

Community Coalition Needs Assessment for FY25
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CONTRACT NUMBER:	HHS001344700042
ORGANIZATION NAME:	Hill Country Council on Alcohol and Drug Abuse (HCCADA)
COALITION NAME(S):	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Kendall County Community Coalition• Kerr County Community Coalition
COVERED SERVICE AREA(S):	Kendall County & Kerr County
NAME OF PERSON(S) COMPLETING THIS FORM:	Andrea Salazar

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Overview

The Hill Country Council on Alcohol and Drug Abuse, Inc. (HCCADA) has provided prevention, intervention, outpatient treatment, and recovery support across Central Texas since 1991. HCCADA sponsors the Kendall County Community Coalition and the Kerr County Community Coalition. These coalitions unite local stakeholders to address substance use and mental health challenges through community-driven strategies. The coalitions implement youth and adult prevention education, public outreach, and local policy advocacy, working closely with law enforcement, community leaders, and schools to provide alcohol and drug prevention programming and education for youth and adults.

Key Findings

Community Strengths

- **Strong Community Supports:** Community-based programs, school partnerships, and mentoring initiatives offer youth development, family support, and community wellness. Strong social networks, especially in Kerr, provide opportunities for connectedness that reduce substance use risk.
- **Robust Mental/Behavioral Health Provider Supply:** Kendall and Kerr exceed state averages in the supply of general healthcare providers and mental and behavioral health providers. This improves service availability, strengthens early intervention, and can reduce behavioral health risks.
- **Active Coalition and Community Partnerships:** The Kendall County and Kerr County coalitions collaborate closely with schools, law enforcement, healthcare providers, community organizations, and media. These partnerships enhance prevention capacity, increase visibility, and foster coordinated responses to youth substance use across both counties.

Challenges and Opportunities

- **Socioeconomic and Service Access Disparities:** Kerr County experiences greater economic hardship, with higher child poverty, greater food insecurity, higher rates of uninsured children and adults, alongside lower educational attainment. Mental and physical health distress is also more common. Kendall County, though more prosperous, faces gender pay inequities and has fewer local direct treatment providers for substance use.
- **Elevated Risk Environment for Youth Substance Use:** Youth in Kerr and Kendall counties face a high-risk environment for substance use, as confirmed by community surveys, student data, arrest records, and probation referral trends. Students and adults report greater youth access to alcohol, marijuana, vapes, and tobacco. Regional 2024 TSS data show higher 30-day substance use rates compared to state averages, with increased reports of substance use at parties and during class. In Kendall County, felony marijuana-related juvenile probation referrals have tripled since 2021, signaling an urgent need for early intervention.
- **Social Norms and Access Undermine Prevention:** Survey data indicate permissive community attitudes and social acceptance of substance use are critical barriers to prevention. Peer use is more common, and students report lower parental disapproval for alcohol. Social access through friends, parties, and informal sharing is a primary pathway

for youth to obtain substances. Additionally, higher alcohol and tobacco retail density in both counties increases youth access and exposure to substance use. Prevention efforts must address social and cultural conditions that enable youth substance use, as well as environmental strategies for policy enforcement.

Putting It All Together

The outcomes of this needs assessment inform the strategic priorities and substances of focus for the HCCADA community coalitions. Strengthening connections between youth, families, schools, and local organizations is essential to building resilience and reducing risk of youth substance use.

