Protective Factors

The 2021 Delaware Epidemiological Profile

Substance Use, Mental Health, and Related Issues

prepared for

Director Joanna Champney and the Delaware Division of Substance Abuse and Mental Health & The Delaware State Epidemiological Outcomes Workgroup
All states, including Delaware, received support from the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration's (SAMHSA) Center for Substance Abuse Prevention (CSAP) to establish a Statewide Epidemiological Outcomes Workgroup (SEOW). The Division of Substance Abuse and Mental Health (DSAMH) in the Department of Health and Social Services initially supported the SEOW through SAMHSA Strategic Prevention Framework grants and continues to sponsor the SEOW with SAMHSA funding. The SEOW is facilitated by a team at the Center for Drug and Health Studies at the University of Delaware that convenes a network of representatives from over 50 State and nonprofit agencies, community organizations, advocacy groups, and other entities. Formerly known as the Delaware Drug and Alcohol Tracking Alliance (DDATA), the SEOW’s mission is to bring data on behavioral health and associated issues to the forefront of prevention and treatment by pursuing the following goals:

- To build monitoring and surveillance systems to identify, analyze, and profile data from state and local sources;
- To provide current benchmarks, trends, and patterns of substance abuse consumption and consequences;
- To create data-guided products that inform prevention and treatment planning and policies;
- To train agencies and communities in understanding, using, and presenting data effectively.

The annual Delaware State Epidemiological Profile is a valuable data resource for strategic planning, decision-making, and evaluation. Using data that are available on an ongoing basis, the report highlights indicators of mental health and wellbeing, patterns of substance use and its consequences, and risk and protective factors for people in Delaware. The report also highlights crosscutting issues that warrant attention as well as populations that may experience disproportionate risk for these concerns.

This final chapter of the report focuses on protective factors. To review the complete report, slides, infographics, and other SEOW data products, please visit the UD Center for Drug and Health Studies Delaware Epidemiological Reports page. Video recordings of select SEOW presentations referenced in this report are also available online.
SEOW Collaborators

Thank you for your participation and commitment to data-driven prevention planning, practice, and evaluation! We are especially grateful to the team at the Delaware Division of Substance Abuse and Mental Health for their guidance and collaboration.

atTAcK Addiction
Bellevue Community Center
Christiana Care Health System
Colonial School District
Delaware Academy of Medicine/Delaware Public Health Association
Delaware Afterschool Network
Delaware Center for Justice
Delaware Coalition Against Domestic Violence
Delaware Council on Gambling Problems
Delaware Courts - Office of the Child Advocate
Delaware Criminal Justice Council
Delaware Criminal Justice Information System
Delaware Department of Education
Delaware Department of Services for Children, Youth and their Families
  Division of Prevention and Behavioral Health Services
Delaware Department of Health and Social Services
  Division of Medicaid and Medical Assistance
  Division of Public Health
  Division of Services for Aging and Adults with Physical Disabilities
  Division of Substance Abuse and Mental Health
Delaware Department of Safety and Homeland Security
  Delaware State Police
  Division of Alcohol and Tobacco Enforcement
  Division of Forensic Science
Delaware Department of State
  Delaware Office of Controlled Substances
  Division of Professional Regulation, Prescription Monitoring Program
Delaware Domestic Violence Coordinating Council
Delaware Guidance Services  
Delaware Information and Analysis Center  
Delaware Multicultural and Civic Organization  
Delaware Prevention Coalition  
Delaware State Board of Education  
Holcomb BHS/Open Door, Inc.  
KIDS COUNT in Delaware, University of Delaware Center for Community Research & Service  
La Esperanza Community Center  
Latin American Community Center  
Mental Health Association in Delaware  
Milford School District  
NAMI Delaware  
Nemours Health and Prevention Services  
New Castle County Police Department  
Planned Parenthood of Delaware  
Red Clay Consolidated School District  
Sun Behavioral Delaware  
Sussex County Health Coalition  
Transitions Delaware  
Trauma Matters Delaware  
United Way of Delaware  
University of Delaware  
  College of Health Sciences  
  College of Arts and Sciences  
  Partnership for Healthy Communities  
  Student Health & Wellness Promotion  
Wesley College  
West End Neighborhood House  
Wilmington University

