

The Pennsylvania Youth Survey (PAYS) How-To Guide for School Professionals

"IT PAYS TO ASK...IT PAYS TO KNOW"

www.episcenter.org/paysguide



The EPISCenter represents a collaborative partnership between the Pennsylvania Commission on Crime and Delinquency (PCCD), and the Prevention Research Center, College of Health and Human Development, Penn State University. The EPISCenter is funded by PCCD and the Department of Public Welfare. This resource was developed by the EPISCenter through PCCD grant VP-ST-24368.

Introduction:

What is the Pennsylvania Youth Survey?

The Pennsylvania Youth Survey (PAYS) is a student survey administered in odd-numbered years (e.g., 2009, 2011, 2013) to youth in 6th, 8th, 10th, and 12th grades in participating schools throughout the Commonwealth.

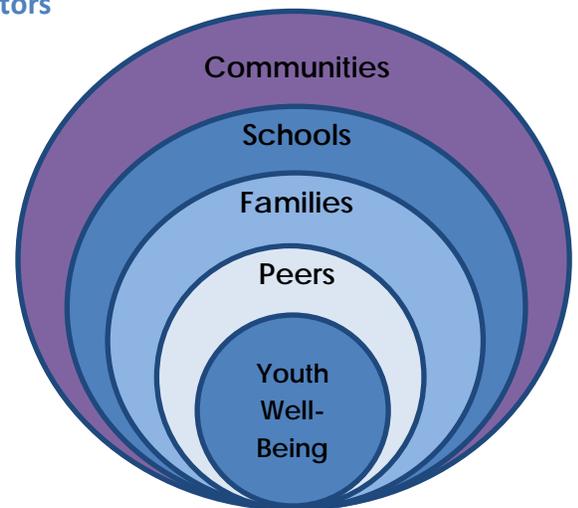
The survey is **anonymous, voluntary and confidential**. Youth are never required to complete the survey, and their identity is not connected to their answers.

The questions asked in the survey cover many types of **attitudes, knowledge, behaviors, and experiences**. Youth respond to questions on topics such as:

- Violence and drugs on school property;
- Being bullied;
- Involvement in gangs;
- Use of alcohol, tobacco, and other drugs (ATOD);
- Depression; and
- Gambling.

Youth also answer questions related to **risk and protective factors (RPF)**. **Risk Factors** increase the chances of a youth having problems, and **Protective Factors** decrease the chances. RPF questions in the PAYS cover many areas of youths' lives, including:

- Community;
- School;
- Family;
- Peer; and
- Individual.



The PA Commission on Crime and Delinquency (PCCD) sponsored the administration of the PAYS since 1989. In 2013, the PA Dept. of Education (PDE) and PA Dept. of Drug and Alcohol Prevention (DDAP) joined PCCD in sponsoring school-district participation in the survey.

Introduction:

What makes PAYS data valuable to Schools?

Finding root causes of problems

- The PAYS includes data on risk and protective factors. These factors can be viewed as the root cause of youth problems and of youth well-being. PAYS data enables us to find and address these root causes, like commitment to school, **instead of only looking at the symptoms**, like poor grades.

Youth reporting on their own experiences

- This survey asks youth to share their personal experiences across many areas of their lives. It provides an opportunity for youth to directly and confidentially share their experiences of violence, drugs, bullying, depression, and more. Research has found that youth typically respond honestly to confidential surveys, so this data can provide very **valuable insight** into the lives of our young people.

Looking across many areas of their lives

- In order to understand our youth, we must understand the many parts of their lives. The PAYS does this by asking questions about the **youth's community, school, family, and peers**, as well as questions about the youth **themselves**.