	Kendall County Community Coalition	Kerr County Community Coalition
Strategic Focus Area	Increase social and community connectedness.	Increase social and community connectedness.
Key Environmental Factors	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Suburban with rural pockets, closer to San Antonio • More economic stability, higher income • Better health and family outcomes • Easy, low-cost retail access to alcohol and vapes 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Rural setting, more isolated, travel barriers • Less economic stability, more children in poverty • Worse health outcomes, more uninsured people • Easy, low-cost retail access to alcohol and vapes
Primary Substance	Vaping (Nicotine and THC)	Vaping (Nicotine and THC)
Intervening Variables	Social Norms, Social Access	Social Norms, Social Access
Supporting Information	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Social acceptance and permissive parent/community attitudes reported as top barriers to prevention • Nicotine vapes and marijuana are a top prevention priority, rated as highly accessible to youth • Higher youth-reported e-cigarette use in past month • Higher youth-reported marijuana use in past month • Increasing tobacco retail density • Increasing THC-related juvenile felony probation referrals in Kendall County 	
Secondary Substance	Alcohol Use	Alcohol Use
Intervening Variables	Social Norms, Social Access	Social Norms, Social Access
Supporting Information	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Higher rates of ease of access and peer use • Weaker perceived parental disapproval • Higher rates of youth alcohol use in the past month • Greater alcohol retail density • Higher rates of excessive drinking, alcohol-related arrests in Kendall County • Higher rates of DWI incidents, alcohol-related crash fatalities in Kerr County 	
Community Readiness	<p><i>Higher Readiness:</i> Law enforcement, healthcare professionals, youth-serving organizations, youth, other prevention organizations.</p> <p><i>Lower Readiness:</i> Schools, business community, parents, media, state, tribal government, civic/volunteer groups, religious/fraternal groups.</p> <p><i>Key Needs:</i> Increase parent and youth engagement, shift social norms, and expand prevention programming to reduce youth substance access and use.</p>	

Part I: CONTRIBUTING MEMBERS

The Hill Country Council on Alcohol and Drug Abuse, Inc. (HCCADA) has served as a nonprofit leader in providing substance use prevention, intervention, outpatient treatment, and recovery support services to youth, adults, and families across Central Texas since 1991. Grounded in the understanding that addiction is a progressive and treatable disease, HCCADA was one of the first organizations to bring these essential services to the Hill Country region and continues to deliver evidence-based programs that promote successful long-term recovery using evidence-based approaches.

HCCADA sponsors two community coalitions:

- **Kendall County Community Coalition**
- **Kerr County Community Coalitions**

HCCADA's coalitions in Kendall and Kerr counties bring together a diverse network of local stakeholders committed to addressing substance use and mental health challenges through collaborative, community-driven prevention strategies. The overarching mission is to cultivate healthier, more resilient communities throughout the Texas Hill Country by promoting evidence-based solutions and strengthening local capacity.

The Kendall and Kerr County Community Coalitions implement a wide range of initiatives including youth, adult, and community prevention education, public outreach campaigns, and local policy advocacy. Each coalition works closely with area school districts to deliver alcohol and drug prevention presentations tailored for students, educators, and school administrators, incorporating up-to-date substance use trends and data. Additionally, the coalitions partner with county juvenile and adult probation departments, as well as area courts, to provide behavioral health education and access to treatment services.

Coalition members represent a broad cross-section of the community, including nonprofits, businesses, educators, mental health providers, law enforcement, and media. These members meet monthly to share insights, coordinate efforts, and advance shared goals. Table 1 lists key coalition partners for the 2025 fiscal year.

Table 1. Key Coalition Partners, FY25

Kerr County Community Coalition	
<i>Key Partners</i>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Encore Radio Station - Local radio station willing to give the coalition airtime whenever we need.• Hill Country Youth Ranch - Provides residential care and education for at-risk youth.• Kerrville Citizens Police Academy Alumni Association - Participates in DEA Takeback and several other community events to promote safety.• Kerr County Women's Chamber - Supports women's initiatives and community involvement.• Kerrville DAEP - Disciplinary Alternative Education Program with prevention supports.• Kerrville Daily Times - Kristi Bernhard collaborates to provide reporting on our efforts.• New Hope Counseling Center - Provides counseling and educational services for all ages.	

