

What Our Kids Are Saying: Inside the Darien Youth Survey

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**Thriving Youth
Darien**

Convened by The Community Fund of Darien

Overview

- **Survey Results Overview**
 - Survey Background
 - Protective Factors
 - Risk Factors
 - Technology Use
 - Mental Health
 - Substance Use
- **Skill-Building Workshop ft. Amanda Craig, PhD, LMFT & Rebecca Campbell, LCSW**

Introduction to Thriving Youth Darien

Thriving Youth Darien is a volunteer coalition that convenes local community organizations to promote & empower positive youth development, with the goal of reducing teen substance use.

- Founded in 2008
- Coalition members include 35+ leaders from organizations and individuals serving youth in Darien
- Awarded a 5-year DFC grant in 2021; \$125,000/year
- The Community Fund of Darien acts as fiscal agent for state/federal grants supporting prevention work



Darien Youth Survey

- First completed in 2008. Now administered every 2 years in Jan/Feb
 - 7th iteration
- Partnership with Darien Public Schools; given to 6th -12th grades
- Anonymous
- Parent opt-out option



Protective Factors

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Trusted Adults: 2023 to 2025

School Counselor:

↑ from 46% to 55%

Teacher:

↑ from 36% to 43%

School administrator:

↑ from 7% to 14%

School nurse:

↑ from 6% to 9%



70% are engaged in productive activities

INDIVIDUAL PROTECTIVE FACTORS



88% are developing a sense of purpose in their life



76% know where to get help if they're struggling with a mental health issue and **63%** know where to go for help for substance misuse



87% have connection to a trusted adult



93% report high levels of love, support and acceptance from family

COMMUNITY PROTECTIVE FACTORS



91% feel safe in the community



78% report their peers in school care about them



46% feel very or extremely connected to adults.



88% feel safe at school

Risk Factors

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13% bullied on school property



23% engaged in gambling activities

RISK FACTORS



35% report irregular eating or exercise habits



Technology



Substance Use



Mental Health
Concerns

Teen Technology Use

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34% felt left out
or excluded due to
social media



26% didn't get enough sleep
and **25%** didn't complete
homework due to gaming



31% felt worse
about themselves
due to social media

SOCIAL MEDIA & GAMING

Consequences of Smartphone Use:

- **48%** felt more productive when they limited use
- **34%** have tried to reduce use over the past 12 months
- **23%** feel phone use impacts their sleep



56% used smartphone for studying.



53% feel the amount of time spent on the phone is "about right" and **45%** feel it's "too much"

SMARTPHONE
USE



27% feel anxious when they don't have their smartphone and **21%** feel lonely.



82% feel happy when they don't have their smartphone and **78%** feel peaceful.

Teen Mental Health

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Changes from 2023 to 2025:

Decrease in stress:

- **Academics:**
62% to 52%
- **Expectations of future:** 46% to 43%
- **Sports achievement:**
27% to 24%

Very little change:

