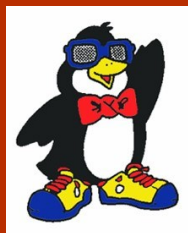


# EDUCATIONAL SUPPORT TEAM UPDATE

Saint Vincent College Prevention Projects is funded by the Westmoreland Drug and Alcohol Commission, Inc. through a grant from the Pennsylvania Department of Drug and Alcohol Programs.



## SAINT VINCENT COLLEGE PREVENTION PROJECTS NEWSLETTER

JANUARY 2026

VOLUME 2: ISSUE 4

### K-12 SAP Trainings & SAP Thematic Workshops

**K-12 SAP TRAINING Dates:** January 22&23, 2026; February 5&6, 2026; March 12&13, 2026; May 14&15, 2026. Trainings are held at the Fred Rogers Conference Center, Saint Vincent College. The Training is designed for new members of either a secondary or elementary S.A.P. team. This is also appropriate for Mental Health and Drug and Alcohol Liaisons, Treatment Staff, and School-Based Probation Officers who have been assigned the role of "ad hoc" S.A.P. team members. Those individuals needing to make up a training session from a prior training will be able to complete those requirements at these trainings. For additional information or to register, please call Saint Vincent College Prevention Projects at 724-805-2050.

**SAP Thematic Workshops:** March 25, 2026. Workshops are held at the Fred Rogers Conference Center, Saint Vincent College. Training announcements will be emailed and also posted in the newsletter. For additional information or to register, please call Saint Vincent College Prevention Projects at 724-805-2050.



SVCPP mailing  
Address:

300 Fraser  
Purchase Road,  
Latrobe, PA  
15650

Phone:  
724-805-2050  
Fax:  
724-420-5930

### Awareness Days

You can easily take advantage of special events to raise awareness of an important issue or cause. Here are a few up-coming events for the month:

Dry January Month—January 2026—<https://www.heart.org/en/news/2023/01/03/want-a-short-term-new-years-resolution-you-may-be-able-to-keep-try-dry-january>

No Name Calling Week—January 19-23, 2026—<https://www.stopbullying.gov/resources/get-help-now>

National Slavery & Human TRAFFICKING Prevention Month—January 2026—<https://www.nctsn.org/resources/public-awareness/national-slavery-and-human-trafficking-prevention-month>

National Mentoring Month—January 2026—<https://www.mentoring.org/campaigns/national-mentoring-month/>

National Birth Defects Month—January 2026—<https://www.cdc.gov/ncbddd/birthdefects/awareness-month/index.html>



## Trainings, Workshops, Events, & more...



**Thematic Workshops— March 25, 2026.** We offer Workshops 3 times a year. Each of these will have a SAP process, Mental Health, and Substance Abuse focus. The training announcements will go to your email address and appear when appropriate in our monthly newsletter. For more information or to register, please call the Saint Vincent College Prevention Projects at 724-805-2050. The cost of the training is \$40.00, and this includes continental breakfast and lunch in the cafeteria. Act 48 credits will be given.

**K-12 SAP TRAINING— January 22&23, 2026; February 5&6, 2026; March 12&13, 2026; May 14&15, 2026.** Training is designed for new members of either a secondary or elementary S.A.P. team who have not completed the initial training with their team. This is also appropriate for Mental Health and Drug and Alcohol Liaison, Treatment staff and school-based probation officers who have been assigned the role of "ad hoc" S.A.P. team members. Those individuals needing to make up a training session from a prior training will be able to complete those requirements at this training. For information or to register, please call the Saint Vincent College Prevention Projects at 724-805-2050. The cost of the training is \$360 which includes Training materials, lunch and continental breakfast both days.





## Events and Community News



### SAINT VINCENT COLLEGE

#### Prevention Projects

#### STUDENT ASSISTANCE PROGRAM

#### Spring Thematic Workshop

#### *"From Risk to Resilience: Student Assistance, Recovery, and the Polyvagal Path to Safety"*

#### ANNOUNCEMENT

WASAP Council Meeting (8:00 a.m. – 9:00 a.m.)

