

DRUG FREE ST. LUCIE

A Network of the Roundtable of St. Lucie County

2021 COMMUNITY ASSESSMENT



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Florida Department of Health, St. Lucie County

Children's Services Council of St. Lucie County

New Horizons of the Treasure Coast

St. Lucie County Sheriff's Office

Port St. Lucie Police Department

Fort Pierce Police Department

St. Lucie County Commissioner

St. Lucie Public Schools

Indian River State College

United Way of St. Lucie & Okeechobee

City of Fort Pierce

City of Port St. Lucie

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Southeast Florida Behavioral Health Network

Port St. Lucie Parks & Recreation

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Tobacco Free Partnership

Boys and Girls Club of St. Lucie County

Department of Juvenile Justice, St. Lucie
County

Communities Connected for Kids

SequelCare of Florida

Treasure Coast Food Bank

Children's Home Society

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Community History

Historical Origins of Community

The name “St. Lucie” was first given to St. Lucie County by the Spanish. Construction of a fort starting on December 13, the feast day of Roman Catholic Saint Lucia, is said to be the origin of the name. The colony was established around 1567 somewhere between Vero Beach and Stuart in Florida. Seminoles and runaway slaves began to settle in the area soon to be called the “Treasure Coast.”¹

St. Lucie County was first formed on March 14, 1844, but portions of it have been cut off since that time to make other counties. It even underwent a change of name, being designated as Brevard County, January 6, 1855. The present county of St. Lucie was formed by an act of the Florida Legislature, dividing Brevard County, May 24, 1905, with the county seat being in Fort Pierce (Florida Memory.com).

The city of Fort Pierce was incorporated in 1901 and is one of the oldest communities on the east coast of Florida.² On April 27, 1961, Port St. Lucie became a city with the passage of House Bill No. 953, proposed by State Representative Rupert Smith and approved by Florida Governor C. Farris Bryant.³

Census data for the period 2000 to 2010, shows that Port St. Lucie was one of the fastest-growing counties in the United States with a total population increase of more than 80,000 during that time frame. Fort Pierce also grew to over 40,000 residents. As of the 2019 census data, St. Lucie County had a population of 328,297.⁴

Historical Origin of Related Issues

A population boom in the county brought about economic challenges for certain areas, mainly Fort Pierce. Not only people but also businesses, jobs, resources, and economic development left Fort Pierce for the growing metropolis of Port St. Lucie. The Fort Pierce community that remained experienced rapidly diminishing resources, accompanied by increased poverty, crime, HIV/AIDS, drugs, and unemployment. During the 1980s, Fort Pierce developed a reputation as the crack cocaine capital of the United States, affecting primarily the high-poverty northwest area (called “Lincoln Park”) with serious drug abuse and violence.

Less than 15 miles away, Port St. Lucie grew, in most respects, flourished. Largely middle class since 2011, Port St. Lucie has boasted having the lowest crime rate of Florida cities with populations greater than 100,000. Port St. Lucie, however, has also experienced challenges. In 2007, the housing market began to collapse and unemployment started to rise. By February 2009, unemployment was at 10.5%, and in 2008 nearly 11,000 homes went into foreclosure. However, many affluent families remain in the area.

¹ St. Lucie County History. Retrieved 28 Jan 22: <https://www.stlucieco.gov/government/st-lucie-county-history>.

² About Fort Pierce. Retrieved 28 Jan 22: <https://www.stlucieco.gov/government/st-lucie-county-history>.

³ Port St. Lucie, Florida Retrieved 28 Jan 22: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Port_St._Lucie,_Florida.

⁴ St. Lucie County, Florida. United States Census Bureau: Quick Facts. Retrieved 28 Jan 22: <https://www.census.gov/quickfacts/stluciecountyflorida>.

By 2014, the opioid epidemic began to escalate in the county affecting both Fort Pierce and Port St. Lucie. A report from the Treasure Coast Regional Planning Council meeting cited opioid overdoses went from 35 to 55 to 103 for the period of 2014-2016.⁵ A national watchdog group in 2014, also ranked Fort Pierce ninth on the list of Florida's most dangerous cities, higher than the ranking given to the cities of Miami, Tampa and Tallahassee.

History of Community Organizing

In 1994, chief executives from five St. Lucie County agencies came together to create an infrastructure where collective problem solving could effectively occur around children's issues. The purpose of this collaboration - called the Roundtable of St. Lucie County - was to engage in a "way of work" that accomplished system change to improve outcomes for youth. The leaders embraced a publication issued in 1993 by the U.S. Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention (OJJDP) called *A Comprehensive Strategy for Serious, Violent, and Chronic Juvenile Offenders* (Wilson & Howell 1993). This groundbreaking publication set out key research findings and critical policy imperatives for effective prevention and intervention efforts with youth at risk of, or already engaged in, delinquent behavior. It relied on decades of research documenting behavioral pathways to delinquency and identifying the major risk factors that increased the likelihood of youth becoming delinquent.

In 1999, the Roundtable became one of six sites in the State of Florida and 52 sites in the nation to conduct a community-wide assessment and develop a comprehensive plan known as *St. Lucie Hand in Hand*, to reduce juvenile delinquency and violence using the principles set out in OJJDP's *Comprehensive Strategy for serious violent offenders*. The Roundtable used a framework called "Communities That Care" (CTC) developed by Dr. David Hawkins and Dr. Richard Catalano. CTC is an "operating system" that provides the structure of a community effort to address youth issues including teen pregnancy, school dropout & delinquency, substance abuse, and violence. CTC focuses on risk and protective factors, and guides communities through the process of planning and implementing comprehensive prevention strategies.

Substance use among youth began to be a major concern for leaders in St. Lucie County, beginning in 2004. With data from the 2004 Florida Youth Substance Abuse Survey (FYSAS) portraying that 1 out of every 4 St. Lucie County youth ages 10-14 already having a drink of alcohol and half of those incidents involved binge drinking. However, understanding the difference between the two cities is important, although youth from both areas present substance use issues, the problems differ. During focus groups with teens, alcohol issues presented by Fort Pierce youth included that drug addicts are hanging out at the stores in the area and they will purchase alcohol for youth in exchange for money, youth also reported stealing alcohol from their parents. In Port St. Lucie, youth reported that teens are drinking alcohol at small house parties (called "Getties" - less than 20 teens) and that many teens have fake IDs to enter the many clubs. Port St. Lucie youth identified the areas of St. Lucie West and Tradition (two middle to upper income "planned communities" known for beautiful homes, gated communities, retail, and dining) as "hot spots" where youth can buy marijuana and smoke in parks without interference from law enforcement.

Economic conditions and lack of resources in St. Lucie County contributed to alcohol and drug use problems. This is particularly so for youth in high crime areas. In 2013, 1 out of 3 people in Fort Pierce and 1 out of 6 people in Port St. Lucie lived in poverty (US Census Bureau). 30% of all children in St. Lucie County (54.6% in Fort Pierce and 24.7% in Port St. Lucie) lived in poverty that same year. The highest rates of poverty were in the Lincoln Park area of Fort Pierce. Lincoln Park residents earned less, on median, than their peers in the rest of the city and county and they were more likely to be unemployed. Transportation is a barrier to service delivery and stable employment. In 2015, a survey of 1200 residents in Lincoln Park cited poverty as a major factor leading to violence and issues in the community.

⁵ Greenlee, Will. "Opioid problem has reached 'epidemic' proportions on the Treasure Coast, report finds." Treasure Coast Newspapers. TCpalm.com; published 23 Aug 2017.

Following a series of deadly shootings, community residents and leaders responded to the growing sentiment that something had to be done about gun violence in Lincoln Park. Florida State Representative Larry Lee, Jr. and other community leaders started the Restoring the Village movement, a grassroots, anti-violence initiative aimed at mobilizing community residents to work together to address violence. In 2013, 1,100 residents attended two anti-violence forums that brought together law enforcement, social service agencies, government leaders, community groups, business owners, and community leaders. Representative Lee and others, including leaders from the Roundtable of St. Lucie County, Fort Pierce Police Department, St. Lucie County School Board, St. Lucie County Health Department, Department of Juvenile Justice, and the U.S. Attorney's Office searched for best-practice, evidence-based strategies to combat the problem.

In 2014, over seventy community leaders and government officials were trained on the Comprehensive Gang Model by the National Gang Center. Hundreds of community residents attended a town hall forum to learn more. The response was overwhelmingly positive. Residents and stakeholders including youth, faith-based partners, business owners, social services, and others agreed to join the movement to “restore the village” of Lincoln Park by implementing the Comprehensive Gang Model in Fort Pierce. The Comprehensive Gang Model was implemented in Fort Pierce under the name Restoring the Village Youth Initiative (RTVYI), now known as IGNITE Youth Alliance (IYA). IYA is a community partnership managed by the Roundtable of St. Lucie County (the Roundtable), under its Safe Neighborhoods Network, to address gang violence in St. Lucie County.

Utilizing the CTC gang prevention framework around risk and protective factors, the Roundtable established other networks such as, ***Economic Sufficiency (Bridges to Prosperity)*** whose aim is to reduce the percentage of disconnected youth ages 16-24 living in St. Lucie County, the ***Child & Adolescent Health Network*** which tracks 12 measures of health including rates of prenatal care, infant mortality, obesity, injury, and teen pregnancy and ***Youth Leadership St. Lucie***, which provides teens a forum in which to discuss and creatively address issues they have identified in the community.

