

Key Findings from the 2023 Missouri Assessment of College Health Behaviors

Partners in Prevention (PIP) is Missouri's higher education substance misuse consortium dedicated to creating healthy and safe college campuses. This year, the coalition is comprised of 26 public and private colleges and universities in the state, 24 of whom have data included in the 2023 survey. The campuses in the coalition work to prevent high-risk behaviors by implementing evidence-based strategies including education, social norming campaigns, policy review and enforcement, and more. To measure progress and obtain data needed for the implementation of programs, PIP created the Missouri Assessment of College Health Behaviors (MACHB) Survey. The MACHB is an annual, online survey that has been implemented each spring since 2007. The survey assesses the roles that alcohol, cannabis, other drugs (illegal and prescription), tobacco/nicotine, interpersonal violence, and mental health concerns have on student health and well-being.

Data consistently shows that academic achievement and retention are impacted by the health, safety, and well-being of students. Substance misuse, experiences of interpersonal violence, and mental health concerns are intersectional issues that impact students' ability to succeed and thrive while attending institutions of higher education. Comprehensive and evidence-informed prevention and health promotion practices are an investment in the lives of students and the overall campus environment.

The following are key findings from the MACHB survey (N=5,817) among the 24 PIP member institutions as of Spring 2023:

Retention and Sense of Belonging

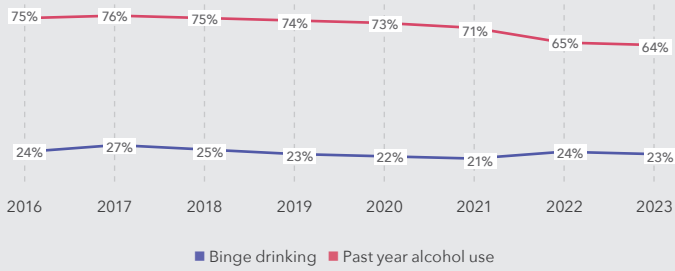
Almost one-quarter (24%) of Missouri college students have thought about transferring from their current college/university in the past year. Additionally, 1 in 5 (20% of) students say they have thought of discontinuing their college/university education in the past year. Students report that the top reasons contributing to their decision to either transfer or

discontinue their education are their own mental health concerns (48%), lack of friends/loneliness (38%), and difficulties keeping up with academics (36%). * Two-thirds (66%) of students say that they feel a sense of belonging to the campus community.

Alcohol Use

Most Missouri college students (64%) report using alcohol in the past 12 months. Binge-drinking (defined as a pattern of drinking that brings a person's blood alcohol concentration (BAC) to 0.08 g/dl or above, which typically means consuming 4+ drinks for women and 5+ drinks for men in a two-hour period at least once in the past two weeks) is a high-risk alcohol use behavior that PIP closely monitors each year. The binge-drinking rate decreased to 23% in 2023 from 24% in 2022 and is below the national average of around 33%¹. Approximately 6.3% of Missouri college students engage in frequent binge drinking, defined as binge-drinking 3 or more times in the past two weeks. Students report that their top reasons for drinking are to have fun with friends (82%), to relax (42%), and to get drunk (32%)*.

Chart 1: Alcohol Use Trend



Underage Alcohol Use

Most Missouri college students who have consumed alcohol in their lifetime report that they first started drinking before age 21 (62%). Fifty-three percent (53%) of underage Missouri college students report consuming alcohol in the past 12 months and 20% of underage students report binge-drinking in the past two weeks (a decrease from 22% in 2022). Underage students report that they obtain alcohol in a variety of ways, the most common being from over 21 friends (27%), from family members (14%), or from an under 21 friend who has a way to obtain alcohol (7.8%). *

