



**West Virginia Substance Abuse Regional  
Task Force Survey 2013**

# **KEY FINDINGS REPORT**

**Region 5**

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# Executive Brief for Region 5

## Background

West Virginia has six regional task forces (RTF) focused on preventing and addressing substance abuse. In the fall of 2013, meeting participants were asked to complete a survey about their beliefs about the task forces, trends in substance abuse, and strategies for prevention. The following report summarizes the results of these surveys.

## Summary of Findings

- ❖ Most RTF participants believe reducing substance abuse in West Virginia is extremely important. They also believe that many other key stakeholders also believe it is extremely important.
- ❖ Most RTF participants believe substance abuse can be reduced in West Virginia.
- ❖ Most RTF participants believe the RTFs have made a difference, and participants intend to stay engaged.
- ❖ Many RTF participants over-estimated substance abuse in West Virginia and thought the trends in recent years were worse than they actually are.
- ❖ Most RTF participants believe prevention, early intervention and treatment can be effective for both youth and adults.
- ❖ Most RTF participants believe a variety of prevention strategies can be effective and are interested in learning more about these strategies.

## Limitations

These results only represent the views of 32 RTF participants who completed the survey and cannot be generalized to other RTF participants, the region or the state.



Most Regional Task Force (RTF) participants, 78%, believe reducing substance abuse in West Virginia is extremely important. Similarly, many believed reducing substance abuse was extremely important to other key stakeholders as well (Q3).

	Percentage of RTF participants who think these agencies/people believe reducing substance abuse is extremely important
The West Virginia Bureau for Behavioral Health and Health Facilities	57%
West Virginia State Agencies (like public Health, Commerce Business and Work Force, etc.)	31%
Most elected officials in West Virginia	13%
Most law enforcement agencies in West Virginia	41%
Most superintendents of schools in West Virginia	25%
Most business owners in West Virginia	13%
Most adults in West Virginia	22%
Most youth in West Virginia	25%

Most RTF participants believe substance abuse can be reduced (Q4).

Most RTF participants, 94%, believe they have ideas and knowledge to contribute to the RTF.

Most RTF participants, 100%, believe “we can reduce substance abuse in my community.”

Most RTF participants, 97%, believe “we can reduce substance abuse in my region.”

Most RTF participants, 91%, believe “we, as a state, can reduce substance abuse in West Virginia.”

Most RTF participants agree the Regional Task Forces have made significant contributions (Q5).

69% agree RTFs have significantly contributed to supporting community-based projects.

72% agree RTFs have significantly contributed to policy changes impacting substance abuse.

63% agree RTFs have significantly contributed to legislation impacting substance use.

72% agree RTFs have significantly contributed to increasing funding to reduce substance abuse.

59% agree RTFs have significantly contributed to increasing services to reduce substance use.

Most RTF participants have been engaged and are likely to stay engaged in RTF activities (Q1-2).

	Engaged in the past 12 months	Likely to be engaged in the next 12 months
Read information provided to you like emails, etc.	91%	91%
Attended RTF meetings	77%	94%
Actively participated in RTF meetings	78%	94%
Spent time between meetings working on RTF tasks	63%	88%
Spoke to other agencies, leaders in your region about efforts to reduce substance abuse	91%	94%

## Perceived Use and Trends

### Tobacco

Many RTF participants, 59%, believe that about half or more of West Virginia adults smoke cigarettes (Q6). Similarly, 19% believe that smoking among West Virginia adults has increased in the past 15 years (Q13). In fact, less than a third of West Virginia adults smoke (about 28%), and cigarette smoking by West Virginia adults has not changed significantly in the past 15 years (source: Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System, 2012).

Many RTF participants, 34%, believe that about half or more of West Virginia high school students smoke cigarettes (Q10). In fact, about 19% smoke, and smoking among high school student has decreased (source: Youth Risk Behavior Surveillance System, 2011).

### Alcohol

Many RTF participants, 38%, believe that most (more than 60%) of West Virginia adults drink alcohol monthly (Q7). In fact, about 32% drink monthly. Alcohol use by West Virginia adults has not changed significantly in the past 15 years (source: Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System, 2012).