- **College/Post HS:**
39% to 40%



Academics
52%



Future Expectations **43%**



College &
Post HS
40%

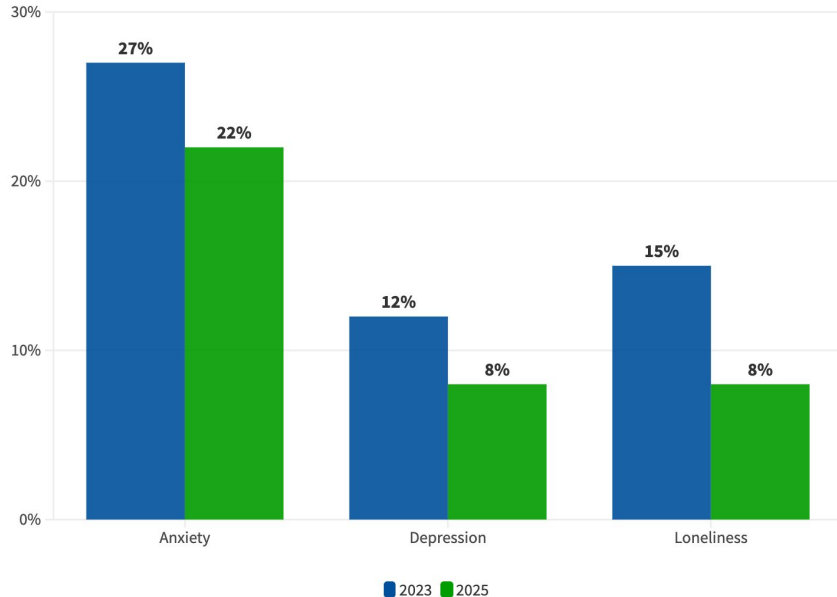


Sports Achievement **24%**

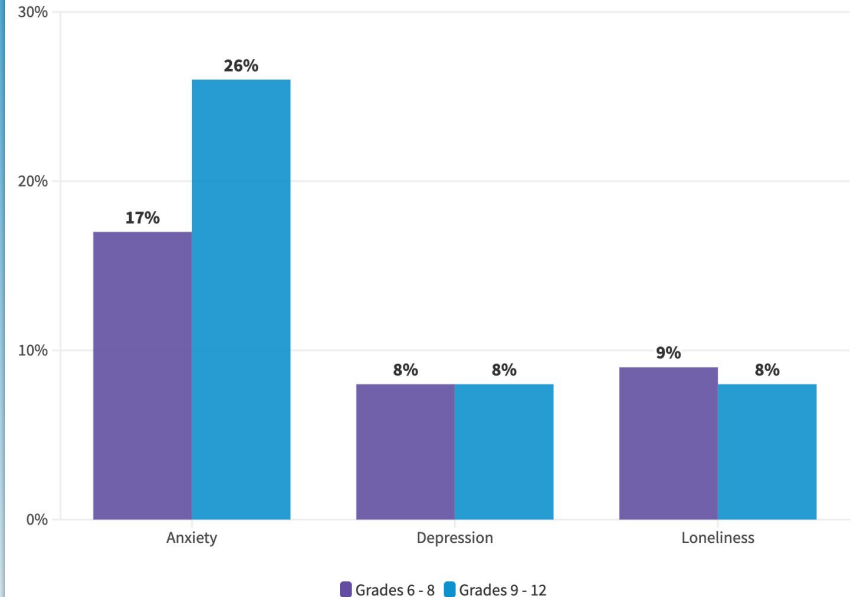
TOP 4 SOURCES
OF STRESS FOR
GRADES 9 - 12

Youth who feel frequently anxious, depressed & lonely in the past month has improved from 2023 to 2025.

