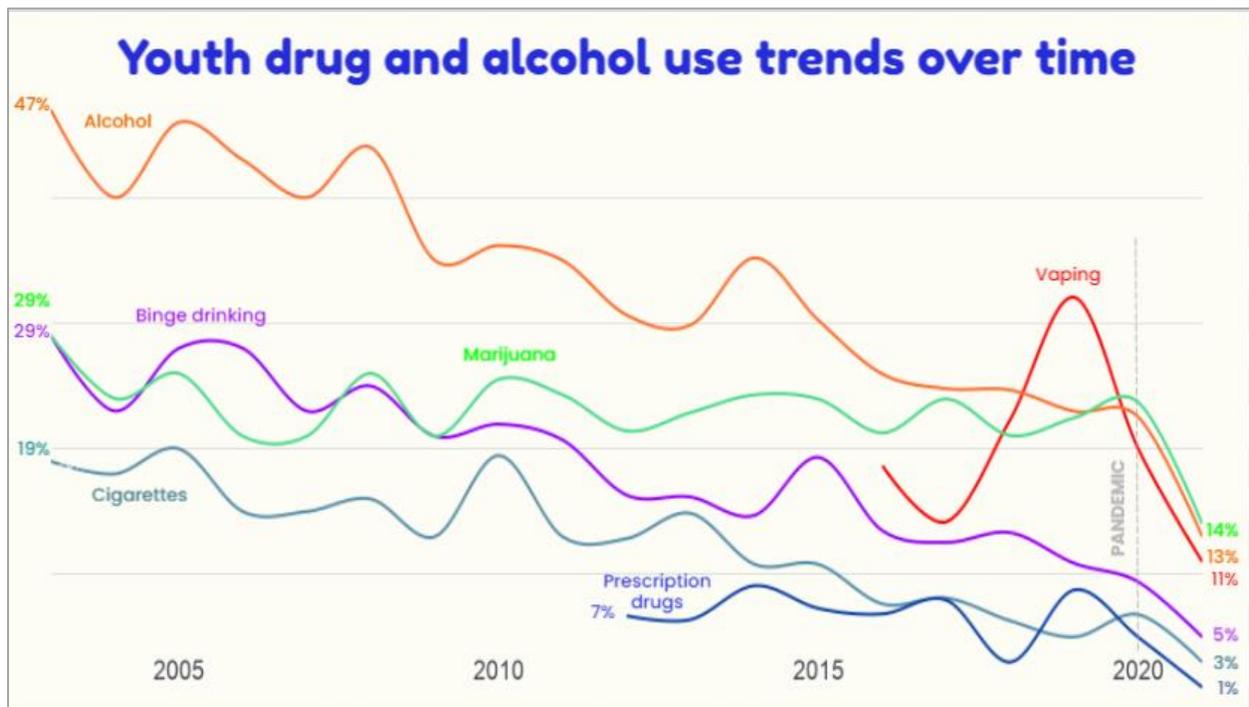


To: Steve Ellis
 From: Kat Allen
 Date: May 19, 2021
 Re: Trends in youth cannabis use in Franklin County/North Quabbin

The Comm14141

unities That Care Coalition has been measuring and reporting levels of youth drug and alcohol use (along with the underlying risk and protective factors that contribute to youth drug and alcohol use) since 2003. The following chart shows the trends in youth drug and alcohol use in Franklin County and the North Quabbin region for the most common addictive substances:



As demonstrated in the chart above, the use of *almost* all addictive substances has decreased dramatically among local youth since the coalition began conducting the annual Teen Health Survey in 2003. The notable exception to this trend is marijuana use, which has remained more or less steady over the last 16 years, in stark contrast to all other substances. Vaping, too, is a new problem, and vaping can include vaporized tobacco and/or vaporized marijuana products.

As would be expected from the fact that youth have been isolated from their friends and their schools, all drug and alcohol use rates were down in February 2021. We have every reason to believe that this is a temporary, quarantine-induced reduction, and that we need to be particularly careful of later *increases* in drug and alcohol use caused by the dramatic increase in mental health problems (particularly depression and anxiety) among youth that have come about during COVID and quarantine.

The Communities That Care Coalition feels that the strategy of increasing mental health supports for youth is *exactly* what is needed right now as we get ready for this wave of changes and transitions as depressed and anxious youth get back into contact with their friends and are tempted to self-medicate with drugs and alcohol.

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