



2022-2023

Data
Action
Resource
Team

Central Virginia Community Report

FULL REPORT

DEVELOPED IN PARTNERSHIP BY



www.horizonbh.org/services/data-action-resource-team/

Executive Summary

The Framework for Addiction Analysis and Community Transformation (FAACT) is the Commonwealth of Virginia's premier data analytics platform to tackle the Opioid epidemic and is spearheaded and implemented by the Virginia Department of Criminal Justice Services (DCJS). It consolidates on a single platform national, commonwealth, and local data resources to help its users address the rising tide of addiction in Virginia.

The Central Virginia FAACT Annual Report analyzes a variety of data sources to better understand the effect of substance use disorder on communities.

- Horizon Behavioral Health data which includes emergency custody order (ECO) information as well as general trends observed by staff members.
- Emergency Medical Services (EMS) data displays the breakdown of individuals involved in opioid-related incidents and when the incidents were occurring most frequently.
- Blue Ridge Emergency Medical Services (BREMS) data which contains reported overdose emergencies in the Central Virginia region.
- Virginia State Police (VSP) Incident Based Reporting (IBR) and local law enforcement data which showcases the trends in substance related arrests.
- Virginia Employment Commission (VEC) data provides insight into the trends in unemployment rates and claims.
- Virginia Department of Social Services (VDSS) data contains information related to Child Protective Services as well as a variety of benefits available to residents.
- Central Virginia Continuum of Care (CVCoC) and Miriam's House provides data related to homelessness in the region as well as comparisons to national averages.
- Lynchburg Youth Survey (LYS) and Public Schools data was analyzed to examine the status and trends in health behaviors of youth in 8th, 10th and 12th grade.
- YWCA – Central Virginia provided qualitative data related to the trends in domestic violence over the last few years.
- Centra Health provided qualitative data regarding the trends observed in the health system recently.

Trend analysis was performed on EMS data from 2021-2022 to define major shifts in overdose incidents in Virginia before observing trends in EMS emergencies, unemployment rates and VSP arrests at the identified change points to understand noteworthy interactions within Central Virginia. Considering local population metrics, trends, and available resources, The FAACT Team's recommendations are as follows:

1. Collaborate with the FAACT Analyst for the region to integrate regional datasets and gain precise insight into addressing the addiction crisis..
2. Prioritize developing educational programs to help younger generations understand the risks of substance use and treatment options.
3. Employ the data available on the platform, along with any locally identified datasets, to develop refined analyses aimed at delivering targeted solutions for the most urgent challenges in the region.

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Summary Analysis

- The age of first marijuana use was reported by 13-14 years old. The likelihood of being offered drugs increased with grade level both at school and in the community.
- Drinking in the past 30 days increased with age but was lower than the national average for 10th and 12th graders
- In fiscal year 2022, Central Virginia witnessed a significant 53% increase in individuals finding shelter or permanent homes compared to the previous year.
- Post-homelessness trends indicate that 16% of individuals returned to homelessness within 24 months, slightly below the national average by 1%.
- 99% of individuals in permanent housing maintained their placements, showcasing the region's effectiveness in addressing homelessness
- Substance-related arrests in 2021 showed significant drops in marijuana-related arrests due to changes in state laws, and Meth/amphetamines-related arrests decreased substantially.
- Overdose incidents in Central Virginia exhibited a rising trend from early 2021 to a peak in March 2021, with the City of Lynchburg and Campbell County experiencing higher emergency rates relative to their population sizes, while Appomattox County had the lowest rate, emphasizing targeted intervention needs
- Central Virginia experienced varying unemployment rates in 2022, with Lynchburg consistently reporting higher rates compared to other localities, indicating diverse economic landscapes

Demographics

- The 30-39-year-old age group remained the most impacted demographic in 2022, contributing to about 22.6% of total emergencies, consistent with previous years. The 20-29-year-old group also remained significant, underscoring the need for tailored strategies to address opioid-related EMS incidents within these age groups.

Gaps

- Collaboration with community partners, including universities, helps address workforce challenges and reduce wait times for psychological testing and therapy referrals.
- Staffing shortages impact bed availability and supportive housing for mental health and substance use patients transitioning into the community.
- Immediate accessibility to services is lacking, with appointment scheduling delays leading to reduced client engagement.
- Limited representation and funding constraints hinder effective case management and resource allocation
- Gaps involve access to mental health resources in specific regions and a need for increased focus on prevention and early intervention.
- Multiple gaps encompassed limited crisis services, family-centered interventions, and resources for English language learners.

The Urgency for a Revolutionary



FAACT, a cross-agency cloud-based data sharing platform, was designed to mitigate the opioid and substance abuse crisis as well as generate valuable insights about the contributing factors to Commonwealth opioid and substance abuse that leads to overdoses.

The platform actively collects data from agencies and organizations across Virginia to provide local governments and community organizations with pertinent and targeted information that helps decision makers in the Public Safety, Public Health and Community Service sectors improve outcomes by decreasing overdoses and combating the addiction epidemic in their neighborhoods.

FAACT Regional Partners

The FAACT team recognizes that to help individuals across the Commonwealth better address the addiction epidemic, they need to understand the unique problems each region is facing. Therefore, the team is committed to working with regional partners to ensure they

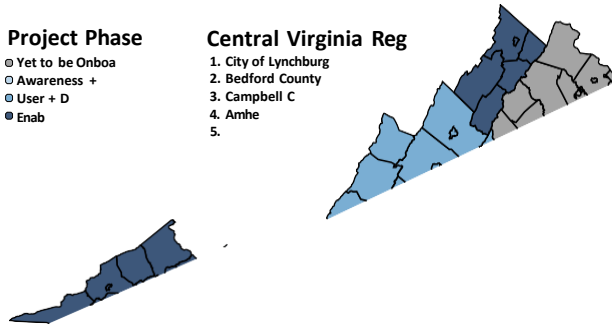
have access to the information they need to make data driven decisions. In the Central Virginia region, those partners include Horizon Behavioral Health and the Data to Action Resource Team (DART). In 2020, it became apparent that there is a tremendous need to better understand how societal factors are impacting substance use, mental illness, and suicide in Central Virginia. As a result, Horizon Behavioral Health in partnership with CIT launched the Data to Action Resource Team (DART) on May 25, 2021. DART is made up of individuals representing multiple sectors including health, law enforcement, Emergency Medical Services (EMS), behavioral health service providers, business community, housing, FAACT, etc. DART is committed to collecting and analyzing data to identify trends, contributing factors, and overall impact of substance use and mental illness in Central Virginia.

Project Phase

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Central Virginia Addiction and Recovery Resources Coalition

The Central Virginia Addiction and Recovery Resources Coalition (CVARR) has built a cross-sector alliance of community partners to address substance misuse and its effects seen in Central Virginia. Under one mission and vision, CVARR's shared goal is to diligently serve the communities of Lynchburg City, Bedford, Appomattox, Amherst, and Campbell by engaging and uniting our community in reducing substance use through action, education, and collaboration. CVARR is able to pursue these specific goals by intently collecting and distributing community-focused data in partnership with the Data to Action Resource Team.

Data Onboarded and Developed

Regional datasets are onboarded to provide a more holistic view of the addiction epidemic in a community. Within Central Virginia, student discipline data was shared with the FAACT team by Mac Duis, the Chief Operating Officer for Bedford County Public Schools. Using the information, an application was developed, accessible only to Mac, that allows him to perform his own self-service analytics. In addition to the discipline data, youth survey, homelessness, local EMS and social services data has been onboarded and incorporated into this report at the request of DART members. We are hopeful that the data gathered by DART will help to educate and inform the community, assist with identifying and prioritizing needs; aid in developing action plans to address contributing factors; and help determine and gain the resources needed to address challenges related to substance use, mental illness, and suicide in Central Virginia.

Data to Action Resource Team (DART)

The Data to Action Resource Team (DART) was initiated by Curtis Jones, Prevention Specialist and State Opioid Response Grant Coordinator, at Horizon Behavioral Health. DART meets on the second Tuesday of every month at 9 AM. If you or your organization have any inquiries or are interested in becoming members of DART, please contact Curtis Jones at (434) 477-5042 or Curtis.Jones@HorizonBH.org.

FAACT Virginia Performance

Survey Responses	Report Users	Dashboard Users	Datasets Onboarded
347	211	93	6

What's Next for FAACT in Central Virginia

FAACT objectives for FY'22 are as follows:

- Accomplish complete geographic coverage of the region by doubling the number of platform users and onboarding at least 1 dataset from each locality
- Maintain ongoing assistance to regional partners by delivering tailored reports that address their unique business inquiries effectively.
- Enhance the scope of cross-domain analytics to achieve a holistic perspective on trends by integrating local data into reports and applications.
- Expand on analytics and enable end users to seamlessly integrate these models into their routine activities, facilitating informed program planning and decision-making processes.

How This Report is Organized

This report covers analysis of each individual data source to describe statistics and identify trends within the Central Virginia VDH Health District between 2021 and 2022. According to the National Institute of Mental Health, nearly half of individuals experiencing substance use disorders will experience a co-occurring mental health disorder.¹ Though we know that substance use and mental health outcomes are highly interdependent, and their collective impact creates an increased risk for individuals, this report analyzes substance use and mental health independently. This report serves as the second in a series of annual reports with this year's analyses (FY'22) based on data from 2021-2022.

¹ National Institute of Mental Health (2021). Substance Use and Co-Occurring Mental Disorders. Retrieved August 9, 2021, from <https://www.nimh.nih.gov/health/topics/substance-use-and-mental-health>.

Three FAACT Applications Analyzed

Utilizing data that the project has onboard as part of its mission, analytical assessment of data provided by VDH, specifically EMS incident data, as well as VSP, VEC and a variety of local datasets was conducted.

Quantitative Data Analysis

The following section of this report is utilizing quantitative data provided by a variety of local organizations within the community as well as commonwealth-wide agencies in order to understand relevant trends occurring in the Central Virginia Region.