Frequent Feelings of Anxiety, Depression & Loneliness in 2023 & 2025

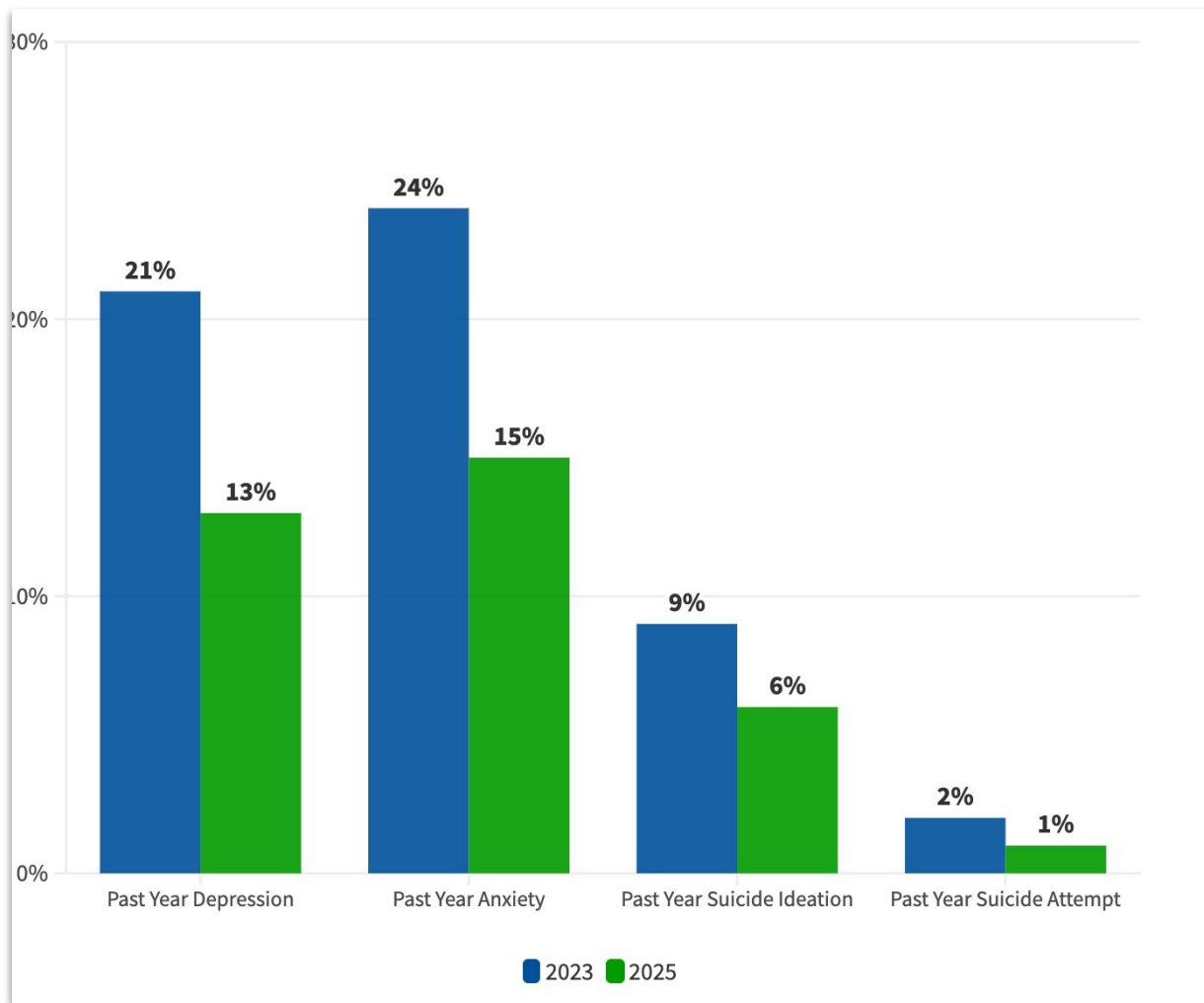


Frequent Feelings of Anxiety, Depression & Loneliness in the Past Month



Past Year Anxiety, Depression and Suicide

Rates of
anxiety,
depression &
suicide have
decreased from
2023 to 2025.



Middle school
& high school
rates
are identical or
nearly identical!



268 respondents (15%)

reported feeling so anxious
almost every day for two
weeks or more in a row
that they stopped doing
some usual activities



104 respondents (6%)

reported seriously
considering attempting suicide

DEPRESSION & SUICIDE

PAST 12 MONTHS
GRADE 6 -12



69 respondents (4%)

reported making a plan
about how they would
attempt suicide



231 respondents (13%)

reported feeling so sad or
hopeless almost every day
for two weeks or more in
a row that that stopped
doing some usual activities



22 respondents (1%)