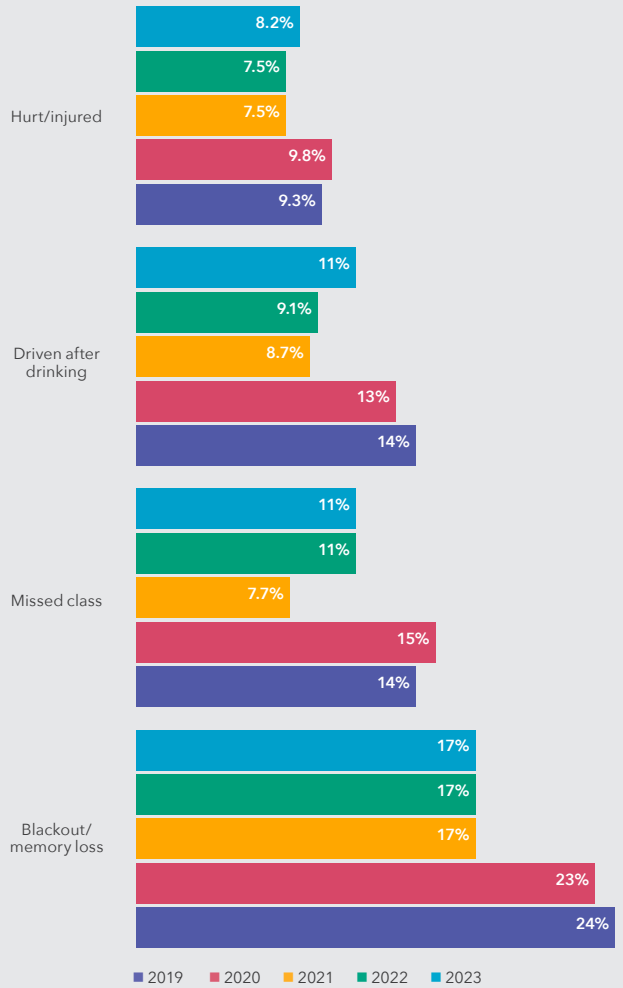
Consequences of Alcohol Use

The MACHB tracks consequences and related behaviors of alcohol use experienced at least once in the past 12 months, shown in Table 1. Additionally, trend data of some key consequences of alcohol use are included in Chart 2.

Table 1: Consequences of Alcohol Use in the Past 12 Months

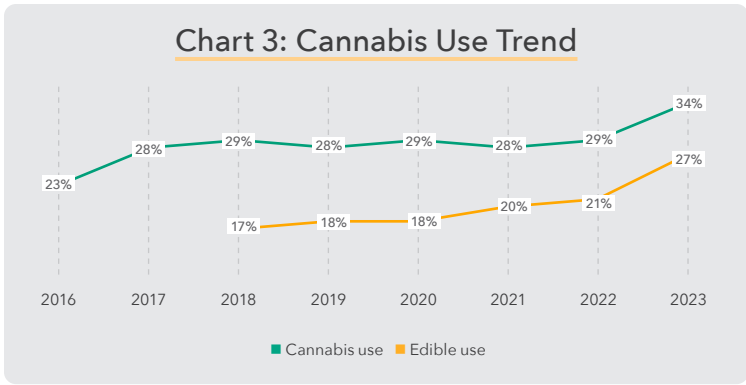
Hangover	37%
Vomited	28%
Blackout/memory loss	17%
Rode in a car with a driver who had been drinking	15%
Missed class	11%
Driven after drinking	11%
Been hurt/injured	8.2%
Forced, pressured, or coerced to drink more	7.0%
Performed poorly on a test/assignment	6.4%
Experienced alcohol poisoning	3.1%