Change-point analysis on EMS data and corresponding trends in other datasets:

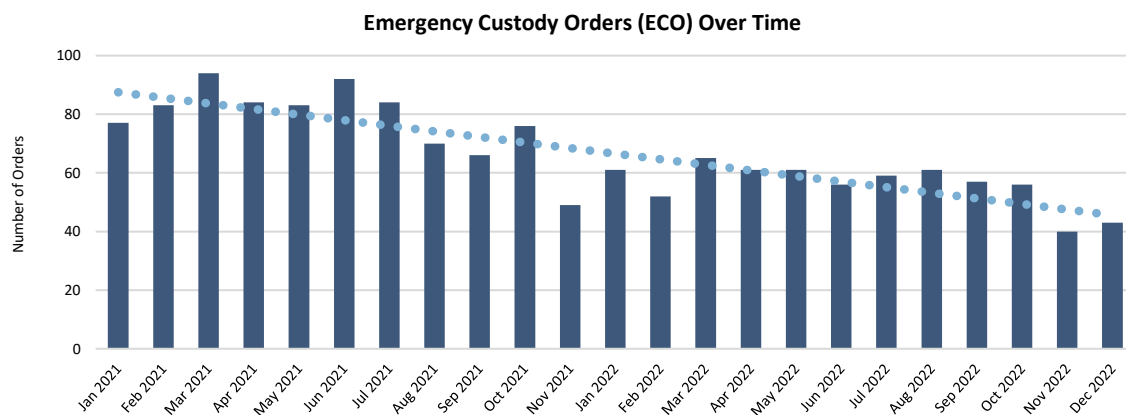
Change-point analysis is used to identify significant changes in the linear trends within data over a certain period. Using this methodology, an analysis was conducted on EMS incident data to define major shifts for the Commonwealth before observing trends in other data sources at the regional level for the identified change points to understand noteworthy time shifts and trends.

Horizon Emergency Custody Order (ECO)

The Horizon Emergency Custody Order data provides a monthly breakdown of ECOs from January 2021 to December 2022. Emergency custody orders result in a meeting between a professional mental health evaluator and a person with a suspected mental illness in order to determine whether hospitalization or treatment is needed as well as if the situation meets the statutory criteria for issuance of a temporary detention order.²

What was the trend in emergency custody orders over time?

From January 2021 to November 2022, Emergency Custody Order (ECO) underwent significant changes. There was a rise in ECO from March 2021 to March 2022, marking an increase of around 68%. This, however, reversed in the latter part of 2022, leading to a decline of about 18% by November. During these fluctuations, certain months, like January, April, and May 2022, maintained relative stability, with performance remaining within a 1-2% range of 61. These trends imply that fewer people require court intervention for hospitalization or mental health treatment.



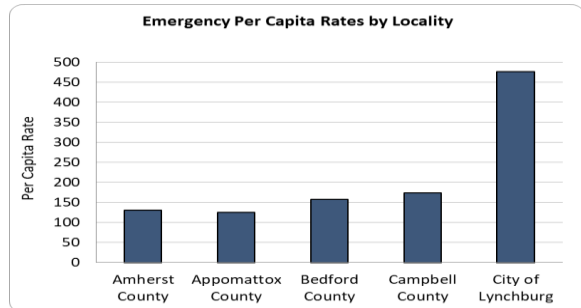
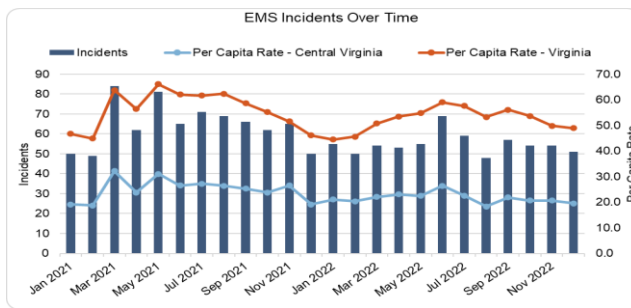
²Temporary Detention Orders. In Magistrate manual (pp. 6–4). essay.

Emergency Medical Services (EMS)

The Emergency Medical Services Application is a self-service dashboard that provides users with statewide data for drilling into emergencies involving opioids, including overdoses and naloxone administration.

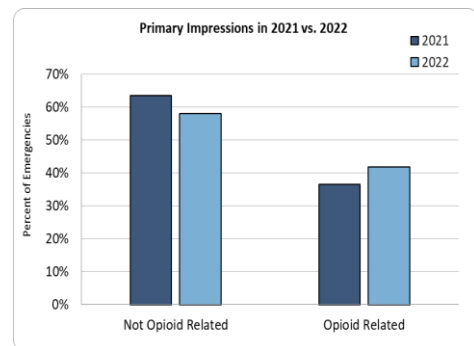
What was the trend in emergency responses for overdose incidents?

The trend in emergency responses for overdose incidents in Central Virginia beginning in early 2021, incident numbers rose steadily until reaching a peak in March 2021 (84 incidents), corresponding with an elevated per capita rate in Central Virginia (32.2) and a higher statewide rate (31.6). The City of Lynchburg had the highest emergency rate relative to the county's population size followed by Campbell County, while Appomattox County had the lowest rate, highlighting the importance of targeted intervention strategies.



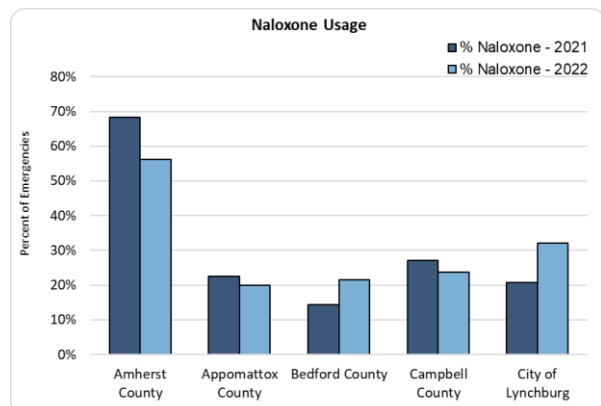
How have the trends in primary impressions recorded by EMS providers changed over time?

In 2021, approximately 36.6% of primary impressions were attributed to opioid-related incidents, which increased to 41.9% in 2022, reflecting a 5.3% rise. This positive shift indicates an improvement in paramedics' ability to promptly identify opioid-related emergencies, leading to more rapid administration of crucial treatments. The goal of increasing the percentage of impressions directly reported as opioid-related is being met, demonstrating an enhanced responsiveness to such incidents, and potentially contributing to better patient outcomes.



How does naloxone usage compare to the total number of opioid emergencies?

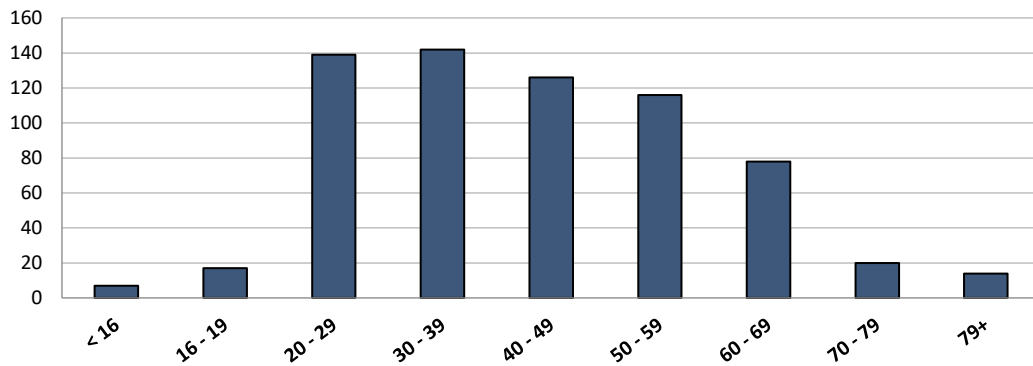
In 2022, approximately 31% of opioid incidents involved the administration of naloxone in Central Virginia. This percentage varied across localities, with the highest usage observed in Amherst County at 56% and the lowest in Bedford County at 22%. However, the City of Lynchburg has shown the highest increase (11%) compared to 2021, followed by Bedford County with a 7% increase from the previous year.



What was the demographic breakdown of EMS incidents?

In 2022, the 30-39-year-old age group continued to be the most impacted, contributing to approximately 22.6% of the total emergencies. This maintains the pattern observed in previous years, where the 30-39-year-olds consistently stood out as the most affected demographic. Similarly, the 20-29-year-old age group remained significant, representing around 18.5% of the incidents. These trends reflect a higher contribution of both age groups to opioid-related emergencies compared to their proportional representation in the general population, underscoring the need for tailored strategies to address EMS incidents effectively within these demographics.

EMS Incidents by Age Groups



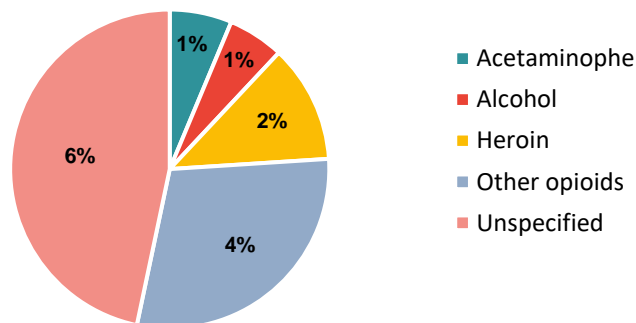
Blue Ridge Emergency Medical Services (BREMS)

The Blue Ridge Emergency Medical Services provided emergency data specific to the Central Virginia region for 2022. This dataset reported on regional EMS responses by behavioral impressions. The analysis below focused on overdose-related impressions.

What were the most common substances involved in overdoses ?

Of all EMS responses by behavioral impressions (2,059) in 2022, overdose-related responses were contributors, with a total of 376 cases. Analyzing the data, the most common substances involved in these overdoses included unspecified substances (6%), other opioids (4%), and heroin (2%). This breakdown highlights the prevalence of various substances in overdose incidents, with unspecified overdoses constituting a substantial portion.

EMS Response by Behavioral Impressions



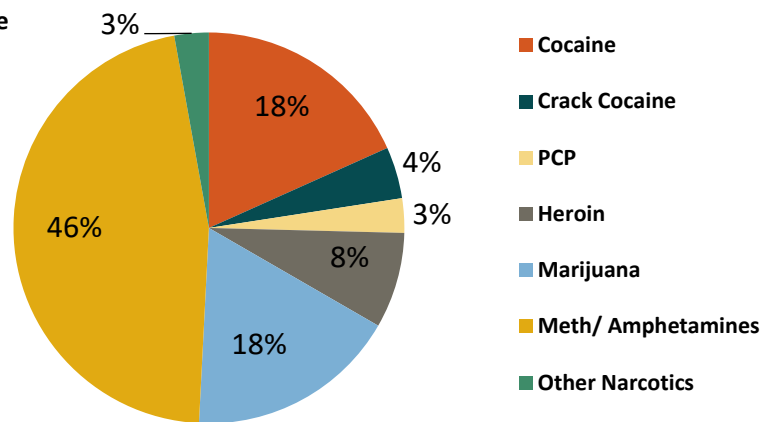
Virginia State Police (VSP) Incident-Based Reporting (IBR) System

The Virginia State Police's Incident-Based Reporting (IBR) System is a self-service dashboard that lets users analyze substance-related arrests.