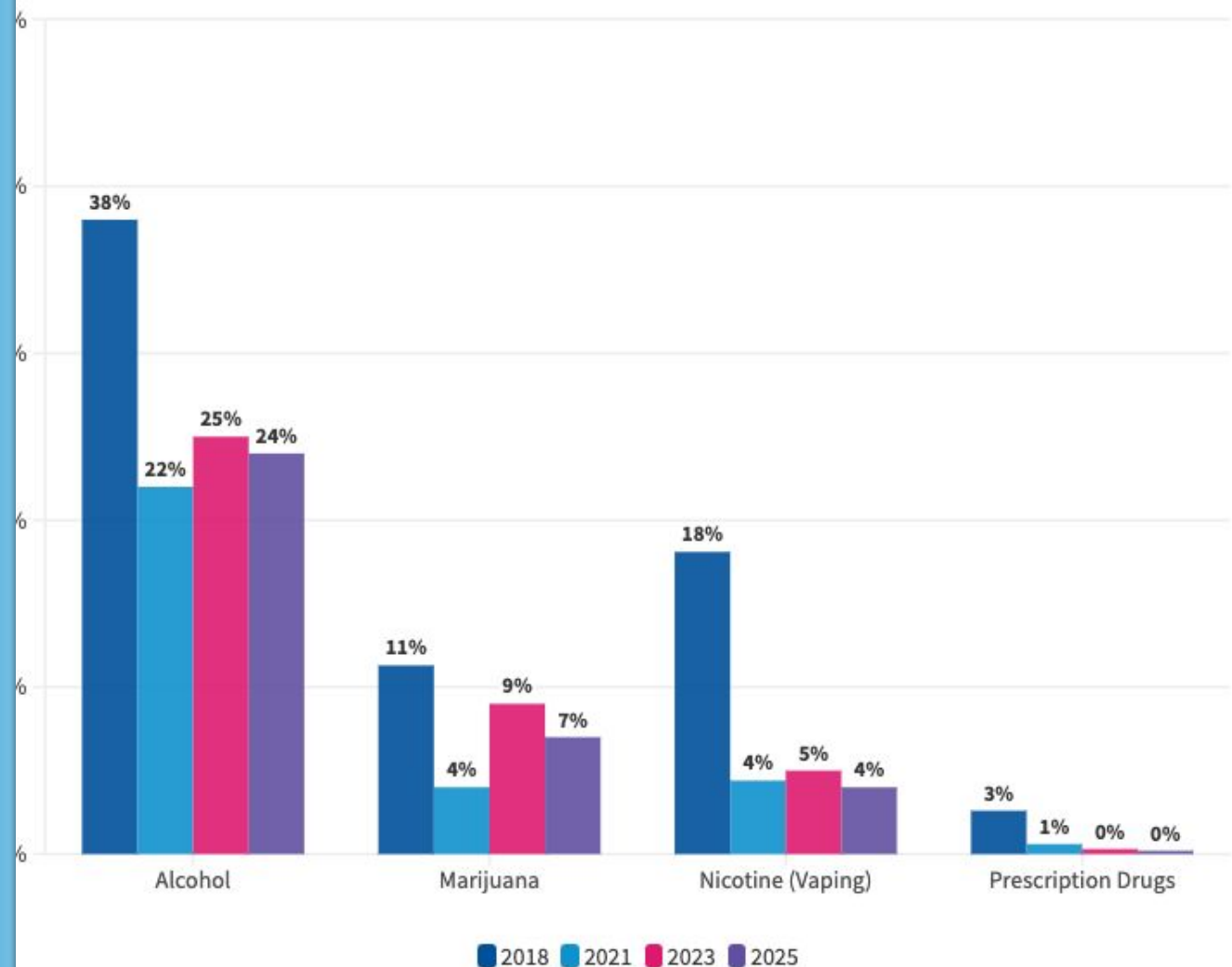
reported that they
attempted suicide

Teen Substance Use

**Thriving Youth
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Past 30 Day Use Rates (9th-12th Grade)

Rates have
decreased since
2023 & there has
been significant
improvement since
2018.



Past 30-day Marijuana Use by Grade

Where are they getting it?

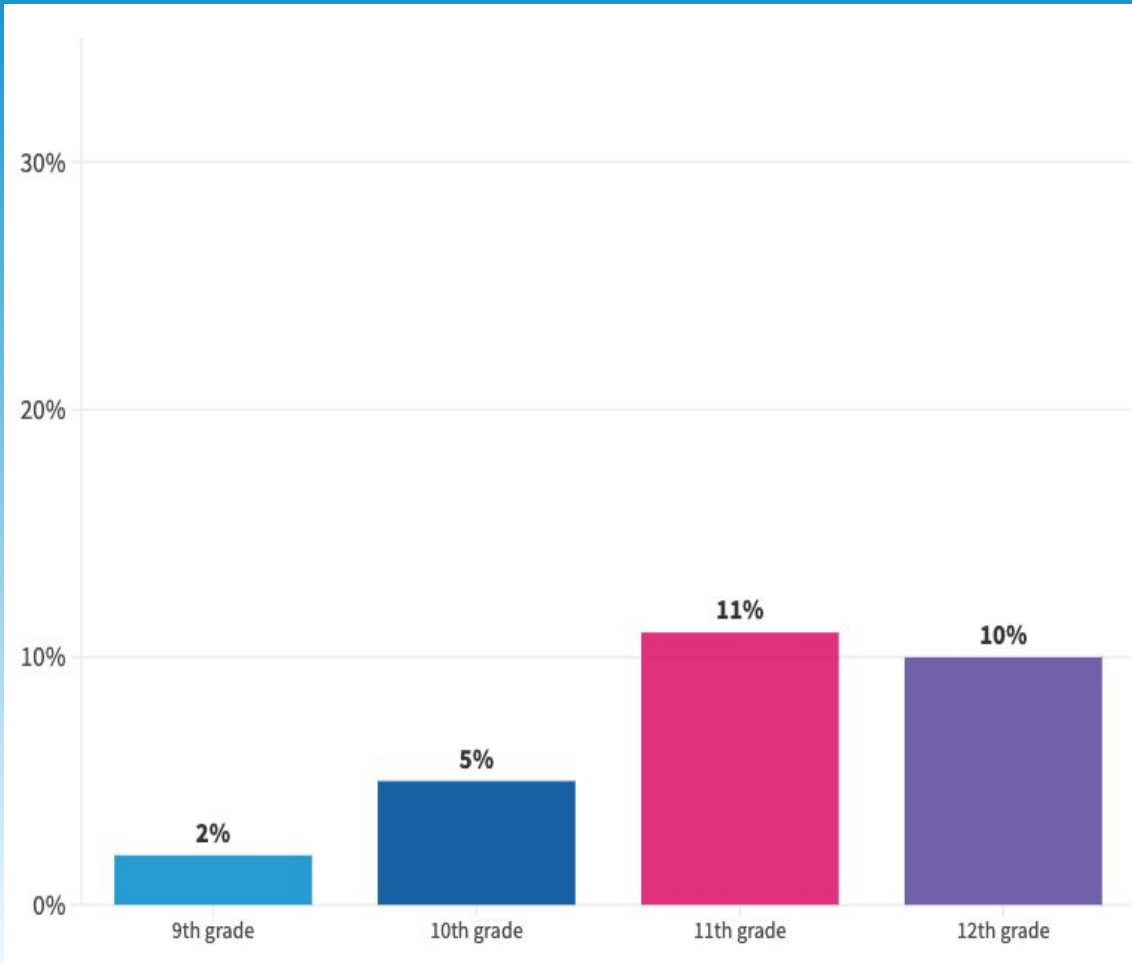
Most common sources are:

