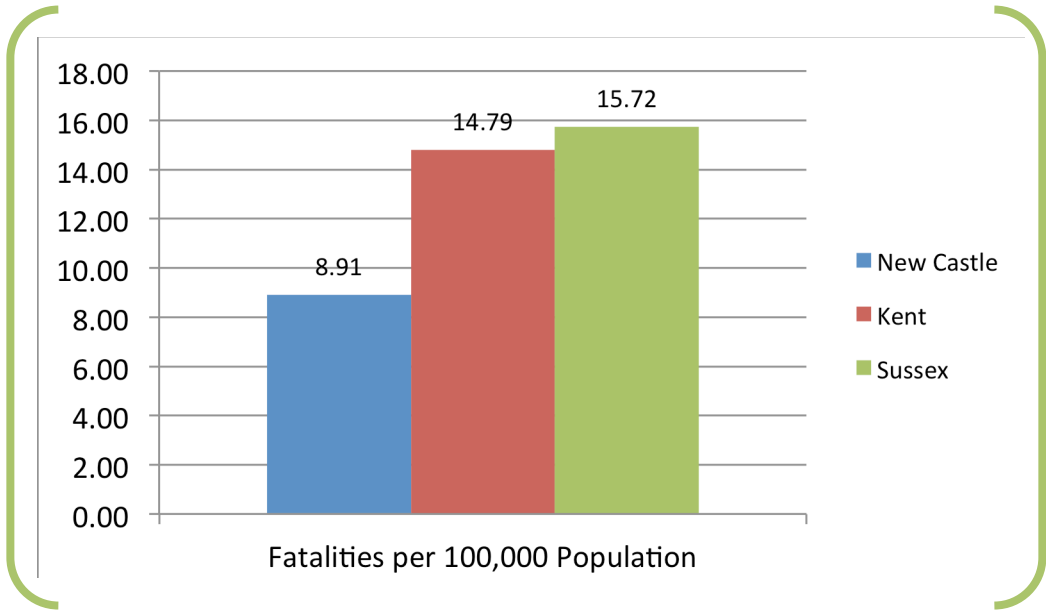




Or it could be a function of increases in Group A offenses in Sussex County—Group A offenses include arson, assault, burglary, vandalism, drug offenses, homicides and forcible sex offenses.



Alcohol-involved traffic crashes and fatalities, while higher than in New Castle County, are similar to those in Kent County. It may be that crash and fatality rates are higher in the less populated lower two counties due to the rural nature of the roads, many of which are unlit, or because greater distances must be traveled to obtain alcohol and to get home after drinking.



Delaware is also in the top quartile for drinking and binge drinking among women aged 18-44, which is the accepted range of child-bearing age. There is no data on the number of children born with Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorders, although there has recently been initiated a state-wide Task Force to address this.

**Youth Substance Use:**

It is an interesting phenomenon that Sussex County youth appear to be similar in use of most substances as well as in some other risk behaviors through middle school. In 2012, there are not significant differences in the age at which Sussex youth reported initiating use of tobacco, alcohol and marijuana and youth of the other counties. By the time they reach the 11<sup>th</sup> grade, however, Sussex youth have increased use of tobacco and alcohol products at rates exceeding those of youth in the other counties. Tobacco use is not more likely to be reported by Sussex County middle school students, but it is slightly more likely to be reported at the high school level.

<b>8<sup>th</sup> Grade Students</b>	<b>STATE</b>	<b>KENT COUNTY</b>	<b>NEW CASTLE COUNTY</b>	<b>SUSSEX COUNTY</b>
Ever smoked cigarettes	15%	16%	13%	<b>16%</b>
Past month cigarette use	6%	7%	4%	<b>7%</b>
Ever used smokeless tobacco	6%	4%	7%	<b>7%</b>
Past month use of smokeless	1%	1%	2%	<b>1%</b>
Ever smoked cigars	15%	17%	10%	<b>14%</b>
Past month cigar smoking	4%	4%	3%	<b>4%</b>