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*If your organization is interested in becoming an SEOW Collaborator, please contact Meisje Scales at: mjscales@udel.edu.*
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Notes on Data Reporting and Interpretation

In order to protect the anonymity of respondents and to ensure that the data reported meet certain statistical standards, the Center for Drug and Health Studies (CDHS) at the University of Delaware has established a set of guidelines for reporting and interpreting data from surveys that it administers to students across the state. As a result, in the Delaware State Epidemiological Profile, data in some tables and figures may be aggregated or otherwise reported differently than in years prior. The following notes summarize the guidelines for interpreting data presented in this report and provide an overview of changes relevant to this year:

- **Reporting small numbers:** For any estimate where the raw number of responses is less than 30, no statistical estimates are reported. Statistics computed from such a small proportion of the total number of students may be unreliable, inflating the significance of existing relationships in the data, and among some special populations, may put individuals at risk of being identified. In some data products such as our heat maps, multiple years of data have been combined in order to increase the sample sizes to a reportable figure.

- **Rounding:** All figures from Delaware School Survey (DSS) are rounded to the nearest whole percent. As such, in some cases the cells in a table may add up to slightly more or less than 100%.

- **Missing Observations:** In our analysis, any missing observations (responses) are not calculated into the total percentages. Because different questions have varying numbers of missing responses, the total sample size and percent missing may fluctuate slightly from question to question. This is due to a few factors:
  - Students may not answer all questions on a survey, particularly those towards the end if they run out of time or they tire of answering questions.
  - Students may also skip or decide not to respond to certain questions for various reasons (e.g., if they fear their responses will not be kept confidential; if they consider the question too personal or sensitive; if they do not understand the question; etc.)

- **Discrepancies in Reporting:** In some instances, there may be slight differences in estimates reported by the Center for Drug and Health Studies compared to those reported by other state or federal entities for the same data source. In most cases this is due to differing practices in rounding or handling missing observations in the data and does not substantially impact the overall prevalence estimates, trends, and relationships among these data points.

- **Statistical Significance:** Unless otherwise indicated, all reported correlations between variables are statistically significant at the p<.05 level. Null hypothesis testing, used to estimate statistical significance, provides an estimate of the likelihood that the relationship between two indicators is not due to random chance. If the p-value for a given crosstab is less than .05, this suggests that in 95% of cases, the correlation between the relevant variables is because there is a relationship between them.
- **Weighted Data:** Weighting data is a correction technique that compensates for nonresponses, helps correct for unequal probabilities of being selected within the sample, and helps ensure that the sample drawn is representative of the Delaware student population. If data is weighted, there will be a notation indicating the data is weighted for the specific fact, figure, or table.
  - **A note about 2019 Youth Risk Behavior Survey (YRBS) Data:** In previous years, Delaware received weighted Delaware YRBS survey data from the CDC for both middle and high school samples. However, during the 2019 administration, participation rates for the Delaware high school survey did not meet the required threshold for weighting the data. Therefore, this report only includes 2019 middle school findings from the YRBS. Whenever available, trend data from the CDC Youth Online Data Portal is also reported. Additional high school YRBS data from previous years may be requested by following the Delaware Division of Public Data Information & Request Process.

- **Pandemic Impacts on Data Collection:** In 2020, the advent of the COVID-19 pandemic and subsequent school closures and shifts to remote learning greatly impacted our ability to collect school survey data. As a result, in 2020, we are unable to report any data from the Youth Tobacco Survey (YTS) for middle or high school, or from the Delaware School Survey (DSS) for 5th and 11th graders. We are, however, able to report figures from the 8th grade Delaware School Survey, based on responses from 3,799 respondents.
2021 DELAWARE STATE
EPIDEMIOLOGICAL PROFILE
SUBSTANCE USE AND RELATED ISSUES
1. Protective Factors