Chart 2: Alcohol Use Consequences Trend



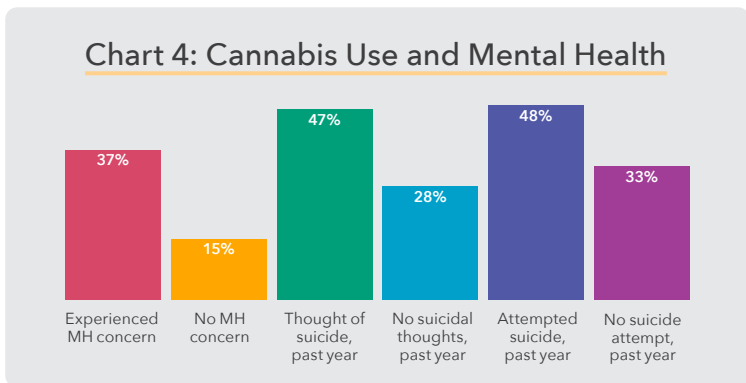
Cannabis Use

The percentage of students who report using cannabis in the past 12 months increased from 27% in 2022 to 33% in 2023. Additionally, there has been a consistent increase in the percentage of students who report that they have used edibles/edible cannabis products in the past year, reaching a high this year at 27%. Given that Missouri legalized cannabis in November 2022 with the passage of Amendment 3, the slight increase in past year use is somewhat expected. Approximately 13% of students report using cannabis one or more times per week. Of students who report using cannabis, 31% report driving after use at least once in the past 12 months. Related to perceptions of others' use, though 66% of students have not used cannabis in the past year, the majority of students (65%) believe that their peers use cannabis 1 or more times per month.



Given the change in Missouri state law, new questions were included on the 2023 survey about intentions to change use given the legalization of cannabis for adult-use. Among students who do not currently use cannabis, the majority (87%) said that they do not plan to start using. Among students who currently use cannabis, most (64%) said that they plan to use cannabis the same amount as before legalization.

Cannabis use among youth is of increasing concern given the high-potency THC (delta-9-tetrahydrocannabinol, the primary psychoactive component in cannabis) content found in most products. High-potency THC consumption has been linked to cannabis use disorder, more severe withdrawal symptoms, and in some cases, acute psychosis. National youth survey data also indicates a link between cannabis use and thoughts of suicide, suicide plans, and suicide attempts.² MACHB data draws a similar conclusion, shown in Chart 4, showing that students who had experienced at least one mental health concern in the past year, had suicidal thoughts in the past year, or had attempted suicide in the past year were more likely to have used cannabis than their peers who did not have past year mental health concerns or suicidal thoughts/attempts.



Illegal Drug Use and Drugs of Concern

Approximately 16% of students report using at least one illegal drug/drug of concern in the past 12 months and use rates of various types are shown in Table 2. We have denoted 'drugs of concern' that may be legal to purchase or obtain in Missouri with two asterisks in the table below.

Table 2: Illegal Drug Use and Drugs of Concern Used in the Past 12 Months

Delta-8 THC**	14%
Hallucinogens (LSD, PCP, mushrooms, etc.)	5.3%
Cocaine	1.9%
K2/Synthetic Marijuana	1.2%
MDMA/Ecstasy/Molly	1.2%
Inhalants**	1.2%
Kratom**	1.1%
Heroin	0.4%

Prescription Drug Misuse

Approximately 5.1% of Missouri college students report prescription drug use without a doctor's prescription in the past 12 months (a decrease from 6.1% in 2022). Additionally, 4.2% of students with a valid prescription report using in a manner other than prescribed in the past 12 months. Of students who report misuse of either type, 28% have combined them with alcohol at least once, which can have serious health effects. Rates of misuse both with and without a prescription are shown in Table 3.

Table 3: Prescription Drug Misuse in the Past 12 Months

	Misuse w/o valid prescription	Misused own prescription
Stimulants (Adderall, Ritalin, etc.)	2.5%	1.7%
Pain medications (Oxycontin, Vicodin, etc.)	1.3%	1.5%
Sleep medications (Ambien, Halcion, etc.)	0.9%	0.6%
Benzodiazepines/sedatives (Xanax, Valium, etc.)	0.8%	0.8%

Tobacco and Nicotine Use

Twenty-three percent (23%) of Missouri college students report using tobacco/nicotine products at least once in the past 12 months (a slight decrease from 24% in 2022, trend data shown in Chart 5). Past year usage rates for various types of tobacco/nicotine products are shown in Table 4: e-cigarettes/vaporizers - includes JUUL/Puff Bar, etc. (19%), cigarettes (10%), cigars (4.1%), smokeless tobacco (3.2%), and hookah (1.6%).* Among students who have used e-cigarettes in the past year, almost half (46%) report using every day.