<b>11<sup>th</sup> Grade Students</b>	<b>STATE</b>	<b>KENT COUNTY</b>	<b>NEW CASTLE COUNTY</b>	<b>SUSSEX COUNTY</b>
Ever smoked cigarettes	28%	26%	28%	<b>32%</b>
Past month cigarette use	14%	13%	13%	<b>16%</b>
Ever used smokeless tobacco	12%	9%	13%	<b>17%</b>
Past month use of smokeless	4%	2%	4%	<b>6%</b>

Ever smoked cigars	30%	30%	28%	<b>32%</b>
Past month cigar smoking	10%	10%	10%	<b>12%</b>

The same phenomenon appears to exist for alcohol-related risk-taking. While Sussex middle school students are not more likely to drink or drink than students from other counties, Sussex high school students are slightly more likely to report past month drinking and binge drinking.

<b>8<sup>th</sup> Grade Students</b>	<b>STATE</b>	<b>KENT COUNTY</b>	<b>NEW CASTLE COUNTY</b>	<b>SUSSEX COUNTY</b>
Ever drank alcohol	46%	46%	43%	<b>46%</b>
Past month alcohol use	17%	17%	15%	<b>18%</b>
Binge drinking	8%	8%	6%	<b>10%</b>

<b>11<sup>th</sup> Grade Students</b>	<b>STATE</b>	<b>KENT COUNTY</b>	<b>NEW CASTLE COUNTY</b>	<b>SUSSEX COUNTY</b>
Ever drank alcohol	71%	71%	73%	<b>72%</b>
Past month alcohol use	17%	17%	15%	<b>18%</b>
Binge drinking	21%	20%	21%	<b>24%</b>
Drank 20 or more days in past month	2%	2%	2%	<b>3%</b>

While marijuana use is high among Sussex County students, it appears to be slightly lower than in New Castle and Kent Counties.

<b>8<sup>th</sup> Grade Students</b>	<b>STATE</b>	<b>KENT COUNTY</b>	<b>NEW CASTLE COUNTY</b>	<b>SUSSEX COUNTY</b>
Ever used marijuana	22%	25%	19%	<b>18%</b>
Past month marijuana use	11%	13%	9%	<b>8%</b>
Heavy marijuana use	4%	5%	4%	<b>4%</b>



Use of illegal drugs **other** than marijuana appears to be reported by Sussex County public school students at rates similar to the other counties. After marijuana, the next most reported drug is non-medical use of prescription painkillers, with one in ten students reporting having used them in the past year. There is not a great deal of use of any drug other than alcohol and marijuana among 8<sup>th</sup> grade students, with the possible exception of abuse of prescription drugs which is reported by 4% of students in each of the three counties. Only 11<sup>th</sup> grade data is reported below.

<b>11<sup>th</sup> Grade Students</b>	<b>STATE</b>	<b>KENT COUNTY</b>	<b>NEW CASTLE COUNTY</b>	<b>SUSSEX COUNTY</b>
Past year ecstasy use	2%	2%	1%	<b>2%</b>
Past year use of hallucinogens	3%	3%	3%	<b>3%</b>
Past year use of downers	4%	5%	4%	<b>3%</b>
Past year use of Rx uppers	1%	1%	2%	<b>1%</b>
Past year use of street uppers	1%	1%	1%	<b>1%</b>
Past year abuse of Rx painkillers	9%	8%	10%	<b>10%</b>
Past year abuse of Rx Ritalin	5%	5%	7%	<b>3%</b>
Past year use of Cocaine/crack	2%	2%	1%	<b>2%</b>
Past year use of heroin	1%	1%	0%	<b>0%</b>

### Youth Risk Factors

Sussex County youth are as likely to perceive great risk in smoking cigarettes (73%) as those in Kent County (74%), and more likely than 11<sup>th</sup> graders from New Castle County (68%). Rates of perception of great risk from daily use of alcohol (New Castle, 39%; Kent, 40%; Sussex, 39%) and from binge use (New Castle, 55%; Kent, 57%; Sussex, 55%) do not differ significantly across counties.