National Overview

Whether the focus is mental health, trauma, substance use, violence, or other behavioral health issues, prevention work is grounded in evidence-based strategies designed to reduce risk factors and strengthen protective factors. Specific risk and protective factors are relevant at various stages of life and across several domains for intervention (Cleveland et al., 2008; Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration [SAMHSA], n.d.). Individual level protective factors include personal characteristics such as adaptability, empathy, and good social skills, as well as a value on academic achievement, hope for the future, self-efficacy, and a willingness to follow rules. Family level protective factors include having safe, stable, and nurturing home environments with clear and consistent rules. Community level factors include social organization, norms, and community safety. Schools operate at the intersection of the peer and community level—they are the setting for most peer interactions among youth but can also provide a powerful protective function if school leaders find ways to enhance school connectedness and promote healthy norms (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention [CDC], 2009). Schools can promote school connectedness by providing adult support, supporting the formation of positive peer groups, promoting the importance of education, and creating a safe and positive school environment. In summary, support and a caring environment coupled with clear and consistent limits are important factors associated with healthy youth development. Further, the feeling of connectedness through positive family, peer, and social relationships builds resilience in youth. Healthy relationships and social supports promote mental wellness and life skill development.

At different stages in a person’s life, one domain may have a more significant influence in comparison to another. For example, Cleveland et al. (2008) found that peers and the school environment had a greater influence on older adolescents’ substance use rates compared to those of younger adolescents. In contrast, families and the outside community had a greater impact than peers or school environments on younger children. Effective prevention
programming should target risk and protective factors that are most salient at each life stage and best-suited for the domain in which the intervention will be implemented (National Institute on Drug Abuse [NIDS], 2003). Early interventions, even at the preschool level, can play a powerful role in reducing risk throughout the “developmental risk trajectory” (NIDA, 2003). The Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration notes that risk factors are “correlated and cumulative”—that is, having a risk factor early in life increases the likelihood of having more risk factors later in life (SAMHSA, n.d.). Efforts to reduce risk factors and increase protective factors for one area of concern, such as substance use, have the potential to improve other areas of concern, such as mental health (SAMHSA, n.d.).

Delaware Overview

The 2018-2019 National Survey of Children’s Health (NSCH) provides national and state prevalence rates of many aspects of childhood health and wellbeing, including several key protective factors, as reported by their parents. Respondents are asked a number of questions regarding their child’s home life and family supports. In terms of family protective factors, more than half of Delaware parents reported having attended an event or activity of their child within the past year. Two-thirds of parents reported that the family ate together at least four days a week, and more than half of parents of younger children reported that someone in the family read to them at least four days a week. Delaware parents also reported children had high levels of school engagement; approximately half reported that their child was always engaged and another third reported that their child was usually engaged. More than three out of four respondents reported their children aged 6 to 17 had no difficulty making and keeping friends (NSCH, n.d.).

The NSCH also includes a series of four questions that comprise a Family Resilience Composite Measure. The questions ask parent respondents to report if their child lives in a home where family members: talk together about what to do; work together to solve problems; know that they have strengths to draw upon; and stay hopeful even in difficult times. Eighty-two percent of Delaware respondents reported that their child lived in a home with these four supports in place most or all of the time, similar to the national sample.

Results from the 2020 Delaware School Survey (DSS) highlight associations between several protective factors and rates of substance use as well as mental health indicators among 8th grade students. Overall, 95% of students reported having at least one person as a source of support and encouragement, most commonly a parent or guardian, followed by friends and then teachers. Students who reported higher grades reported lower rates of vaping, alcohol,

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1 It is important to note that while there is a statistical association between these factors, this does not necessarily mean that there is a causal relationship between these variables in every instance, and there may be additional unobserved indicators that also influence the outcome. This holds true for all of the associations discussed in this chapter.
and marijuana use, and those who cared about doing well in school reported lower substance use rates as well as lower rates of anxiety and depression. The most notable associations were among students who reported getting along with their parents; students who reported never or not often getting along with their parents were approximately three times as likely to have used alcohol, marijuana, and vaped within the past year. These students were also three times as likely to report experiencing anxiety and more than four and a half times as likely to report symptoms of depression on more than half of the days in the past two weeks. Feeling safe in the neighborhood and at school were also associated with lower rates of anxiety and depression, and feeling safe in the neighborhood was also associated with lower rates of substance use. However, there was not a clear association between having strictly enforced rules at home and either substance use or mental health indicators.

