



Strong Families:

*Using Cambridge Resources
to Keep Kids Safe.*

We live in an age of constant change and activity. We may find ourselves having to work harder or longer to make ends meet. We may find it more difficult to fit all of our family's activities into the day.

As families, we also face more challenges. Our lives have become more stressed as we attempt to balance work and personal time. We have found it harder and harder to spend time as a family; talking, listening, and sharing together.

Just as adults face stress, our children also face constant challenges. School and peer pressures, family issues, and the physical changes of adolescence are only a few of the factors that influence a child's emotional and physical well-being.

As our children grow older, the environment; a combination of where we live, and what we see, do, and hear, also affects their sense of security.

Families are often the first line of defense in protecting teens from the many frightening risks they face in our world. These risky behaviors often include substance abuse and addiction, delinquency, aggression or violence.



This booklet outlines strategies that families can use in supporting teens in making good choices and engaging in healthy, positive activities.

While health and social risks continue to be concerns among Cambridge parents, research shows that kids with strong connections to their families or other adult role models, and those who participate in school or community sponsored activities, reduce their risk of engaging in negative behaviors.

Those families able to make the extra effort to spend time with each other, find the resulting connections well worth the effort. *Here are some suggestions for ways to begin to create connections that help keep kids healthy and safe.*

Plan time together. When parents spend positive time with their children they are saying, “I value you. You are worth taking time for.”

Communicate. A simple but crucial tool, family discussions can be an opportunity to gain information, offer compliments, as well as concerns and opinions. Simple statements of appreciation for the time or effort or other skill that someone has contributed to a project go a long way in fostering feelings of self-worth and commitment in young people.

Help Your Child Connect. Cambridge is rich in youth development opportunities. Sometimes youth are unsure of how to choose an activity. Helping your child investigate and make decisions regarding how to spend after school time can make a critical difference.



Protective Factors

These factors contribute to the safety and well-being of our children.

- Close family ties
- Close connections with trusted adults
- Participation in community activities (such as church, youth center, or athletics)
- Bonding and attachment to school
- Active parent or guardian supervision

Risky Behaviors

These behaviors jeopardize the safety and well-being of our children.

- Substance abuse and addiction
- Delinquency
- Exposure to aggression and violence
- Early sexual activity
- Disease transmission

Opportunities for Youth Involvement in Cambridge

Cambridge maintains **parks and playgrounds** throughout the City including tot lots, basketball courts, tennis courts and athletic fields.

The **Recreation Division** provides year round quality, affordable, and accessible recreational opportunities for Cambridge residents of all ages in well-designed and maintained recreational facilities.



The Cambridge Youth Programs serve pre-teens and teens ages 9-19 at five youth centers. The Centers serve approximately 1000 young people throughout the year. Centers utilize two program models that serve young people. One is the Leadership Program that focuses on the needs of our pre-teen (9-13) members, and the other is our Teen Evening Program which works with older youth (14-19). Programs include *employment assistance, homework help, literacy program, life skill's workshops, guest speakers, community service projects, drug and alcohol prevention programs, recreational activities, sport leagues, trips and special events.*

The **Community Schools Programs** provide a network of services including educational, cultural, social and recreational programs for residents of all ages. During the school year, Cambridge Community Schools provide (out of school time) programming for children at every public elementary school in Cambridge with classes such as music, architectural model building, woodworking, drama, dance, yoga, soccer, hockey, and karate. The programs support Cambridge Public Schools' emphasis on literacy and math with after school book clubs, library visits, journalism, foreign language classes, chess, and math related activities. *Homework assistance is an important part of each program!*

The **Middle School Partnership** offers middle school age students a safe place to meet, learn and express themselves. Students play an active role in designing program activities, helping to shape clubhouses, classes, and field trips.

The program is free and runs from 2:00pm to 6:00pm. For more information contact:
Adam Corbeil 617-349-3004

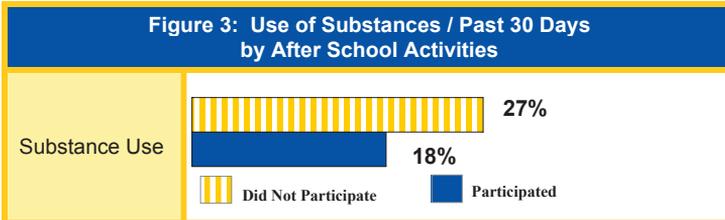
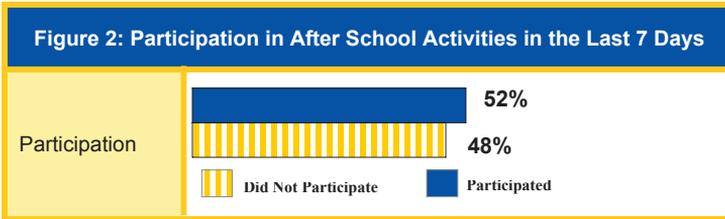