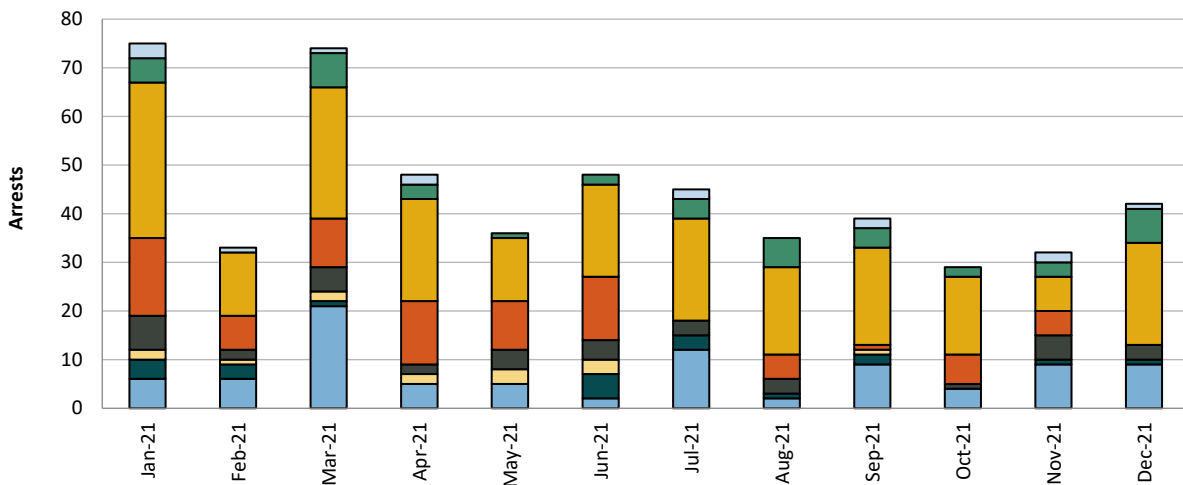
What was the trend year over year in drug-related arrests?

Analyzing the 2021 data, substance-related arrests displayed varying percentages of change throughout the year, where arrests dropped significantly during the second half of the year. Cocaine-related arrests peaked in March (250% increase from February) and then decreased. Heroin-related arrests saw a significant increase in November (400% increase from October). Marijuana-related arrests experienced a decline, dropping to 0 arrests in July and December, and dropped significantly during the second half of the year with a 75% decrease. This decline is likely influenced by changes in VA marijuana laws that went into effect in July 2021. Meth/amphetamines-related arrests displayed a drop of approximately 78% from January to November. Notably, other drugs and other narcotics-related arrests showed varying changes. As marijuana arrests declined significantly, substances of concern for the region shifted to unknown substances followed by meth/amphetamines, and cocaine.

Arrests by Drug Type



Arrests by Drug Type

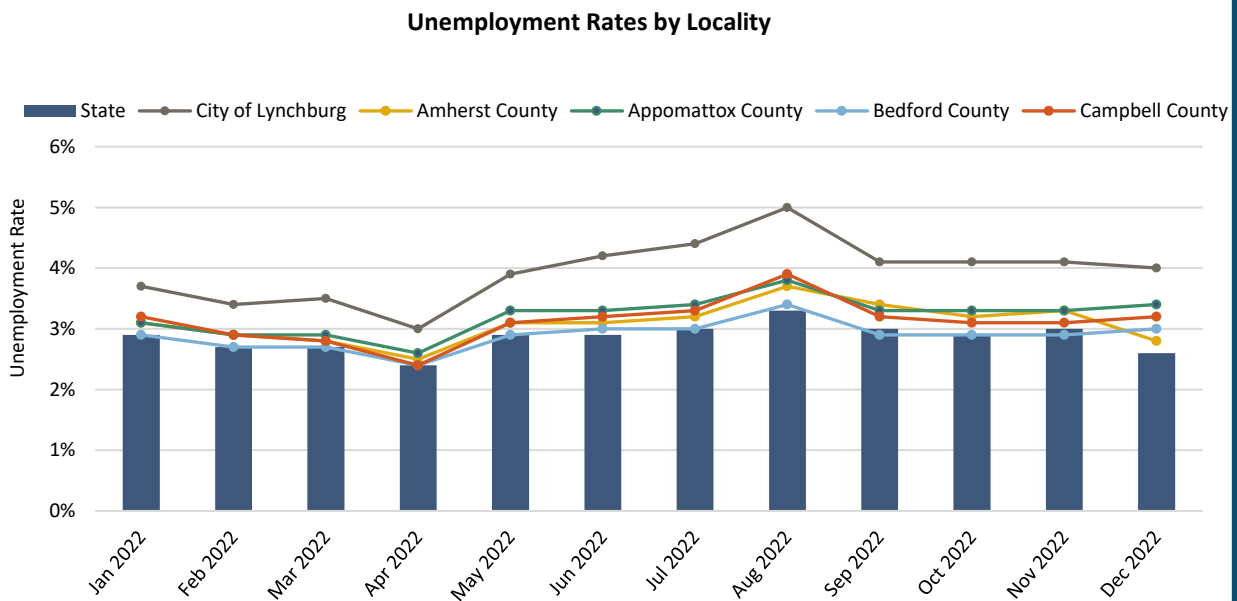


Virginia Employment Commission (VEC)

The Virginia Employment Commission (VEC) is a self-service dashboard that lets users analyze details related to unemployment rates and claims.

What were the unemployment rates in Central Virginia?

Throughout 2022, Central Virginia witnessed varying levels of unemployment rates. The rates ranged from 2.6% in April to a peak of 4.0% in August, ultimately settling at 3.3% in December. Comparing these rates with the broader Virginia unemployment rate, it's notable that Central Virginia generally maintained slightly higher unemployment rates.



How do unemployment rates compare between localities in the region?

Examining the unemployment rates for 2022, a consistent pattern emerges. While each locality experienced fluctuations, the City of Lynchburg consistently reported relatively higher unemployment rates throughout the year, peaking at 5.0% in August. On the other hand, Amherst County, Appomattox County, Bedford County, and Campbell County generally maintained lower unemployment rates, with Appomattox County and Bedford County experiencing a brief increase in unemployment rates around August. These variations likely reflect a combination of local economic dynamics, industry composition, and workforce availability. The relatively lower statewide unemployment rates provide context for understanding the regional rates. This analysis underscores the diverse employment landscapes within Central Virginia and serves as a basis for identifying areas for potential economic development and support.

Virginia Department of Social Services (VDSS)

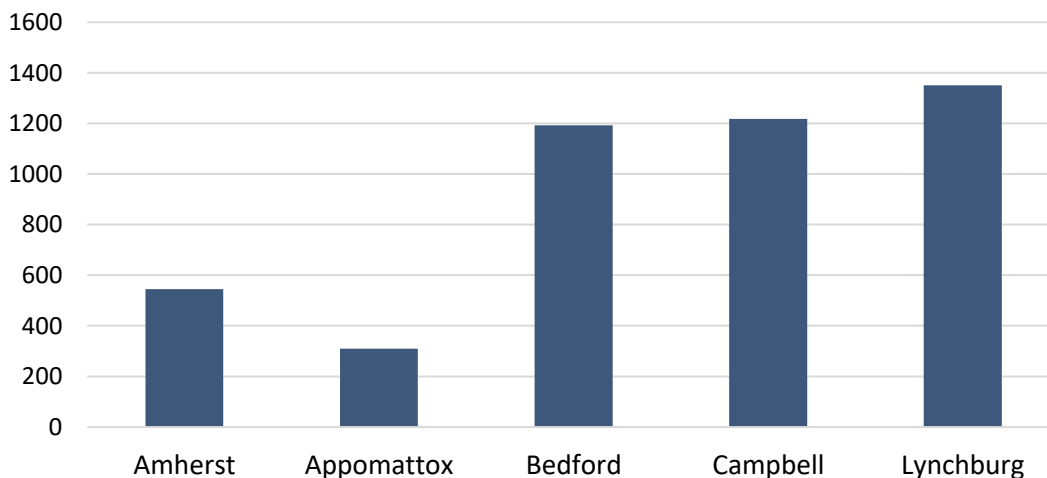
The Virginia Department of Social Services (VDSS) contains data that includes information related to child protective services as well as a variety of different benefits residents could receive.

According to a study published on American Psychiatric Association Publishing, Child Protective Services (CPS) contact is eight times more likely for parents who have a serious mental illness, and the risk of a change in living arrangement is 26 times higher.³ Also, substance use disorders can share correlation with Child Protective Services contact. Nationally, an increase in overdose deaths and substance use hospitalization rates share a common relationship with increased rates of foster care entries. With research showing a correlation between health disorders and protective services and foster care, it is necessary that this data is displayed in this report.

Which locality in Central Virginia had the highest number of CPS referrals?

In state fiscal year (SFY) 2021, there were 4,616 Child Protective Services (CPS) referrals in Central Virginia. Among the localities in the region, Lynchburg had the highest number of CPS referrals, with a count of 1,351. Bedford, Campbell, and Lynchburg stand out with higher CPS referral counts of 1,192, 1,218, and 1,351 respectively. This suggests an elevated degree of vigilance and awareness regarding child protection matters within these areas. While Amherst and Appomattox reported lower referral counts of 545 and 310 respectively, it's essential to consider the size and population density of each locality. The varying referral counts could potentially reflect differences in reporting practices, community engagement, and the effectiveness of child protection mechanisms. These findings underscore the significance of proactive child welfare initiatives and highlight the critical role each locality plays in safeguarding the well-being of their children.

Child Protective Services Referral by Locality

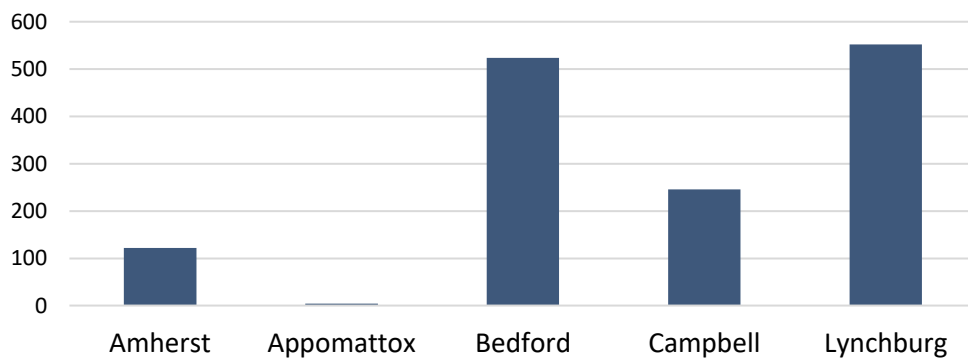


³ Mental Illnesses: Results From a National Survey. *Psychiatric Services*, 70(3), pp.202-208.

Which locality in Central Virginia had the highest number of APS referrals?

