

# Hubbard in Prevention: Drug Free Communities Grant

## Evaluation Report – Year 6

### Background

Hubbard County’s Hubbard in Prevention (HIP) coalition was awarded a second five-year Drug Free Communities (DFC) grant. The coalition had a DFC grant from 2016 to 2021. The goals of HIP are to enhance community collaboration and prevention capacity, and to prevent and reduce youth substance use. HIP has prioritized addressing youth alcohol use, marijuana use, and vaping. This summary highlights successes and challenges during HIP’s sixth year of DFC funding, as well as planned activities for Year 7.

### Coalition activities and successes

- **2022 ACEsMN Summit—Steps to Resilience.** Over 350 participants attended a summit on Adverse Childhood Experiences featuring 8 breakout presentations (each held twice), a key note speaker, and large group discussion. Ninety-five percent of respondents to the event survey said they learned something new. Participants especially appreciated hearing personal stories from former Park Rapids students, and learning strategies for authentically connecting to others.
- **Mister Brown’s Choose Well program.** Motivational speaker Mister Brown spent four days in Hubbard County presenting to students at Park Rapids High School, Park Rapids Middle School, and the Nevis School District. Key messages shared include: always respect others, when you make better choices you will live a better life, and not trading away what you want most for what you want in the moment.
- **Ms. Minnesota.** Elle Mark, Ms. Minnesota 2021 and a former DFC Coordinator, visited all three school districts in Hubbard County to raise awareness of mental health.
- **Handle with Care (HWC).** HWC is a school-community partnership that enables local first responders to notify schools when they encounter a young person at a traumatic scene. This allows school staff and mental healthcare providers to prepare to provide trauma-informed supports. This is now being implemented in all three school districts.

#### HIP’S MULTI-FACETED APPROACH TO PREVENTION

##### **Provide Information.**

Information and resources were given to young people, families, and community members at Night to Unite and Open House events. Information was also shared through radio public service announcements.

**Enhance skills.** Responsible Beverage Server Training was delivered to 21 people. All participants agreed the training should be required for all servers.

**Provide support.** The ACEs summit, Mister Brown, Ms. Minnesota, and HWC all provided support to students either directly or indirectly.

**Change physical design.** Nevis 9<sup>th</sup> graders participated in a poster contest focused on distracted and/or impaired driving. Posters were displayed in the school.

**Change policy.** The county attorney is working on language around licensing establishments that sell paraphernalia and legalized cannabis products.

## Challenges

As of July 2022, under a new Minnesota law, residents can legally purchase edibles like gummies and beverages containing small amounts of hemp-derived THC. This set back HIP's efforts to pre-emptively advocate for the adoption of restrictions on cannabis sales. It also sparked an interest in exploring licensing policies at the local level for edibles.

Another significant challenge was general community-wide burnout (e.g., COVID, local protests over the Enbridge Line 3 pipeline). This burnout restricted the capacity of sectors, including schools, law enforcement, and courts/probation from fully participating in DFC efforts.

## Next steps

During Year 7 of HIP's DFC grant, the coalition plans to: continue implementing RBST and HWC, continue sharing both Positive Community Norms and Mister Brown messaging, and continuing work on cannabis policies. New efforts in Year 7 will include:

- **Mental Health First Aid (MHFA) training.** MHFA is a skills-based training that teaches participants about mental health and substance use issues. Participants learn how to identify, understand, and respond to signs of mental illness and substance use disorders. While the primary focus will be on teachers and school staff, HIP hopes to open up the training to all interested community members.
- **Open the Door events.** HIP plans to resume hosting Open the Door events during which parents and caregivers learn to identify signs that their teens might be using substances, and how to spot everyday-looking objects that can be used to hide substances and paraphernalia.
- **Student-led newsletters.** Century Middle School expressed interest in partnering with HIP to launch a student-led newsletter that would be featured in Park Rapids Enterprise. HIP and school staff would select the overall topics each month, but students could research any aspect of that topic that interests them. Research could include exploring information online, or conducting interviews with subject matter experts in the community. Topics may include Mister Brown's messaging related to good choices, alcohol, vaping, marijuana, bullying, and ACEs. HIP will explore the possibility of inviting students from Park Rapids High Schools Healthy Choices class and/or National Honor Society to mentor the younger students. If the pilot is successful, HIP may explore the idea of producing a prevention-focused magazine to circulate in the community as other DFCs in Minnesota have done. This would provide another platform for elevating youth voice.
- **Community well-being classes.** HIP is exploring opportunities to partner with Sanford Health on offering classes to community members. Topics could include, among other things, mental well-being and ACEs.