Finally, the Roundtable oversees the ***Kids and Hope*** strategic cultural framework based on resiliency research designed to engage entire communities in supporting success for all children without exception. Adopted by the St. Lucie County School District, members of the Roundtable Board, partners, and community residents are trained to become Kids at Hope Treasure Hunters and look for treasures in all youth.

Coalition Background

In response to the concerns emanating from the results of the 2004 FYSAS, the Substance Abuse Prevention Network was formed. Comprising of community leaders, parents, youth, the school district, religious organizations, youth-serving organizations, healthcare, treatment providers, business professionals, community advocates, and law enforcement, the network began addressing substance abuse issues in St. Lucie County, with a focus on middle and high school students.

They hit the ground running in 2007 with a small grant through Florida's Strategic Prevention Framework State Incentive Grant, Substance Abuse Response Guide (SARG), that provided the technical assistance they needed to develop strategies that would address youth substance use. The group worked on a community needs assessment that reviewed consequences, consumption, and contributing factors to substance abuse among youth in the county. They analyzed data, collected missing information, and identified patterns of youth alcohol and drug use, gang data, violence, arrest data, teen birth rates, HIV/AIDS cases, runaway data, risk and protective factors, and hospital admissions. Focus groups were also conducted with students from across the county to further comprehend the reasons kids were drinking. However, in 2011 there was a minor setback when funding ended and the group did not have a sustainability plan in place to continue the work of the SARG Coordinator, who oversaw the project and activities. Consequently, without a dedicated staff person to coordinate and the resources to implement projects, many activities ended and commitment levels decreased.

In 2014, Drug Free St. Lucie (DFSL) rebirthed through joining the Community Coalition Alliance Southeast (a regional alliance of the Coalitions in the Circuit) with reinfused optimism due to all the positive outcomes from countywide coalition leaders across the Southeast. The group reached out to recognized coalition leaders in Florida to help mentor them in developing a strong, and fully operating prevention coalition with an Executive Board to oversee the coalition's work.

In 2015, DFSL applied for the Drug Free Communities Mentoring grant, to strengthen the coalition's structure and develop a clear understanding of the Strategic Prevention Framework. DFSL graduated from CADCA's National Coalition Academy in 2016 and CADCA's National Youth Leadership Institute in 2017.

That same year, the Roundtable applied and was awarded the Drug Free Communities Grant of \$125,000 per year from the White House's Office of National Drug Control Policy and the federal Substance Abuse and Mental Health Service Administration (SAMHSA). The grant provides local community coalitions funding to prevent youth substance use, including prescription drugs, marijuana, and underage drinking.

The coalition continued their community outreach efforts which focused on preventing underage drinking and substance abuse through education, awareness, community-wide initiatives, and changing social norms. Initiatives included, the **Friday Night, Done Right** campaign – a project that emphasizes what teens would rather do instead of alcohol and other drugs and provides alcohol and drug-free events; **Parents that Host, Lose the Most** campaign addresses social-hosting uses; **Know the Law** campaign – a onetime education course taught by school resource officers to teach teens the laws surrounding alcohol and other drugs; and **Youth Leadership St. Lucie**, which serves the voice of youth members.

Priority Areas

Alcohol continues to be the most prevalent form of substance use among St. Lucie County students, followed by **nicotine** and **cannabis**. The Drug Free St. Lucie Coalition partners utilized both secondary data and primary data to prioritize significant issues. Analyzing trends of substance use and impacts, drawn from the secondary data, were used to estimate scope and burden.

In 2018, the Florida Youth Substance Abuse Survey (FYSAS) showed 12.2% of St. Lucie County youth (middle school and high school) reported having used **alcohol** in the past 30 days, increasing to 17.5% in 2020, which is higher than the Statewide report of 14.8%. There was no significant change in middle school use, but a 9.1% increase with high school use. Underage drinking is a serious public health problem in St. Lucie County. Alcohol is the most widely used substance among youth and drinking by young people poses enormous health and safety risks. Binge drinking is still an issue, which may lead to addiction at an older age. In 2020, 17.5% of high school students reported trying more than a sip of alcohol at the age of 13 or younger. According to SAMHSA, underage drinking contributes to a wide range of costly health and social problems, including suicide, death from motor vehicle crashes, interpersonal violence (such as homicides, assaults, and rapes), unintentional injuries (such as burns, falls, and drownings), brain impairment, alcohol dependence, risky sexual activity, academic problems, and alcohol and drug poisoning.⁶

From 2014 to 2020, the Florida Youth Tobacco Survey (FYTS) showed a significant increase in students currently vaping **nicotine**. In 2014, the rate was at 6.3% and in 2020 the rate increased to 11.2%. The popularity was fueled by heavily marketed products, flavors, and packaging that intentionally targeted youth. According to the Surgeon General, e-cigarette use among youth and young adults is a public health concern; exposure to nicotine during adolescence can cause dependence and can harm the developing brain. The rise in e-cigarette use during 2017–2018 is likely because of the popularity of e-cigarettes shaped like a USB flash drive, such as JUUL; these products can be used discreetly, have high nicotine content, and come in flavors that appeal to youth. Youth nicotine vaping remains highly prevalent, flavors remain highly accessible, and declines in JUUL use were countered by increased use of other disposable vaping device brands.

The Florida Youth Substance Abuse Survey (FYSAS) 2020 showed a percentage of St. Lucie County youth who reported having used vaping **cannabis** in their lifetime at 10.1%. There is no comparison data from previous years because 2020 was the first time this question was asked. Along with vaping nicotine products, the use of electronic devices for the use of marijuana is concerning.

In St. Lucie County, **opioid-related** deaths tripled between 2014–2016, according to the Treasure Coast Regional Planning Council. Opioid misuse occurs when a person uses heroin or misuses prescription pain relievers. Opioids are a class of drugs that includes several kinds of painkillers— both prescription and illicit versions—as well as heroin. Black-market varieties of *fentanyl*, a synthetic opioid, have recently surged in popularity, leading to opioids being monitored as a concerning trend.

⁶ “Facts on Underage Drinking.” Substance Abuse and Mental Health Administration; 2021.

Community Assessment

VISION A healthy, vibrant community that is substance-free.

MISSION To cultivate a community that supports a substance-free lifestyle and well-being in youth through advocacy and community collaboration.