In SFY 2021, there were 1,448 Adult Protective Services (APS) referrals in Central Virginia. Lynchburg had the highest number of APS referrals, with a count of 552, closely followed by Bedford with 524. These numbers potentially reflect a strong focus on identifying and addressing concerns related to the well-being of vulnerable adults. Campbell and Amherst reported fewer APS referrals, standing at 246 and 122 respectively. Appomattox had the lowest APS referral count at 4. It was also the locality with a lower count which is consistent with the trends seen in the CPS referrals analysis above. It's essential to consider the contextual factors that contribute to these variations, including population demographics, community awareness, and reporting practices.

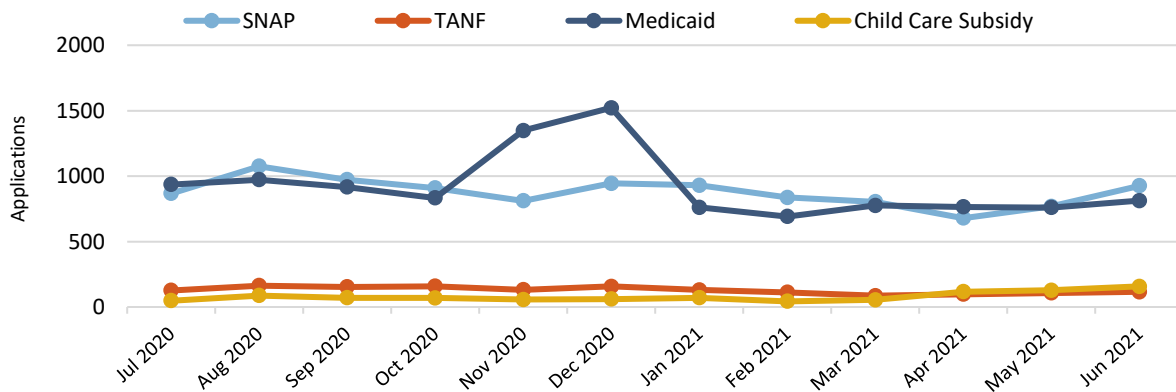
Adult Protective Services Referral by Locality



What is the most common benefit program in Central Virginia?

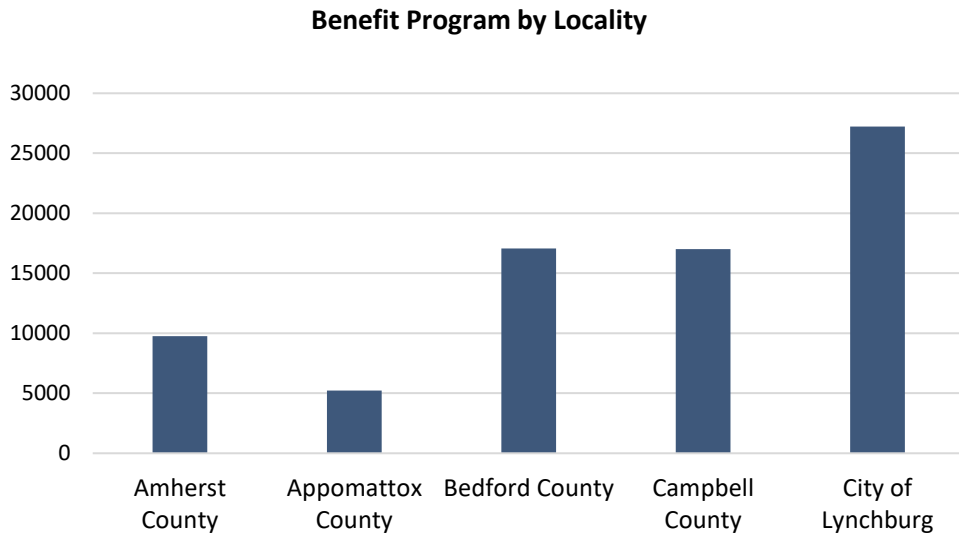
During the analyzed period (Jul 2021 - Jun 2022), the Medicaid program consistently attracted the highest number of applications, while applications for TANF, Child Care Subsidy, and SNAP programs displayed fluctuations. The Child Care Subsidy program exhibited seasonal trends, with increased applications in April, May, and June 2022, potentially linked to school vacations or family dynamics. Notably, the SNAP program witnessed a rise in applications in April 2022, likely due to the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic's economic impact. Furthermore, a spike in Medicaid applications between November and December 2021 coincided with the open enrollment period, reflecting responsiveness to healthcare coverage adjustments.

Benefit Applications Received in Central Virginia



Which locality relies on benefit programs the most in the region?

In the context of benefit program utilization within the Central Virginia region, the City of Lynchburg had the highest number of benefit program clients and emerges as the locality relying most extensively on such support systems. A significant number of 27,222 individuals from Lynchburg sought assistance through various benefit programs. This noteworthy figure underscores the city's proactive engagement with these programs to provide essential aid to its residents. Comparatively, while other localities also use benefit programs, Lynchburg's considerably higher number of benefit program clients highlights the city's efforts to address socio-economic needs comprehensively.

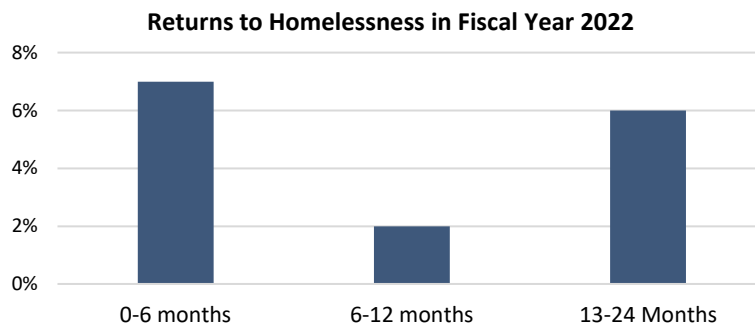


Central Virginia Continuum of Care (CVCoC)

The Central Virginia Continuum of Care (CVCoC) data contains information related to homelessness in the region during fiscal year 2022, as well as comparisons to similar metrics for the United States. Lack of housing and homelessness are social determinants of health that contribute to the health disparities and health inequities related to substance use and mental illness. Therefore, since homelessness and health disorders are interlinked, data about homelessness and housing is necessary to show within this report.

How many individuals were homeless during fiscal year 2022?

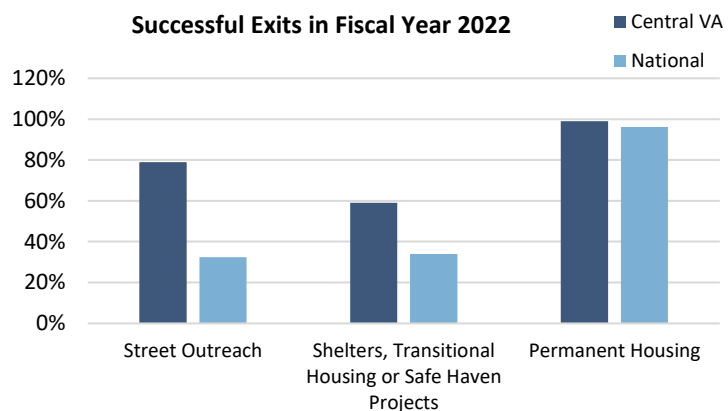
In fiscal year 2022, a total of 524 individuals in Central Virginia found themselves in emergency shelters (ES) and permanent homes (PH), representing a substantial 53% increase compared to the preceding year. Additionally, the data sheds light on post-homelessness patterns: approximately 7% of individuals who transitioned out of homelessness were susceptible to experiencing further episodes within 6 months. This percentage dropped to 2% within 6-12 months and increased again to 6% within 13-24 months. During this time, around 16% of individuals encountered a return to homelessness within 24 months, a statistic that remained marginally below the national average by 1%.



What percent of individuals experiencing homelessness had successful exits in 2022?

In Central Virginia during fiscal year 2022, a remarkable 79% of exits from street outreach projects culminated in successful placements within shelters, transitional housing, or safe haven projects. This achievement exceeds the national average by more than double, which stands at 32%. Further underscoring Central Virginia's proactive efforts, approximately 59% of exits from shelters, transitional housing, or safe haven projects led to permanent housing placements, nearly doubling the national average.

Furthermore, an impressive 99% of individuals in permanent housing effectively maintained their placement or transitioned out successfully. Collectively, these outcomes highlight Central Virginia's significantly higher success rates in exits compared to the broader landscape of the United States.

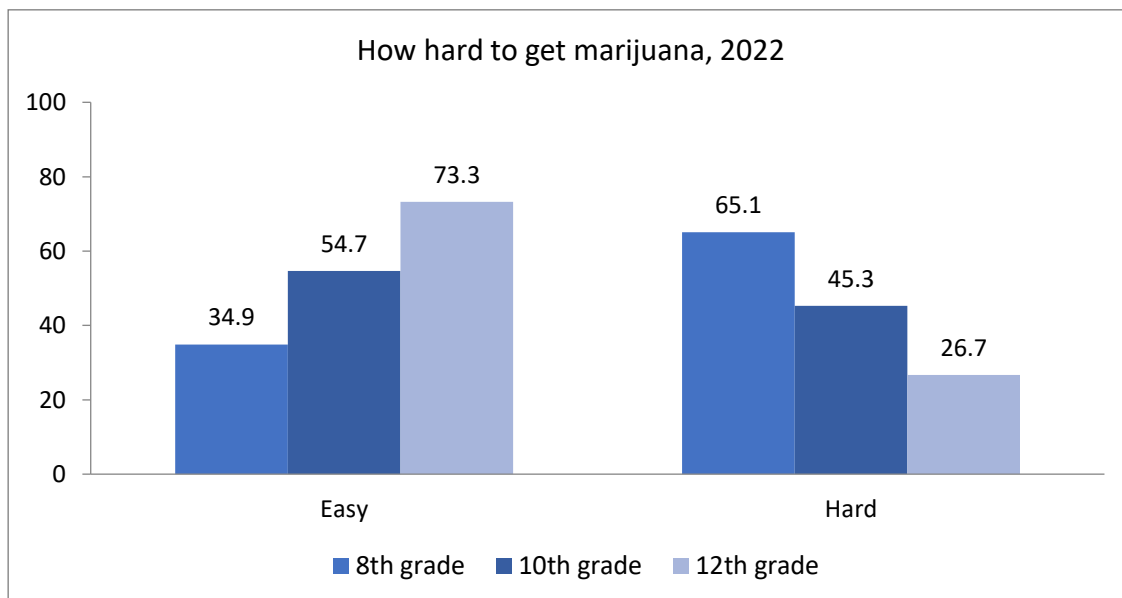
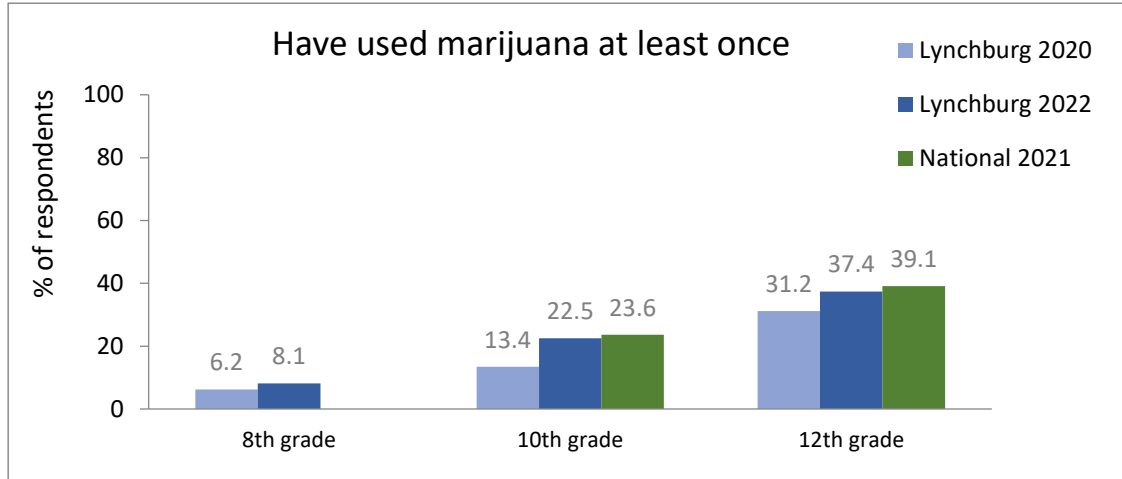