- A friend or peer gave it to me
- Bought it from someone else

Where are they using it?

Most common locations are:

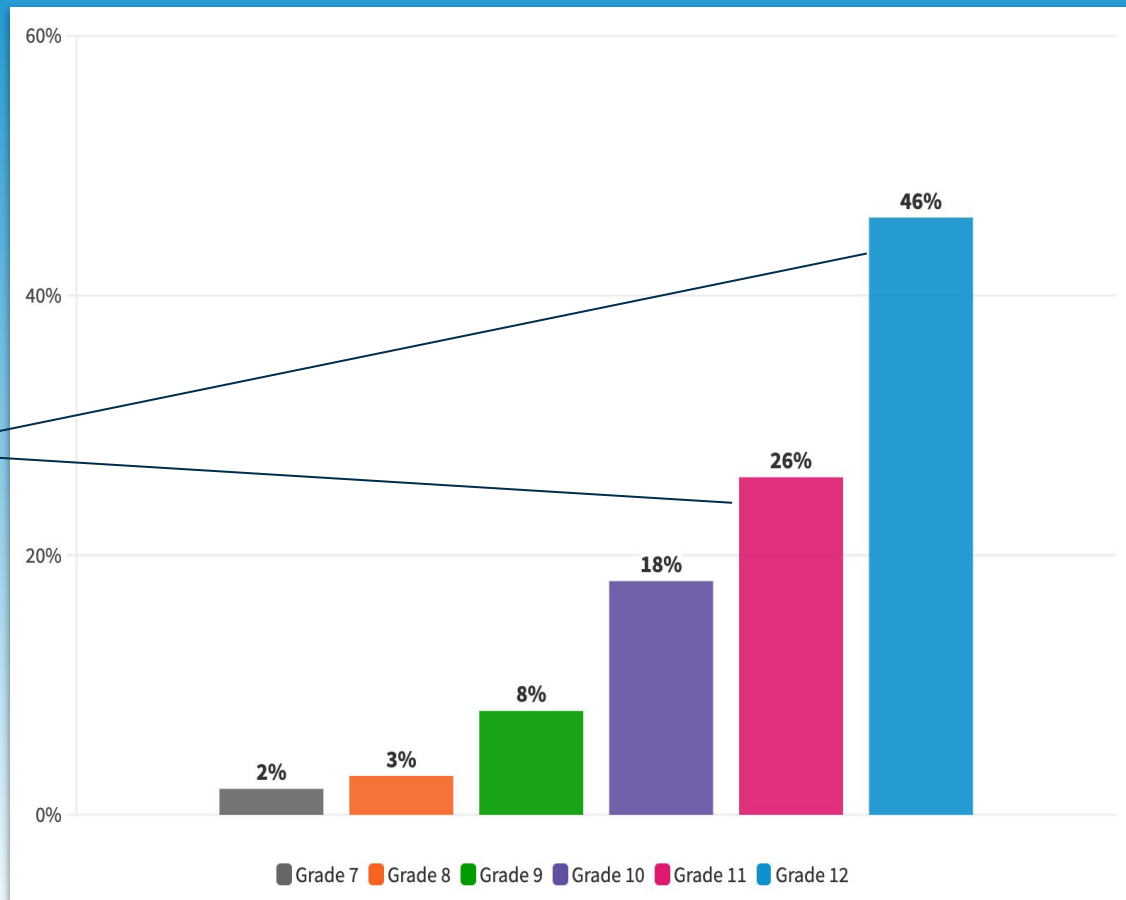
- With friends at my home or my friends' home
- At a party
- At home, alone