Kendall County Community Coalition	
Key Partners	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Boerne ISD - K-12 education with comprehensive student support. • Comfort ISD - K-12 education with comprehensive student support. • Drug Free Comfort - Supports community through events, speakers, and community awareness activities. • Forever Hope Counseling - Provides counseling, skills training, and psychotherapy for all ages. • Hill Country Daily Bread Ministries - Provides food, mentoring, and spiritual support services. • Hill Country Family Services - Provides crisis assistance, food, and financial support. • Hill Country Pregnancy Care Center - Free pregnancy testing, education, and support services. • Kendall County Juvenile Probation - Supervises, rehabilitates, and coordinates education for youth offenders. 	

This needs assessment aims to identify the local conditions influencing substance use among youth and adults in Kendall and Kerr counties. It examines existing community assets, service gaps, and critical risk factors, while also assessing patterns of substance use across the region. The insights gathered will serve to guide the strategic planning and implementation of targeted prevention efforts.

Part II: METHODOLOGY USED

This needs assessment uses both primary and secondary data sources to build a comprehensive understanding of community needs and substance use in Kendall and Kerr counties.

Surveys. As part of this needs assessment, survey data was collected from parents, community members, and members of the Kendall County and Kerr County Community Coalitions. Aggregated responses from these surveys are used throughout the assessment to help identify key concerns and guide the Strategic Focus Areas for the CCP project. These responses offer valuable insight into community perceptions and priorities.

- *Parent/Community Member Needs Assessment Survey* – There were 22 local parents and community members that responded to this survey. This survey gathered feedback about local needs, with a focus on substance use trends and contributing factors.
- *Coalition Member CCP Needs Assessment Survey* – There were 10 members of the Kendall County and Kerr County Community Coalitions that responded to this survey. The survey covered the same topics as the parent/community member survey, and it also asked about community readiness with the aim of informing prevention strategies.

Public Statistical Data. In addition to local surveys, the assessment incorporates a range of public statistical data. Data included is derived from sources such as the United States (U.S.) Census Bureau, County Health Rankings & Roadmaps, the Texas Education Agency, the Texas Department of Public Safety, and the Texas Health and Human Services Commission. Data was also obtained from the Texas Youth Tobacco Survey, the U.S. Department of Agriculture, and the Congressional Research Service to capture broader trends and local conditions.

Texas School Survey Reports. To better understand patterns of substance use among youth, this needs assessment also draws from regional and state data provided by the Texas School Survey (TSS) of Drug and Alcohol Use. The TSS report data offers insight into the prevalence of substance use among students and supports identification of high-priority issues in the community. It is important to note that Kendall County and Kerr County fall within Health and Human Services (HHS) Region 8, but the TSS reports combined HHS Region 7 and Region 8 outcomes together for reporting.