Most Delaware youth who drink cite friends from school as their most frequent drinking companions, and this includes Sussex County 11<sup>th</sup> graders, who are two and a half times more likely to report drinking with friends from school than they are drinking with friends from the neighborhood. Drinking with a boyfriend or girlfriend is reported by 11% of Sussex 11<sup>th</sup> graders, and drinking with an adult family member is reported by 8%. 8<sup>th</sup> graders are most likely to report drinking at someone else's house (14%), and also likely to drink at home with their parents knowing about it (6%) or their parents

not knowing about it (7%), or outside (7%). 11<sup>th</sup> graders are also most likely to report drinking at someone else’s house (33%), while they also drink at home with their parents knowing (10%) or not knowing (11%), in a car (12%) or outside (11%).

For 8<sup>th</sup> graders, use of marijuana is more equally reported with friends from school and from the neighborhood. By 11<sup>th</sup> grade, however, 22% of students in Sussex report marijuana use with friends from school versus 14% with friends from the neighborhood. Students also report use of marijuana with adult family members (4%) and with siblings (6%). 8<sup>th</sup> graders report that they usual use marijuana outside or at someone else’s house; they also report use at home and in a car. 11<sup>th</sup> graders are as likely to report use in a car (16%) as they are outdoors (14%) or in someone else’s house (17%). They are also twice as likely to report use in their own home (9%) as are 8<sup>th</sup> graders (4%).

Related Behaviors

Sussex 11<sup>th</sup> graders are slightly less likely to report being in a group fight as are students from other counties. They are slightly less likely to report hitting someone with the intention of hurting them. 8<sup>th</sup> graders may be less likely to hit someone, but may be just as likely to participate in a group fight.

<b>8<sup>th</sup> Graders</b>	<b>STATE</b>	<b>WILMINGTON</b>	<b>NEW CASTLE COUNTY</b>	<b>KENT COUNTY</b>	<b>SUSSEX COUNTY</b>
Participate in a group fight	12%	16%	11%	11%	<b>12%</b>
Hit someone with intention to hurt	27%	30%	27%	26%	<b>24%</b>
<b>11<sup>th</sup> Graders</b>					
Participate in a group fight	9%	10%	9%	9%	<b>8%</b>
Hit someone with intention to hurt	20%	24%	20%	19%	<b>17%</b>

Family/Culture Related Risk Factors

Among Sussex County 11<sup>th</sup> graders, 7% report being threatened or called names by their parents and 5% report being hit, slapped, kicked, pushed, shoved or choked by a parent, which is 1% higher than reported in other counties. Students who have witnessed domestic violence or been victims of violence in the home are more likely to report alcohol and drug use.

Sussex County students are more likely to report living with a parent who smokes, with 28% of 8<sup>th</sup> graders reporting a father/stepfather who smokes versus a state average of 22%, and 26% of 11<sup>th</sup> graders from Sussex versus a state average of 20%. Parents act not only as a role model, but also as a source of cigarettes, especially for 8<sup>th</sup> graders. Sussex County youth are most likely to report getting cigarettes from their parents with the parent’s knowledge (New Castle, 3%; Kent, 5%; Sussex, 6%)

Sussex County students are slightly less likely to report that their parents think teen use of alcohol is wrong or very wrong ( 8<sup>th</sup> grade: Wilmington, 83%; New Castle, 79%; Kent, 77%; Sussex, 75% and 11<sup>th</sup> grade: Wilmington, 83%; New Castle, 79%; Kent, 77%; Sussex, 75%).

Sussex County parents are most likely to talk to their children about the risks of drinking alcohol (Wilmington, 43%; New Castle, 49%; Kent, 50%; Sussex, 53%) and the risks of using illegal drugs (Wilmington, 50%; New Castle, 55%; Kent, 54%; Sussex, 58%). That difference no longer exists by the time they reach 11<sup>th</sup> grade.