March 25<sup>th</sup> 2026

- |                                |  |
|--------------------------------|--|
| TO:                            | SAP Contacts   |
| TIME:                          | 8:30 a.m. – 3:45 p.m.  |
| PLACE:                         | St. Vincent College, Fred Rogers Center  |
| <b>8:30 a.m. – 9:00 a.m.</b>   | <b>Registration, continental breakfast provided.</b>   |
| <b>9:00 a.m.-9:15 a.m.</b>     | <b><i>"Welcome &amp; Introductions"</i></b><br><b>Presenter: Donna Kean, Executive Director</b><br><b>Saint Vincent College Prevention Projects</b>  |
| <b>9:15 a.m.- 10:00 a.m.</b>   | <b><i>"Streamlining SAP"</i></b><br><b>Presenter: Ray Killen, School Counselor and Quinn Matz, Health and P.E. Teacher</b><br><b>West Hempfield Middle School</b>                          |
| <b>10:00 a.m. – 10:15 a.m.</b> | <b>Break</b>   |
| <b>10:15 a.m.-11:00 a.m.</b>   | <b><i>"Sage's Army Teen Prevention"</i></b><br><b>Presenter: Amber Yingling, Certified Recovery Specialist</b><br><b>Sage's Army, Inc.</b>   |
| <b>11:00 a.m.- 12:00 p.m.</b>  | <b>LUNCH</b>   |
| <b>12:00 p.m. – 1:30 p.m.</b>  | <b><i>"You Are the Emotional Wi-Fi: Polyvagal Theory and the Science of Safety"</i></b><br><b>Presenter: Susan L. Tarasevich, Ed.D.</b><br><b>Susan Tarasevich Learning, LLC</b>           |
| <b>1:30p.m.-1:45 p.m.</b>      | <b>Break</b>   |
| <b>1:45p.m. – 3:00 p.m.</b>    | <b><i>"You Are the Emotional Wi-Fi: Polyvagal Theory and the Science of Safety"</i> Continued</b><br><b>Presenter: Susan L. Tarasevich, Ed.D.</b><br><b>Susan Tarasevich Learning, LLC</b> |
| <b>3:00 p.m. – 3:15 p.m.</b>   | <b>Summary/Evaluations/Concluding Remarks/Individual Team Assistance</b>   |

**REGISTRATION: Phone – 724-805-2050 on or before **March 24, 2026****

**ACT 48 Professional Development Credit – 5.00 hours**

***COST: \$40.00 per person, includes lunch in the cafeteria.***

*Saint Vincent College Prevention Projects is funded by the Westmoreland Drug and Alcohol Commission, Inc. through a grant from the Pennsylvania Department of Drug and Alcohol Programs.*



## Events and Community News



### T H E M A T I C W O R K S H O P D E S C R I P T I O N S

#### **Streamlining SAP**

**Presenters: Ray Killen and Quinn Matz, West Hempfield Middle School**

Looking for a better way to gather information and feedback on the students referred to your SAP team? Tired of endless paperwork and messy records? This session is designed to help! Streamlining SAP will provide participants with tools and strategies for using Google Forms and Sheets to keep your team organized, efficient, and collaborative. You'll also learn effective methods for running productive meetings and explore creative event ideas that can positively impact your school community and help your SAP Team truly shine.

#### **Sage's Army Teen Prevention Program**

**Amber Yingling, Certified Recovery Specialist, Sage's Army, Inc.**

Adolescents with substance use challenges often struggle academically, socially, and emotionally; many do not access formal treatment or feel safe discussing their experiences in traditional school settings.

Integrating CRS and CFRS within the SAP offers students relatable, non-judgmental support from individuals with lived experience, strengthening trust, early identification of concerns, and connection to resources.

SMART Recovery Teen programming complements this support by equipping students with skills that target underlying thought patterns and behaviors, promoting long-term resilience and well-being.

#### **You Are the Emotional Wi-Fi: Polyvagal Theory and the Science of Safety**

**Presenter: Susan L. Tarasevich, Ed.D. Susan Tarasevich Learning, LLC**

Visit us at [www.susantarasevichlearning.com](http://www.susantarasevichlearning.com)

This presentation doesn't just focus on your work with students; it's for you as well. This workshop applies educational neuroscience and Polyvagal Theory to classroom practice and student support systems, equipping educators with trauma-informed, co-regulation strategies that enhance emotional resilience, reduce behavioral barriers to learning, and strengthen supports for referred students.

