



▶ Watch our video: Together We Can!

# CASCO BAY CAN

## Together, Preventing Youth Substance Use

Casco Bay Create Awareness Now (CAN) began in 2007 when a small group of concerned community members came together and met on an as-needed basis to discuss specific incidents of youth substance use. Today, Casco Bay CAN is a regional, multi-sector coalition working to prevent youth substance use in eight Southern Maine communities: Cumberland, Falmouth, Freeport, Gray, New Gloucester, North Yarmouth, Pownal, and Yarmouth. We have approximately 100 coalition members, including parents, teachers, law enforcement, health care providers, faith-based leaders, coaches, business owners, youth, and many others.

Casco Bay CAN has become a leading resource for community organizations and agencies that look to us for guidance, training, and materials to support their youth substance use prevention efforts. We work to educate and empower adults that influence youth, and they have consistently stepped up to participate. School administrators not only help connect us with parents and students, they have turned to our coalition for help with new and updated substance use policies, including, most recently, for medical marijuana and vaping. Youth-serving organizations, such as the YMCA, distribute materials and information in the community and help engage parents in awareness activities. We have a long-standing partnership with law enforcement, who work within the communities as a positive resource, promoting information, goodwill, and using a restorative approach when youth engage in risky behavior rather than punitive. Local businesses have also partnered with us to help get the word out about underage drinking and furnishing laws, as well as to distribute materials.

While we are proud of the impact we have had in our communities over the past decade, there is still much more to do to empower youth to make healthy choices. Today's youth face new circumstances that can lead to self-medicating, including increased stress and anxiety, which has been exacerbated by COVID-19. Over the next decade, we will build upon our strong network to increase our impact, build resiliency with youth and families, and address on-going and emerging challenges in order to continue our work reducing substance use by children and teens.

**“I think younger students are making more positive and healthy decisions. The most important part of CAN is creating an environment where students feel good about their choices and their community.”**

– Abigail Latham, Casco Bay CAN's first youth coalition member, serving 2012-2014

Serving the towns of Cumberland,  
Falmouth, Freeport, Gray, New Gloucester,  
North Yarmouth, Pownal and Yarmouth

**Casco Bay CAN**  
CREATE AWARENESS NOW  
TOGETHER, PREVENTING YOUTH SUBSTANCE USE  
[www.cascobaycan.org](http://www.cascobaycan.org)

*Maine*  
**Cumberland County**  
Cumberland County government is  
the fiscal sponsor of Casco Bay CAN's  
state and federal grants

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## Together, Preventing Youth Substance Use

### Our Impact: Educating and Empowering Parents

Recognizing that parents continue to be the most influential force in preventing youth substance use, Casco Bay CAN has focused on educating parents with evidence-based strategies that facilitate open communications with their children.

Each year, Casco Bay CAN develops and implements outreach and education campaigns with distinct messages and information to engage elementary, middle, and high school parents. Positive social norm messaging and age-appropriate communications tips have raised awareness of the physiological, psychological, and social harm caused by underage drinking and substance use. Parent phone surveys help track our progress, and our latest survey show a 6% decrease in the number of parents who believe it is okay for their teen to drink.

Our campaigns use multiple communication channels to reach parents, including digital, social media, print, community television, school notices, and events. Messages include parental monitoring tips, guidelines for safe teen gatherings, talking to college-bound students, "Table Talks" (facilitated parent discussions), and tips for when and what to say to youth at all developmental stages in our "Talk Early, Talk Often and Keep Talking" campaign. To respond to the increased stresses and anxiety youth are experiencing, recent resiliency messages address the social-emotional needs of families and promote healthy coping skills.

**"Casco Bay CAN has been there for me every step of the way for just about 10 years! It has been shifting our broader community-culture and shining light on subjects that are often hidden from broader community view."**

– Peter Scott, MSAD 51 High School Counselor and Founding Member of Casco Bay CAN

### Our Impact: Faith Leaders

Faith leaders have consistently come together to support youth substance use prevention in our communities. Each year since 2013, dozens of local faith leaders have attended Casco Bay CAN's "Faith Leaders Connecting for Substance-Free Youth" forum for training and access to resources that support prevention efforts.