Where there may be a difference between Sussex and the other counties is in how students access alcohol. Access is more likely to come in a social setting, which may increase the likelihood of binge drinking.

<b>11<sup>th</sup> Grade Students</b>	<b>STATE</b>	<b>KENT COUNTY</b>	<b>NEW CASTLE COUNTY</b>	<b>SUSSEX COUNTY</b>
Been to a party in past year where parents bought alcohol for teens	18%	17%	16%	<b>26%</b>
Been to a party in past year where there was alcohol and no parents	36%	33%	37%	<b>40%</b>
Pre-gamed (drank before going to an event)	18%	14%	20%	<b>21%</b>
Had someone over age 21 buy alcohol for them	26%	24%	27%	<b>30%</b>
Bought alcohol with fake ID	2%	1%	2%	<b>2%</b>
Bought alcohol without being asked for an ID	3%	3%	4%	<b>3%</b>

## School Related Factors

Sussex County students are as likely as students from other counties to perceive violence or report perpetrating violence in their schools. 80% of 8<sup>th</sup> graders and 84% of 11<sup>th</sup> graders feel safe in their school often or most of the time. Almost half of 1<sup>st</sup> grade students report they know where to buy alcohol (49%) and two-fifths know where to buy marijuana (40%). One in ten Sussex students (10%) reports selling alcohol to others, while more (14%) report having sold marijuana and 4% sold illicit prescription drugs. These rates are similar to the other counties.

Sussex 8<sup>th</sup> graders are least likely to report skipping classes (12%) or being suspended or expelled (8%), and the difference persists into 11<sup>th</sup> grade, with Sussex being second only to Kent County in the lowest percentage reporting skipping or being suspended or expelled. This may indicate a difference in schools' approach to discipline.

## Resources

Most of the treatment and prevention resources in the state of Delaware are concentrated in New Castle County and in Wilmington, with significantly fewer available to the populations of Kent and Sussex Counties. In addition, resources tend to be further from potential clients with fewer options for public transportation to help them connect. Some services for students are provided by schools and by school-based health centers within schools. Others are provided by the faith-based community. Unfortunately, there does not appear to be much networking between faith organizations to better disseminate the resources they have. Sub-populations, such as Hispanics or members of the Lenape or Nanticoke tribes, may be isolated and hence less aware of what resources do exist.

## Conclusions

To restate the initial premise of the assessment, differences may exist between communities and sub-populations within counties, but they are generally not significant when examined at the county level. However, small consistent differences, even though they are not statistically significant, may possibly provide some input for prevention planning. Alcohol, tobacco, marijuana and prescription drugs appear to be the substances most frequently used by Sussex County youth, as they are in other parts of the state. What may differ in Sussex County consumption patterns is the rate of increase in use of tobacco and alcohol (and binge use) between middle school and high school.

Sussex is comprised of rural families, most of whom own their own home and consider the local middle and high schools among the dominant structures of the community. They know their neighbors and their communities. On the other hand, there are not a lot of recreational options for youth—this was a major finding of a recent CDC report following a cluster of youth suicides in Kent and Sussex Counties. These small, tight-knit communities and lack of social alternatives may, at least in part, explain the findings that parents may be the source of tobacco and alcohol for their children, and that alcohol may be consumed in larger social contexts.

What may be called for is a pervasive, positive and family-based message targeting parents to “Lock up the Liquor,” while at the same time supporting the development of appropriate social activities and meeting places for youth. Since enforcement seems to be a strength of Sussex County, another option might be a coordinated media/education/enforcement program such as “Parents Who Host.”

Because the schools are an integral part of the communities, they may offer an opportunity for programming and also for social activities, while school nurses and school-based health centers could be a source of education for youth and for parents in “Lunch and Learn” and “Dessert and Learn” formats.

Overall, Sussex County is very similar to Delaware’s other counties in substance use and its consequences. What may differ is the nature of social interactions in which substance use takes place, both within families and within communities. Recognizing this, prevention efforts should be planned accordingly.