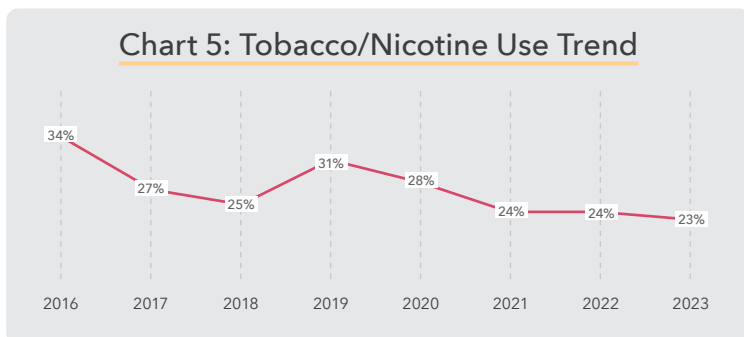


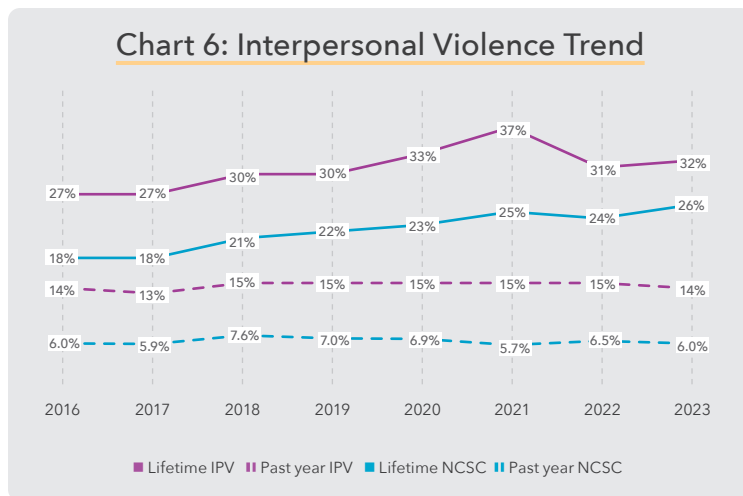
Table 4: Tobacco/Nicotine Product Use in the Past 12 Months

E-cigarettes	19%
Cigarettes	10%
Cigars	4.1%
Smokeless tobacco (e.g., chew, spit, dip, snus)	3.2%
Hookah	1.6%

Interpersonal Violence

Almost one-third (32%) of Missouri college students report experiencing intimate partner violence (IPV) in their lifetime, and 14% report an abusive relationship in the past 12 months.

Almost one-third (32%) of Missouri college students report experiencing intimate partner violence (IPV)/an abusive relationship in their lifetime, and 14% report IPV/an abusive relationship in the past 12 months. Of all NCSC students report experiencing, 6.4% occurred while the student was attending their current college or university. The majority of NCSC occurred off-campus and not related to university events (44%) or on-campus in residence halls (35%)*.



New questions related to active bystander behaviors were included in the 2023 MACHB survey. Sixty-nine percent (69%) of Missouri college students feel that they have the skills to intervene/prevent a potentially harmful situation, while only 56% of students say they know where to go to find resources on bystander intervention/violence prevention and related trainings at their campus. The vast majority of students (92%) report that they would want a peer to do something if they themselves were in danger of being harmed by someone else.

Students also reported witnessing harmful situations/behaviors at their campus within the past 12 months related to substance use, acts of bias/discrimination, interpersonal violence and mental health. The top 2 situations/behaviors that students report witnessing in each category are shown below in Table 5.