Many RTF participants, 47%, believe that about half or more of West Virginia high school students drink alcohol monthly (Q11). Similarly, 59% believe that drinking among West Virginia high school students has increased in the past 15 years (Q16). In fact, about 34% drink monthly, and drinking among high school students has decreased (source: Youth Risk Behavior Surveillance System, 2011).

### Marijuana

Many RTF participants, 34%, believe that about half or more of West Virginia adults use marijuana monthly (Q8). Similarly, 44% believe that marijuana use among West Virginia adults has increased in the past 15 years (Q14). In fact, about 5% use marijuana monthly, and marijuana use by West Virginia adults has not changed significantly in the past 15 years (source: National Survey on Drug Use and Health, 2011-2012).

### Prescription Drugs

Many RTF participants, 50%, believe that about half or more of West Virginia adults have taken a prescription drug that was not prescribed to them in the past year (Q9). In fact, about 4% have used prescription pain relievers for non-medical use in the past year (source: National Survey on Drug Use and Health, 2011-2012).

Many RTF participants, 31%, believe that about half or more of West Virginia high school students have taken a prescription drug that was not prescribed to them in the past year (Q12). In fact, about 17% have done so (source: Youth Risk Behavior Surveillance System, 2011).

Prescription drug abuse has increased in the past 15 years among both adults and high school youth. However, it has decreased among both adults and high school students in the past year in West Virginia.

## Beliefs about Prevention, Intervention and Treatment

Many RTF participants, 56% strongly agree or agree that substance abuse can be prevented among West Virginia adults (Q17), and 69% strongly agree or agree that substance abuse can be prevented among West Virginia youth (Q18).

Most RTF participants, 75% strongly agree or agree that if you can identify substance abuse problems among adults early, you can intervene and reduce the likelihood of future problems (Q19). Similarly, 81% strongly agree or agree early identification and intervention is effective for youth (Q20).

Most RTF participants, 84% strongly agree or agree that adults who are abusing substances can recover and lead healthy, productive lives (Q21). Similarly, 91% strongly agree or agree that treatment is effective for youth (Q22).

Most RTF participants, 100%, believe it is important to use evidence-based strategies to prevent substance abuse in West Virginia (Q23).

### Perceived Effectiveness of Strategies

Most RTF participants believe the following strategies would be highly effective in reducing substance abuse among youth (age 17 and younger) and adults in West Virginia (Q24, Q25).

	Among Youth	Among Adults
Providing information about the impacts of substance abuse through media campaigns, school events, etc.	28%	31%
Providing education through curriculum delivered in schools / workplaces and other educational settings	34%	25%
Working with families (parents and other primary caregivers) to enhance their skills in preventing substance use among youth	44%	59%
Working with adults who interact with youth to enhance their skills in preventing substance use among youth	55%	--
Providing alternative activities for youth and adults that are safe and do not involve alcohol or other drugs	63%	63%
Improving school / workplace policies regarding substance use	44%	56%
Improving community laws and policies that reduce availability of substances, impact advertising, and increase enforcement	44%	44%
Building strong prevention, intervention and treatment capabilities to serve the community	78%	88%
Increasing early identification of youth using substances and connecting them with interventions	66%	69%

### Familiarity and Interest in Learning More

Most RTF participants are familiar with AND want to learn more about the following strategies to reduce substance abuse in West Virginia (Q26, Q27).

	Familiar	Interested in learning more
Providing information about the impacts of substance abuse through media campaigns, school events, etc.	53%	81%
Providing education through curriculum delivered in schools and other educational settings	53%	84%
Working with families (parents and other primary caregivers) to enhance their skills in preventing substance use among youth	56%	91%
Working with adults who interact with youth to enhance their skills in preventing substance use among youth	53%	88%
Providing alternative activities for youth that are safe and do not involve alcohol or other drugs	66%	88%
Improving school policies regarding substance use	34%	81%
Improving community laws and policies that reduce availability of substances, impact advertising, and increase enforcement	69%	91%
Building strong prevention, intervention and treatment capabilities to serve the community	78%	97%
Increasing early identification of youth using substances and connecting them with interventions	63%	94%