By reviewing the framework for applying educational neuroscience in schools, we will apply this to classroom practices as well as action planning for referred students.

Leave with real-world applications of co-regulation that you can apply to your everyday educational and personal routines to enhance your emotional resilience and build this capacity in your students.



## Events and Community News



### Have you heard the news?

PDE has granted all K-12 Public School District employees the opportunity to be SAP Trained free of charge through December 2026. This special grant funding allows for reimbursement for classroom teacher substitute costs up to \$150/day per substitute.

#### Saint Vincent College Prevention Projects 2025–2026 Training Dates for K-12 SAP Training:

- ♦ January 22&23, 2026
- ♦ February 5&6, 2026
- ♦ March 12&13, 2026
- ♦ May 14&15, 2026

Workshop cost for all other training participants is \$360.00/person

#### Saint Vincent College Prevention Projects 2025-2026 Training Dates for SAP Thematic Workshop:



- March 25, 2026

Workshop cost is \$40/person

*For information or to register, please call the Saint Vincent College Prevention Projects at 724-805-2050.  
Participants will receive training materials, lunch and continental breakfast at all trainings.*

*All trainings and workshops will be offered at:*

*Saint Vincent College 300 Fraser Purchase Road, Latrobe, PA 15650*





# POWERED UP: GAMING DISORDER & HOW TO HELP YOUR CHILD FIND BALANCE IN THE DIGITAL AGE

MATT MISSAR, LCSW, IGDC, ICGC-I  
THE BETTER INSTITUTE

## LEARN ABOUT

- What is gaming disorder
- Develop better discipline strategies with your children as it relates to gaming
- Utilize interventions to help get involved in your child's gaming
- Reduce potential problematic behaviors



*WE ARE OFFERING 4 DIFFERENT DATES*

**TUESDAY**  
**DECEMBER 2**  
**6:30PM**

**MONDAY**  
**JANUARY 5**  
**6:30PM**

**zoom**

SCAN QR CODE TO  
REGISTER FOR ANY DATE



**THURSDAY**  
**DECEMBER 11**  
**6:30PM**

**WEDNESDAY**  
**JANUARY 14**  
**6:30PM**



PLEASE CONTACT [SOPALINSKI@WEDACINC.ORG](mailto:SOPALINSKI@WEDACINC.ORG)



## Webinars to Strengthen Supports for our Homeless Students in Westmoreland County

I hope everyone is off to a strong and positive start to 2026! As the need continues for us to support students experiencing homelessness, I wanted to share several upcoming professional learning opportunities facilitated by SchoolHouse Connection. These webinars offer timely strategies and guidance to support students, families, and school teams.

Upcoming Webinars:

- January 15, 2026: [Holding Steady to Support Students Experiencing Homelessness: Strategies for Building Compassion Resilience](#)
- January 21, 2026: [The Set-Aside Series: Practical Strategies for Strengthening Title I Supports for Homeless Students](#)
- Other dates in the series: February 4, February 18, and March 4
- January 22, 2026: [Understanding Immigration Status and Financial Aid Eligibility](#)

I encourage you to share these opportunities with any relevant staff who may benefit from this training. Thank you for your continued commitment to supporting students experiencing homelessness!



***Tara Maharowski, MSW***


Education Program Specialist/Education Liaison  
Westmoreland County Children's Bureau

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724. 552. 3555  
tmaharow@westmorelandcountypa.gov  
40 N. Pennsylvania Avenue, Suite 310  
Greensburg, Pa 15601

**Understanding Unaccompanied Homeless Youth (UHY)**

A Resource Guide for Pennsylvania Schools



[Click HERE](#)



## Awareness Month Information



### Dry January 2026: All You Need to Know



BY  
ALYCIA O'DELL

Globally, around 400 million people— or 7% of the world's population— struggle with alcohol use disorders. Dry January is a month-long challenge that encourages participants to abstain from alcohol to better understand their relationship with drinking and to explore the positive impacts of sobriety on health and well-being. So, we had to ask: What is the most important information you need to know about this year's Dry January?