Lynchburg Youth Survey (LYS)

The Lynchburg City Schools has been surveying youth in the school district since 1999. The survey is based on the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's (CDC) Youth Risk Behavior Survey (YRBS) with some minor modifications according to local interest. The LYS was administered to Lynchburg City Schools 8th, 10th, and 12th grade students in Fall 2022.

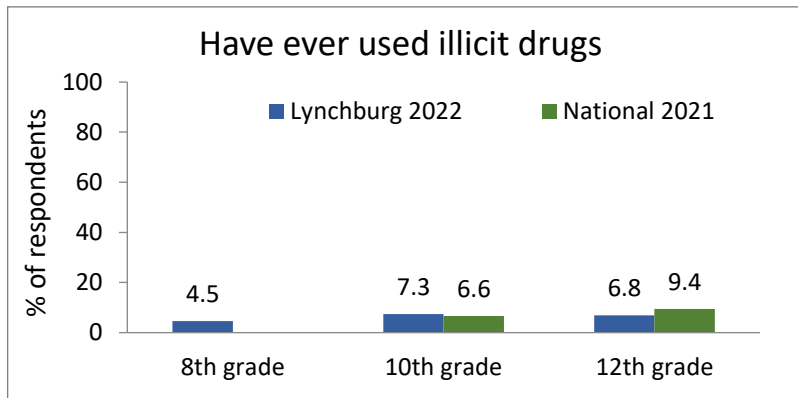
Survey questions related to marijuana use?

An average of 22.7% of Lynchburg students across all grades reported having tried marijuana, with 12th graders demonstrating the highest percentage at 37.4%. The most frequently reported age of first marijuana use for Lynchburg youth was 13-14 years old (6.1%). The percentage of Lynchburg students who reported trying marijuana before the age of 13 is similar across Lynchburg (5.5%) and National (5.1%) data. The percentage of Lynchburg youth who reported using marijuana in the past 30 days increased alongside grade level but remained relatively lower compared to National averages. The most common method of consumption was smoking.



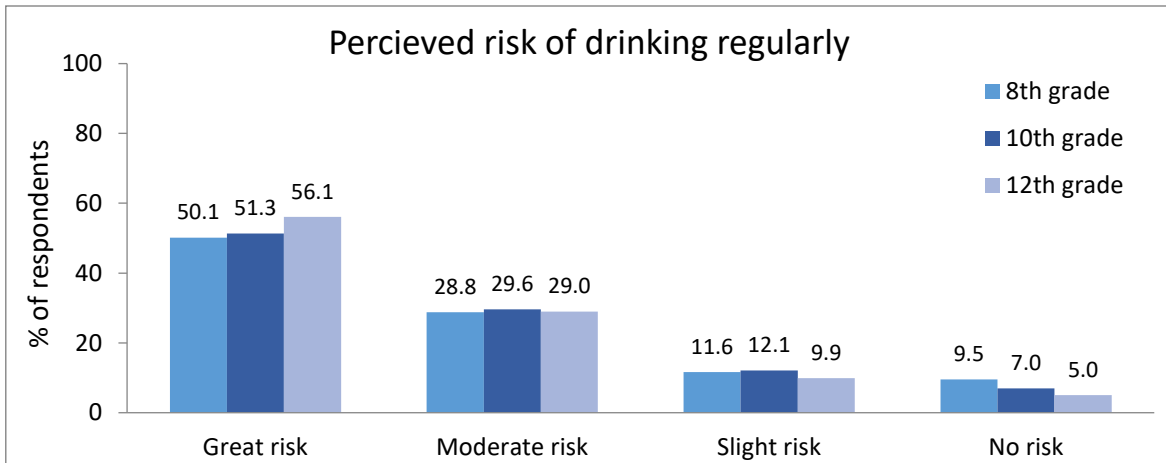
Survey questions related to illegal drugs use?

While the vast majority of Lynchburg students reported never having tried illicit drugs (93.7% across all grades), a small number of students reporting using illicit drugs in the past month (1.5% for inhalants and <1% for all other drugs surveyed). The most commonly reported illicit drug used across all grades was “sniffing glue, breathing the contents of aerosol spray cans, or inhaling paints or sprays to get high (huffing)” (4.5% of 8th graders, 6.4% of 10th graders, and 5.4% of 12th graders reported having ever done so). As grade level increased, students were more likely to report being offered drugs both at school and in their community. Across grade level, Lynchburg students reported being offered drugs at about the same rate (e.g., 5.3% of 8th graders reported at school, and 5.6% of 8th graders reported in the community).



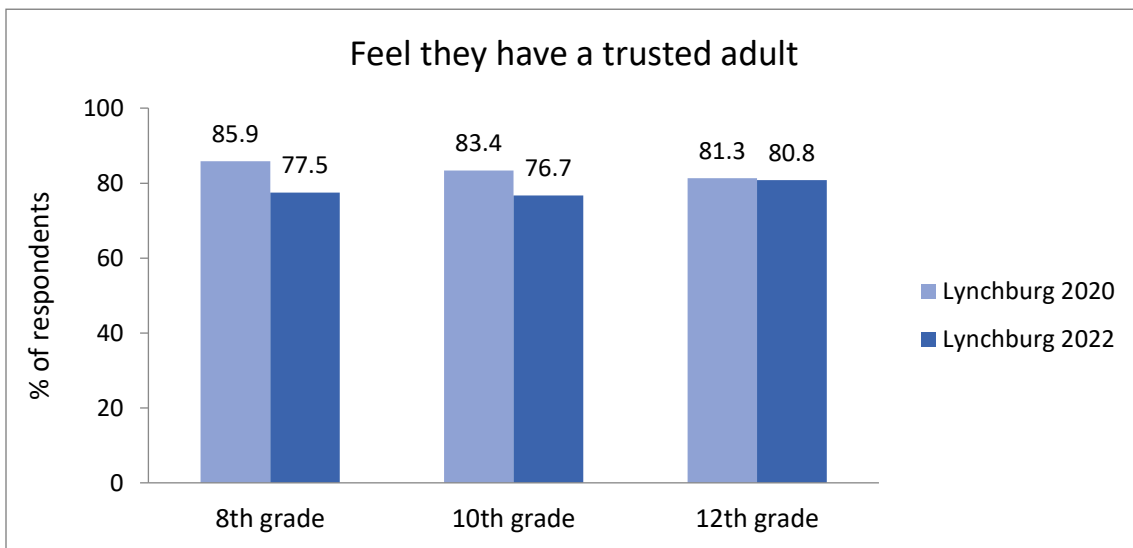
Survey questions related to alcohol use?

Most students in Lynchburg (64.9%) have never had an alcoholic drink, which is higher than the National average (52.9% never had a drink). On average 10.9% of Lynchburg students across all grades reported having ever tried alcohol. The portion of Lynchburg youth who reported drinking at least once in the past 30 days increased with age, with 3.1% of 8th graders, 11.1% of 10th graders, and 18.6% of 12th graders reporting consumption in the past month. While there is no data to compare 8th grade students, the portion of Lynchburg 10th and 12th graders who reported drinking at least once in the past month was lower than that National youth.



Survey questions related to Social Supports?

Although the percentage of Lynchburg students indicating they had ample opportunities to get involved in extracurricular activities and had schools that provided supportive feedback to students/parents remained relatively high, the percentage of respondents decreased (at least slightly) for all grade levels across all of these facets from 2020 to 2022. The most noticeable difference was in the school providing positive feedback to the 8th grade student/parents, albeit over 50% of respondents still indicated agreement with the statement for all grade levels. Students also generally indicate that they have a trusted adult in their life and that their parents are generally aware of their whereabouts. These percentages remain high across all grades.



Qualitative Data Analysis

The following section of this report is utilizing qualitative data provided by key informants from a variety of local organizations within the community in order to understand relevant trends that are not captured in the data they are able to share.

Horizon Behavioral Health

The information summarized in this section was provided by Jennifer Ramey who works in the outpatient portfolio at Horizon. The data was captured by through several of the programs and staff at Horizon.

Substance use, and mental health impact related to Horizon’s work over the past year?

Over the past year, Horizon has observed a significant increase in referrals across all age groups and developmental stages, indicating a growing demand for services. This increase is not limited to any specific population but is evident across different demographics. Unfortunately, Horizon has faced workforce challenges, particularly in hiring and retaining licensed and licensed-eligible staff with master's degrees. Despite these challenges, the organization has made efforts to identify community gaps through qualitative analysis, relying on community health needs assessment data, Youth Risk Behavior surveys, and partnerships with community organizations. Additionally, Horizon recognizes the importance of cross-sector collaboration to leverage shared resources and address community needs comprehensively.

Substance use and mental health impact on Horizon’s service delivery?

Horizon has developed collaborative programs and partnerships to address the gaps in community services. Notably, they have established two drug treatment courts—one adult drug court and one family treatment drug court—in central Virginia. These courts involve partnerships with various sectors such as law enforcement, probation and parole, health departments, and child welfare agencies. The goal of these courts is to adopt a restorative and therapeutic approach, providing an alternative to the strictly punitive nature of the criminal justice system. Horizon is also launching a mental health or behavioral health docket in partnership with law enforcement agencies, the prosecutor's office, the public defender's office, and community corrections. Moreover, the organization has earned a federal grant to implement a homeless program for youth, young adults, and families affected by homelessness or unstable housing.

