
CHAPTER 2

Administration of the Teen Assessment Project

This report is the result of a joint effort between the Monadnock United Way, Cheshire County UNH Cooperative Extension, and the Monadnock Action Network with Youth. Concerns about changing youth issues since the DAY (Drugs, Alcohol, and Youth) survey was done in the region in 1987, prompted the Monadnock United Way to assemble a committee to once again plan for the surveying of teens in the Monadnock Region. After the Monadnock Region TAP was approved, the committee worked with many community groups and organizations to insure that critical issues would be identified.

The Teen Assessment Project involves four distinct dimensions:

- survey development and implementation
- compiling and sharing research data from the youth surveys
- parent and community educational efforts
- community and school responses or actions resulting from the project

The MUW TAP committee used the previous DAY survey; the 475 question bank developed by Dr Stephen Small of Wisconsin-Madison, originator of the Teen Assessment Project; and questions developed locally to assess teen attitudes and worries, future aspirations, alcohol and other drug abuse, sexuality, use of time, diversity and perceived discrimination, personal safety, violence and delinquency, health, interactions with peers, perceptions of parental behavior and monitoring, family relationships and values, perceptions of school and neighborhood monitoring and support. The possible questions were reviewed by a number of community groups including: the Consortium of Alternative and Prevention Programs, Monadnock Substance Abuse Services, Women's Crisis Services, Samariteens of the Monadnock Region, Cheshire County Coalition for Tobacco Free Youth, the Family Planning Collaborative and Hitchcock Clinic, DADAPR (formerly BSAS), and school health professionals and administrators. The final survey was reviewed by the Teen Assessment Project Director and approved for use by the UNH Institutional Review Board.

The project was approved by the Superintendents of SAUs 1, 29, 38, 47, and 60. The community was informed about the survey through articles in the newspaper. A letter which included a passive consent notification was sent to all parents of youth being surveyed in SAUs 1, 29, 38, 47 and 60 explaining the project. Parents had the option of not having their teen participate in the survey by contacting the school. Prior to the youth survey date, parents were able to review the survey at several locations.

Teachers and volunteers were trained in survey administration procedures in advance. The day of surveying, teachers administered the survey with the help of volunteers. A specific instruction script was read to maintain consistency between classrooms. In order to ensure accurate and honest responses, the survey process is designed to protect the anonymity of youth. Names were not placed on survey booklets or answer sheets. Teachers and volunteers were instructed to not walk around the classroom while students completed the survey. Each student placed their own computer answer sheet into a special envelope for their classroom. In the report, youth responses are aggregated to protect identification of any individual response.

The survey was administered throughout March of 2000. Seventh through twelve grade students were surveyed at SAUs 29, 38 and 60. Students in 9th -12th grade were surveyed in SAUs 1 and 47. Students were informed the survey was voluntary and that they did not have to participate. Some students were absent, tardy or on field trips and did not participate in the surveys (SAU 1 - 130, SAU 29 - 91, SAU 38 - 118, SAU 47 - 51, SAU 60 - 115). The parents of 32 students (SAU 1 - 2, SAU 29 - 9, SAU 38 - 3, SAU 47 - 18, SAU 60 - 0) did not allow them to participate in the survey. Answer sheets were examined for obvious patterns, scribbles, etc and unusable answer forms were removed. A total of 5,576 surveys (3,838 - high school; 1,738 - middle school) were useable and analyzed to produce this research report and the series of six parent newsletters entitled, "Whose Kids?...Our Kids!" These 5,576 student surveys represent 84% of the student population in the 7th to 12th grades. Newsletter topics include: Parent-Teen Communication; Teenagers' Use of Alcohol and Other Drugs; Teen Sexuality; Teen Depression and Suicide; Parent-Teen Relationships; and Working Together: Youth, Families, Schools and Communities.

It is the hope of the TAP committee that this report will be a valuable resource to:

- parents as they strive to support the positive development of youth;
- schools and youth serving organizations as they target curriculum and programs to meet the expressed needs of youth;
- community members and organizations as they become more aware and supportive of youth voices;
- all who share in the vision of youth and adults working together to create healthier families, schools, and communities.

This report speaks for youth collectively to give us a picture of the status of the Monadnock Region teens. It is our hope it will be useful in educational and community planning, stimulate program and policy review and modifications, help secure funding and resources, and lead to changes in attitudes and behaviors that strengthen assets/protective factors in Monadnock Region's youth, families and schools.