2025 Teen Alcohol Misuse - Past 30 Days

Looking at only 11th & 12th graders, in the past year:

- 31% drank 4+ drinks in less than 2 hours (binge drinking)
- 15% rode with a driver who had been drinking or using drugs
- 14% reported being drunk or high at school or at a school event 1 or more times



Where do Darien teens get and consume alcohol?



Where are they getting it?

Most common sources are:

- A friend or peer gave it to me
- Bought it from someone else
- Bought it myself at a store outside of Darien
- A parent or guardian with permission



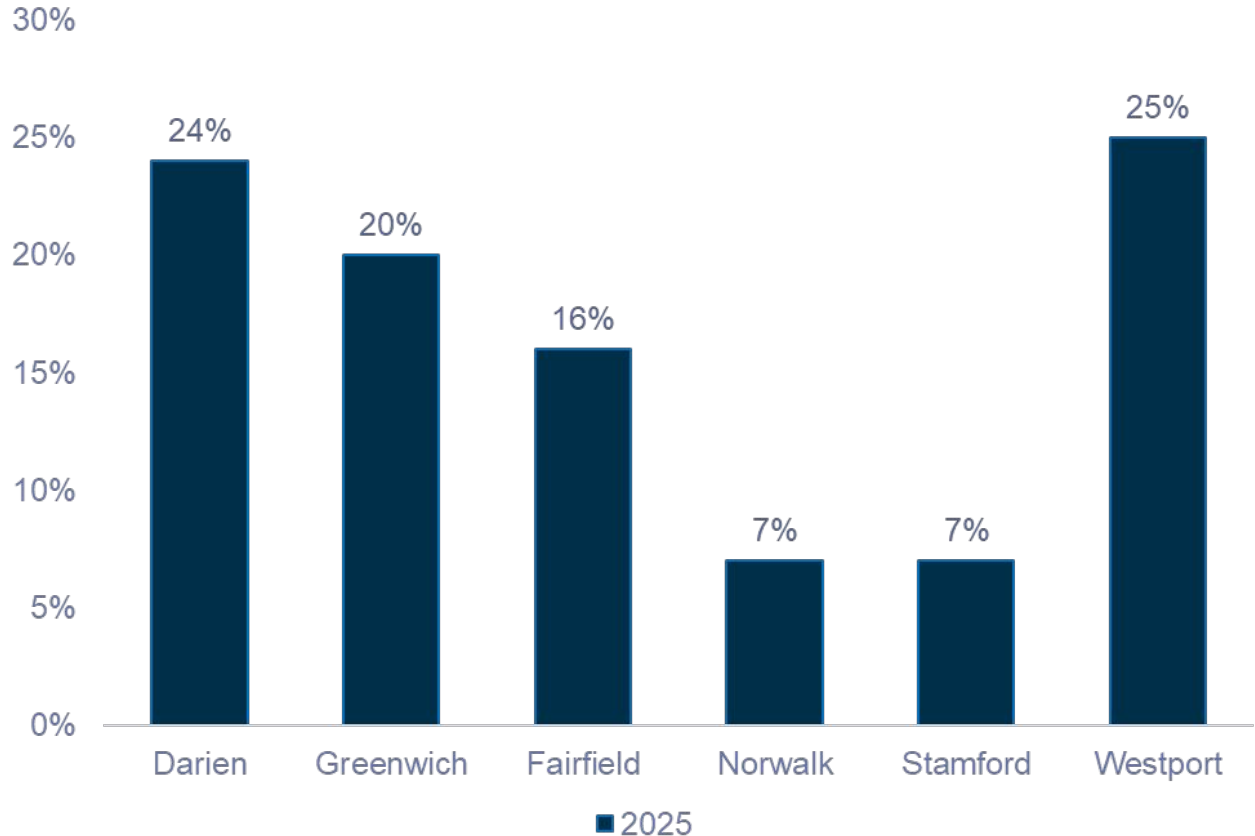
Where are they using it?