#### Impactful Insights



**Official Name:** Dry January



**Cause:** Promoting alcohol-free living and raising awareness about the benefits of sobriety



**Next Date:** January 1-30, 2026



**Official Website:** <https://alcoholchange.org.uk/dry-january>



**Hashtag:** #DryJanuary #SoberJanuary

Keep on reading to find out all the important information about Dry January at a glance, including its big picture, why it's important, and how you can get involved. We'll then share its brief history, three interesting facts about it, its future dates, and how you'll never miss any important awareness event again.



### The Most Important Information About Dry January at a Glance

I. The Big Picture: Dry January is a public health campaign encouraging individuals to forgo alcohol for the entire month of January. The initiative aims to promote healthier drinking habits, raise awareness about the effects of alcohol, and provide a supportive community for those exploring sobriety.





## Awareness Month Information



2. □ Why It Is Important: Worldwide, approximately 2.6 million deaths were attributed to alcohol consumption in 2019 alone, including chronic health conditions, accidents, homicides, and suicides. For example, in that year, 474,000 people died due to cardiovascular disease caused by alcohol consumption, while roughly 298,000 people were killed by impaired drivers. Dry January helps participants evaluate their drinking habits and potentially reduce long-term alcohol-related risks. By participating, individuals can experience significant health benefits, including improved sleep, enhanced mood, and better overall physical health.

3. □ How you can get involved: You can support Dry January by committing to an alcohol-free month and participating in associated events and activities:

- \* Join the Challenge: Sign up for Dry January and track your progress using the official resources and app provided.
- \* Share on Social Media: Use social media to share your Dry January journey, tips, and experiences using the hashtag #DryJanuary.
- \* Support Others: Encourage friends and family to participate, and join local or virtual groups for added support and motivation.

Info from: <https://impactful.ninja/dry-january/>

[CLICK HERE](#) for more Info!