New trends related to substance use and mental health over the past year?

Horizon has observed local trends that mirror statewide patterns, including an increase in drug overdoses and drug-related deaths involving fentanyl and fentanyl analogs. The use of cannabinoids, particularly among adolescents, has also seen an increase, with vaping becoming a prevalent issue. Furthermore, there has been a steady rise in stimulant use, affecting both county areas and the city. These trends are derived from qualitative research conducted by Horizon, reflecting the evolving substance use and mental health landscape.

Demographic trends (age, gender, race, location) related to substance use and/or mental health?

Horizon has noted significant increases in anxiety and depression among children and adolescents within the school system. The Director of School-Based Services reports a 20% rise in the number of children receiving school-based therapy compared to previous years. To address these needs, Horizon has embedded clinicians, case managers, and family peer recovery specialists in schools. It is important to highlight that less than half of the students who meet the criteria for mental health or substance use diagnoses nationwide receive services. The Director of School-Based Services has also observed issues such as aggression and younger children presenting themselves with increased mental health-related problems. Vaping has become prevalent across various genders, ages, and cultures.

Social, environmental, or economic factors that impacted your service delivery?

The ongoing effects of COVID-19 have had a significant impact on Horizon's service delivery. Socially, younger populations have struggled to engage and integrate with pro-social peers. However, the increased use of telehealth has been a positive development, helping individuals overcome transportation and other barriers. Nevertheless, it is essential to recognize that not all clients have access to telehealth, and it may not be suitable for everyone. Horizon aims to provide a continuum of services, including face-to-face, community-based, and office-based approaches, to accommodate diverse client needs.

Recent changes in marijuana laws and effect on Horizon?

Horizon staff have observed increased prevalence and visibility of marijuana use in the community. Attitudes toward marijuana use have also shifted, with mixed views among referral sources. Some sources no longer monitor marijuana use, while others require abstinence from marijuana similar to alcohol, often due to federal regulations or funding requirements. The changing marijuana laws have presented challenges in terms of treatment approaches and funding eligibility. Horizon has adapted by providing education and support to clients regarding the potential risks and consequences of marijuana use, regardless of its legal status. The organization continues to stay updated on the evolving legal landscape and incorporates evidence-based practices in addressing substance use and mental health concerns related to marijuana.

Are you aware of any gaps in the services?

The organization is committed to collaboration and coalition building with community partners. This approach allows them to leverage strengths and support from these partnerships to effectively address gaps in services. The organization has established partnerships with Liberty University and the University of Lynchburg, providing internship and practicum opportunities for psychology and counseling students. This collaboration helps address workforce challenges, reduce wait times for psychological testing, and meet the increasing demand for therapy referrals. The benefits of these university partnerships, both for the students gaining valuable experience and for the organization in terms of enhanced clinical care are significant.

Additionally, the organization recognizes the significance of involving individuals with lived substance use and mental health experience, highlighting the "year of the peer" in 2023. Peers play a crucial role in engaging and retaining clients in treatment, providing support, role modeling, and instilling hope. The organization plans to expand its peer programs across various programs, acknowledging their effectiveness in supporting individuals with substance use and mental health issues.

Centra Health

The information summarized in this section was provided by the Senior Director of Nursing Operations Psychiatry & Behavioral Health and a Provider from Centra Health.

What impact does substance use, and mental health have on your organization's service delivery?

The organization is investing in a larger facility with state-of-the-art services and equipment for mental health. Telehealth has expanded significantly, benefiting patients who were hesitant to visit hospitals during the pandemic. However, there is a gap in services for substance use, as the organization doesn't offer treatments for children, but the Up Foundation provides some of those services.

How have substance use and mental health impacted your organization's work?

The implementation of telehealth during the pandemic greatly improved service delivery, removing barriers for patients to access mental health services. However, there is a need for more substance use services, especially for children, which are currently limited to using EDS (Emergency Department Services).

Has your organization seen any new trends related to substance use or mental health over the past year?

The organization reported that the number of behavioral health patients has remained consistent compared to the previous year.

Are you aware of any gaps in the services?

One major gap in the organization's services is related to staffing shortages, leading to capped beds and reduced availability for patients in need. However, they are experiencing improvements as more staff members return, reducing the reliance on traveling nurses. Additionally, there is a significant need for supportive housing, particularly for mental health and substance use patients to facilitate their transition back into the community. The need for stable housing is another challenge, as discharge barriers arise when the hospital cannot provide a safe environment.

Were there any social, environmental, or economic factors in 2022 that impacted your service delivery? (e.g., COVID, funding, capacity etc.)

The staffing shortages, particularly in nursing, have been a major factor impacting service delivery. There is also a pressing need for supportive housing to address long-term care and patient engagement in the community, aiming to prevent relapses and substance use triggers.

The organization acknowledges the high demand for supportive housing, as existing facilities are consistently full, indicating the significant need for additional resources to address this issue effectively.

What factors do you perceive is contributing to substance use and mental health problem in your community?

The organization identifies several factors contributing to substance use and mental health problems in the community. For the youth population, limited access to youth activities such as sports during the pandemic may have led to an increase in substance use. For adults, there has been an overall expansion of substance use issues, which was exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic due to canceled social activities. The lack of recreational alternatives may have pushed individuals towards substance use. The need for more community engagement and positive activities to divert attention from substance use is evident in the perceived factors affecting the community.

Blue Ridge Emergency Medical Services

The information summarized in this section was provided by the Regional Director and Performance Improvement Specialist from the Blue Ridge Emergency Medical Services Council.

How has substance use & mental health impacted your organization's work over the past year?

The organization discussed the strain that substance use and mental health issues place on the public safety system. Responding to these calls often leads to longer wait times for other patients in need, resulting in elongated scene times. These calls frequently involve other public safety agencies like the fire department or police, creating a rippling effect throughout the entire public safety system. This trend is not improving locally or nationally.

Has your organization seen any new trends related to substance use over the past year?

There have been significant increases in substance abuse and behavioral emergencies, as well as a rise in the use of Narcan in 2022. They explain that pre-hospital EMS faces challenges in identifying specific substances involved in overdoses due to limited diagnostic resources, resulting in many cases being marked as "overdose unknown substance."

Have you or your organization observed any trends in demographics (age, grade, gender, race, location. etc) related to substance use and/or mental health?

Referring to a study by the CDC that focused on non-fatal opioid-involved overdose emergencies encountered by EMS, the study found that rates of non-fatal opioid-involved encounters increased steadily from 2018 to the onset of COVID. Rates increased across all age groups and racial/ethnic groups, with significant increases noted in white males.

Non-fatal opioid-involved overdose rates also increased in urban counties and counties with higher unemployment rates.

Were there any social, environmental, or economic factors in 2022 that impacted your service delivery? (e.g., COVID, funding, capacity, etc.)

The potential implications of these trends on the entire patient care continuum, affecting staffing, availability, emergency rooms, and rehabilitation centers were highlighted. They emphasize the importance of real-time monitoring, using platforms like bio-spatial, to identify regional trends and prepare for potential challenges. While EMS providers have limited time to impose preventative efforts, they can promote awareness and education among patients. The organization also questions whether enough training and information dissemination are being provided, given the high turnover rate among EMS providers.

YWCA – Central Virginia

The information summarized in this section was provided by the Senior Director of Victim Services for YWCA in Central Virginia.

How has substance use, and mental health impacted your organization's work?

Substance use and mental health have impacted victim services in multiple ways. We recognize clients with mental health issues as a high-risk population and often have to staff these cases more often and rely on community partners in order to get the best outcome for the survivor. We recognize substance use as a coping mechanism among our clients. However, substance use while in the program is problematic. Some residential clients recognize this issue is real and often impairs their ability to move forward and explore ways to develop other coping skills. Some will engage in programs within the community to get sober. Other residential clients will continue to use and even offer drugs to the ones trying to get sober. There have also been times when staff and/or clients have found drugs in the program, creating concern for possible drug exposure to children. Some clients will leave the program rather than stay and get services because seeing people use is triggering for them. Staff often must think outside the box in order to serve these populations and keep everyone safe within the program.

Has your organization seen any new trends related to substance use?

We have noticed an increase in clients who report using marijuana since it became legal. We also noticed a lack of care/concern/knowledge of the harmful effects of marijuana on the unborn child. We also have concerns for clients who are on suboxone/methadone and still currently using other drugs.

Has your organization seen any new trends related to mental health?

A noticeable trend in mental health is the high number of diagnosed clients not on meds.

Has your organization observed any change in the number of referrals/admissions/calls over the past year?

While we have seen an increase in homeless/abused youth needing shelter, the number of youths using substances remains about the same. The number of youths with diagnosed mental health issues is at its highest and currently not being treated.

Have you or your organization observed any trends in demographics (age, grade, gender, race, location. Etc.) related to substance use and/or mental health?

There has been an extreme increase in referrals to shelters from mental health providers. Only about half of the referrals we are receiving from mental health providers, especially lockdown facilities, are current domestic violence. We believe the referrals are more often due to the lack of housing and shelter. Our staff are not mental health providers and often when clients are released to us, they are still suicidal. Burnout amongst staff is at its highest not just in our programs but other programs that provide human services.

What positive or negative impact did the COVID-19 pandemic have on service delivery?

Due to the severe trauma experienced in violent homes/relationships, we are seeing people come into services who are severely battered. We have seen children as young as 6 cutting and in need of relief. As a result, we have teamed up with several mental health providers who specialize in trauma. We are currently using Impact Services to conduct/facilitate support groups for both adults and children. We are making more referrals for these services for individuals as well.

What impact have recent changes in marijuana laws had on your organization?

Since marijuana has become legal, rarely is there a client in a shelter who is not currently using it.

Are you aware of any gaps in the services?

There is a lack of immediate accessible service for our clients. Most clients are scheduled out as far as a month before they get the first appointment, which is usually only intake. By the time clients get the appointment, they have already decided not to go or have left the program.

What factors do you perceive is contributing to substance use and mental health problem in our community?

We contribute the increases in substance use to a lack of coping skills, poverty, housing and opportunities for youth and poverty-stricken areas, and easy access to drugs.

Were there any social, environmental, or economic factors in 2022 that impacted your service delivery? (e.g., COVID, funding, capacity, etc.)

COVID was a challenge for our programs, especially the shelter. At times we had more than half of the staff out sick with COVID. Staff continued to serve even those who were at high risk, but it took a toll on their mental health as well. One of the factors that played a part in this was the lack of care or concern shown by our clients. People refused to take precautions, wash their hands, or practice safe habits and this was very frustrating for staff.