Most common locations are:

- With friends at my home or my friends' home
- At a party

**Underage
drinking
rates are
highest in
Darien.**

Past 30 days alcohol use in high school:



Why Teens DO & DO NOT Drink

Top reasons why teens DO NOT drink:

6th to 8th graders:

- Too young to drink: 66%
- Don't want to: 60%
- It's against the law: 58%

9th to 12th graders:

- Don't want to: 58%
- Play sports/involved with club: 37%
- Parents are strict: 36%

TOP REASONS THEY ARE DRINKING, GRADES 6 - 8

① Peer Pressure



60%

② Curiosity



60%

③ To Have Fun



52%

④ Reduce Stress



27%

TOP REASONS THEY ARE DRINKING, GRADES 9 - 12

① To Have Fun



75%

② Peer Pressure



63%

③ Curiosity



44%

④ Reduce Stress



29%

**My parent
has clear
rules
discouraging
me from
using the
following
substances**



RX drugs

93
%

Nicotine

93
%

Cigarettes or Tobacco

92
%

Cannabis

90
%

Alcohol

71
%

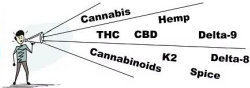
0% 10% 20% 30% 40% 50% 60% 70% 80% 90% 100%

■ 9th to 12th grade

Community Education Programs Informed by Thriving Youth Survey Data

Substance Misuse/Prevention

Marijuana and Related Products



Are you looking to learn more about these products? Join our upcoming webinar to learn:

- What are these products and what do they look like?



Examples of cannabis-containing products with misleading packaging

- CT laws and regulations around cannabis products
- Addressing sales of unlicensed products, sales to minors
- What can you do?

ALL ARE WELCOME!

Thursday, Sept 5th 7-8pm

Click [here](#) to register



NEW BRITAIN CARES



Thriving Youth
Darien

The Dangerous Truth About Today's Marijuana and Teen Mental Health
October 24th 7:00-8:30 PM

▶ WEBINAR

With Laura Stack

Founder & CEO of Johnny's Ambassadors

THRIVING YOUTH DARIEN PRESENTS:

ONE PILL CAN KILL

WHAT EVERY FAMILY NEEDS TO KNOW ABOUT FENTANYL



BRIDGET LATTIMER
SONG FOR CHARLIE

YOUTH SESSION

WEDNESDAY
APRIL 9TH
7 PM

THE DARIEN DEPOT
25 HEIGHTS ROAD

PARENT SESSION

THURSDAY
APRIL 10TH
12 PM

THE DARIEN DEPOT
25 HEIGHTS ROAD



IF TEENS CAN'T BUY IT, DON'T SUPPLY IT.



Know the CT Social Host Law.
Underage drinking on your property can result in a \$2,000 fine or jail time.



March 26th @ 7pm - Darien High School Auditorium



Substance-Free Social Alternatives



FREE FOOD? YUP! IT'S FREE.

PLUS MUSIC, POOL, PING PONG, AND TIME TO CHILL WITH FRIENDS.

HIGH SCHOOLERS: COME OVER AFTER THE HOMECOMING FOOTBALL GAME.

FOOD IS LIMITED AND AVAILABLE WHILE IT LASTS, SO DON'T MISS OUT!

SPONSORED BY:



OCTOBER 18 @ 9:30PM

CALLING ALL DHS SENIORS! DEPOT YOUTH CENTER PRE-PROM PARTY

MAY 2 @ WEED BEACH
5:00-6:30PM

PRESENTED BY WAVE STRONG

Event includes professional photographers, light bites & lemonade, and transportation to prom!



Community Education Programs Informed by Thriving Youth Survey Data

SURVIVING THE PRESSURE COOKER: HOW TO HELP TEENS MANAGE THE NEED TO SUCCEED

Wednesday, May 15th
7pm
Zoom Webinar

Join family therapist Dr. Amanda Craig in conversation with Sasco River Center's Rebecca Campbell about managing the stress that comes with living in a high-achievement environment & empowering teens to maintain a healthy balance between their goals and their mental health. Teens and parents welcome!