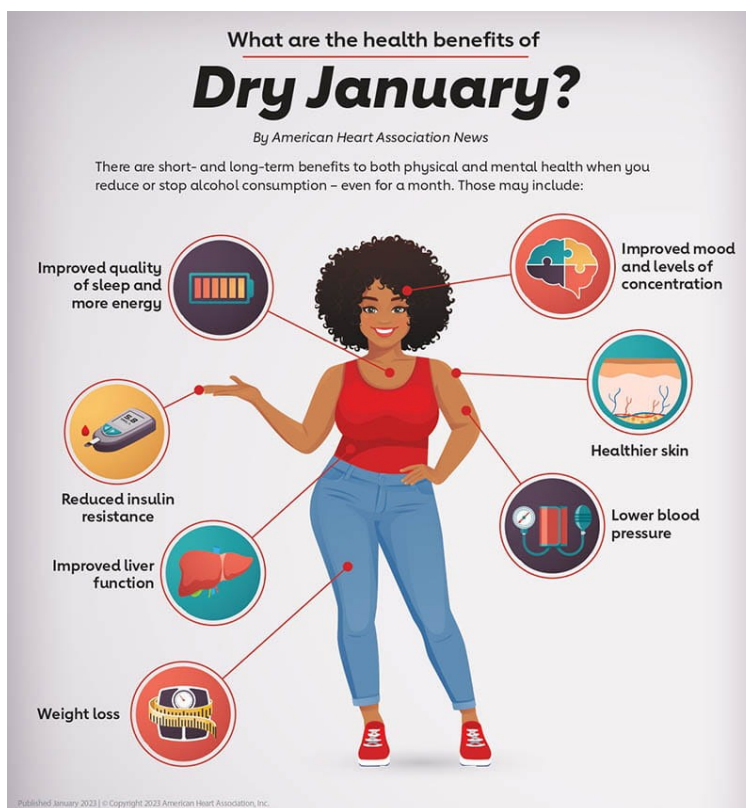
## Awareness Month Information



### Interesting Facts About Dry January

- \* **Health Benefits:** Dry January is associated with notable improvements in physical health, such as better sleep, increased energy levels, and enhanced mental clarity. Furthermore, research indicates that short-term abstinence from alcohol can lead to reductions in weight, blood pressure, and cancer-related growth factors.
- \* **Increased Awareness:** The Dry January campaign has successfully raised awareness about the risks associated with excessive alcohol consumption and has led to a broader discussion about alcohol use and its effects. This increased awareness contributes to ongoing efforts to promote public health and support for those affected by alcohol use disorders.
- \* **Sober Movement:** The “sober curious” movement has gained significant momentum in recent years, with an increasing number of people exploring sobriety. For example, a 2024 survey found that 25% of U.S. adults reported participating in Dry January. And, alcohol consumption among younger generations has declined, with Gen Zers drinking about 20% less alcohol per capita than Millennials did at their age.

Info from: <https://impactful.ninja/dry-january/>



Info graphic from: <https://www.heart.org/en/news/2023/01/03/want-a-short-term-new-years-resolution-you-may-be-able-to-keep-try-dry-january>



## How Mentoring Can Change Lives

March 27, 2024

In our recent study, *Who Mentored You?*, we wanted to develop a holistic understanding of mentorship throughout the last 50+ years – how different generations and demographics gain access to mentorship, where gaps exist and the reasoning behind them, and the tangible benefits people experience when they connect with meaningful mentors.

Answering this last question has its nuances. Most mentorship programs or relationships often emphasize short term outcomes that are easy to see in the immediate wake of program participation. For school-based programs, the emphasis is often on improved attendance and academics, forging stronger peer relationships, and decreasing negative behaviors and school disciplinary referrals. For older adolescents, the focus is often on graduating high school, applying to college, and figuring out possible career paths. However, with this study, MENTOR was interested in the effects of mentoring relationships 10, 20, or even 30 years down the line. How has an individual's life changed because of mentorship? How did that relationship help them thrive or give them wisdom they carry deep into their adulthood? And what kind of recognition do we give these mentors several decades on?



There is no perfect way to measure the long-term effects of mentoring relationships, but we asked respondents to reflect on how mentoring had helped them and how much their mentors were responsible for the people they are today. We discovered that 56% of our multi-generational survey group felt that their mentors had a direct effect on their success in life. More specifically, these Americans gave their mentors at least half the credit for their progression in life, a percentage share that increased significantly when the question was posed to youth from low-income and marginalized backgrounds and for youth who had four or more negative childhood experiences.



## Awareness Month Information



### **But why did these mentors have such a strong impact on the respondents? And what were the ways in which mentors provided support to young people?**

What we found is that meaningful mentorship opportunities create an environment where people can feel supported, build their identity and sense of belonging, and get exposed to new ideas and new opportunities. We found strong correlations between having a mentor in childhood and reports of positive mental health and sense of belonging both in childhood and adulthood, compared to those who did not have a mentor. We also found that youth with a mentor were more likely to be engaged in positive extracurricular activities and leadership positions. We even found some hints that mentorship supported the upward economic mobility of youth from low-income homes. While our study did not definitively prove that mentoring was solely responsible for these differences, when you ask youth how their mentors helped them, a more complete picture of the value of mentors emerges .

Regardless of whether they had a naturally occurring or program-picked mentor, the most important forms of support to youth were helping to solve problems (49%), building a sense of belonging (48%), and helping to understand who they are as a person (45%).

These aspects of our research answer how mentorship affects youth well into adulthood, but it does leave out the how behind the progress. What makes a meaningful mentor? And what are the key attributes for a mentor to create these lasting changes in young people's lives?

**It mostly came down to how mentors supported youth throughout challenges and the respect embedded in the relationship. To be considered a meaningful mentor, we identified four prominent themes that stood out: 1) accepting youth for who they are, 2) listening carefully, 3) trusting them, 4) being patient, and 5) taking them seriously.**

These findings illustrate the many ways in which mentors can help to support a young person – from a fostering a sense of belonging and supporting mental health, to academic achievement and community involvement, having a mentor can help guide youth towards a more positive adulthood. But more than anything, we see Americans of all ages appreciate their mentors for the impact that they had on their lives.