Family Assessment and Planning Team (FAPT)

The information summarized in this section was provided by the Children Services Act coordinator for Appomattox County FAPT.

What impact does substance use, and mental health have on your organization's service delivery?

The analyst highlights the significant impact of substance use and mental health on the organization's service delivery. The past year has been challenging, with the organization feeling broken and lacking options to serve the community effectively. COVID-related factors, including the turnover of staff in the field, have contributed to staffing shortages, making it difficult to provide services. The organization faces limitations due to its location, as it falls outside the reach of some private providers, leading to families missing out on services. Additionally, poverty and lack of transportation further hinder access to services. Despite efforts to transition to outpatient therapy and case management services in schools, crisis services have suffered, affecting vulnerable populations such as autistic individuals.

Has your organization observed any change in the number of referrals/admissions/calls over the past year?

The organization has observed a substantial increase in referrals, with appointments consistently booked and no time for respite. Court-ordered kids and truancy cases have added to the workload, putting strain on existing resources.

Are you aware of any gaps in the services?

Several gaps in services are apparent in the organization. The limited representation on FAPT makes it challenging to allocate sufficient time and resources to address cases effectively. Funding constraints further exacerbate the situation, with the organization having significantly fewer non-mandated dollars compared to other counties. The increase in higher-level needs has made it difficult to utilize the non-mandated funding effectively.

What factors do you perceive is contributing to substance use and mental health problem in our community?

The analyst points out that while the pandemic has served as a catalyst for the needs in the community, substance use, and mental health issues have always been pervasive. The increase in cases may also be due to more people feeling safe to come forward and seek help, but the systems are not adequately prepared to handle the influx of cases.

Were there any social, environmental, or economic factors in 2022 that impacted your service delivery? (e.g., COVID, funding, capacity, etc.)

The organization faces funding disparities compared to other counties, particularly in non-mandated funding, affecting the availability of services. Limited resources and staffing shortages have led to challenges in meeting the needs of the community effectively. The absence of sufficient resources to address cases has resulted in individuals meeting higher-level needs and being eligible for services that were previously not within their scope.

Miriam's House

The information summarized in this section was provided by the Director of Housing Services at Miriam's House.

How has substance use & mental health impacted your organization's work over the past year?

The organization follows the "Housing First" model, prioritizing individuals based on the acuity of need. Those with acute mental illness or substance use disorders are given high priority. They emphasize the importance of partnering closely with mental health skill-building organizations and other partners to connect clients with the necessary services. Due to the harm reduction approach and Housing First model, the organization often works with clients who are in active substance use or have not received treatment. This necessitates supporting clients with symptoms like delusions. Street outreach focuses on engaging individuals who are unsheltered and may have complex mental health or substance use needs, making it a challenging task.

Has your organization seen any new trends related to substance use over the past year?

The data showed indicated changes in the percentage of clients with mental health and substance use disorders served by different programs. For street outreach, mental health diagnoses were 50% in 2021, dropping to 42% in 2022, while substance use diagnoses remained at 20%. Permanent supportive housing had a higher percentage of mental health diagnoses (85% in 2021 and 75% in 2022) and an increased substance use diagnosis percentage between the years. Additionally, there has been an increase in homelessness among youth aged 18 to 24, with higher numbers experiencing serious mental health or substance use disorders. The organization partners with GBHI at Horizon to address the needs of this vulnerable population.

Were there any social, environmental, or economic factors in 2022 that impacted your service delivery? (e.g., COVID, funding, capacity, etc.)

The closure of Hand Up Lodge in March 2022 significantly impacted the organization's ability to provide shelter to clients with mental illness or substance use disorders, leading to an increase in the unsheltered population. COVID-related funding for homeless services ended, affecting the ability to provide housing assistance to those in need. However, the availability of mainstream vouchers for people with disabling conditions and homelessness has helped place chronically homeless individuals in permanent housing. Roads to Recovery opened a low-barrier shelter to replace Hand Up Lodge, providing a harm reduction approach for individuals experiencing homelessness.

Are you aware of any gaps in the services?

The organization recognizes a need for a street medicine model to complement street outreach services, providing on-site medical and mental health support. They also identify a gap in connecting individuals who express interest in detox or recovery services with appropriate resources. Cross-training between homeless response and substance use services could improve connections for clients seeking recovery services.

The organization notes a need for tailored services for older clients with mental health and recovery needs and faces challenges finding suitable services covered by Medicare.

What factors do you perceive is contributing to substance use and mental health problem in your community?

The organization identifies various factors contributing to mental health and substance use issues in the community, including trauma experienced by individuals who are homeless and the compounding traumas they face. Poverty, lack of access to basic needs, social isolation, racism, and discrimination also play significant roles in exacerbating mental health and substance use challenges.

How do all these factors work together?

Through a case study, the organization illustrates the collaboration among various programs to address mental health and substance use issues. They emphasize the importance of housing stability, income support, case management, and other services working collaboratively to help individuals achieve stability and improve their overall well-being.

Central Virginia Health District

The information summarized in this section was provided by the Health Educator at Central Virginia Health District.

How have substance use and mental health impacted your organization's work?

Substance use and mental health have had a significant impact on the organization's work. They have a Partnering for Recovery program that addresses these issues at drug court, and the increased prominence of these issues during the COVID-19 pandemic. They also express interest in getting involved in a mental health drug court and working with clients who have co-occurring mental health and substance use issues. Their goal is to bring drug courts to underserved areas within the Central Virginia Region. This suggests that substance use, and mental health concerns are central to the organization's work.

What impact does substance use, and mental health have on your organization's service delivery?

Substance use and mental health have required the organization to rethink its approach to service delivery. They have had to consider staffing and capacity in response to the growing community needs. They have only one peer support specialist and express the hope to expand the program. This indicates that substance use and mental health have increased the demand for their services and necessitated adjustments to meet the community's needs.

Has your organization seen any new trends related to mental health over the past year?

The organization has seen an increase in referral calls related to substance use and mental health over the past year. This suggests a growing need for services in the community, with more individuals seeking support for these issues. The organization recognizes the need to make space and allocate resources to address this increase in demand.

Has your organization noticed any trends in demographics related to substance use and/or mental health in service utilization?

The organization has noticed specific trends in demographics related to substance use and mental health. They mention an increase in methamphetamine use among Caucasian individuals and an increase in PCP use among adults and adolescents in the Lynchburg community. Additionally, they mention a trend among youth involving the use of THC vapes. It has also been noted that there has been an increase in STIs (Sexually Transmitted Infections), particularly syphilis, in those who have substance use disorders. This highlights demographic-specific patterns in substance use that the organization has observed through their interactions with individuals in their programs and drug courts.

Were there any social, environmental, or economic factors in 2022 that impacted your service delivery?

Several social, environmental, and economic factors have impacted the organization's service delivery. Funding limitations have prevented them from implementing programs that could be helpful to participants. Staffing capacity is another challenge, with only one peer support specialist covering a wide area of individuals. The COVID-19 pandemic has also led to an increase in calls and referrals. The "Year of the Peer 2023" initiative, which aims to celebrate and recognize the work of peer recovery specialists was signified. This initiative reflects an effort to acknowledge and support those who play a crucial role in addressing substance use and mental health issues. The organization highly values the peer they currently have and aims to expand their presence across different programs, recognizing their invaluable contribution to the mental health/substance use disorder community.

Amherst County Social Services

The information summarized in this section was provided by the Family Service Manager at Amherst County Social Services.

What impact does substance use, and mental health have on your organization's service delivery?

The impact of substance use and mental health on the organization's service delivery seems significant. The prevalence of these issues and the need for mental health services to address them is acknowledged by the organization. They mention the presence of these needs among both children and adults, emphasizing the importance of providing services to ensure their safety.

Has your organization seen any new trends related to substance use over the past year?

There haven't been any new trends related to substance use observed by the organization in the past year. The most impactful substances are methamphetamines and opiates, indicating that these substances have been consistently problematic.

Has your organization seen any new trends related to mental health over the past year?

Similarly, there haven't been any new trends related to mental health observed by the organization in the past year. Mental health has always been a concern and hasn't witnessed any notable changes in their career.

Has your organization observed any change in the number of referrals/admissions/calls over the past year?

The organization has seen an increase in referrals to Child Protective Services (CPS) and Adult Protective Services (APS) over the past seven years. This suggests a growing number of cases requiring their services, potentially indicating an increase in the overall demand for support.

Have you or your organization observed any trends in demographics (age, grade, gender, race, location. Etc.) related to substance use and/or mental health?

No specific demographic trends related to substance use and mental health have been observed by the organization. They believe that mental health and substance abuse affect all demographics equally.

What impact have recent changes in marijuana laws had on your organization?

The legalization of marijuana hasn't had a significant impact on the organization. They mention adhering to legal codes, ensuring marijuana is kept away from children and the public, but it hasn't posed a major challenge to their operations.

Are you aware of any gaps in the services?

The organization is not aware of any gaps in services, suggesting that they are providing comprehensive support without significant deficiencies.

What factors do you perceive is contributing to substance use and mental health problem in your community?

A variety of factors contribute to substance use and mental health problems in the community. They emphasize the link between substance use and mental health, with individuals turning to substances as a means of addressing their mental health concerns.

Is there a specific grade level or demographic that is experiencing the most significant challenges with substance use? Mental illness?

No specific grade level or demographic stands out as experiencing the most significant challenges with substance use or mental illness. The issues appear to be prevalent across all demographics.

Were there any social, environmental, or economic factors that impacted your service delivery?

The COVID-19 pandemic had a substantial impact on the organization's service delivery. They had to adapt by shifting to telephonic methods and reducing in-person meetings. This suggests that the pandemic significantly affected their operations and forced them to modify their service delivery methods.

What are the major differences today compared to this time last year in your organization?

No major differences have been observed in the organization between the current time and the previous year, and things have remained relatively the same.

Bedford County Public Schools

The information summarized in this section was provided by the Director of Student Support Services with Bedford County Public Schools.

How has substance use and mental health impacted your organization’s work over the past year?

We have observed that these variables greatly influence student and family engagement in school. The struggles with academic performance, truancy, and disengagement among students and their families are closely linked to mental health and substance use issues. We have also noticed an increase in administrative oversight, investigation, and discipline related to these issues, which takes away valuable instructional time. Moreover, there is a concern that focusing too much on addressing intensive tier-three needs may result in overlooking tier-two and tier-one needs, such as general mental health literacy and education for all students.

Has your organization seen any new trends related to substance use over the past year?

Regarding substance use trends, we have seen a significant increase in disciplinary actions related to drug possession, particularly for illegal or controlled substances. The number of infractions for drug possession with the intent to distribute has almost quadrupled. Instances of students found under the influence of drugs have increased by over 300%. Similar trends have been observed for tobacco use and distribution, although the increase is not as pronounced. Consequently, we have witnessed a rise in school removals due to drug use. In court cases involving students, a significant percentage has tested positive for marijuana when drug testing was ordered. Additionally, parents who were drug tested had a high rate of positive results, primarily involving substances such as marijuana, meth, fentanyl, and cocaine.