Community Description

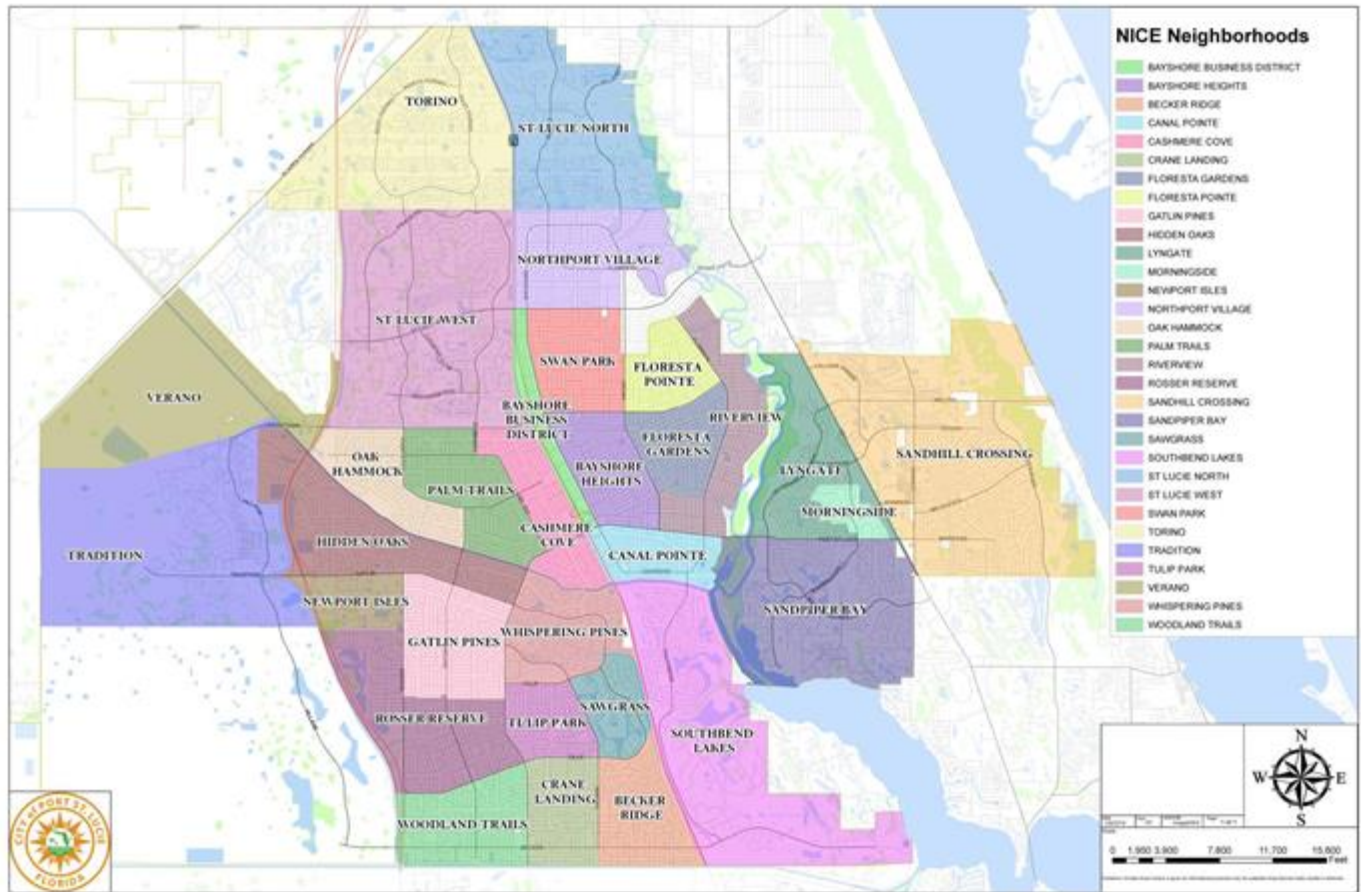
Geographic Description

St. Lucie County, Florida is on the eastern shore of Florida surrounded by the Atlantic Ocean, Indian River, Okeechobee, and Martin Counties. St. Lucie County is included in the Port St. Lucie, Florida Metropolitan Statistical Area.



Map of Florida

St. Lucie County has a total area of 688 square miles; 572 square miles of land and 116 square miles (16.9%) of water. The county seat is Fort Pierce. The area includes the St. Lucie County International Airport.



Map of St. Lucie County

Community Demographics

Approximately 328,297 people live in St. Lucie County, Florida and it is the 49th-largest county bordered by Okeechobee County, Indian River County, and Martin County. According to the U.S. Census Bureau American Community Survey 2019 5-year estimates.⁷

Age Cohort ⁷	Percent Population
Under 18	19.5%
18-24	7.3%
Over 21	76.8%
60 and over	31.6%
65 and over	24.7%
75 and over	11.4%
Median age	45.2 years

⁷<https://data.census.gov/cedsci/table?q=%20saint%20lucie%20county%20fl&text=age&g=0500000US12111&tid=ACST1Y2019.S0101>

Among the population, 16.8% are foreign-born, while 23.4% speak a language other than English, mainly Spanish (15.1%).⁸ In 2019, the most common birthplace for the foreign-born residents of Florida was Cuba, the natal country of 1,040,032 Florida residents, followed by Haiti with 356,045 and Colombia with 294,743. St. Lucie County is a multi-ethnic and diverse community with a foreign-born population of 16.6%. Approximately 23.27% of households speak a language other than English at home. As of 2018, 15.8% of St. Lucie County residents (50,600 people) were born outside of the United States, which is higher than the national average of 13.7%. In 2017, the percentage of foreign-born citizens in St. Lucie County was 15.5%, meaning that the rate has been increasing.⁹ Notably, 46.9% of individuals report being part of other groups, unclassified or not reported.

Racial Demographics

Race/Ethnicity ¹⁰	Percent of Population
White	72.0%
Black or African American	19.5%
American Indian and Alaska Native	0.3%
Asian	2.1%
Native Hawaiian and Other Pacific Islander	0.1%
Hispanic/Latino of any race	19.9%
Two or more races	5.1%

Educational Demographics

Among the adult population 25 years and over in St. Lucie County, 86.6% are high school graduates or higher: 21.5% have some college with no degree, 10.4% have an Associate's degree, 14.0% have a Bachelor's degree, and 7.6% have a graduate or professional degree.¹¹ St. Lucie County has one school district that is comprised of:

- Six high and 6-12 schools
- Nine K-8 schools
- Four middle schools
- Nineteen elementary schools
- Ten magnet and non-traditional schools

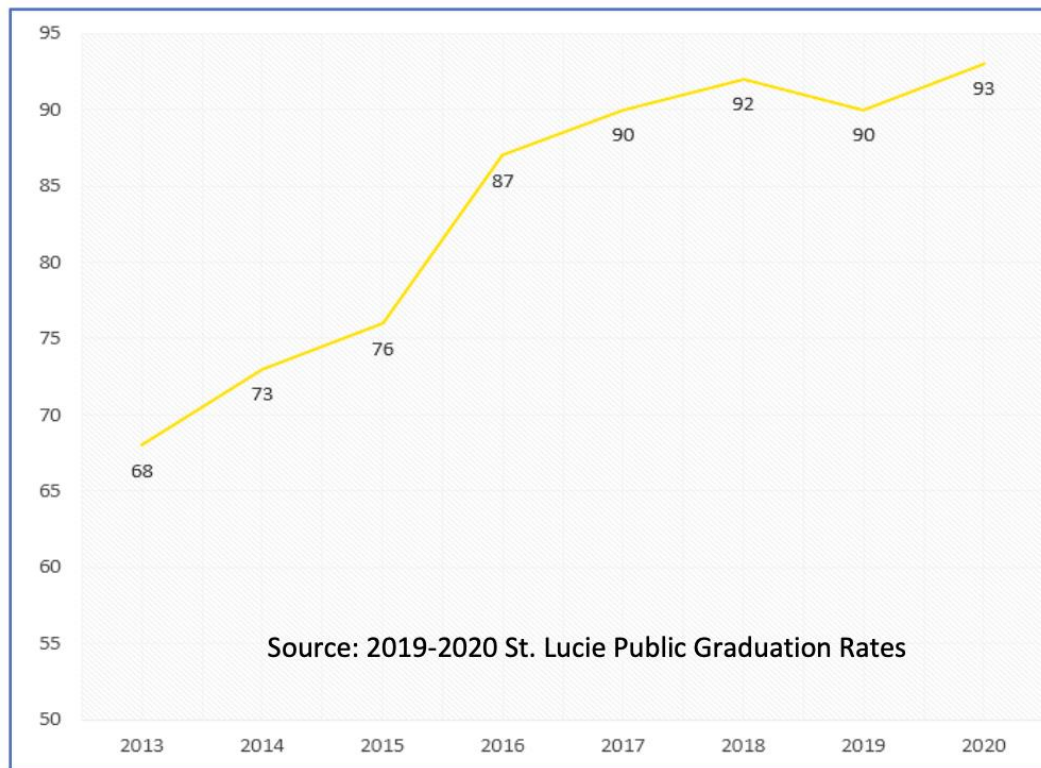
In 2020, St. Lucie Public Schools had 3,389 graduates and earned a graduation rate of 93.2% and the comprehensive six traditional high schools' rate of 98% for the 2019-2020 school year. The graduation rate for Black students improved to 92.5%, Hispanic students improved to 94% and Exceptional Education Students improved to 91.6%.

⁸ <https://data.census.gov/cedsci/table?text=age&g=0500000US12111&tid=ACST5Y2019.S1601>

⁹ <https://data.census.gov/cedsci/table?text=age&g=0500000US12111&tid=ACSDT5Y2019.B04006>

¹⁰ <https://data.census.gov/cedsci/table?q=Race%20and%20Ethnicity&text=race%20and%20ethnicity&g=0500000US12111&tid=ACSDT1Y2019.B03002>

¹¹ <https://data.census.gov/cedsci/table?q=st.%20lucie%20county%20florida%20Education&tid=ACST1Y2019.S1501&hidePreview=false>



St. Lucie Public High School Graduation Rates, 2013-2020

Economic Description

Among the St. Lucie County population, 12.9% of households rely on public assistance income or Food Stamps/Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Benefits, however, 47.4% of households with children under 18 rely on these benefits.¹² Over half the population ages 16 to 64 is employed and works full-time year-round (56.4%) and 27.7% are not in the labor force.¹³ Reportedly, 9.7% of the population lives below the poverty level, disproportionately affecting children (10.0%).¹⁴ Veterans make up 9.8% of the population.¹⁵

There are 5,263 businesses registered as employer establishments in St. Lucie County totaling 65,162 employees with 7,062 jobs lost from either closing establishments or contracting establishments in 2018.¹⁶ The labor force participation rate in St. Lucie County is 76.6% among the population aged 25 to 64, where the average commute to work is 28.4 minutes.^{17,18}

¹² <https://data.census.gov/cedsci/table?q=st.%20lucie%20county%20florida&tid=ACST5Y2019.S2201&hidePreview=false>

¹³ <https://data.census.gov/cedsci/table?q=st.%20lucie%20county%20florida%20Income%20and%20Poverty&t=Employment%3AEmployment%20and%20Labor%20Force%20Status&tid=ACST5Y2019.S2303>

¹⁴ <https://data.census.gov/cedsci/table?q=st.%20lucie%20county%20florida%20Income%20and%20Poverty&tid=ACST1Y2019.S1701&hidePreview=false>

¹⁵ <https://data.census.gov/cedsci/table?q=st.%20lucie%20county%20florida&tid=ACST5Y2019.S2101&hidePreview=false>

¹⁶ <https://data.census.gov/cedsci/table?q=st.%20lucie%20county%20florida%20Business%20and%20Economy&tid=BDTIMESERIES.BDSEAGE&hidePreview=false>