There is no greater praise for a mentor than to hear a person say, “I wouldn’t be the person I am today without their help.”

Info from: <https://www.mentoring.org/blog/research/how-mentoring-can-change-lives/>



## Available Services Through SVCPP:



### **LOOK FOR THE SAINT VINCENT COLLEGE PREVENTION PROJECTS AT MANY SCHOOL EVENTS THROUGHOUT WESTMORELAND COUNTY**

#### **Special Speaker Presentations**

Presentations are available to your community group, business or organization at minimal cost or FREE. Topics include: Current Drug Trends, Power of Parents, Gambling/Gaming Awareness, Responsible Gambling, Talking with your Kids and The Dangers of Underage Drinking, Mobile Bedroom, Social Media, Click-Bait and Other On-Line Potholes, and more.

#### **RADAR (Free Materials)**

#### **Regional Alcohol/Drug Awareness Resource, Information Center**

The Saint Vincent College Prevention Projects provides free materials (pamphlets, brochures, posters, etc.) to schools, organizations, community groups, and to the general public on various topics that include: alcohol, tobacco, drugs, violence prevention, child guidance, and medications and the elderly.

**To schedule a program for your business, school or organization, please contact Beth Potochnik, Prevention Education & Community Outreach Services Manager at Saint Vincent College Prevention Projects at 724-805-2050 or email [beth.potochnik@stvincent.edu](mailto:beth.potochnik@stvincent.edu)**







## Available Intervention Services Through SVCPP:



**The following Tier II Intervention Programs are offered to all  
Westmoreland County Secondary Schools  
at NO cost to the school districts:**



### **N.O.T. (Not on Tobacco) Program**

SVCPP Intervention Specialists deliver 6 sessions covering facts vs. myths, triggers and advertising nicotine products, identifying support strategies, benefits to quitting nicotine use and how your body responds, creating healthy habits, and ways to stay nicotine free. N.O.T. explores the various delivery systems, i.e. vape devices, chewing, smoking, etc. N.O.T. is an American Lung Association program aimed to recognize dependence on nicotine and to identify replacement strategies to restore health.

### **The Blues Program**

SVCPP Intervention Specialists provide early intervention service groups for adolescents with observable behaviors displaying depressive symptoms or are at-risk for depression. These are 6 session groups provided weekly within your school.

### **Marijuana Brief Intervention Program**

SVCPP Intervention Specialists use this evidence-based program for early intervention with students who may be experimenting with marijuana in its various forms. During the 6 weekly sessions, students will identify triggers, how their environment can contribute to usage, and practical evidence-based ways to reduce/eliminate marijuana use.

### **In-Depth Program**

The American Lung Association's INDEPTH® (Intervention for Nicotine Dependence: Education, Prevention, Tobacco and Health) program is an alternative to suspension or citation program that is offered as an option to students who face suspension for violation of school tobacco or e-cigarette use policies. This program is administered by a trained adult facilitator in either a one-on-one or group format and can be offered in a school or community-based setting. The program consists of four sessions of approximately 50 minutes geared toward youth and focused on tobacco use, including e-cigarettes, nicotine dependence, establishing healthy alternatives and making the change to be free of all tobacco products. Because the program is offered as an alternative to suspension or citation, attendance is mandatory to fulfill the obligation for the infraction. While INDEPTH is not a cessation program, steps toward cessation are strongly encouraged. Students may decide to quit or reduce their tobacco/nicotine use as result of their participation in the program.

**If your school district can benefit from these services, please email:** Christina Weimer, SAP  
Coordinator and Intervention Services Manager, [Christina.weimer@stvincent.edu](mailto:Christina.weimer@stvincent.edu)



## Westmoreland County Information



1200 Maronda Way, Suite 300, Monessen, PA  
Hours: Monday-Friday 8:00 AM – 4:30 PM

724-243-2220

<http://wedacinc.org>



Southwestern Pennsylvania Human Services, Inc.