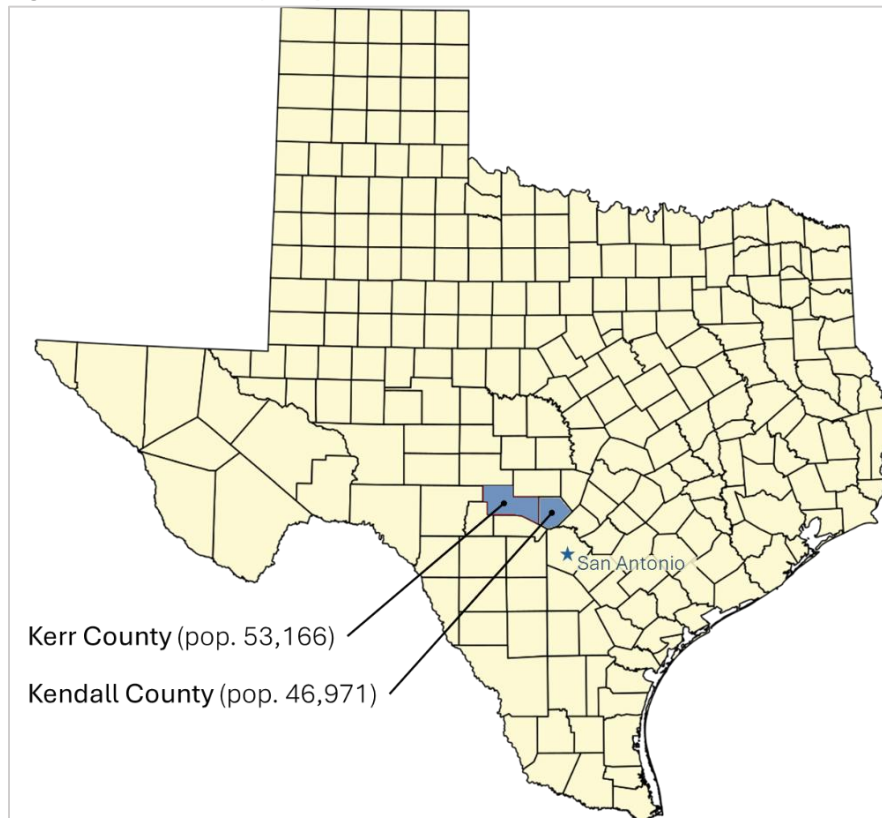
2023 Region 8 PRC Regional Needs Assessment (RNA) Report. This needs assessment also utilizes findings from the 2023 Region 8 Prevention Resource Center Regional Needs Assessment, a collaborative report produced by the Region 8 PRC (San Antonio Council on Alcohol and Drug Awareness, SACADA) along with data coordinators from PRCs across Texas, with support from the Texas Health and Human Services Commission (HHSC). The RNA report provides local data on health disparities, healthcare access, social determinants of health, and other community indicators. It serves as a valuable secondary source and helps to contextualize service gaps, inform coalition priorities, and validate findings from other data sources.

Part III: GEOGRAPHIC/FOCUS POPULATION

1. Overview

HCCADA's coalitions are focused on preventing youth substance use across two counties in Texas: Kerr and Kendall (see Figures 1 and 2). Each county brings geographic, economic, and cultural characteristics that shape the coalition's work and inform the strategies used to engage schools, families, and local stakeholders.