¹⁷ <https://data.census.gov/cedsci/table?q=st.%20lucie%20county%20florida%20Employment&tid=ACST1Y2019.S2301&hidePreview=false>

¹⁸ <https://data.census.gov/cedsci/table?q=st.%20lucie%20county%20florida&tid=ACST1Y2019.S0801&hidePreview=false>

U.S. Census Bureau inflation-adjusted income data report a mean household income of \$68,673¹⁹ (\$52,322 median income)²⁰ with a per capita mean income of \$27,121 showing significant racial disparities as indicated in the table below:

Income Type ¹⁹	Amount
Aggregate Mean Household Income	\$68,673
Per Capita Income	\$27,121
Asian	\$30,917
White	\$29,407
Black	\$19,036
Hispanic/Latino	\$18,947
American Indian/Alaska Native	\$61,499

The most prominent industries for employment in the county are:²¹

Trade ²¹	Percent of Workforce
Educational services, health care, and social assistance	22.2%
Retail trade	15.5%
Professional, scientific, management, administrative, waste management services	11.6%
Arts, entertainment, recreation, accommodation, food services	11.0%
Construction	9.4%
Other services, except public administration	6.2%

There are 116,900 households in St. Lucie County where 75.9% are homeowners and the average household size is 2.78 people.²² The median monthly housing cost is \$949 and renter costs are approximately \$1,185 per month (median gross rent).²³

Broken down by gender, median earnings for males in St. Lucie County total \$32,576 while the same figure is \$25,734 for females;²⁴ women's earnings as a percentage of men's earnings are 79.0%. Only 84.7% of households have access to broadband internet access (cable, fiber optic, DSL, satellite),²⁵ leaving 17,069 households without internet access. Of St. Lucie County residents, 10.0% of children (under 18 years of age) live in poverty (based on income in the past 12 months below the poverty threshold);¹⁴ 8.9% of children under 19 years of age are without health insurance coverage.²⁶

Fifteen percent (15.1%) of the population reports living with a disability. The most predominant disabilities reported among all ages include:²⁷

(dis)Ability ²⁷	Percent of Population
Hearing difficulty	4.8%
Vision difficulty	3.0%
Cognitive difficulty	5.6%
Ambulatory difficulty	9.3%
Self-care difficulty	3.3%
Independent living difficulty	6.7%

¹⁹ <https://data.census.gov/cedsci/table?q=st.%20lucie%20county%20florida&tid=ACSST5Y2019.S1902&hidePreview=false>

²⁰ <https://data.census.gov/cedsci/table?q=st.%20lucie%20county%20florida&tid=ACSST5Y2019.S1903&hidePreview=false>

²¹ <https://data.census.gov/cedsci/table?q=st.%20lucie%20county%20florida&tid=ACSST5Y2019.S2403&hidePreview=false>

²² <https://data.census.gov/cedsci/table?q=st.%20lucie%20county%20florida&tid=ACSST1Y2019.S1101&hidePreview=false>

²³ <https://data.census.gov/cedsci/table?q=st.%20lucie%20county%20florida&tid=ACSST5Y2019.S2503&hidePreview=false>

²⁴ <https://data.census.gov/cedsci/table?q=st.%20lucie%20county%20florida&tid=ACSST5Y2019.S2001&hidePreview=false>

²⁵ <https://data.census.gov/cedsci/table?q=st.%20lucie%20county%20florida&tid=ACSST5Y2019.S2801&hidePreview=false>

²⁶ <https://data.census.gov/cedsci/table?q=st.%20lucie%20county%20florida&tid=ACSST5Y2019.S2701&hidePreview=false>

²⁷ <https://data.census.gov/cedsci/table?q=st.%20lucie%20county%20florida&tid=ACSST5Y2019.S1810&hidePreview=false>

Grandparents live with grandchildren in 3.4% of households and 15.6% of grandparents are responsible for raising their grandchildren.²⁸ For schooling, 67,008 children ages 3 and older are enrolled in school. For kindergarten to 12th grade, 85.4% are in public school and 14.6% are in private school.²⁹

Definition of Community

Drug Free St. Lucie serves the cities of Fort Pierce and Port St. Lucie, accounting for the majority of the population in St. Lucie County, Florida. Census-designated places include Fort Pierce North and South, Hutchinson Island South, Indian River Estates, Lakewood Park, River Park, and White City. Unincorporated communities include Viking.

Fort Pierce is known as the Sunrise City and is also the county seat of St. Lucie County. Directly on the Atlantic Coast, the city has seen devastation from multiple hurricanes in the last 220 years. One in five (21.6%) individuals are Hispanic or Latino while 45.3% are White and 40.9% are African American. The city includes Fort Pierce Harbor which moves thousands of tons of waterborne commerce annually.

Lincoln Park is a 2.5 square mile area located in northwest Fort Pierce. One of the oldest communities in the city, its primary U.S. Census Tracts are 3802 and 3803. Though it is culturally and historically a rich community, the area also has a significantly lower socioeconomic status overall with more families living in poverty. Transportation, housing and health disparities are limitations in this area of the county.

The coastal city of Port St. Lucie is about 15 miles away from Lincoln Park and is described as largely middle class. It is the most populous municipality in the county and includes 32 different neighborhoods. An extremely ethnically diverse city, Port St. Lucie has a sizeable Hispanic population accounting for 20.5% of the city's residents. The demographics closely match those of the county overall.

In defining the community that we serve it is important to consider the social context of the community. This includes specific communities inside of our county that may be interested and/or have experienced the impact of substance misuse. Some of those social groups may include the following:

Communities of Place, Interest & Experience

When defining the community, it is important to consider communities within communities that may have a common set of concerns and may be mobilized to address substance misuse. These communities within communities include, 1) communities of place, where people may congregate or live in shared environments such as neighborhoods or other geographic areas; 2) communities of interest, groups who share common "interest" or passion for substance misuse prevention and other relevant social issues; and 3) communities of experience, groups of people that have shared experience and are impacted by substance misuse. All these groups are key to mobilizing the community to collectively address substance misuse. Some of the groups may include, but are not limited to the following:

- Neighborhood Associations
- Historical Lincoln Park and surrounding neighborhoods
- City of Port St. Lucie Neighborhood Services, Neighborhood Improvement and Community Engagement (NICE) Program
- Faith-based groups
- Community and school-based sports teams

²⁸ <https://data.census.gov/cedsci/table?q=st.%20lucie%20county%20florida&tid=ACSST1Y2019.S1002&hidePreview=false>

²⁹ <https://data.census.gov/cedsci/table?q=st.%20lucie%20county%20florida&tid=ACSST1Y2019.S1401&hidePreview=false>

- Fraternities and Sororities
- After-school program service providers
- Public and Private Schools
- National Guard Counter-Drug Task Force
- Lions Club
- Treasure Coast Opioid Task Force
- Mothers Against Drunk Driving (MADD)
- Victims of Murdered Children
- Veterans Community
- Recovery Community
- Roundtable of St. Lucie County, Inc.

Fort Pierce

The City of Fort Pierce was founded in 1901. Also known as the Sunrise City, Fort Pierce is the county seat of St. Lucie County and is one of the oldest communities on the east coast of Florida. Its growth, in the following decades, can be attributed to connections to the rail lines, the Atlantic Intracoastal Waterway, the land-boom of the 1920s, the Navy base on Pierce Beach, and other post-war development. Its current main economic drivers include agriculture (citrus and cattle), fishing, light industry (including small engines), food processing, and tourism. The city encompasses 21 square miles and has a population of 119,190 according to the U.S. Census Bureau American Community Survey 2019 5-year estimates.

The population boom brought economic challenges for certain areas of the county, mainly Fort Pierce. People and businesses left Fort Pierce for the growing metropolis of Port St. Lucie. The Fort Pierce community that remained experienced rapidly diminishing resources and increasing poverty. Currently, 32.4% of the residents are living below the poverty level. HIV/Aids, drugs, and unemployment surged and by 1980, Fort Pierce had developed a reputation as the crack cocaine capital of the United States, affecting primarily the high-poverty northwest area (known as “Lincoln Park”) with serious drug abuse and violence. In 2014, a national watchdog ranked Fort Pierce ninth on the list of Florida’s most dangerous cities, higher than the rankings of Miami, Tampa, and Tallahassee.

In 2018, there were 1.04 times more Black or African American (Non-Hispanic) residents (16,900 people) in Fort Pierce than any other race or ethnicity. There were 16,300 White (Non-Hispanic) and 8,130 White (Hispanic) residents, the second and third most common ethnic groups: 23% of the people in Fort Pierce are Hispanic (10,300 people).

Lincoln Park

Lincoln Park is a 2.5 square mile area, in northwest Fort Pierce, with a population of 9,000 (22% of the Fort Pierce population). The area has a disproportionally low-income population as compared to only 14% of families in St. Lucie County and 32% in the city of Fort Pierce. Over half of the families in Lincoln Park, two-thirds of them with children, live below the federal poverty level. Transportation limitations, sub-standard housing, and health disparities plague this area.