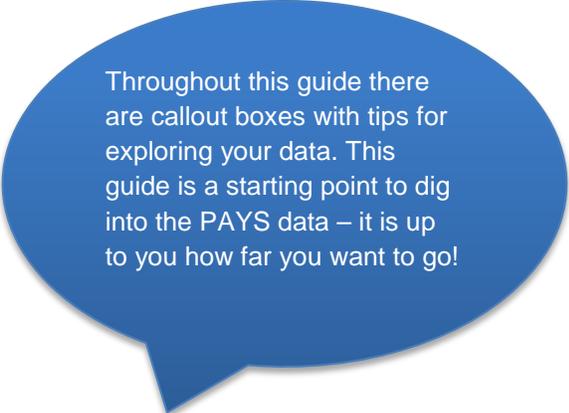
Setting School-wide Priorities

- The PAYS data can shed a light on areas, strong or weak, that need to be addressed by your school or school district, enabling you to make data-driven decisions. Use your PAYS data to pick prevention programming, make goals for your school year, and improve the overall student experience in your school.

Getting Started:

In this guide, you will learn how to...

- Develop your PAYS team and analyze your data
- Identify your strengths and challenges
- Determine your priorities
- Review existing resources related to your priorities
- Explore evidence-based programming
- Develop a comprehensive school prevention plan
- Share your PAYS data
- Weave your plan into the larger community prevention framework



Throughout this guide there are callout boxes with tips for exploring your data. This guide is a starting point to dig into the PAYS data – it is up to you how far you want to go!

...and ultimately map your path to success!

Getting Started:

What you need to know...

If you are just starting this process, going through your PAYS report can be a daunting but very important task. This guide is meant to walk you through the steps to understand and utilize your PAYS data. Additionally, the PAYS Workbook contains supplemental materials and space for answers to the questions posed in this guide. Using your PAYS data and this guide you will be able to better understand what is happening in your school and your community, and how best to help your students.

View the worksheets and handouts that will assist you throughout your process:

www.episcenter.org/paysguide.

Throughout each section of this guide, you will find red boxes like this one with links to the PAYS Workbook and supplemental materials that are designed help you dig a little deeper into your report. These resources will help to support you in each step of the process.

Acronym Guide:

- ATOD: Alcohol, Tobacco and Other Drugs
- CTC: Communities That Care
- DDAP: Department of Drug and Alcohol Programs
- EBP: Evidence-based Programs
- PAYS: Pennsylvania Youth Survey
- PBIS: Positive Behavior Interventions and Supports
- PCCD: Pennsylvania Commission on Crime and Delinquency
- PDE: Pennsylvania Department of Education
- RPF: Risk and Protective Factors

Section One:

Develop your PAYS team and analyze your data

Step One: Who should be on your team?

Look for diversity on your team

The more diverse your team is, the more in-depth your analysis can be. No one expects one person to be able to do all of this!

Examples of potential team members:

- School Counselors
- SAP team members
- Administrators (AP, Principal)
- Superintendent/Assistant Superintendent
- School/community program providers
- Family Liaison/Specialist
- School District Data Analyst/Research Specialist
- Interested Community Members (coalition members, etc.)
- Student Services Director

Tips for Reading Your Report

- Look for highs and lows that really catch your eye on first read.
- Make note of how your local data compares with county, state and national

Step Two: How will the work get done?

Each team member should read through this guide, review the PAYS Workbook, and explore the supplemental materials found at www.episcenter.psu.edu/paysguide.

- **Read the report**
Each team member should read the report and plan to spend time discussing the results they found.
- **Divide and conquer**
To save time, consider dividing the portion of the PAYS report on behaviors into sections and have two people read each section. Be sure to have everyone read the risk and protective factors sections.
- **Set completion goals**
Determine dates for several meetings to discuss the results of your PAYS report; set goals for completing the tasks.

- **Elect team leader(s)**
Identify one or more team leaders who will help organize the remaining steps in your analysis process.

Step Three: Familiarize yourself with PAYS materials and resources

View the worksheets and handouts that will assist you throughout your process:

www.episcenter.org/paysguide.