Figure 1. Texas County Map



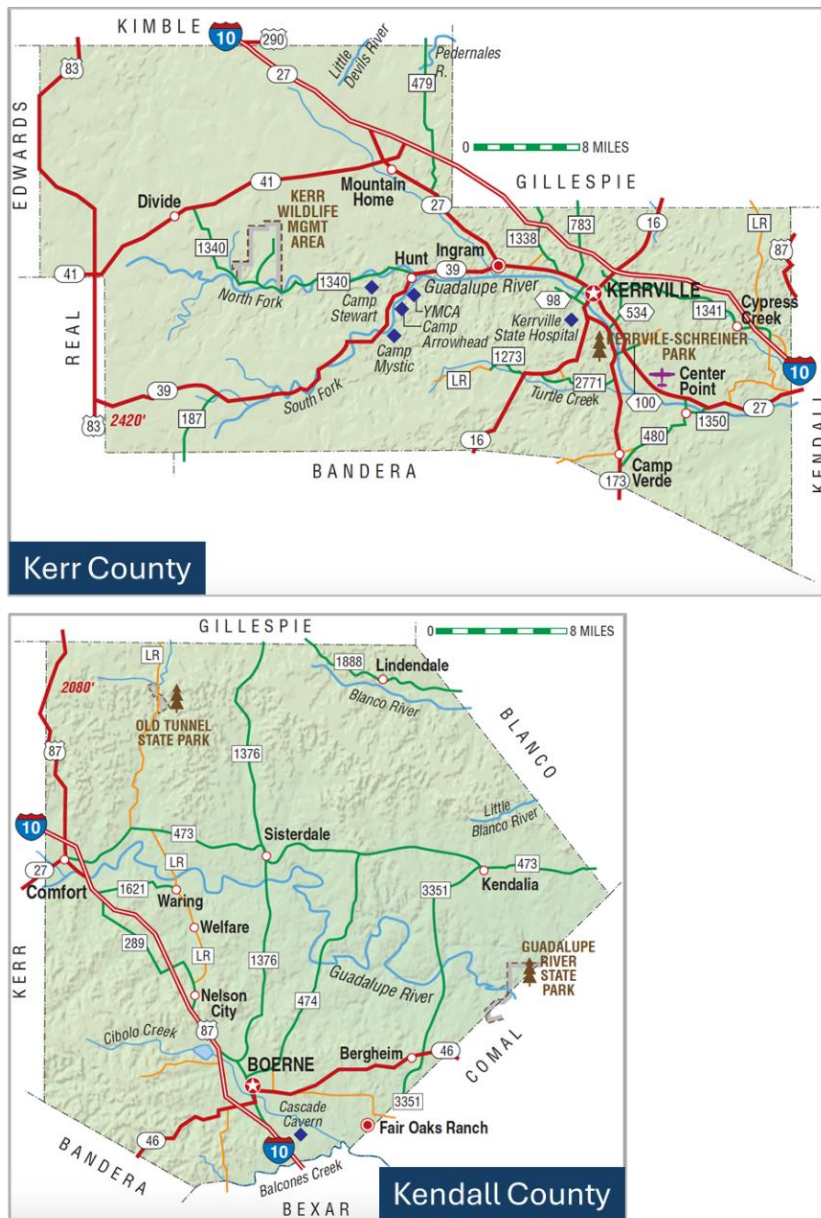
Source: U.S. Census Bureau. (2019-2023). Demographic and Housing Estimates. American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates. <https://data.census.gov>

Table 2. County Zip Codes

Kerr County (10 zip codes)
76849*, 78010, 78013*, 78024, 78025, 78028, 78029, 78058, 78624*, 78631*
Kendall County (9 zip codes)
78004, 78006, 78013, 78015, 78027, 78070*, 78074, 78606*, 78624*

*Zip code extends into a neighboring county

Figure 2. Maps of Kerr and Kendall Counties



Source: Texas Almanac, Robert Plocheck. <https://www.texasalmanac.com/>

Kerr County is in the Texas Hill Country region of central Texas and has a population of 53,166 residents. The county seat, Kerrville (population ~21,774 residents), is the largest city in the county and is known for its scenic location along the Guadalupe River, vibrant arts scenes, and annual cultural events. Archeological artifacts have been found in the area, particularly along the Guadalupe River. The second and third largest cities in the county are Center Point (population ~2,000 residents) and Ingram (population ~1,800 residents). The county features rolling hills, rivers, and parks, making it a destination for outdoor recreation which contributes to its appeal as both a place to visit and live. Kerr County is served by 8 ISDs and is home to Schreiner University, a private liberal arts college. Major highways, including Interstate 10, provide access to larger cities like San Antonio. The most prominent industries in Kerr County are healthcare and social assistance, retail trade, and construction.

Kendall County is located on the Edwards Plateau region in south central Texas, northwest of San Antonio. The county has a population of 46,971 residents. The county seat, Boerne, sits along Cibolo Creek and is known for its rich German heritage, historic downtown, and welcoming, family friendly atmosphere. While the county has seen steady growth, it has maintained its small-town and scenic beauty. Comfort is the second largest city in Kerr County, with a population of less than 2,000 residents. Kendall County is served by 5 Independent School District (ISDs) and offers access to several nearby colleges and universities, including Geneva School of Boerne, Alamo College, Texas State University, and UT San Antonio, with many nationally recognized institutions within a 50-mile radius. The county is well connected via Interstate 10, offering convenient access to San Antonio and surrounding areas. Major industries in Kendall County include construction, professional, scientific, and technical services, and health care and social assistance.