Their activities include distributing 1,000 Casco Bay CAN-messaged canvas bags to local food pantries each year, sharing our monthly prevention tips in communications to their congregations, and peace candle lightings with CAN readings during their services. The faith community has

**"By participating in Casco Bay CAN, I have more connection to those who work directly with lots of kids, learn strategies from them, possibly offer my church's perspective, and keep myself more current with the issues and strategies Casco Bay CAN facilitates."**

– Linda Gard, Reverend, First Congregational Christian Church, United Church of Christ, New Gloucester

invited CAN coalition members to address their congregations and focused a portion of their sermons on youth substance use and the role of the faith community in prevention. Youth in our faith communities participate by volunteering with "Project Sticker Shock" events. Casco Bay CAN Director, Beth Blakeman-Pohl was recently a guest with Pastor Nathan Ferrell in an iHeart Radio interview, which resulted in several inquiries by listeners for resources to help address youth substance use. Casco Bay CAN is currently working with faith leaders to help start a Good Samaritan Network where faith communities integrate substance use prevention and intervention into their mission.

**1 million+**  
impressions from  
our local print and  
digital ad campaigns  
with youth substance  
use prevention  
messages  
in 2019

**6%**  
decrease in  
parents who think  
it is okay for their  
teen to drink  
alcohol (Parent  
surveys: 2014  
-2018)

**6,500**  
canvas bags with  
youth substance use  
prevention messages  
distributed by faith  
leaders and local  
food banks  
(2011-2019)

Casco Bay CAN is proud to be recognized for its work and is often invited to share best practices and strategies with other youth substance use prevention efforts throughout the country. Awards include: National Association of Counties Achievement Award Winner (2015); Recognition Award from YMCA of Southern Maine (2015); and Recognition Award from Greater Portland Council of Governments (2015).

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## Our Impact: School Collaboration

Casco Bay CAN is proud of its relationship with school districts, educators, counselors, teachers, staff, athletic directors, and coaches. They have embraced the evidence-based youth substance use tools and positive social norms messages we provide and have distributed 44,127 materials to students and parents since 2011. Principals and vice principals attend our presentations to get the latest information and best practices, and we are regularly invited to sports information nights to present information and materials to student-athletes, coaches, athletic directors, and parents.

A decade ago, our work focused primarily on high school teens, however, when research indicated a need to educate youth earlier, we expanded our prevention strategies to include elementary and middle school students. Our campaigns include age-appropriate messages that support healthy choices early on. To help realign youth perceptions about the prevalence of alcohol, marijuana, and prescription drug use in school, we developed the "Most Kids Don't Use" campaign, which is supported by local data from the Maine Integrated Youth Health Survey (MIYHS).

Not only do schools regularly share information and materials, they host many CAN-sponsored events. Each year, CAN sponsors a national expert to speak to parents, youth, and school staff. For instance, Dr. John Duffy presented "Parenting the New Teen in the Age of Anxiety." On several occasions, international speaker John Underwood has presented, "Life of a Student Athlete," focusing on data to illustrate the negative effects of substance use on athletic performance. Casco Bay CAN has evolved the program to "Life of a Student," which now includes broader messages relevant to many student groups, including theater, debate, music, and dance, as well as athletics.

1,100  
"When the Bell Rings" books  
written by Casco Bay CAN youth were provided to support incoming freshmen in 2019

CAN also sponsors, "Drug Impairment Training for Educational Professionals," a nationally-certified two-day training for school staff to help them identify and provide support to teens under the influence.

Through our relationships with schools, we have engaged youth groups to support peer-to-peer messaging that encourages non-use. They participate in several initiatives, including "Project Sticker Shock." An annual meeting of the Casco Bay CAN Youth Panel helps inform our yearly work plan and associated messaging. Recently, 19 area high school students participated in a CAN-funded project with The Telling Room to publish

"The Moment the Bell Rings," a collection of personal stories and advice for incoming freshmen who may be

experiencing school pressure and encountering substance use. The first year, 1,100 books were distributed as part of freshmen orientation. Digital and audio versions will be available to future incoming freshmen classes, and, if funded, printed versions will be distributed, as well.