- **Understand Risk and Protective Factors**
While it can be appealing to only identify and address problem behaviors, this should only be a way to start your PAYS conversation. It is important to review the [PA Risk and Protective Factor Matrices](#) to help you better understand how risk and protective factors are developed and how they related to youth behaviors. Reduction of risk factors and increasing protective factors should be the priority targets when addressing your youth behavior issues. Once you have selected your priorities, you will then want to utilize your PAYS data and other archival data that you have collected to support the risk and protective factor priorities that you selected for your school district.
- **Determine your interests**
Identify areas of the report that you find most intriguing and where you would like to provide more in-depth analysis; this will be helpful if your team decides to “divide and conquer” the work.

PAYS Guide Section One Materials

- [Understanding Your PAYS Data](#)
- [PA Protective Factor Profile Matrix](#)
- [PA Risk Factor Profile Matrix](#)

Section Two:

Identify your strengths and challenges

Step One: Identify the positive and concerning behaviors that you are seeing reported by your students in your PAYS report

- **What behaviors are students doing well with?**
Look for **low percentages** of students reporting behaviors such as drug use, bullying, anxiety and/or depression.
- **What behaviors are students struggling with?**
Look for **high percentages** of students reporting behaviors like drug use, bullying, anxiety and/or depression.
- **Think about how this data is similar to or different than what you know based on your school records.**
Comparing the data from your PAYS to office referrals, counseling reports, and/or SAP team data can help you round out and better understand what is happening in your schools.

Look for patterns in your data. Certain behaviors can co-occur or influence one another. (e.g.- high availability of drugs can lead to more use). What do you see?

Step Two: Identify and list the strengths and challenges identified in your PAYS report

Behavioral data tells you what is occurring, but it is the risk and protective factors that can tell you **WHY** the behaviors are occurring. Each of the risk and protective factors in the PAYS has been shown to influence the likelihood of engaging in problem behaviors.

- **What protective factors are strengths?**
Look for protective factors where there is a **high percentage** of youth reporting protection (look for rates that are the same as or above county, state, and national norms).
- **What risk factors are strengths?**
Look for risk factors where there is a **low percentage** of youth at risk (look for rates that are lower than the county, state, and national norms).
- **What protective factors are challenges?**
Look for protective factors where there is a **low percentage** of youth reporting protection (rates lower than the county, state, and national norms).



- **What risk factors are challenges?**
Look for risk factors where there is a **high percentage** of youth at risk (rates higher than county, state, and national norms).

Step Three: Summarize your results

After you have identified the strengths and challenges related to your students' behaviors and the risk and protective factors, ask yourself if there are areas where youth are experiencing more or less success. For example:

- Are strengths or challenges clustered in specific domains (individual/peer, family, school, community)?
- Are there strengths or challenges in pro-social involvement for the family, school, and community?
- Is there a specific grade that is more at risk than others?
- What protective factors were the lowest or highest?

Important Notes:

- Not all data points will have national comparisons. Also, only counties with two or more school districts participating in the PAYS will have county-level reports available.
- It is important during this phase of the analysis to begin to think about how and with whom your team plans to share your PAYS data and analysis. Turn to page 16 of this guide to quickly review the section on sharing your PAYS data.

PAYS Guide Section Two Materials

- [PAYS Workbook: PAYS Survey Analysis and Report-Out Guide](#)
- [School and Community Health Check-Up Profile Template](#)
- [PAYS Executive Summary Report Template](#)
- ["Focus on our High School Seniors" Report Template](#)

Section Three:

Determine your priorities

Step One: Determine RPF priorities to be addressed by your school district

Based on the information you collected and your understanding of risk and protective factors, your team will have a clearer understanding of the areas that need to be addressed. Make a list of all possible targeted areas; select **at least one, but not more than three**, risk and/or protective factors to be your school's priorities.