Register at
www.communityfunddarien.org/ty-programs-and-events

Stress & Anxiety



The Social Scene:

Coaching Your Teen/Tween to Make Positive Decisions



GUEST SPEAKERS

Joyce Sixsmith
Connections Counselor
Darien High School



John Hamilton
President & CEO
Liberation Programs

Thursday, February 8th at 7pm

Join us for an interactive Zoom webinar about helping kids navigate the social/party scene.



Gambling, Sports Betting & Gaming

RAISING THE STAKES: A PARENT'S GUIDE TO YOUTH GAMBLING, SPORTS BETTING AND GAMING

Learn how gambling impacts today's youth, how to spot the warning signs, and how you can support your child. In this webinar, you will be provided with local, regional, and statewide resources for prevention, treatment, and recovery.

January 30, 2025
At 12pm via Zoom

JOIN US

Social Media & Smartphones

SMARTPHONES, SOCIAL MEDIA, AND YOUR KIDS

Virtual Q&A
KATEY MCPHERSON



OK To Delay Darien
The Depot
Darien Library
Thriving Youth Darien



Film Screening
CHILDHOOD 2.0

April 23, 2024
6-9 PM
Darien Library
Community Room

REGISTER NOW
darienlibrary.org

MIDDLESEX PARENT ASSOCIATION & DARIEN
HIGH SCHOOL PARENT ASSOCIATION

NOV 20, 2024
7:00PM

SOCIAL MEDIA & YOUR KIDS

MAX STOSSEL
SPEAKER

DARIEN HIGH SCHOOL AUDITORIUM

<https://tinyurl.com/4k8YA422>



Hear Dr. Heitner speak
in person about
helping kids navigate
boundaries, privacy and
their reputation
on social media!



Tuesday, October 24th
7pm
Middlesex Auditorium

Register at
www.communityfunddarien.org/ty-programs-and-events

DEVORAH HEITNER, PhD
author of Screenwise

Growing Up in Public

COMING OF AGE
IN A DIGITAL WORLD

*Screen to Screen: Stop approximating where kids spend most of their waking moments. Screen and Mobile Data Report: what kids really do.
©2024 LARK'S NEW YORK TIMES bestselling author of THE GIFT OF HEAVEN

Event sponsored by:



Thriving Youth
Darien



Youth Presentation

**Monday, Jan 26th
7pm**

**St Luke's - Anderson
Youth & Community
Center**



REAL TALK

INSIDE THE DARIEN YOUTH SURVEY

Youth Presentation

January 26th, 2026 7-8:30pm

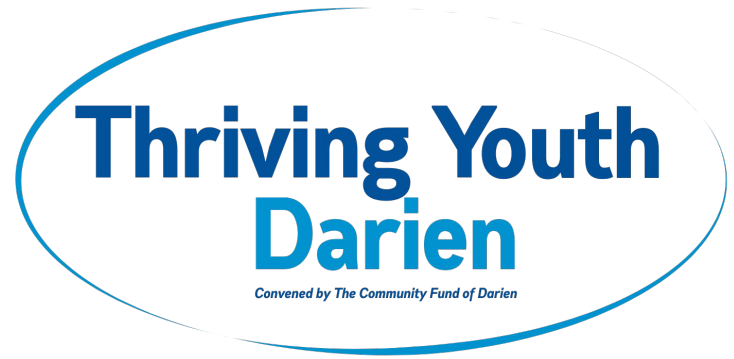
St. Luke's Parish - Anderson Youth & Community Center
1864 Post Road, Darien CT 06820

High school students – your voice matters!
Please join us for an interactive youth presentation featuring
key takeaways from the 2025 Darien Youth Survey.
Come learn what the data says, share your thoughts, and ask
questions in a supportive space.

Program is open to 9th – 12th graders.

**Learn more about our
survey findings,
access parent resources &
watch past program recordings
on our
Thriving Youth Darien website.**

**Follow us
@ThrivingYouthDarien
on Instagram &
Facebook!**



www.communityfunddarien.org/thriving-youth-darien



What Our Kids Are Saying: Skill Building Workshop

Amanda Craig, PhD, LMFT

Rebecca Campbell, LCSW

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