203 S Maple Ave, Greensburg, PA 15601

724-834-0420

Hours: Monday-Thursday 8:30am-9:00pm

<http://www.sphs.org>

Friday 8:30am-5:00pm

**Outside In**

*To the Fullest...*

Outpatient Services  
PHONE 724-837-1518

Residential Programs  
PHONE 724-238-8441

PO Box 639  
Greensburg, PA 15601



First Floor Suite 110, 40 N Pennsylvania Avenue, Greensburg, PA 15601  
(724-830-3617)

<http://www.co.westmoreland.pa.us/>



### SVC Prevention Projects

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Office: 724-805-2050

Cell: 724-771-4776



Map from: <https://www.city2map.com/en/us/pa/westmoreland-county.html>



## From the Desk of Saint Vincent College Prevention Projects: Parent Tips & Resources



### Understanding Teen Cannabis Vaping: What Parents Need to Know and How to Help

Teen substance use is a growing concern, especially when it comes to the rise of cannabis vaping. While vaping has been marketed as a safer alternative to smoking, the truth is that vaping cannabis poses significant risks, particularly for teens. As a parent, it's important to be informed about what vaping cannabis involves, why it's harmful, and what you can do if you suspect your child is vaping.

In this article, we'll cover the key information you need to know, provide real tips for helping your teen, and guide you on how to address the issue effectively.

#### **What Is Cannabis Vaping?**

Vaping cannabis involves inhaling vaporized marijuana or cannabis extracts using an electronic device, commonly referred to as a vape or a "pen". These devices heat cannabis oil or concentrates to a temperature where the active compounds (such as THC) are released as vapor, which is then inhaled. Unlike traditional smoking, vaping doesn't produce combustion, which has led many to incorrectly assume that it is a safer alternative.

Unfortunately, this misconception has contributed to the increasing popularity of vaping among teenagers, who may not fully understand the risks involved.

#### **Why Cannabis Vaping Is Dangerous for Teens**

Cannabis use during adolescence poses several health risks, particularly because the teenage brain is still developing. Here are some of the dangers associated with teen cannabis vaping:

1. **Impact on Brain Development:** Studies show that cannabis use in teens can interfere with brain development, potentially leading to problems with memory, learning, attention, and decision-making. Since the brain continues to develop until around age 25, early cannabis use can have long-lasting effects.
2. **Higher THC Levels:** Cannabis concentrates used in vape pens often contain much higher levels of THC than traditional marijuana. High-potency THC can increase the likelihood of dependency, anxiety, paranoia, and even psychosis.
3. **Increased Addiction Risk:** According to the National Institute on Drug Abuse (NIDA), regular cannabis use in teens can lead to addiction. Adolescents are more susceptible to developing a substance use disorder than adults due to their still-maturing brains.
4. **Lung Health Concerns:** Vaping, whether nicotine or cannabis, has been linked to lung injuries. In 2019, there was a significant outbreak of vaping-related lung injuries, some of which were tied to cannabis products containing harmful additives.



## From the Desk of Saint Vincent College Prevention Projects: Parent Tips & Resources



### Signs Your Teen May Be Vaping Cannabis

As a parent, you should be aware of the signs that your teen might be vaping cannabis. Here are some red flags to watch for:

- \* Sweet or unusual smells: Vape pens often emit fruity or candy-like odors that are different from the traditional smell of marijuana smoke.
- \* Behavioral changes: A sudden drop in academic performance, disinterest in activities, or changes in social circles could be a sign of substance use.
- \* Physical symptoms: Look for signs of dry mouth, red eyes, or excessive hunger (also known as “the munchies”), which can be side effects of cannabis use.
- \* Unfamiliar devices: Vape pens can look like USB drives or pens. If you find unfamiliar devices or cartridges in your teen’s room, it could be a vaping device.