There are several questions that your team needs to ask when selecting priorities:

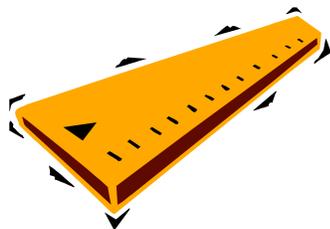
- Who will be responsible for determining the priorities? Will it be your group? Are you making recommendations to others for final decision?
- What is your ability to influence the risk and protective factors on your list?
- Can programs or processes be put in place in your schools to address them?
- Do you have the resources to do so?
- Do you need to consider involving other community members (perhaps your local prevention coalition, SCA, or mental health agency)?
- Are there other political/social/economic considerations that the team should consider?

The PAYS is just one source of data that gives you information about your school and community. Consider using other forms of data to confirm the results of your PAYS. (e.g.- attendance records or elementary reading scores may help shed light on low school commitment)

PAYS Guide Section Three Materials

- [PAYS Workbook: Determining Your Targeted Risk & Protective Factor Priorities](#)
- [Archival Data Resources](#)

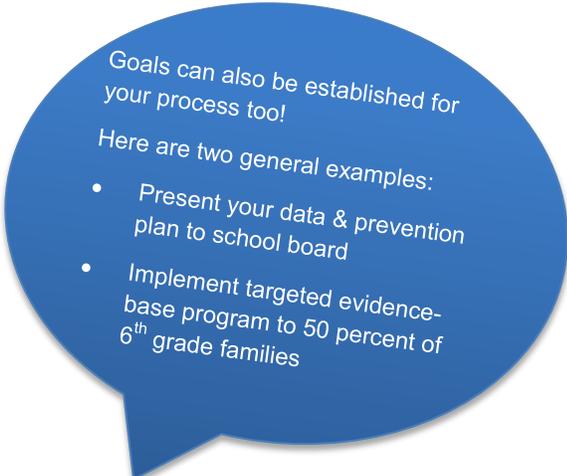
Step Two: Establish measurable short and long-term goals



It is important to develop measurable short- and long-term goals for each of your priority risk and/or protective factors. Additionally, your team might want to establish goals for problem behaviors identified with your PAYS data. These goals will help you track your progress in both the short and long terms.

Measurable goals should include:

- A specific behavior, risk factor, or protective factor – the more specific the easier it is to stay on target.
- How the goal will be measured – what tool will you use to measure your progress?
- A baseline data point – this shows where you currently are.
- How much of a change you are expecting to see and by when?



Short-term goals established for items found on the PAYS can be tracked from one PAYS administration to the next (**Remember: the PAYS survey is administered every other year, in the odd years**).

Long-term goals are generally set for five to ten years and can also be written for both PAYS data points and process as well. There is no exact right or wrong amount of time, you just need to be sure that you select an amount of time that you will commit to tracking and will be relevant to your school and community.

Here are some examples of well-written goals:

Behavior Goal

To decrease youth anti-social behaviors as measured by 6th-grade students reporting having been hit, kicked, pushed, or shoved around within the past year on the 2013 PA Youth Survey (PAYS) from the current baseline of 35 percent to 25 percent by 2019.

2013 Baseline: 35%

2017 Desired Outcome: 29%

2015 Desired Outcome: 32%

2019 Desired Outcome: 25%

Priority Protective Factor Goal

To increase bonding to family as measured by 10th-grade students reporting poor family attachment on the 2013 PA Youth Survey (PAYS) from the current baseline protective factor percentage of 40 percent to 55 percent by 2019.

2013 Baseline: 40%

2017 Desired Outcome: 50%

2015 Desired Outcome: 45%

2019 Desired Outcome: 55%

Priority Risk Factor Goal

To decrease family conflict as measured by 8th-grade students reporting high levels of family conflict on the 2013 PA Youth Survey (PAYS) from the current baseline risk factor percentage of 75 percent to 60 percent by 2019.