Finally, hopefulness has been identified as a protective factor for mental health (Kirby et al., 2021). As discussed in Chapter 9 of this report, several questions on the DSS are based on the Cantril Ladder, which asks the following: Please imagine a ladder with steps numbered from zero at the bottom to ten at the top. The top of the ladder represents the best possible life for you and the bottom of the ladder represents the worst possible life for you. Two-thirds of 8th graders rated themselves in the top tier of the ladder at the time of the survey and three-quarters envisioned themselves being in the top tier in five years (please see Chapter 9 Mental Health and Wellbeing). This suggests that the majority of students are hopeful about where they will be in life in the future.

The following figures highlight a number of protective factors among Delaware youth and associations with risk experiences.

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2The Delaware School Survey includes two questions based on the Cantril Ladder. Students are asked to imagine a ladder with steps numbered from zero at the bottom and ten at the top. The top of the ladder represents the best possible life for the student, and the bottom of the ladder represents the worst possible life. Students are asked to respond with which step of the ladder they feel that they personally stand on now, and on which step of the ladder they think they will stand on in five years. Present and Future scales vary slightly. The Present scale categorizes steps 7-10 as Thriving and steps 5-6 as Struggling. The Future scale categorizes steps 8-10 as Thriving and 5-7 as Struggling. Both scales categorize steps 0-4 as Suffering.
2018-2019 National Survey of Children’s Health
Family Resilience Composite Measure
(in percentages)

Figure 1: Family Resilience Composite Index, Delaware and national comparison, children 0-17
Note:
Indicator 6.12 Family Resilience: “Does this child live in a home where the family demonstrates qualities of resilience during difficult times.” The composite measure includes four items: “Talk together about what to do; Work together to solve the problem; Know we have strengths to draw upon; Stay hopeful even in difficult times.”
Source: Data Resource for Child and Adolescent Health.

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Figure 2: Number of days children and family ate together during the past week, Delaware and National comparison, ages 0-17

Note:
Indicator 6.9: “During the past week, on how many days did all the family members who live in the household eat a meal together?”
Source: Data Resource for Child and Adolescent Health.
Figure 3: Number of days children were read to by household member, Delaware and National comparison, ages 0-5

Note:
Indicator 6.7: “During the past week, how many days did you or other family members read to this child, age 0-5 years.”
Source: Data Resource for Child and Adolescent Health.

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2020 Delaware School Survey
Sources of Support and Encouragement
Among 8th Grade Students
(in percentages)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Source of Support</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Parents</td>
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<td>Friends</td>
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<td>Teachers</td>
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<td>School Adults</td>
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<td>Adults in places of worship</td>
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<td>Neighborhood Adults</td>
<td>10</td>
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<tr>
<td>No One</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 4: Sources of support and encouragement, 8th grade

Note: Student are asked to mark all responses that apply to the question: "Which of the following people would you say give you a lot of support and encouragement?"

2020 Delaware School Survey
Past Year Substance Use\textsuperscript{a} and Academic Achievement
for 8\textsuperscript{th} Grade Students
(in percentages)

Figure 5: Past month substance use and grades, 8\textsuperscript{th} grade

Notes:
Unless otherwise noted, all estimates are statistically significant at the p<.05 level.

Source: Center for Drug & Health Studies. (2020). Delaware Secondary School Survey: 8\textsuperscript{th} Grade [Annual Survey].

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2020 Delaware School Survey
Past Year Substance Use\textsuperscript{a} and Caring about Doing Well in School for 8\textsuperscript{th} Grade Students
(in percentages)

![Bar chart showing substance use and caring about doing well in school]

Figure 6: Substance use, mental health, and caring about school, 8\textsuperscript{th} grade

Note:
Unless otherwise noted, all estimates are statistically significant at the p<.05 level.
*Anxious here is reported as students who respond that they have felt very nervous or anxious on more than half of the days in the past two weeks.
**Depressed here is reported as students who respond that they have been bothered by feeling down, depressed or hopeless on more than half of the days in the past two weeks.

Source: Center for Drug & Health Studies. (2020). Delaware Secondary School Survey: 8\textsuperscript{th} Grade [Annual Survey].