- 27% of households do not own a vehicle
- 10.7% of housing units are renter-occupied and 26% are vacant or abandoned
- Approximately one-third of all families are single-parent homes headed by females
- 95% of these female-headed households are at or below the federal poverty level
- 40% of residents aged 25 and older did not graduate high school
- Approximately 24% of births are to mothers aged 15-19

In 2017, Allegany Franciscan Ministries (AFM) contracted Hebni Nutrition Consultants, to conduct a community food security assessment in Lincoln Park Community. This was to address the availability of food, access, the health of residents, and the lack of grocery stores that provide healthy food options. According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), food deserts are “areas that lack access to affordable fruits, vegetables, whole grains, low-fat milk, and other foods that make up the full range of a healthy diet.” After Hebni concluded their full assessment of the community and analyzed data, they identified the needs of the residents and an understanding of the food system. They provided their conclusions and recommendations to Allegany Franciscan Ministries in a prepared community food assessment report that revolved around food security, supply, proximity, health status, and financial stability. According to the USDA, just over 6% of the U.S. population lives in “low-income and low access tracts and are more than one mile or

10 miles from a supermarket.” Additionally, the USDA notes that 9.2% of individuals living in the United States do not have a personal vehicle. Though there have been significant improvements with the transportation services for residents, to access healthy food, they often lack financial resources to purchase it. This all contributes to high health risks and outcomes. Allegany Franciscan Ministries and local community partners continue to use Hebni’s recommendations in their community action plans and assessments to improve health, financial stability, mental and cultural well-being.

Port St. Lucie

Less than 15 miles away from Fort Pierce, Port St. Lucie grew, and in most respects, flourished. The population is largely middle class since 2011. Port St. Lucie has boasted having the lowest crime rate of Florida cities and is ranked 13th in the nation. Understanding the differences in the two cities is important, and although youth from both areas present substance use issues, the problems differ.

Port St. Lucie is a relatively large coastal city with a population of 195,248. The city is comprised of 22 constituent neighborhoods and is the ninth-largest community in Florida. Port St. Lucie is neither predominantly blue-collar nor white-collar, instead having a mixed workforce of both types of jobs. Overall, Port St. Lucie is a city of sales, service providers, office workers, and professionals.

The percentage of adults in Port St. Lucie who are college-educated is close to the national average for all communities. 19.26% of the adults in Port St. Lucie have a bachelor’s or graduate degree. The per capita income in 2018 was \$24,947 which is middle-class income compared to Florida overall and the nation. This equates to an annual income of \$99,900 for a family of four. However, there is a wealth disparity in Port St. Lucie as well.

Port St. Lucie is an extremely ethnically diverse city. The city has a sizeable Hispanic population (people of Hispanic origin can be of any race) and account for 20.53% of the city’s residents. Tradition, Florida is a master-planned community in Port St. Lucie, Florida established in 2003. It covers 8,300 acres (34 km²) on the Florida Treasure Coast. Tradition is comprised of seven residential neighborhoods surrounding a town square, neighborhood parks, lakes, and a retail shopping center. A few years after its establishment, it was incorporated as an in-city town of Port St. Lucie. It is under development by Core Communities.

Community Needs

Problem Behaviors

Among St. Lucie County middle and high school students, there are still significant numbers across the county using and misusing substances, and some of these are at risk of developing severe and enduring substance misuse problems that continue into adulthood. Crime related to alcohol and other drug use either through the sale of drugs, a crime committed to obtain drugs, or being impaired from using drugs is contributing to community problems in St. Lucie County.

In the Florida Youth Substance Abuse Survey (FYSAS), St. Lucie County middle and high school students reported engaging in delinquent behavior within the past 12 months. Suspensions rates, for example, increased from 9.5% in 2018 to 11.4% in 2020, while selling and carrying handguns declined.

Delinquent Behavior (middle and high school students, past 12 months), FYSAS	2018	2020
Getting suspended	9.5%	11.4%
Attacking someone with intent to harm	6%	7%
Carry a handgun	4.7%	3.9%
Selling drugs	3.6%	1%

Prevalence of Use, Perception of Harm & Perception of Disapproval

Between 2018-2020, there was a 5% increase in past 30-day alcohol use among youth, while cannabis past 30-day use declined by 5.7%. Further, perception of harm for both substances did not increase but showed a significant decline. In addition, nicotine vaping increased from 10.7% to 13.1%, and while there is no comparative data for cannabis vaping, 3.3% of youth vaped cannabis, 35.8% perceived a risk of harm and a 75.6% of peers disapproved.

Past 30-day use, St. Lucie County and Florida (middle and high school students), FYSAS						
2020						
Measure	Alcohol	Cigarettes	Vaping Nicotine	Cannabis	Vaping Cannabis	Opioids
Past 30-day use	17.5%	1.8%	13.1%	6.2%	3.3%	0.7%
Perception of risk (great risk)	43.2%	58.8%	36.3%	29.9%	35.8%	76.4%
Perception of peer disapproval	89.3%	93.8%	71.4%	72.0%	75.6%	93.0%
2018						
Measure	Alcohol	Cigarettes	Vaping Nicotine	Cannabis	Vaping Cannabis	Opioids
Past 30-day use	12.2%	1.9%	10.7%	11.9%	n/a	0.7%
Perception of risk (great risk)	47.7%	71.7%	n/a	31.1%	n/a	72.5%
Perception of peer disapproval	88.6%	92.9%	n/a	70.4%	n/a	94.6%

Consequences

Cannabis

Of those who reported using electronic vapor products in 2020, 23.9% of St. Lucie County middle and high school students have used an electronic vapor product with marijuana oil, a decrease of 2.4% from 2018.

Percent of student users of electronic vapor products who have used an electronic vapor product with marijuana oil, among all middle and high school students:		
Year	St. Lucie County	Florida
2018	26.3% (20.6 - 31.9)	25.7% (24.7 - 26.7)
2020	23.9% (15.5 - 32.3)	37.9% (36.9 - 39.0)

Substance Use Dashboard: Exposure and Risk Behaviors | CHARTS (flhealthcharts.gov)

Alcohol

In 2019, the Florida Department of Law Enforcement reported 1,498 juvenile DUI arrests. Though annual drug arrests decreased 2018-2019 overall, they increased among juveniles during that time in St. Lucie County. Alcohol and drug confirmed crashes decreased between 2017 and 2019.

In the 2020 Florida Youth Substance Abuse Survey (FYSAS), 8% of St. Lucie County high school students reported riding in a vehicle within the past 30 days driven by someone who had been drinking alcohol; and 2.2% reported driving a vehicle within the past 30 days after drinking alcohol. In the 2015-2016 fiscal year, state-funded substance use treatment programs treated 228 youth ages 17 and under; and 228 young adults ages 18-25 years were enrolled in treatment with their primary drug of treatment being alcohol.³⁰

Nicotine

St. Lucie Public School data show a 47% decline in tobacco possession/use between 2018-19 and 2019-2020. However, there was a 143% increase from 2019-20 to 2020-21. Possession of contraband materials has shown a steady decline over the same period.

Discipline Response Codes	2018-2019	2019-2020	2020-2021
*Tobacco (Possession, Use)	105	56	136
**Possession Contraband Material	351	295	266

**Defined as possession, use, distribution, or sale of tobacco or nicotine products, on school grounds, at school-sponsored events, or on school transportation by any person under the age of 21.*

*** Possession, use, or distribution of materials or items which are forbidden at school. For example, this includes, but is not limited to, matches, lighters, ammunition, Class C common fireworks, toy weapons, laser beam devices, vape devices, or vape cartridges. It also includes tobacco products, which include cigarettes, chewing tobacco, and e-cigarettes possessed by students twenty-one years of age or older. Contraband shall be confiscated, and the return of such items shall be at the principal's discretion.*

³⁰ Southeast Region of Florida Treatment Program Admission data, 2015-2016.

Drug use/possession as reported by the St. Lucie Public schools also shows a 76% decrease from 2018-19 to 2019-20. However, has shown an increase of 145% from 2019-20 to 2020-21.

Discipline Response Codes	2018-2019	2019-2020	2020-2021
Drug Use /Possession	90	22	54

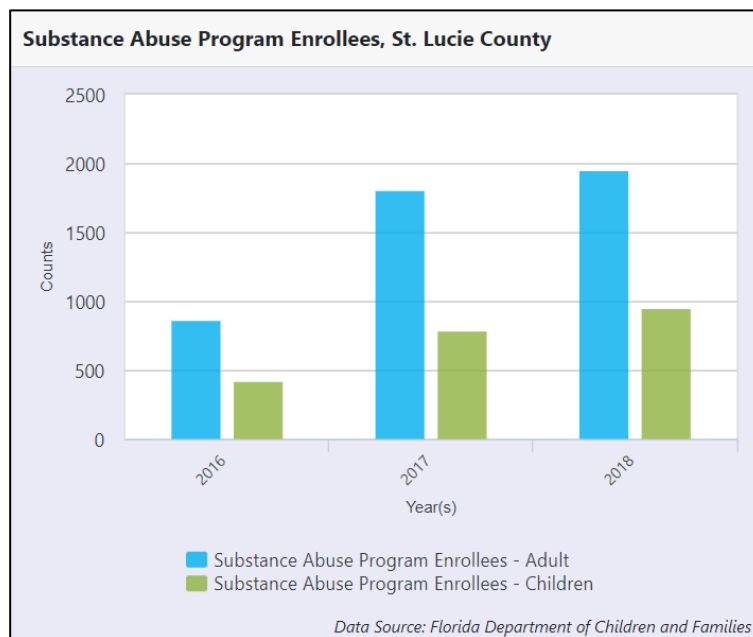
Defined as: The use or possession of any drug, narcotic, controlled substance, or any substance when used for chemical intoxication. Use means the person is caught in the act of using, admits to using, or is discovered to have used in the course of an investigation.