Our partnership with schools has also allowed us to conduct the Student Intervention & Reintegration Program (SIRP), a risk-reduction program for youth who have experimented with alcohol and/or other drugs. Over and over again, SIRP participants and their parents have told us the program was eye-opening and helped them "see the consequences of their risky behavior." The success of this program has led us to explore opportunities for a program to expand our impact by bringing this information to all youth in our communities.



Annual Youth Summit includes Casco Bay CAN area high school students and other area youth working together to help inform substance use prevention strategies

## 44,127

Substance use prevention materials have been distributed by schools to students and parents including...

- Talk Early, Talk Often and Keep Talking posters
- Most Casco Bay High School Students Don't Use posters and with version for middle school students
- Safeguarding Your Future rack cards and posters
- Videos featuring local teens asking parents to stay involved
- Brochure with tips for safe teen gatherings
- Monitoring Tips for parents
- College Transitions rack card with tips for parents with college-bound teens
- Monthly Prevention Tips
- Achieve Peak Performance posters for coaches and parents to share with student athletes
- Signed letter from all high school and middle school principals sent in October during National Prevention Month



Project Sticker Shock: A Collaboration of Youth, Law Enforcement and Local Businesses

## Our Impact: A Partnership with Law Enforcement

Our partnership with law enforcement started over 10 years ago, and has resulted in policies and multi-district collaboration that strongly support youth substance use prevention efforts. A task force with law enforcement representing all of our communities is a sub-committee of Casco Bay CAN, and has been recognized statewide and nationally for its work, including drug take-back events, educating senior citizens about proper medication storage and disposal, Responsible Beverage Training, compliance checks, party patrols, and prom safety messages. Since its inception in 2011, the anonymous tip line, in collaboration with local law enforcement, has received 207 (as of July 2020) anonymous tips related directly to youth substance use. With Casco Bay CAN and law enforcement working together, policies and practices for responding to youth substance use have shifted: When a youth makes an unhealthy choice, law enforcement uses a restorative justice approach whenever possible, encouraging youth to recognize what they did and its impact rather than focusing on punishment. This has strengthened the relationship between law enforcement, youth, and other community members.

**“CAN is one of the only groups in my 25 years of law enforcement experience that has successfully built a network of dedicated skilled individuals, surrounding our youth with relevant information, compassion, energy, and mentoring. They truly have impacted our youth and reduced substance misuse.”**

– Chief John Kilbride, Falmouth Police Department

Local law enforcement is also engaging youth in many other positive ways, including issuing “Positive Tickets” to youth “caught” doing something good, working with youth on “Project Sticker Shock” (see below), and implementing “Handle with Care,” a program that enables police to notify schools when they encounter children and teens at a traumatic scene, so schools can provide immediate support. CAN has provided law enforcement with training and materials to support these efforts, including informational pocket cards which they hand out to parents, promotional materials for prescription safety, videos, posters, and online promotions.

## Our Impact: Project Sticker Shock

Since 2012, Casco Bay CAN has helped coordinate “Project Sticker Shock,” a point-of-sale campaign to bring awareness to state laws and penalties for providing alcohol to minors. In May and December each year, approximately 100 youth volunteers work in collaboration with all five local law enforcement agencies and nearly 20 local retailers to place bright orange awareness stickers on alcohol packs. The project is supported with ad campaigns and social media posts. Local restaurants participate by placing pizza box top stickers with the headline, “Because You Care About Teens, Don’t Provide the Means.” Youth volunteers wear “Project Sticker Shock” t-shirts and receive recognition for their efforts. This is truly a multi-sector collaboration that builds relationships between youth, local businesses, and law enforcement.

**100**  
youth volunteers,  
5 law enforcement  
agencies, and approx.  
20 retailers work  
together 2x per year  
for Project Sticker  
Shock

Join us as we continue community-driven, proactive, and collaborative strategies to build and strengthen our communities. Our Coalition has demonstrated that when a community comes together to address youth substance use, positive change happens. How can you help? Join one of our committees, volunteer, help promote our work, or donate to support the continuation of our work.

Together, we CAN prevent youth substance use.

Casco Bay Create Awareness Now (CAN)

www.cascobaycan.org | email: cascobaycan@gmail.com