### Tips for Parents Concerned About Teen Cannabis Vaping

If you suspect that your teen is vaping cannabis, it’s important to approach the situation with care and understanding. Here are some actionable steps you can take:

- \* Start a Conversation: Rather than confronting your teen with accusations, start a conversation by asking open-ended questions. Focus on expressing concern rather than anger. For example, “I’ve noticed some changes recently, and I’m worried about you. Can we talk about what’s going on?”
- \* Educate Yourself and Your Teen: Make sure both you and your teen are informed about the risks of vaping cannabis. Share facts about how vaping high-potency THC can affect brain development, lung health, and increase the risk of addiction. NIDA and CDC websites provide reliable resources on these topics.
- \* Set Clear Expectations: It’s important to set clear boundaries and expectations about substance use. Let your teen know where you stand on the issue and the consequences of violating these boundaries. Reinforce that your rules are there to protect their health and future.
- \* Encourage Healthy Coping Mechanisms: Teens often turn to substance use as a way to cope with stress, anxiety, or peer pressure. Encourage your teen to develop healthier ways to manage stress, such as through physical activity, mindfulness practices, or engaging in hobbies.
- \* Seek Professional Help If Needed: If your teen is already struggling with cannabis use or addiction, it may be time to seek professional help. Many therapists specialize in adolescent substance use, and programs like Cognitive Behavioral Therapy (CBT) can help teens develop strategies to resist peer pressure and make healthier choices.
- \* Involve Their School: Schools often have counselors or substance use programs that can offer support. They can provide resources and education for both students and parents on substance use prevention.



## From the Desk of Saint Vincent College Prevention Projects: Parent Tips & Resources



### Resources for Parents

If you're concerned about your teen's cannabis use, there are numerous resources available to help:



### **Download our FREE eBook**

*[Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA)](<https://www.samhsa.gov/find-help/national-helpline>): Offers a national helpline (1-800-662-HELP) for individuals and families facing substance use issues.*

*[National Institute on Drug Abuse (NIDA)](<https://www.drugabuse.gov/related-topics/teen-brain>): Provides information on how drug use affects the developing brain.*

*[Partnership to End Addiction](<https://drugfree.org>): Offers resources and support for parents concerned about their child's substance use.*

Info from: <https://roots-recovery.com/teen-cannabis-vaping-what-parents-need-to-know/>





## From the Desk of Saint Vincent College Prevention Projects: Parent Tips & Resources



# WINTER Bucket List

- |                               |                              |  |
|-------------------------------|------------------------------|--|
| 1 Drink hot cocoa             | 21 Go ice skating            | 41 Hand out candy canes to classmates        |
| 2 Have a snowball fight       | 22 Go on a light walk        | 42 Decorate the house for winter             |
| 3 Bake cookies                | 23 Make snow paint           | 43 Make a gingerbread house                  |
| 4 Have a secret santa         | 24 Make pancakes             | 44 Go on a family car trip to see lights     |
| 5 Play in the snow            | 25 Make a winter craft       | 45 Make paper snowflakes                     |
| 6 Stay in pj's all day        | 26 Celebrate new years       | 46 Catch snowflakes on your tongue           |
| 7 Make a gift for someone     | 27 Make snow angels          | 47 Make a special breakfast                  |
| 8 Take a family photo         | 28 Create a winter picture   | 48 Make a pinecone bird feeder               |
| 9 Have a game night           | 29 Make thank you cards      | 49 Listen to Christmas music                 |
| 10 Make an indoor pillow fort | 30 Wrap presents             | 50 Send a handwritten letter to a friend     |
| 11 Go caroling                | 31 Make a winter slime       | 51 Make your own snow globe                  |
| 12 Build a snowman            | 32 Play indoor hide and seek | 52 Make a christmas ornament                 |
| 13 Throw confetti             | 33 Make a winter play        | 53 Decorate the Christmas Tree               |
| 14 Visit Santa                | 34 Put up christmas lights   | 54 Create a christmas countdown              |
| 15 Write a christmas story    | 35 Cozy up by the fireplace  | 55 Do a random act of kindness               |
| 16 Go sledding                | 36 Dance to music            | 56 Go on a winter nature walk                |
| 17 Donate toys                | 37 Make real snow cones      | 57 Have a winter movie marathon              |
| 18 Decorate a stocking        | 38 Have an indoor picnic     | 58 Blow bubbles & see if they turn to ice    |
| 19 Cozy up and read a book    | 39 Hang up mistletoe         | 59 Make New Year's resolutions               |
| 20 Make a popcorn garland     | 40 Visit the library         | 60 Tell someone how much you appreciate them |

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