Opioids

Between 2017-2020, there were 285 drug overdose deaths in St. Lucie County, of which 227 were opioid related overdose deaths.³¹ In 2021, over 260,000 prescriptions were dispensed in St. Lucie County, resulting in 5.8 prescriptions per patient and 57.3 prescriptions dispensed per provider annually.³² There were 449 non-fatal overdose hospitalizations in 2020 and 588 overdose-related emergency department visits.³² In addition, 396 naloxone deployments were reported in 2021; most frequently (91% of the time) naloxone was administered by EMS. In 2018, 1,948 adults and 954 children in St. Lucie County were enrolled in substance abuse programs.³²

Opioids Prescribed for Pain (Number/Rate of Prescriptions)³²

St. Lucie County	Number of opioid prescriptions dispensed	Prescriptions dispensed per patient
2017	229,080	3.9
2018	265,458	5.1
2019	272,768	5.8
2020	270,725	6.2
2021	267,988	5.8



³¹ Substance Use Dashboard: Overdoses | CHARTS (flhealthcharts.gov)

³² Substance Use Dashboard: Substance Use and Treatment | CHARTS (flhealthcharts.gov)

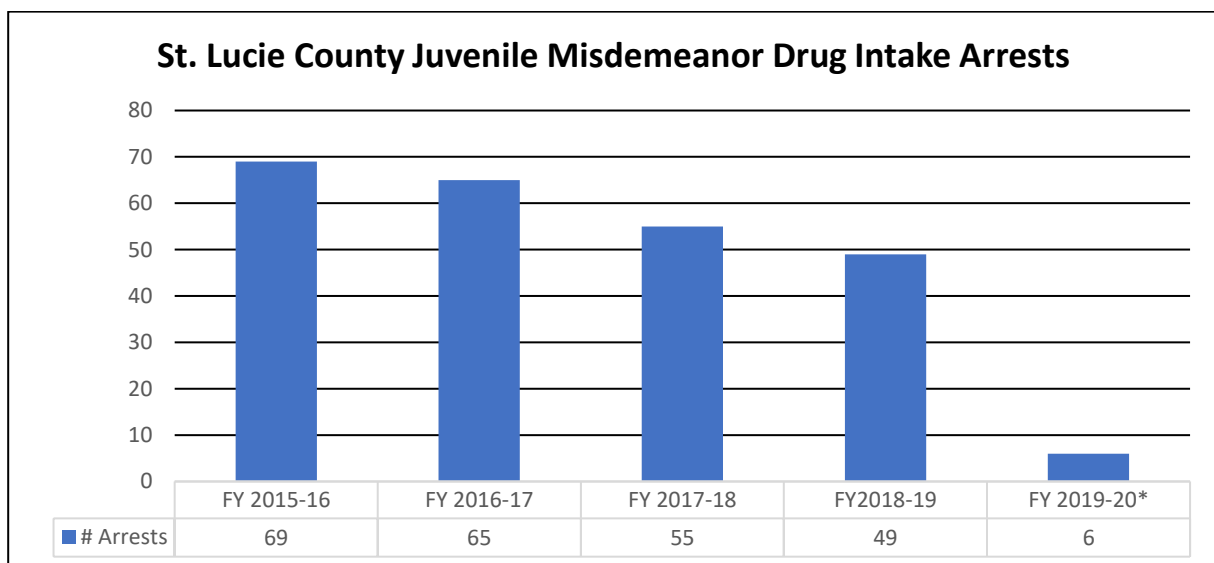
Drug Overdoses (Number of total population)³²

St. Lucie County	Drug Overdose Deaths	Opioid Overdose Deaths	Drug Overdose Age-Adjusted Death Rate (per 100,000)	All Drug Non-Fatal Overdose Hospitalizations	All Drug Non-Fatal Overdose (Emergency Dept. Visits)
2016	88	74	33.0	441	539
2017	86	66	29.1	402	613
2018	62	45	21.9	418	467
2019	58	47	21.0	401	497
2020	79	69	29.2	449	588

Neonatal Abstinence Syndrome Diagnoses (Total/Rate per 10,000 live births)³²

St. Lucie County	Rate per 10,000 live births
2016	66.7
2017	79.5
2018	73.7
2019	38.6
2020	n/a

Data from the Department of Juvenile Justice for misdemeanor drug arrests related to marijuana and paraphernalia show a decline for the past four (4) years. With an 88% reduction for 2019-2020, over the previous year. This decrease is attributed to a policy of not prosecuting marijuana offenses because of the inability to test for THC and hemp, thereby not reflective of an actual reduction among juveniles.



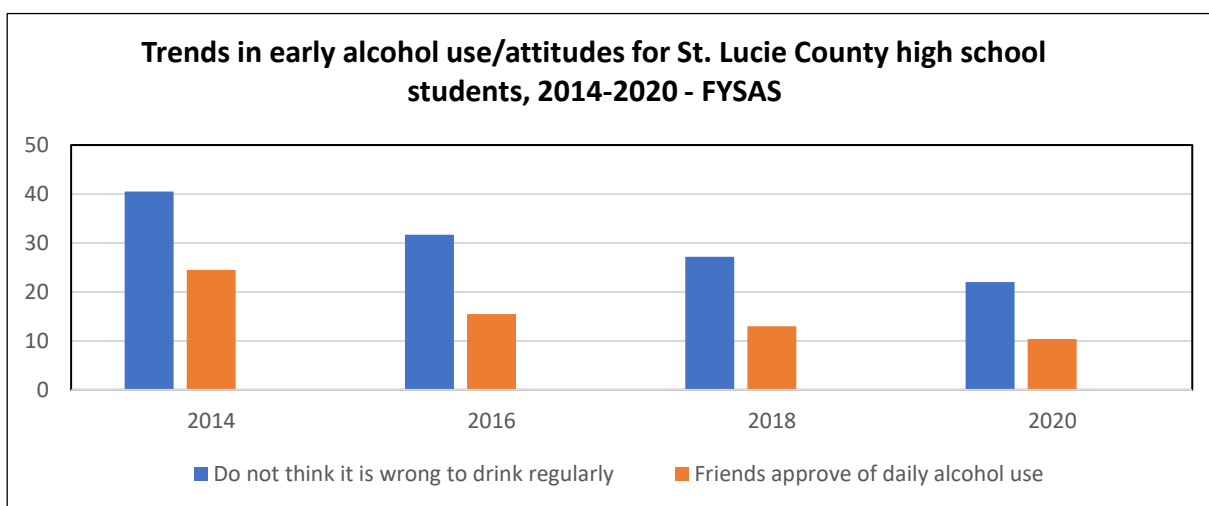
**Affected by Covid-19 Pandemic*

Root causes and Local Conditions

Alcohol

Favorable Youth Attitudes

- In 2018, more than one in four (27.2%) of St. Lucie County high school students do not think it is wrong to “drink regularly”; decreasing to 22% as reported in 2020. (FYSAS)
- In 2018, 13.0% of St. Lucie County high school students reported having friends that would approve of daily alcohol use; decreasing to 10.4% as reported in 2020. (FYSAS)
- In focus groups, kids report drinking in public places (Whispering Pines Park, local beaches, parties in parking lots).
- 2 out of 3 youth report visiting a convenience store at least once a week.
- In focus groups, St. Lucie County youth reported cultural norms in teen drinking (Christmas, birthday parties, etc). Source: Drug Free St. Lucie Youth Focus Groups



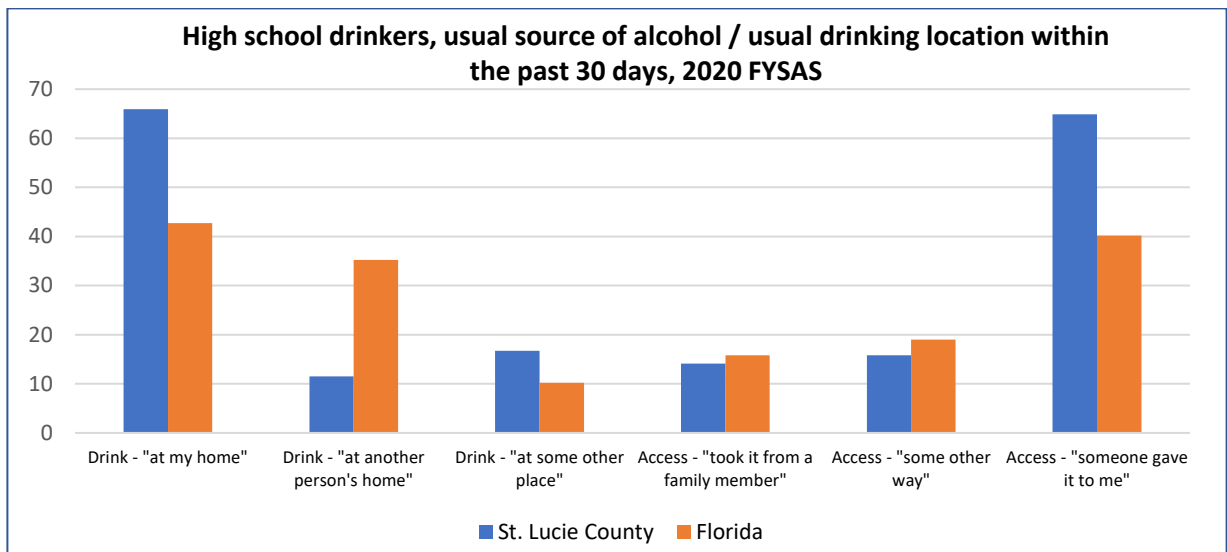
Favorable Parent Attitudes

- Nearly half (44.0%) of parents believe there is “no risk” or “slight risk” for youth to consume alcohol.³³
- 35% of students in the Drug Free St. Lucie’s youth focus groups reported parents allow their kids to drink at home because it was safer.
- 85% of students reported drinking at home, parties with their parents or other adults.