Has your organization seen any new trends related to mental health over the past year?

There has been an increase in the intensity and complexity of mental health issues among students. Data from the first semester shows a rise in suicide risk assessments, referrals for psychiatric hospitalizations, and threat assessments. However, we have also seen positive impacts from our intervention design specialist programs. These programs, available at secondary and elementary levels, have provided academic and alternative suspension support to students. They have stabilized behaviors and contributed to improved student performance. In some cases, there have been significant reductions in discipline referrals after receiving these services.

Has your organization observed any change in the number of referrals/admissions/calls over the past year?

The most significant change in referrals has been related to substance use and inappropriate communication of a sexual nature. Instances of these behaviors have increased, leading to a higher rate of disciplinary referrals. Additionally, the organization has focused on Title IX investigations concerning sexually harassing behaviors.

Have you or your organization observed any trends in demographics (age, grade, gender, race, location. Etc.) related to substance use and/or mental health?

Regarding demographics, we have observed that the grade levels alone do not predict the prevalence of substance infractions. However, interestingly, when there was a higher rate of substance infractions among ninth graders in a particular school last year, that rate declined this year. It is unclear whether this decline is due to improved behavior or students avoiding detection. Stanton River Middle School has experienced a significant spike in substance infractions, with 46% of those incidents involving sixth graders. Generally, substance use trends have shown a relatively equal distribution between males and females, consistent with the population demographics.

Were there any social, environmental, or economic factors in 2022 that impacted your service delivery? (e.g., COVID, funding, capacity, etc.)

Changes in the Code of Virginia related to homeschooling have led to some families disengaging from public schools when facing truancy or multidisciplinary coordination. This trend of opting for homeschooling when facing challenges or potential court involvement is a concern. Economic factors have also affected the organization, with concerns about the tight budget and limited local funding for positions like Intervention Design Specialists. This financial constraint puts valuable services at risk.

What impact have recent changes in marijuana laws had on your organization?

The recent changes in marijuana laws have influenced the organization. During discipline hearings, families have shown an openness in response to the fact that family members themselves are marijuana users and it's permissible under the law, and children are getting from home. This openness about marijuana's legality may contribute to misconceptions among students that permissibility equates to safety or harmlessness. Addressing and challenging these beliefs has become part of the organization's work.

Are you aware of any gaps in the services?

Two notable gaps in services have been identified. First, there are challenges for families living in the Staunton River area to access mental health and substance abuse resources. The limited availability of providers in that region, combined with transportation barriers, makes it difficult for these families to receive the support they need. Efforts are being made to explore telehealth options and partnerships with community organizations to address this issue. The second gap pertains to prevention and early intervention efforts. While the organization has focused on addressing tier three needs and providing intensive interventions, there is a recognized need for increased emphasis on tier two and tier one supports.

These include general mental health literacy, education, and prevention programs that can reach all students. By promoting early intervention strategies, such as social-emotional learning programs, mental health awareness campaigns, and substance abuse prevention initiatives, we aim to create a proactive and supportive school environment that addresses issues before they escalate.

Is there a specific grade level or a demographic that is experiencing the most significant challenges with substance use? Mental illness?

The organization identifies the LGBTQ community as a specific demographic experiencing significant challenges with substance use and mental illness. They explain that adolescence is already difficult for anyone, but for students in this demographic, it can be even harder due to societal pressures, misconceptions, and a sense of alienation. The politics surrounding this topic further contribute to anxiety, depression, and a sense of being disconnected from school. The emphasis is on the impact on mental health and suicidality statistics for these individuals.

What are the major differences today compared to this time last year in your organization?

The organization highlights the success of its intervention Design Specialist Program as a major difference compared to the previous year. They mention a new program called "reconnecting youth" and specifically highlight the "cast" module, which stands for coping and support training. This six to eight-week small group experience is designed for students struggling with school performance, self-identity, and navigating the challenges of adolescence, including understanding drug use. Each high school campus and the alternative education program now has a trained cast facilitator, allowing the promotion of this opportunity to students. Some students voluntarily participate, while others are offered the program as an alternative to consequence-based disciplinary actions.

Amherst County Public Schools

The information summarized in this section was provided by the Director of Student and Family Wellness with Amherst County Public Schools.

How has substance use & mental health impacted your organization's work over the past year?

The data supports the significant impact of substance use and mental health on the organization's work. The number of threat assessments has doubled compared to the previous year, with a focus on threats to self, particularly in elementary schools. There has been a notable increase in discipline incidents, referrals, and substance abuse offenses, with the majority involving gummies and THC vapes rather than traditional substances. Bullying investigations are more frequent in certain schools, particularly in the south end, indicating a communication issue. The organization highlighted an alarming rise in disruptive behaviors among kindergarten students. Additionally, the organization faces challenges in providing mental health services to English language learners and struggles with truancy, largely influenced by anxiety issues in both students and parents.

Parental substance abuse continues to be a recurring problem, leading to home visits and involvement of Child Protective Services.

Were there any social, environmental, or economic factors in 2022 that impacted your service delivery? (e.g., COVID, funding, capacity etc.)

The primary challenge identified is staffing shortages, preventing the organization from providing adequate support and services to students. The lack of resources hampers the ability to access crisis services promptly, leading to significant waiting lists and difficulties in meeting criteria during critical situations. The analyst emphasizes the need for family-centered interventions to address family substance abuse issues and seeks additional funding options to cater to families without Medicaid. Another pressing issue is the overuse of homebound placements for anxious students, leading to further problems with reintegration. The analyst also highlights the limitations in providing substance abuse prevention and suicide prevention programs due to scheduling conflicts and resistance from some teachers. The mental health of teachers and staff is another concern, as they face burnout and stress amid a lack of time and support.

Are you aware of any gaps in the services?

The organization faces multiple service gaps, including limited access to crisis services, especially in emergencies, and the need for more family-centered interventions to address parental substance abuse. The lack of resources hinders the provision of mental health referrals to English language learners. The organization also struggles to address teacher and staff mental health due to scheduling constraints and the absence of dedicated wellness days. The staffing shortage affects the ability to provide comprehensive support to students, impacting their well-being and academic progress. Addressing bullying issues and disruptive behaviors in certain schools is a significant challenge, requiring targeted communication strategies and interventions. The lack of an alternative school for elementary students exacerbates the difficulties in managing disruptive behaviors and truancy cases.

Law Enforcement

The information summarized in this section was provided by the Sergeant at Lynchburg Police Department and a Major at Appomattox County Sheriff's Office.

Lynchburg Police Department (LPD)

How have substance use and mental health impacted your organization's work? / What impact does substance use, and mental health have on your organization's service delivery?

Mental Health and Substance Abuse calls have a great impact on Lynchburg Police Department's service delivery. Mental Health calls are especially taxing due to the resources required, and there are a lot of hours being spent on these types of calls for service.

Has your organization seen any new trends related to substance use?

According to the Lynchburg Police Department, substance use is trending more toward opioids. Lynchburg Police Department drug seizures within the first six months of 2023 show that Fentanyl seizures were already at 66% of 2022's fentanyl seizures for the entire twelve months. Heroin seizures within the first six months of 2023 were at 56% of 2022's heroin seizures over the twelve months. Total drug seizures for the first six months of 2023 were already at 67% of 2022's total drug seizures.

Has your organization seen any new trends related to mental health?

Lynchburg Police Department reports spending a lot of time on calls related to mental health and reports that these calls are frequent.

What impact has recent changes in marijuana laws had on your organization?

Lynchburg Police Department reports that they have seen a decrease in enforcement in their area, due to the change in legal status.

Appomattox County Sheriff's Office (ACSO)

How have substance use and mental health impacted your organization's work? What impact does substance use, and mental health have on your organization's service delivery?

Appomattox County Sheriff's Office has continued to observe substance use throughout their service area, mainly methamphetamine. Many of the stolen property crimes in the county involve a subject that is using some type of illegal narcotic. Mental health calls put a strain on the department due to being a small agency, lack of funding, and staffing shortages. Due to the previously listed reasons, the Appomattox County Sheriff's Office also experiences difficulty with capacity & resource allocation related to overtime with calls involving ECOs and TDOs rather than Violent Crimes (i.e., Murder, Rape, or Robbery). The current state of the Mental Health Crisis in the Appomattox area has created overworked deputies, making it extremely hard to get staff to come help with covering a shift.

Has your organization seen any new trends related to substance use?

There were no reports related to new substance use trends but have seen an increase in the use of gummies by juveniles.

Has your organization seen any new trends related to mental health?

There were no reports related to new trends in reference to mental health.

Has your organization experienced any change in the number of referrals/admissions/calls over the past year?

The biggest change that the Appomattox County Sheriff's Office has seen is that Citizens have learned to abuse workarounds the magistrate system with ECOs.

They reported that they have witnessed individuals in the community tell deputies and the magistrate different stories related to familial problems. According to the Appomattox County Sheriff's Office, the magistrate then issues an ECO. Once that ECO is written the cycle of issues related to service delivery continues to occur.

Were there any social, environmental, or economic factors in 2022 that impacted your service delivery? (e.g., COVID, funding, capacity, etc.)

Appomattox County Sheriff's Office has been impacted the most by a lack of staffing and funding.

What impact have recent changes in marijuana laws had on your organization?

It is reported that the marijuana law change has impacted this Sheriff's Office significantly. Checking for the smell of marijuana was a tool that the Sheriff's Office utilized. When law enforcement used this tool it not only uncovered the illegal use of marijuana before the law change, but they were also able to find other illegal drugs and weapons. According to the Sheriff's Office, when these items were found it potentially prevented violent crime from happening. Also, based on the Sheriff's Office insights, the law change also opened the door to the illegal sales of marijuana. It is believed that the law change has incentivized lacing marijuana with illegal narcotics, so they are undetected and increasing substance use disorders in the community. It was also noted that the Sheriff's Office has also seen marijuana that has been laced with Fentanyl causing citizens to overdose.

Conclusion

The goal of this DART Report is to utilize the data to educate and inform the community, assist with identifying and prioritizing needs; aid in developing action plans to address contributing factors; and help determine and gain the resources needed to address challenges related to substance use and mental illness in Central Virginia. Please contact Horizon Behavioral Health's Prevention and Wellness Services – Program Manager, at 434-477-5464 if you believe there is information that is missing or that can further substantiate this report. DART would also like to know if you found this report helpful and were able to use it in any way, including informing the community, securing funding or expanding services offered by your organization. More information about this report and the Data to Action Resource Team can be found at <https://www.horizonbh.org/services/data-action-resource-team/>.