THE GOOD NEWS: *Keeping Youth Involved Really Helps*

Children and youth who are involved in school extra-curricular activities, school sports, after school programs, youth centers or church programs are less likely to report use of alcohol, tobacco, or other drugs. Students in Cambridge report participation in a variety of school and community based youth programs. (Figure 1)

Figure 1: Cambridge Middle Grade School Community Activity Participation			
	6 th	7 th	8 th
Academic Groups, Clubs , Student Government	39%	42%	45%
Participated in Music, Band or Choir	53%	50%	33%
Participated in Interscholastic Sports	17%	35%	43%
Participated in community-organized youth sports	45%	48%	47%
Participated in after-school programs, youth programs, church programs, teen centers (7 day)	55%	54%	49%

Just over half of all students in grades 6,7 and 8 participate in after school activities in Cambridge. (Figure 2) According to the 2005 Middle Grade Health Survey, youth in Cambridge who reported participating in after-school activities, youth programs, church programs, and/or attending a teen center in the last 7 days were significantly less likely to report use of substances in the past 30 days. (Figure 3)



MORE GOOD NEWS: *After School Programs Matter*

Good after-school programs really work, keeping kids safe and out of trouble, and helping them learn to get along with others and succeed in school and in life.

Studies now show after-school programs can:

- *Reduce juvenile crime and violence*
- *Reduce drug use and addiction*
- *Cut other risky behavior like smoking and alcohol abuse*
- *Reduce teen sex and teen pregnancies*
- *Boost school success*

Americas After School Choice, a report from Fight Crime: Invest in Kids, 2000

After-School Programs Prevent Crime, Teach Skills and Values

“On school days, the prime time for violent juvenile crime is from 3 PM to 6 PM. The after-school hours also are the most common time for teens to become pregnant, and being unsupervised after school puts kids at greater risk of truancy, receiving poor grades, mental depression, and substance abuse.”

In fact, being unsupervised after school doubles the risk that an eighth grader will smoke, drink, or abuse drugs.

An excerpt from: Americas After School Choice, a report from Fight Crime: Invest in Kids, 2000

What is Your Child Doing After School ?

Half of youth do not regularly participate in after school programs. Nearly two-thirds say they make the decision about whether to go or not.

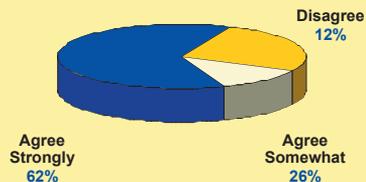
The major reason they cite for not participating: *They are not interested or motivated.*

However, once youth attend the majority report having fun, that staff are caring, and making friends.

(Source; Public Agenda, 2005)

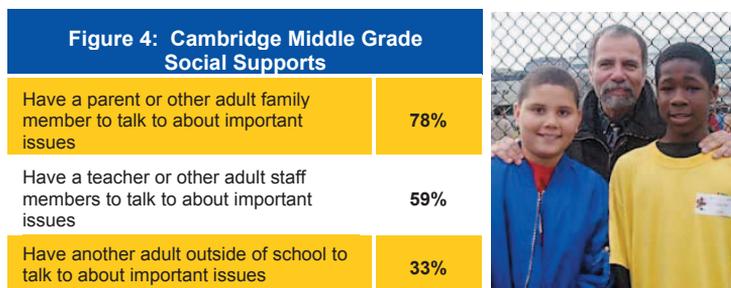
Parents/caregivers must do more to encourage youth to participate- and youth agree.

Even though I might complain about it, sometimes I need to be pushed by my parents to do things that are good for me - do you agree or disagree?

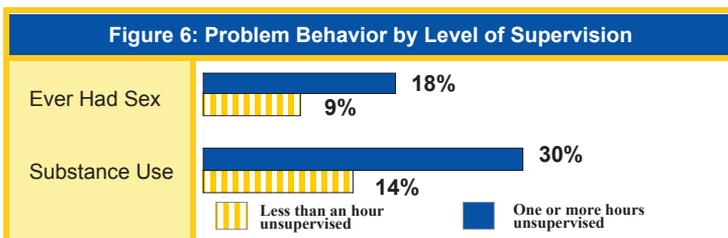
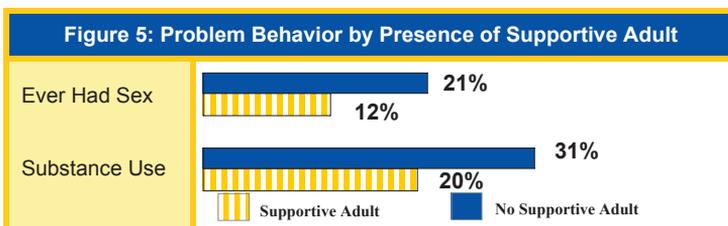