2013 Baseline: 75%

2017 Desired Outcome: 65%

2015 Desired Outcome: 70%

2019 Desired Outcome: 60%

PAYS Guide Section Three Materials

- [PAYS Workbook: Goal Writing Worksheet](#)



Section Four:

Review existing resources related to your priorities

Using PAYS information will allow you to use a data-driven approach to decision making in your school. You will be able to get a clear snapshot of what types of problems students in your school are having which can aid in intervention planning. The data can also be used for selecting targeted prevention programs that align with the problems your students are experiencing.

Step One: Determine who would best be able to assist with your resource assessment

This part of the process may be done by the same team members as those who worked on the data collection part of your process or you may need expand your team to include those who are knowledgeable of the programs, policies, and practices that are currently in place to address your prevention needs.

Here are some examples of good team members:

- School Counselors
- SAP team members
- Administrators (AP, Principal)
- Superintendent/Assistant Superintendent
- School/community program providers
- Family Liaison/Specialist
- School District Data Analyst/Research Specialist
- Interested Community Members (Coalition members, etc.)

Step Two: Explore existing programs, policies and practices available to address the priorities determined

Using the Resource Assessment Survey Template, you will explore existing programs and practices that your school district and community have in place to address your priorities. It is important that you find out as much as you can about each program and practice as it relates to your priority in both your school setting and out in the community. Very generally, you will ask yourself the following questions:

- Does your school/district already have programs, policies, and/or practices in place to address the priorities chosen?
- Are there programs, policies and/or practices in your community that are being implemented that are addressing your needs?

Step Three: Conduct a gap analysis

Using the “School Program Analysis” Worksheet, you will be able to focus on gaps not only in types of programs and practices available to address your priorities, but also gaps related to the following areas:

- Effectiveness of programs;
- Funding for programs;
- Developmental (ages, stages, etc.) being served;
- Demographic (cultural, ethnic, gender, etc.) served;
- Schools/Areas served; and
- Implementation challenges (fidelity, dosage, etc.) being encountered.

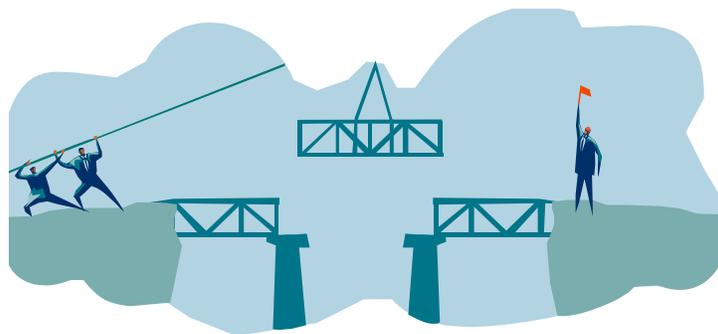
Step Four: Summarize information gathered through this process

All of the information gathered here will allow you to make more informed decisions on how to spend your district’s limited resources to address RPFs that are targeted. Using the resource summary worksheet you will be able to identify:

- The effective programs, policies and practices;
- What areas these programs policies and practices target;
- What needs to be expanded, modified and/or implemented to address the RPF priorities; and
- Any duplicate or overlapping services.

PAYS Guide Section Four Materials

- [PAYS Workbook: School Program Analysis Worksheet](#)
- [PAYS Workbook: Resource Assessment Worksheet](#)



Section Five:

Putting PAYS into action

Step One: Explore evidence-based programming at your school

When exploring evidence-based programs, there are several things to consider, including:

- How confident are you that your current programs are addressing your prioritized risk and protective factors?
- How confident are you that these programs will address the long-term outcomes you would like to see for your students?
- What information is out there to help you find other programs?
- How well do the programs you are implementing or are interested in implementing fit with your school, and how feasible are they to implement with your current resources?