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2020 Delaware School Survey
Rules Enforced at Home\textsuperscript{a} and
Past Year Substance Use Among Delaware 8\textsuperscript{th} Grade Students
(in percentages)

![Bar chart]

Figure 7: Past year substance use and rules enforced at home, 8\textsuperscript{th} grade

Notes:
*The relationship between past year marijuana use and frequency of rule enforcement at home was not statistically significant.
\textsuperscript{a}Students were asked: “How often are your parents’ or guardians’ rules strictly enforced?”

Source: Center for Drug & Health Studies. (2020). Delaware Secondary School Survey: 8\textsuperscript{th} Grade [Annual Survey].
2020 Delaware School Survey
Rules Enforced at Home\textsuperscript{a} and
Mental Health\textsuperscript{b} Among Delaware 8\textsuperscript{th} Grade Students
(in percentages)

![Bar chart showing mental health and rules enforced at home, 8\textsuperscript{th} grade students]

Figure 8: Mental health and rules enforced at home, 8\textsuperscript{th} grade

Notes:
\textsuperscript{a}Students were asked: “How often are your parents’ or guardians’ rules strictly enforced?”
\textsuperscript{b}The relationship between rule enforcement at home and these two mental health indicators was not statistically significant.
*Anxious here is reported as students who respond that they have felt very nervous or anxious on more than half of the days in the past two weeks.
**Depressed here is reported as students who respond that they have been bothered by feeling down, depressed or hopeless on more than half of the days in the past two weeks.

Source: Center for Drug & Health Studies. (2020). Delaware Secondary School Survey: 8\textsuperscript{th} Grade [Annual Survey].

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2020 Delaware School Survey
Getting Along with Parents\textsuperscript{a} and
Past Year Substance Use Among Delaware 8\textsuperscript{th} Grade Students
(in percentages)

![Bar chart showing past year substance use and getting along with parents, 8\textsuperscript{th} grade]

Figure 9: Past year substance use and getting along with parents, 8\textsuperscript{th} grade

Notes:
Unless otherwise noted, all estimates are statistically significant at the p<.05 level.
\textsuperscript{a}Students were asked: “How often do you get along with your parents or guardians?”
Source: Center for Drug & Health Studies. (2020). Delaware Secondary School Survey: 8\textsuperscript{th} Grade [Annual Survey].
2020 Delaware School Survey
Getting Along with Parents\textsuperscript{a} and 
Mental Health Among Delaware 8\textsuperscript{th} Grade Students 
(in percentages)

![Bar Chart]

Figure 10: Mental health and getting along with parents, 8\textsuperscript{th} grade

Notes:
Unless otherwise noted, all estimates are statistically significant at the p<.05 level.
\textsuperscript{a}Students were asked: “How often do you get along with your parents or guardians?”
*Anxious here is reported as students who respond that they have felt very nervous or anxious on more than half of the days in the past two weeks.
**Depressed here is reported as students who respond that they have been bothered by feeling down, depressed or hopeless on more than half of the days in the past two weeks.

Source: Center for Drug & Health Studies. (2020). Delaware Secondary School Survey: 8\textsuperscript{th} Grade [Annual Survey].

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2020 Delaware School Survey
Talking to Parents about School\textsuperscript{a} and
Past Year Substance Use Among Delaware 8\textsuperscript{th} Grade Students
(in percentages)

![Graph showing past year substance use and talking to parents about school for 8th grade students.](image)

Figure 11: Past year substance use and talking to parents about school, 8\textsuperscript{th} grade

Notes:
Unless otherwise noted, all estimates are statistically significant at the p<.05 level.
\textsuperscript{a}Students were asked: “How often do you talk with your parent or guardian about how things are going in school?”

Source: Center for Drug & Health Studies. (2020). Delaware Secondary School Survey: 8\textsuperscript{th} Grade [Annual Survey].

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2020 Delaware School Survey
Talking to Parents about School\textsuperscript{a} and Mental Health Among Delaware 8\textsuperscript{th} Grade Students
(in percentages)

![Bar chart showing percentages of students talking to parents about school and experiencing mental health issues.]

Figure 12: Mental health and talking to parents about school, 8\textsuperscript{th} grade

Notes:
Unless otherwise noted, all estimates are statistically significant at the $p<.05$ level.
\textsuperscript{a}Students were asked: “How often do you talk to your parent or guardian about how things are going at school?”
*Anxious here is reported as students who respond that they have felt very nervous or anxious on more than half of the days in the past two weeks.
**Depressed here is reported as students who respond that they have been bothered by feeling down, depressed or hopeless on more than half of the days in the past two weeks.