Table 5: Witnessing of Potentially Harmful Situations

Substance Use	Bias/Discrimination	Interpersonal Violence	Mental Health
30% - Blacking out/passing out from drinking/drug use	42% - Jokes or comments made reflecting group stereotypes	13% - Abusive relationship (i.e., verbal, physical, emotional, sexual, financial or other abuse)	36% - not attending class
24% - Driving after drinking/using substances	29% - Making stereotyped assumptions about a person based on their group membership	10% - Stalking, and 10% any non-consensual sexual contact	34% - pulling away from friends or activities

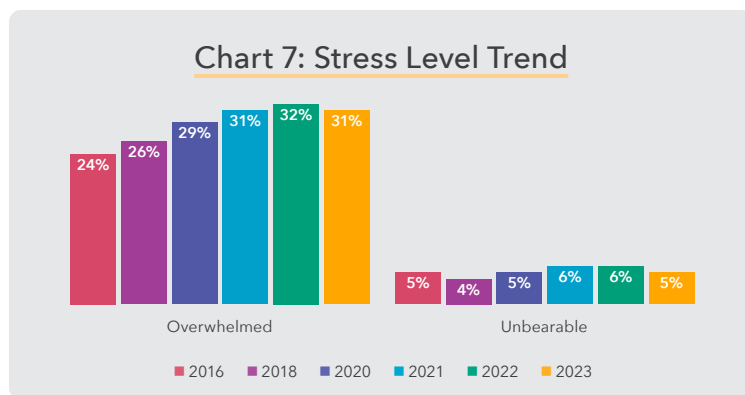
For more information, visit mopip.org

Funded by the Missouri Department of Mental Health, Division of Behavioral Health

Among students who had witnessed at least one harmful situation, very few (5.6%) reported that they did not do anything. Students were most likely to act directly (58% - ask someone to stop doing something, check on the person being harassed, etc.), enlist others to help (22%), or refer the person experiencing harm to a helpful resource (22%).

Well-Being and Sexual Health

Students are asked to gauge their stress levels in the two weeks prior to completing the survey and in 2023, 36% of students report that their stress was overwhelming or unbearable (stress level trend data is shown in Chart 7).. The most common sources of stress are school/academics (88%), time management (55%), and financial concerns (53%) *.



Other well-being questions related to typical hours of sleep and thriving/flourishing are also included on the survey. Sixty-one percent (61%) of students report that they get 7 or more hours of sleep on a typical school night. Questions on flourishing related to feelings of purpose, being engaged, and having positive self-esteem were reported highly among students, with the average score on the flourishing scale being 44.11 (on a scale ranging from 7 to 56). [Click here for more information on the flourishing scale from Diener et al.](#)

To better understand experiences of food insecurity in the past 30 days, students are asked to report if they are unable to afford eating balanced meals, worrying whether food would run out before getting money to buy more, and food that was bought not lasting and not having money to get more. Students who report sometimes, very often or always experiencing issues with food security are shown in table 6.

Table 6: Experiences of Food Insecurity in the Past 30 Days

I couldn't afford to eat balanced meals	26%
I worried whether my food would run out before I got money to buy more	24%
The food I bought just didn't last and I didn't have money to get more	16%