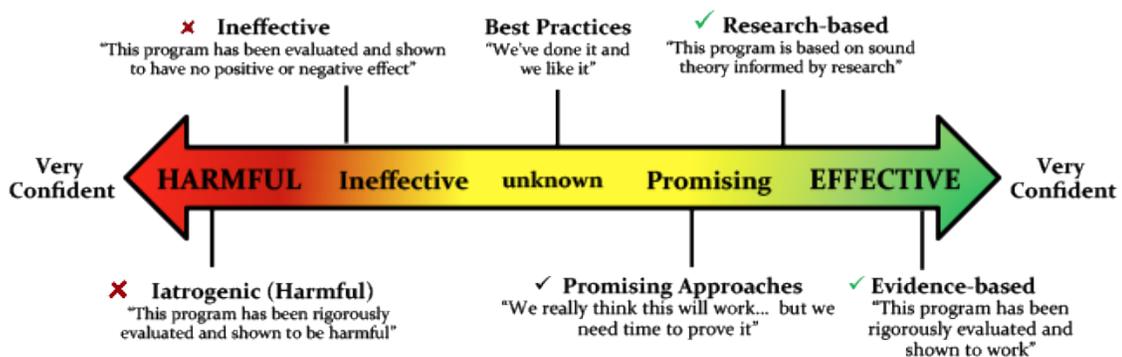
Did you know? There are evidence-based prevention programs that can be delivered as part of the regular school day curriculum that meet PA Common Core Standards?

Think about the programs and practices that you identified in your resource assessment. How confident are you in those programs?

- Are your current programs evidence-based programs?
- Are you sure they are working?
- Do you have a way to measure their effectiveness in your schools?
- If you have programs in place that already address your needs, how do you strengthen your confidence in those programs?

Collecting systematic data to measure fidelity and outcomes of the program increase the likelihood the program will have the desired results.

Continuum of Confidence*



*Bumbarger, B. K., Moore, J. E., & Cooper, B. R. (2013). Examining adaptations of evidence-based programs in natural contexts. *The Journal of Primary Prevention*, 34(3), 147-161. Retrieved from <http://link.springer.com/article/10.1007%2Fs10935-013-0303-6>



If needed, find other programs that align with your prioritized risk and protective factors.

There are many websites, lists, and directories of evidence-based programs and practices. When looking at these websites, be sure to understand how each one rate the programs included in the list. Not all programs are as effective as others – just because they are on a list does not mean they are the best option. Ratings also vary by website, make sure to read their selection criteria closely.

See these websites for more information on evidence-based programs:

- **Blueprints for Healthy Youth Development**
www.blueprintsprograms.com
- **SAMHSA’s National Registry of Evidence Based Programs and Practices (NREPP)**
www.nrepp.samhsa.gov
- **Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention (OJJDP) Model Programs Guide**
www.ojjdp.gov/mpg
- **National Institute of Justice (NIJ)**
www.crimesolutions.gov
- **EPISCenter Website**
www.episcenter.psu.edu

Consider how the programs you are interested in implementing fit with your school, and how feasible they would be with your resources.

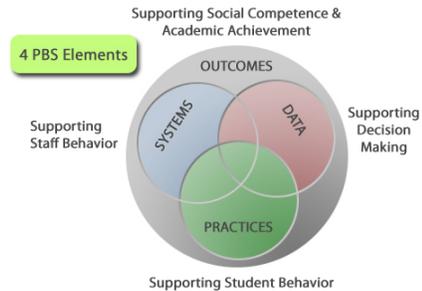
- Can your school afford the ongoing program materials?
- Can you get someone in your school certified as a trainer?
- Will the program fit in your existing school structure or would you need outside help?
- See the “Fit and Feasibility” worksheet for more information on this topic.