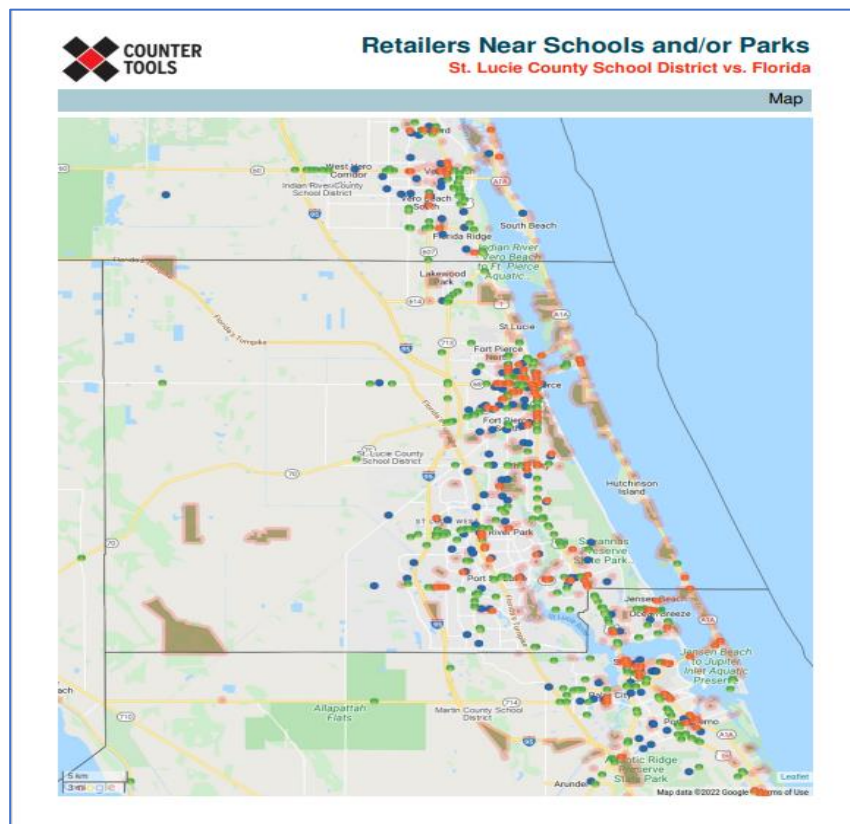
Ease Of Social Access

- In 2018, St. Lucie high school students reported usual drinking location within the past 30 days, at: “my home” 46.9%, increasing to 65.9% in 2020 – higher than the state average of 42.7%; “another person’s home” at 27.0% in 2018, decreasing to 11.5% in 2020; and “some other place” at 18.8% in 2018, decreasing to 16.7% in 2020 – higher than the state average of 10.2%.
- St. Lucie high school drinkers, usual source of alcohol within the past 30 days, was reported as: “took it from a family member” - 16.5% in 2018 and 14.1% in 2020; “some other way” - 23.6% in 2018 and 15.8% in 2020; and “someone gave it to me” - 48.1% in 2018 and 64.9% in 2020, which is higher than the state average of 40.2%.
- 70% of students reported access to alcohol out of their home refrigerator or at a close relative’s home.

³³ 2020 Drug Free St. Lucie Parent Survey



Source: Florida Youth Substance Abuse Survey, 2020



Proximity of Retail Stores to Schools, St. Lucie County, 2022

Ease of Retail Access

- 17.55% of retailers failed compliance checks according to the 2019 St. Lucie County Sheriff's Office.
- Students in Fort Pierce focus groups reported adult individuals are outside convenience stores ready to buy alcohol for youth in exchange for money to purchase drugs.
- There are 116 retail stores in Port St. Lucie and 124 retail stores in Fort Pierce that sell tobacco and alcohol.

Nicotine

Favorable Youth Attitudes

- 93.5% of middle and high school students reported they think it would be wrong to smoke cigarettes in 2018; that number decreased slightly to 93.2% in 2020. (FYSAS)
- 71.7% of middle and high school students reported great risk of harm in smoking 1+ packs of cigarettes per day in 2018; that number decreased to 58.8% in 2020. (FYSAS)

Ease of Social Access

- 90% of stores have outdoor marketing of alcohol. (2020 DFSL Environmental Scan)
- Retailers near stores with high smoking rates appear to have lower prices, more in-store promotion and advertisement (80% of retailers feature tobacco product advertising inside).

Ease of Retail Access

- There are 0.7% of retailers per 1,000 population in Port St. Lucie (i.e., 1,464.4 people per retailer) and 2.9% of retailers per 1,000 population in Fort Pierce (i.e., 348 people per retailer).
- There are approximately 240 retail stores in St. Lucie County that sell tobacco and alcohol.
- Some tobacco retailers are within 300 feet of schools in St. Lucie County. (countertools.org)
- 46% of retailers are within ½ mile of schools in Port St. Lucie and 60% of retailers in Fort Pierce are within ½ mile of schools.
- 59% of retailers are within ½ mile of parks in Port St. Lucie and 82% of retailers in Fort Pierce are within ½ mile of schools.

Cannabis

Favorable Youth Attitudes

- In 2018, 38.5% of St. Lucie County high school students reported they do not think it is wrong to smoke marijuana; decreasing slightly to 34.6% in 2020. (FYSAS)
- In 2018, 39.2% of St. Lucie County high school students reported they have friends that do not think it is wrong to smoke marijuana; also decreasing to 36.5% in 2020. (FYSAS)

Favorable Parent Attitudes
















- 60% of parents surveyed believe there is “no risk” or “slight risk” for youth to use marijuana.
- Youth in Fort Pierce indicate that adults allow teens to smoke marijuana in their households and that parents and high school students promote the use of marijuana on social media.



Risk & Protective Factors

Risk factors increase the likelihood of negative outcomes, while protective factors guard against negative outcomes. Effective prevention strategies involve the use of evidence-based practices and programs designed to reduce risk factors or increase protective factors operating at multiple levels.

Outlined below are selected risk and protective factors for middle and high school students in St. Lucie County. Targeting these factors through prevention initiatives is an effective approach for impacting outcomes across the identified priority areas. **Risk factors are associated with negative behavior outcomes; therefore, it is better to have lower risk scale scores and protective factor scale scores with higher values.**

RISK FACTORS					
Domain	Indicator	SLC Normative Value 2018	SLC Normative Value 2020	State and National Normative Value 2020	SLC 2020 Compared to National 2020
Community	Laws and Norms Favorable to Drug Use	33	42.5	42	
	Perceived Availability of Drugs	29	33.0	45	
	Perceived Availability of Handguns	29.5	21.0	33.5	
Family	Poor Family Management	41.5	39.0	44.5	
	Family Conflict	40.5	42.5	39.5	
School	Poor Academic Performance	44	38.5	46.5	
	Lack of Commitment to School	61.5	68.5	46.5	
Peer and Individual	Favorable Attitudes toward ATOD Use	32	32	42	
	Favorable Attitudes toward Antisocial Behavior	40.5	46	43	
	Early Initiation of Drug Use	22	14.5	43.5	
PROTECTIVE FACTORS					
Domain	Indicator	SLC Normative Value 2018	SLC Normative Value 2020	State and National Normative Value 2020	SLC 2020 Compared to National 2020
Family	Family Opportunities for Prosocial Involvement	56	55.5	56.5	
	Family Rewards for Prosocial Involvement	49	53.9	54.5	
School	School Opportunities for Prosocial Involvement	53.5	38.5	58.5	
	School Rewards for Prosocial Involvement	42.5	68.5	55.5	
Peer and Individual	Religiosity	49	51.0	57	

Adverse Childhood Experiences

Adverse childhood experiences, commonly known as ACEs, are traumatic events experienced during childhood that have been linked to a broad range of negative health and behavioral outcomes, including impaired cognitive development, high-risk behavior such as substance use, difficulty forming positive social relationships, high rates of chronic disease, and employment and financial difficulties. Students with higher levels of childhood trauma are more likely to report substance use and symptoms of depression, and less likely to report success in school.