SO NOW WHAT: *The Importance of Social Supports*

Meaningful involvement in school or community activities provides opportunities for youth to bond with a positive adult. Having another adult to connect with in school or in the community can support youth in making healthy decisions. The majority of Cambridge youth report having social supports. (Figure 4) A wide variety of programs exist and a searchable database of youth programs is available. (www.cambridgesomervilleresourceguide.org)



Youth who reported that there is at least one teacher or other supportive adult in school they can talk to if they have a problem were less likely to report use of substances in the last 30 days and ever having had sex. (Figure 5) Youth that reported spending *less than one hour* at home alone with no adult on an average school day were less likely to report problem behavior. (Figure 6)



THE BAD NEWS: *Facing The Facts*

Based on the results of the 2005 Cambridge Middle Grade Health Survey, current use of alcohol, sexual behavior, and some indicators of violence are up among students in grades 6-8. The percentage of students who report conversations with parents about alcohol and other drugs is down.

Alcohol and Other Drug Related Issues – Middle Grade Students			
Current Use (any use in past 30 days)	6 th	7 th	8 th
Alcohol	12%	18%	25%
Binge Alcohol Use (5+ drinks in one setting)	4%	5%	11%
Cigarettes	2%	4%	6%
Marijuana	4%	6%	10%
Inhalants	5%	8%	5%
Talked With Parents About Alcohol/Drugs	50%	46%	51%
Was Offered, Bought, or Received an Illegal Drug	1%	3%	10%

Sex– Middle Grade Students			
	6 th	7 th	8 th
Ever Had Sexual Intercourse	8%	10%	19%
Were Touched, Pinched, Grabbed, or Patted in a Sexual Way Against Your Will (12 Months)	4%	9%	14%
Talked With Parents About Sex (12 months)	31%	31%	37%

Violence and Safety– Middle Grade Students			
Percentage in the last 12 months	6 th	7 th	8 th
Witnessed Violence in The Neighborhood	20%	21%	23%
Received Rude Sexual Comments	10%	16%	20%
Were Bullied, Threatened or Pushed Around	20%	16%	13%

*The Health Survey can provide us with key information including: What are youth telling us about the challenges they face in our community? What should parents know about: Substance Use, Violence and Safety, Mental Health, Sexual Behavior, Weight and Control, Physical Activity, and Resiliency. For Information about the Cambridge Health Survey Contact: **Cambridge Prevention Coalition** 617-349-6283 or <http://www.cambridgema.gov/DHSP2/cpc.cfm>*

Cambridge Community Resources

to Keep Kids Safe.

Cambridge Community Schools Program

Eileen Keegan

617-349-6225

Agassiz Community School

(617) 349-6287x11

Cambridgeport Community School

(617) 349-6307

Fitzgerald Neighborhood Council and Community School at Peabody School (617) 349-6302

Fletcher Maynard Neighborhood Council and Community School (617) 349-6295

Haggerty Neighborhood Council and Community School (617) 349-6264

Harrington Neighborhood Council and Community School at King Open School (617) 349-6305

Kennedy Neighborhood Council and Community School at Kennedy-Longfellow School (617) 349-6308

King Neighborhood Council and Community School (617) 349-6269

Linnaean Neighborhood Council and Community School at Graham & Parks School (617) 349-6267

Longfellow Neighborhood Council and Community School (617) 349-6260

Morse Neighborhood Council and Community School (617) 349-6291

Tobin Neighborhood Council and Community School (617) 349-6300

Childcare and Family Support Services

Janette McKinnon

617-349-6203

Cambridge Youth Programs

Michelle Farnum

617-349-6266

Willis D. Moore Youth Center:

617-349-6273

Gately Youth Center:

617-349-6277

Area IV Youth Center:

617-349-6262

Frisoli Youth Center:

617-349- 6312

West Cambridge Youth Center:

617-349-6314

The Recreation Division

617-349-4301

The Agenda For Children

Out of School Time Program

Susan Richards 617-349-4099

Boys and Girls Clubs of Middlesex County

617-628-4665

Cambridge Community Center Inc.

617-547-6811

Cambridge Family YMCA

617-661-9622

Cambridge Community Art Center

617-868-7100

East End House 617-876-4444

Jamnastics Inc. 617-354-5780

Tutoring Plus 617-547-7670 x1



The Cambridge Somerville
Resource Guide
[www.cambridgesomerville
resourceguide.org](http://www.cambridgesomervilleresourceguide.org)