PAYS Guide Section Five Materials

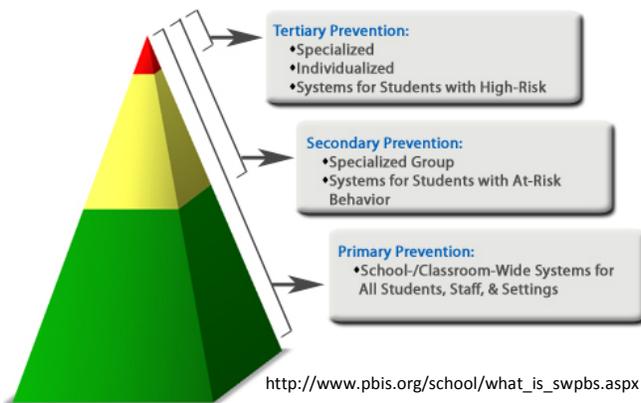
- [PAYS Workbook: Sharing Your Data](#)
- [PAYS Workbook: Practicing the Positive](#)
- [Questions to Ask When Selecting Evidence-Based Programs](#)
- [Evidence-based Program Guide](#)
- [Understanding the Research Lingo](#)
- [Program Fit and Feasibility Worksheet](#)

Step Two: Develop a comprehensive school prevention plan

One of the most important functions of the PAYS is to provide another source of data for developing a comprehensive school prevention plan. PAYS supports data driven decision making by allowing your school another way to identify behaviors that might be a risk to students; it also helps to inform you of the underlying risk factors that might contribute to the problem. Further, you can learn about what is going well, areas of protection that can serve to buffer students from negative effects. Using this data in conjunction with the archival data (attendance, referrals, etc.) will allow you to be more exact in selecting programs to address problems that are occurring. PAYS data allows you not only to identify areas for improvement, it also can serve as a progress monitoring tool to track how things are going on an ongoing basis.



Continuum of School-Wide Instructional & Positive Behavior Support



Using the risk and protective factor scores from the PAYS, you will be able understand what universal prevention programs need to be put in place to address your Primary Prevention needs. You will also be able to track how programs are working in your school by looking at PAYS data over time.

In addition, specific problems can be identified (ATOD use, depression, etc.) through the PAYS demonstrate a need for certain secondary prevention or intervention services. While the

PAYS cannot tell you what students need the program, it can indicate the types of programs that should be made available to address the overall needs in the school.

Many schools have prevention plans with SAP or other school agreements related to intervention or prevention. We encourage the integration of these plans into a larger comprehensive school wide plan. Sometimes, these plans exist in silos; what happens in one area of the school or district may not be coordinated with other areas. Doing a school-wide plan allows coordination of time and resources for a larger effort.

Prevention plans include:

- Long and short-term goals related to program implementation
- Long and short-term goals related to student behavior change

Utilize the PAYS workbook and supplemental materials to assist in creating a school-wide prevention plan.



Step Three: Share your PAYS data

Use the data in your school to create the environment you want

One of the most important things you can do with your PAYS data is to share it with your students. They need to know that the information they are providing is important and useful. Data on risk factors such as depression or bullying can give you a platform from which you can open a discussion about these issues with the youth. Because this data comes directly from them, it is more meaningful than other any other statistics that could be shared.

You can also find simple ways to embed collected data through the PAYS into the school environment. Using positive messages about peer use norms (e.g. - **most kids at your school DO NOT drink/smoke**) is one example of how to help to reframe problem behaviors for students.

Sharing data with community stakeholders

Data provided through this PAYS report contains information that is pertinent to all areas (community, family, school, peer and individual) of students' lives. Sometimes, the risk factors identified with the PAYS influence a student's ability to be successful but are not able to be addressed within the school context. By sharing the information in your report, you can partner with community stakeholders and have a bigger impact on your students.

These are just a few examples of the types of data you may share with different audiences. Highlight information that tells the best story about your strengths and your needs!

Audience	Data Examples	Method
Parents, Community	30-day ATOD use	By grade, gateway drugs vs. other
PTAs	Prosocial opportunities	By grade, change over time
Policymakers/ Funders	Risk & protective factors (Section 5)	Comparisons to state, national norms
Prevention Boards	Risk & protective factors (Section 5)	Highs & lows, change over time
School Administrators	School climate & safety (Section 2)	Comparisons to state, change over time
Youth	Prosocial opportunities, Bullying	By grade, by bullying type
County Officials	Risk & protective factors, Gambling, DUI, other illicit drugs	Youth overall, change over time
Media	ATOD prevalence, lifetime use	Comparisons to state, national norms

More information on what kinds of data might be useful to share with your different audiences is available at:

http://www.portal.state.pa.us/portal/server.pt/community/justice_research/5259/informational_factsheets_about_pays_for_various_audiences/1593509.