The greater number of ACEs that you have, the more at risk you are likely to be. In 2020, 37.5% of youth had no ACEs, compared to 36.7% of youth who had an ACE score of 4 and above, and 25.7% of youth with an ACE score between 1 and 3.

Adverse Childhood Experiences Reported Among High School Students (FYSAS 2020)

2020	St. Lucie County	Florida Statewide
Emotional abuse	13.4%	15.7%
Physical abuse	10.6%	10.5%
Sexual abuse	8.4%	5.5%
Parents separated or divorced	47.0%	40.1%
Physical abuse in household	9.3%	8.8%
Substance abuse in household	35.3%	26.8%
Mental illness in household	19.2%	30.5%
Incarcerated household member	38.0%	26.8%
Emotional neglect	39.3%	29.2%
Physical neglect	7.2%	7.4%

2020	St. Lucie County	Florida Statewide
No ACEs reported	37.5%	32.1%
1 ACE	7.9%	21.0%
2 ACEs	12.9%	14.3%
3 ACEs	4.9%	10.9%
4 ACEs	19.4%	8.1%
5 ACEs	10.4%	5.7%
6 ACEs	1.8%	3.7%
7 ACEs	4.4%	2.1%
8 ACEs	0.6%	1.3%
9 ACEs	0.1%	0.6%
10 ACEs	0.0%	0.3%

Community Resources

The Roundtable of St. Lucie County is made up of senior executives representing funders, state agencies and elected officials who have the ability to collectively make strategic decisions and establish priorities to address substance misuse through their organization and across systems. One such funder and member is the St. Lucie County Children's Services Council (CSC), which is a countywide special-purpose government created by ordinance and approved by local voters to fund programs and services that improve the lives of children and their families. They currently support seven (7) St. Lucie County programs that focus on keeping youth away from drugs, alcohol, and other risky behaviors. These include:

- *Children's Home Society's - Teen Life Choices* program targets the prevention of teen pregnancy through group presentations with teens in middle and high schools, summer programs, afterschool programs, and community settings.
- *Families of the Treasure Coast's - Parent Teen Community Connection* program provides educational outreach to support accurate health education, focused on strengthening parent-child communication.
- *Florida Community Health Center's - Adolescent Health Program* provides medical and drug testing for your ages 11-18.
- *Healthy Start Coalition's - Teen Choices* program offers teens life skills education and one-on-one case management regarding physical and emotional issues surrounding their development.
- *In the Image of Christ's - Directed Growth Girls* program provides peer-led group, skills training designed to reduce sexual risk behaviors among African American female teens who are at risk for teen pregnancy and substance abuse.
- *Inner Truth Project's - Inner Truth Teen* program provides direct services and outreach to adolescents who have experienced sexual violence. Teens may participate in group therapy, individual therapy, trauma-sensitive yoga, and equine therapy opportunities.
- *New Horizons of the Treasure Coast, Inc.'s - Student Assistance* program targets elementary, middle and K-8th grade students with prevention strategies that focus on education, problem identification and referral. They utilize the evidence-based substance abuse and violence prevention curricula, *Too Good for Drugs*, *Too Good for Violence*, *Botvin Life Skills Training*, and *Second Step*. They also distribute fact sheets on underage drinking and marijuana use, focus on consequences/local contributing factors, and implement environmental strategies/environmental scans of local alcohol vendors.

The Children's Services Council of St. Lucie County also sponsors:

- *Teen Resource Card for the 211 Helpline*, which provides 24/7 free and confidential support to teens. The card highlights the names and telephone numbers of agencies if teens just need to talk, need information or resources for substance abuse, health services, homelessness, public transportation, and if they are pregnant or have a baby.

Another funder and Roundtable member is the Southeast Florida Behavioral Health Network (SEFBHN). They provide funding for Drug Free St. Lucie's substance misuse prevention strategy by supporting community events and norm campaigns - *Friday Night, Done Right* and *Farfromdruggin*. Further, with the support of SEFBHN, Drug Free St. Lucie is engaged in hosting several community events. These include:

- An Annual Youth Leadership Conference, with a focus on advocacy and community problem-solving skills, refusal skills and education about the dangers and negative consequences of youth marijuana use, underage drinking, and vaping.
- *Hidden in Plain Sight* community demonstrations to allow parents, grandparents, caregivers, teachers and other adults to explore a mock teenager's bedroom to observe and identify drug paraphernalia, hiding places and signs that may indicate alcohol or other drug use by teens.
- A Drug Symposium to facilitate youth dialogues about substance abuse and mental health issues in the community.

As a member of the Roundtable, the St. Lucie County Health department is currently working with the school district to revisit their *Tobacco Free Schools* policies to better match the recommendations by the American Heart Association and they are also working on addressing local conditions through its *Healthy Corner Stores* initiative.

Also, a member of the Roundtable, the St. Lucie County School District provides both prevention and intervention services to students and families (Substance Abuse Prevention – St Lucie Public Schools).

- *Project SUCCESS (Schools Using Coordinated Community Efforts to Strengthen Students)* is a school-based substance abuse prevention and intervention program carried out in partnership with the Drug Abuse Treatment Association (DATA). Middle schools and K-8 schools are provided with a prevention counselor and high schools are provided with a school-based intervention counselor. Project Success focuses on the prevention of substance abuse disorders over 8 sessions while individual counseling/intervention services is for 14 weeks.
- *Mental and Emotional Health Education* provides five (5) hours of instruction to students in grades 6-12 related to youth mental health awareness and assistance, including suicide prevention and the impacts of substance abuse. Services are provided by licensed and/or certified mental health professionals which include school counselors, school social workers, mental health counselors, and school psychologists. If the student requires services beyond that which can be provided in the school, referrals are made to the mental health collaborative or other community agencies.
- *School-Based Mental Health Services* is provided on each school campus for students that may be experiencing mental or behavioral health concerns. Services are delivered by licensed and/or certified mental health professionals, school counselors, mental health counselors, school social workers, and school psychologists. <https://www.fldoe.org/schools/k-12-public-schools/bosss/mental-health.stml>.
- *Tobacco and Vaping Student Citation Course* is designed as an educational tool and an alternative to out-of-school suspension for students that are found to be in possession of contraband material specifically vaping devices, cigarettes, or cartridges. Students that participate in this course learn about the harmful effects of nicotine, dangers of tobacco, hazards of E-Cigarettes, E-Cigarette flavors, refusal skills, and cessation techniques.
- *Substance Use Education* is a six (6) hour course designed as an option for first-time students who were discovered to be in possession or using marijuana or THC products during a school-related activity or on campus. Students learn about the stages of chemical dependence, triggers, and signs and symptoms of drug use and abuse. They also learn about healthy ways to cope, how to manage their emotions, communicate effectively, and set goals for the future.

Gaps in Resources

Despite having 211 services which provides information and referrals to health and human services and social assistance programs, focus groups conducted by the Department of Health and the Roundtable of St. Lucie have revealed that many community residents either don't know about these resources or they don't feel comfortable accessing them because of cultural differences. This therefore highlights the need to have a dedicated group of individuals/workers embedded within communities who can create connections for vulnerable populations.

This group of individuals has been referred to by many titles, such as community resource navigators, community health workers, outreach educators, and peer health educators. What is distinct about this group is that they share the same ethnicity, socioeconomic status, and life experiences with the community that they serve. Their role would be to provide culturally appropriate health information, advocate for individual and community health needs, or give guidance on health behaviors (CDC - Community Health Worker Resources - STLT Gateway).

Further, as highlighted on page 11 of the 2017 Drug Free Communities (DFC) assessment grant request, policies/practices in the State of Florida are supportive of alcohol and other drug use, partially because of the tourism rates, "vacation mentality" and "Spring Break", that guides the economy. Florida does not have a law against underage alcohol consumption and is one of three states in the country that does not have laws against serving alcohol to an intoxicated person. Florida's hospitality industry has long opposed strengthening Florida's alcoholic beverage laws. Florida does not have restrictions on drink specials or happy hours and allows youth ages 18-20 years to patronize and bartend in bars. Florida does not have a law against public intoxication and there are no statutory restrictions on alcohol advertising in stores, signs or on billboards. Additionally, *Responsible Beverage Server Training* is not mandatory in the state.



Logic Models

Underage Alcohol Use In St. Lucie County	Favorable Attitudes	Students drink at home
		Parents let students drink at home
		Youth drink at home or parties with parents or other family members
		Youth get alcohol out of their own refrigerator at home or a close relative's home
	Marketing/Promotion	Young people use alcohol with their parents at home because they are exposed to excessive outdoor marketing of alcohol products
		Students buy alcohol at retail markets close to their school
	Availability	Youth drink in public places (local parks near school)
		Older family and friends provide alcohol
		Youth purchase alcohol at local stores using fake IDs

Middle and High School Student Marijuana Use In St. Lucie County	Favorable Attitudes	Youth use marijuana at home with friends
		Youth use marijuana with their peers at parties
		Youth use marijuana after school but before parents get home from work or on weekends
	Availability	Youth purchase marijuana at retail outlets, apartments, and from people in parks
		Youth get marijuana through friends and family including friends, in home, other youth