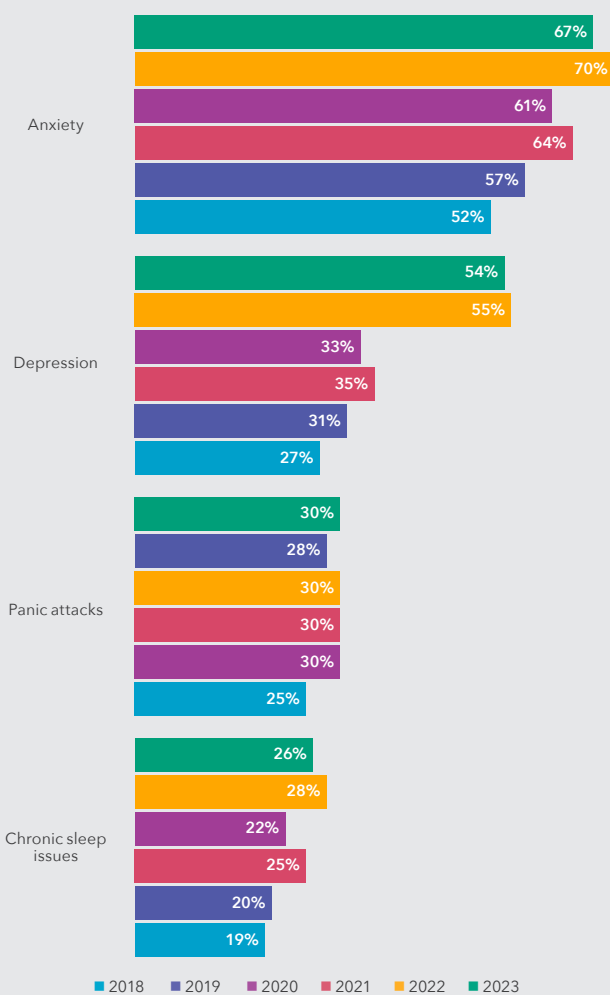
New questions were added to the MACHB survey this year related to disordered eating and body image concerns. Almost half (48%) of Missouri college students report that they feel they worry a little or a lot more about their weight and body shape than their peers. Additionally, 22% of students report that their weight is more important than most (but not all) things in their life, and 2.1% of students said that weight is the most important thing in their life. Finally, close to half (49%) of students said that in the past 3 months, at least once, they had a sense of loss of control and ate what most people would regard as an unusually large amount of food at one time. Finally, around 24% of students reported engaging in behaviors such as fasting, excessive exercise, etc. as a way to control their weight and shape in the past 3 months.

New questions related to sexual health and STI testing were also added to the survey this year. Forty-two percent (42%) of students report that they had not been tested for STIs in the past year because they are not sexually active, 18% of students have been tested in the past year, and 39% have not been tested. The most common testing locations for students were an off-campus doctor's office (54%) and an off-campus health center (e.g., a community clinic - 25%). Among students who were not tested, the most common barriers/factors contributing to their decision were not thinking they are at risk of getting an STI (44%), not knowing where to get tested (9.3%), and it being too expensive/not being covered by insurance (8.3%) or not knowing what is involved in getting tested (8.3%). Students also report using sexual health products themselves/with partners in the past year such as contraception/pregnancy prevention methods (58%), barrier/STI prevention methods (48%) and emergency contraception (13%). *

Mental Health

Missouri college students self-report experiencing issues related to mental health in the past 12 months, the most common being anxiety (67%), depression (55%), panic attacks (30%), and chronic sleep issues (26%). * Students are also asked to report if their mental health concern had been diagnosed by a mental health or medical professional. Almost half (46%) of those who had experienced a mental health concern had not received a diagnosis, 39% report being diagnosed with an anxiety disorder, and 25% report being diagnosed with major depression.*

Chart 8: Past Year Mental Health Concern Trend



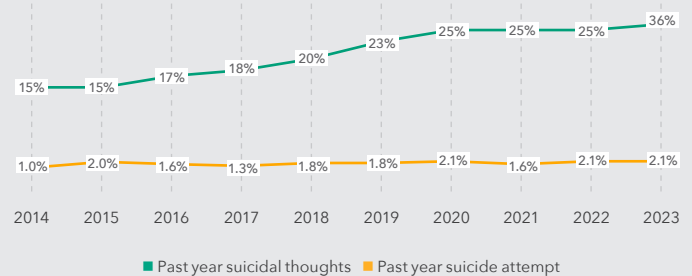
For students who had experienced a mental health concern in the past 12 months, 19% did not seek assistance. For those who did seek assistance, their primary source of assistance was family/friends (28%), an off-campus mental health provider (21%),

an off-campus medical doctor (19%), or the college/university counseling services (12%).