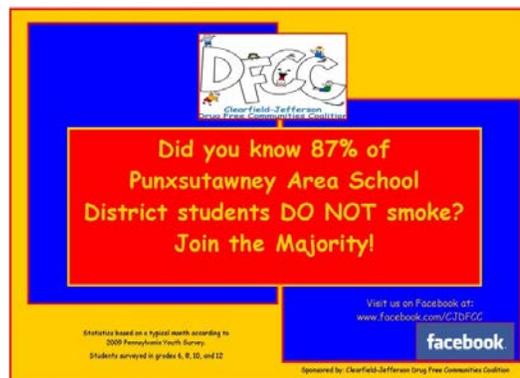


Find positive ways to share data from your surveys

When it comes to sharing messages from the PAYS in your schools and communities, positive messaging enables students to hear all the positive news about young people. Social norming research has shown that sharing positive messages also leads to an increase in positive behaviors and attitudes about students. Messages with a “scare-tactic” attitude often have negative and sometimes harmful effects.

Communities in Schools of Pennsylvania (CISPA) is currently leading a positive messaging campaign for schools, prevention coalitions, and students in PA.

All Pennsylvania school districts are invited to apply for \$1,000 in funding to support youth positive messaging projects. Prevention Coalitions will be able to apply for \$5,000 to use their PAYS data and to further projects supported in their local schools. Students are eligible to enter contests by telling their story on why they choose to be drug and alcohol free. Learn more about the project by visiting www.MyVoicePA.org.



Note: From Clearfield-Jefferson Drug Free Communities Coalition

Step Four: Weave your plan into the larger community prevention network

Seek out partnerships with coalitions and key stakeholders in your community

Partnerships throughout the community can be a key to your success. Many communities have people in areas outside of the school that can provide resources (funding, expertise, manpower, etc.). Identifying these key stakeholders for partnerships will allow you to broaden your resource base beyond what only the school district can provide.

One partnership we encourage is with local prevention coalitions. Drug Free Communities (DFC), Single County Authorities (SCA), and Communities That Care (CTC) coalitions are all actively engaged in prevention planning at the community level. If you already have a prevention coalition in your community, they may be able to help with additional ideas, resources, and partnerships. These coalitions can be engaged at any time during the prevention planning process. They can often help you develop your school prevention strategy as well.



The EPISCenter is a technical assistance provider for coalitions in the state of Pennsylvania. We maintain a website that contains a directory of coalitions to enable you to see who you could partner with in your area: <http://www.episcenter.psu.edu/ctcresources>.

Please note: Although we do our best to list all coalitions, there may be some we are not aware of. If you do not see one listed for your local area, please contact the EPISCenter for more information at episcenter@psu.edu.

Resource Development

PAYS data can be used to provide the necessary data on your grant applications to demonstrate need in your schools. Using this data along with other school or community archival data, you will be able to create a full picture of the need for prevention programs in your school and community.

See these websites for more information on grants available for these programs:

- **Pennsylvania Department of Education**
www.education.state.pa.us
- **Pennsylvania Commission on Crime and Delinquency**
www.pccd.state.pa.us



In closing...

This guide has provided a variety of information and tips on how to fully utilize your PAYS data to improve your school and community. While this may seem overwhelming, working to understand the data and responses your students provided in the PAYS can lead to rewarding improvements and goals within your school.

For more information about the materials presented in this guide, please visit www.episcenter.psu.edu/paysguide. An interactive online version of the Guide and additional supplemental materials and worksheets are available on the website. Questions? [Contact us using this form](#).

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