Source: Center for Drug & Health Studies. (2020). Delaware Secondary School Survey: 8\textsuperscript{th} Grade [Annual Survey].

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2020 Delaware School Survey
Feeling Safe in the Neighborhood\textsuperscript{a} and
Past Year Substance Use Among Delaware 8\textsuperscript{th} Grade Students
(in percentages)

Figure 13: Past year substance use and feeling safe in their neighborhood, 8\textsuperscript{th} grade

Notes:
Unless otherwise noted, all estimates are statistically significant at the p<.05 level.
\textsuperscript{a}Students were asked how often they feel safe in their neighborhood

Source: Center for Drug & Health Studies. (2020). Delaware Secondary School Survey: 8\textsuperscript{th} Grade [Annual Survey].
2020 Delaware School Survey
Feeling Safe in the Neighborhood\(^{a}\) and Mental Health Among Delaware 8\(^{th}\) Grade Students
(in percentages)

![Bar chart showing mental health and feeling safe in neighborhood, 8\(^{th}\) grade](image)

Figure 14: Mental health and feeling safe in neighborhood, 8\(^{th}\) grade

Notes:
 Unless otherwise noted, all estimates are statistically significant at the p<.05 level.
\(^{a}\)Students were asked how often they feel safe in their neighborhood
*Anxious here is reported as students who respond that they have felt very nervous or anxious on more than half of the days in the past two weeks.
**Depressed here is reported as students who respond that they have been bothered by feeling down, depressed or hopeless on more than half of the days in the past two weeks.


[Back to table of figures]
2020 Delaware School Survey
Feeling Safe at School\textsuperscript{a} and
Past Year Substance Use Among Delaware 8\textsuperscript{th} Grade Students
(in percentages)

![Bar chart showing past year substance use and feeling safe at school, 8\textsuperscript{th} grade](chart.png)

Figure 15: Past year substance use and feeling safe at school, 8\textsuperscript{th} grade

Notes:
Unless otherwise noted, all estimates are statistically significant at the p<.05 level.
\textsuperscript{a}Students were asked how often they feel safe at school

Source: Center for Drug & Health Studies. (2020). Delaware Secondary School Survey: 8\textsuperscript{th} Grade [Annual Survey].

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2020 Delaware School Survey
Feeling Safe at School\textsuperscript{a} and Mental Health Among Delaware 8\textsuperscript{th} Grade Students (in percentages)

Figure 16: Mental health and feeling safe at school, 8\textsuperscript{th} grade

Notes:
Unless otherwise noted, all estimates are statistically significant at the p<.05 level.
\textsuperscript{a}Students were asked how often they feel safe at school
*Anxious here is reported as students who respond that they have felt very nervous or anxious on more than half of the days in the past two weeks.
**Depressed here is reported as students who respond that they have been bothered by feeling down, depressed or hopeless on more than half of the days in the past two weeks.

Source: Center for Drug & Health Studies. (2020). Delaware Secondary School Survey: 8\textsuperscript{th} Grade [Annual Survey].

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2. References

**Protective Factors**


## Data Sources

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<th>Data Instrument</th>
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In addition to the data sources for the figures and tables in the 2021 report, the following data sources are also cited throughout the narrative:

- America’s Health Rankings
- American Psychological Association
- Bureau of Labor Statistics
- Center for Drug and Health Studies, University of Delaware
- Crisis Text Line
- Delaware Department of Education
- Delaware Department of Health and Social Services, Division of Public Health, My Healthy Community
- Delaware Department of Safety and Homeland Security, Division of Forensic Science
- Delaware Household Health Survey
- Drug Enforcement Administration
- KIDS COUNT in Delaware
- KFF
- National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine
- National Center for Health Statistics
- National Conference of State Legislatures
- National Institute on Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism
- National Institute on Drug Abuse
- National Institutes of Health
- National Institute on Mental Health
- Rapid Assessment of Pandemic Impact on Development – Early Childhood
- RTI International
- State of Delaware Economic Development Office
- The Trevor Project
- U.S. Census Bureau
- U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention
- U.S. Health Resources and Services Administration