Suicidality

Half (50%) of Missouri college students report having suicidal thoughts in their lifetime, and 26% of students report suicidal thoughts in the past 12 months. In the past 12 months, 2.1% of students report attempting suicide. For those who had thoughts or attempts in the past 12 months, 36% sought assistance. The most common places students primarily sought assistance were an off-campus mental health center (32%), family/friends (25%), or the college/university counseling services (19%). Additionally, 39% of Missouri college students have been concerned about a friend having suicidal thoughts or exhibiting suicidal behaviors in the past 12 months.

Chart 9: Suicidality Trend



Summary

Partners in Prevention continues to monitor the critical health behaviors of college students. To reiterate, data consistently shows that academic achievement and retention are impacted by the health, safety, and well-being of students. Substance misuse, experiences of interpersonal violence, and mental health concerns are intersectional issues that impact students' ability to succeed and thrive while attending institutions of higher education. Comprehensive and evidence-informed prevention and health promotion practices are an investment in the lives of students and the overall campus environment. For more information about Partners in Prevention and to explore our research, visit mopip.org.

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Funded by the Missouri Department of Mental Health, Division of Behavioral Health

Partners in Prevention Resources

CHEERS

Bars, restaurants and nightclubs participating in CHEERS provide FREE non-alcoholic beverages to the acknowledged designated driver in a group of two or more.

mopip.org/CHEERS

Drive Safe Drive Smart (DSDS)

PIP member campuses and the Missouri Department of Transportation are driven to help Missouri's college students Drive Safe Drive Smart.

mopip.org/DSDS

Engage

The Engage Violence Prevention Training was designed to introduce incoming students to the concept that by contributing to a culture of care within their campus community, they can be a part of creating a safer campus community.

mopip.org/engage

Party Safe

Party Safe will increase your skills and knowledge in planning and hosting a successful, fun, and safe event of any kind.

mopiptraining.org/partysafe

Ask Listen Refer (ALR)

Ask Listen Refer is an online suicide prevention training tool that takes about 20 minutes to complete. The program addresses the need to educate students, faculty, staff, and parents about suicide prevention, and also addresses the need to have suicide prevention resources in an online format. The goal of this program is to educate students, faculty and staff on how to ASK if someone is thinking about suicide, LISTEN to their response and REFER them to a professional.

asklistenrefer.org

MoSafeRx Initiative

Prescription drug misuse is of particular concern for college students. With the MoSafeRx Initiative, we hope to educate students on the dangers of prescription drug misuse, overdose education and response, and safe and healthy alternatives to use.

mopip.org/RX

Missouri Alliance of Collegiate Recovery Organizations (MACRO)

MACRO, the Missouri Alliance of Collegiate Recovery Organizations, is a statewide initiative to support addiction recovery efforts on college campuses. With support from the Missouri Department of Mental Health, MACRO provides resources, networking opportunities, and financial support for schools as they start and grow their own recovery support services.

mopip.org/MACRO

Contact Partners in Prevention at (573) 884-7551.

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*question is select all that apply

**question is select up to 2 choices

Citations

1. SAMHSA, Center for Behavioral Statistics and Quality. 2019 National Survey on Drug Use and Health. Table 6.21B—Types of Illicit Drug, Tobacco Product, and Alcohol Use in Past Month among Persons Aged 18 to 22, by College Enrollment Status and Gender: Percentages, 2018 and 2019. <https://www.samhsa.gov/data/sites/default/files/reports/rpt29394/NSDUHDetailedTabs2019/NSDUHDetTabsSect6pe2019.htm#tab6-21b>

2. B Han, WM Compton, EB Einstein, ND Volkow. Associations of Suicidality Trends With Cannabis Use as a Function of Sex and Depression Status(link is external). JAMA Network Open. DOI: 10.1001/jamanetworkopen.2021.13025 (2021).