2. Demographic Information

The demographic profile of Kerr and Kendall counties reveals unique racial, ethnic, gender, and age distributions that shape the implementation of effective prevention strategies.

Race and Ethnicity. Table 3 presents race and ethnicity data for Kendall County, Kerr County, Texas, and the U.S. Kerr County had a larger total population (53,166) compared to Kendall County (46,971). The percentage of the White population was similar in both counties (78% in Kendall and 77% in Kerr), both of which are higher than in Texas (54%) and the U.S. (63%). Kendall County had a Hispanic/Latino population of 24%, and Kerr County has 26%, compared to nearly 40% in Texas and only 19% in the U.S. For individuals identifying as Two or More Races, both counties report higher percentages than the U.S. average but lower than the Texas state average. The Black/African American, American Indian/Alaska Native, Asian, Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander categories make up <2% of the Kendall and Kerr County populations.

TABLE 3. Race and Ethnicity

	Kendall	Kerr	Texas	USA
Total Population	46,971	53,166	29,640,343	332,387,540
White	77.8%	77.3%	53.9%	63.4%
Hispanic or Latino (of any race)	23.7%	26.4%	39.5%	19.0%
Two or More Races	14.1%	13.2%	19.2%	10.7%
Some Other Race	6.0%	6.4%	8.6%	6.6%
Black or African American	0.9%	1.6%	12.2%	12.4%
Asian	1.0%	0.9%	5.3%	5.8%
American Indian or Alaska Native	0.1%	0.5%	0.6%	0.9%
Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander	0.1%	0.0%	0.1%	0.2%

Source: U.S. Census Bureau. (2019-2023). Demographic and Housing Estimates. American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates. <https://data.census.gov>

Age and Gender. Kendall and Kerr counties both have larger aging populations, with Kerr County showing a notably high proportion of residents aged 65 and older (28.6%), more than double the state average of 13.2% (Table 4). While most residents in both counties fall within the 18 to 64 age range (57.4% in Kendall and 53% in Kerr), these rates are lower than both the Texas and national averages. Kendall County stands out with 22.7% of its population being under 18, which exceeds the national average of 22.2%. Gender distribution in both counties is about even, like

the state and national rates (Table 5). These demographic patterns have implications for service needs across the lifespan, particularly for older adults and working-age residents.

TABLE 4. Age

	Kendall	Kerr	Texas	USA
Under 18 years	22.7%	18.4%	25.2%	22.2%
18 years to 64 years	57.4%	53.0%	61.6%	61.0%
65 years and over	19.9%	28.6%	13.2%	16.8%

Source: U.S. Census Bureau. (2019-2023). Demographic and Housing Estimates. American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates. <https://data.census.gov>

TABLE 5. Gender

	Kendall	Kerr	Texas	USA
Male	49.1%	48.8%	49.9%	49.5%
Female	50.9%	51.2%	50.1%	50.5%

Source: U.S. Census Bureau. (2019-2023). Demographic and Housing Estimates. American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates. <https://data.census.gov>

Educational Attainment. Educational attainment levels vary notably between Kerr and Kendall counties. Kendall County reports a significantly higher percentage of residents with a bachelor's degree or higher at 49.2% compared to 31.2% in Kerr County (Table 6). This places Kendall County well above both the Texas average of 33% and the national average of 35%. In contrast, Kerr County has a higher percentage of residents with only a high school diploma or less, including 29.1% with only a high school diploma compared to 16.6% in Kendall County. Kerr County also shows slightly higher rates of residents with less than a ninth-grade education or some high school but no diploma. These educational disparities can influence access to economic opportunities, health literacy, and engagement with prevention services. Higher education levels in Kendall County may support stronger community awareness and receptivity to youth substance use prevention strategies, while lower attainment in Kerr may indicate a greater need for tailored outreach and support.

TABLE 6. Educational Attainment - Population 25 Years and Older

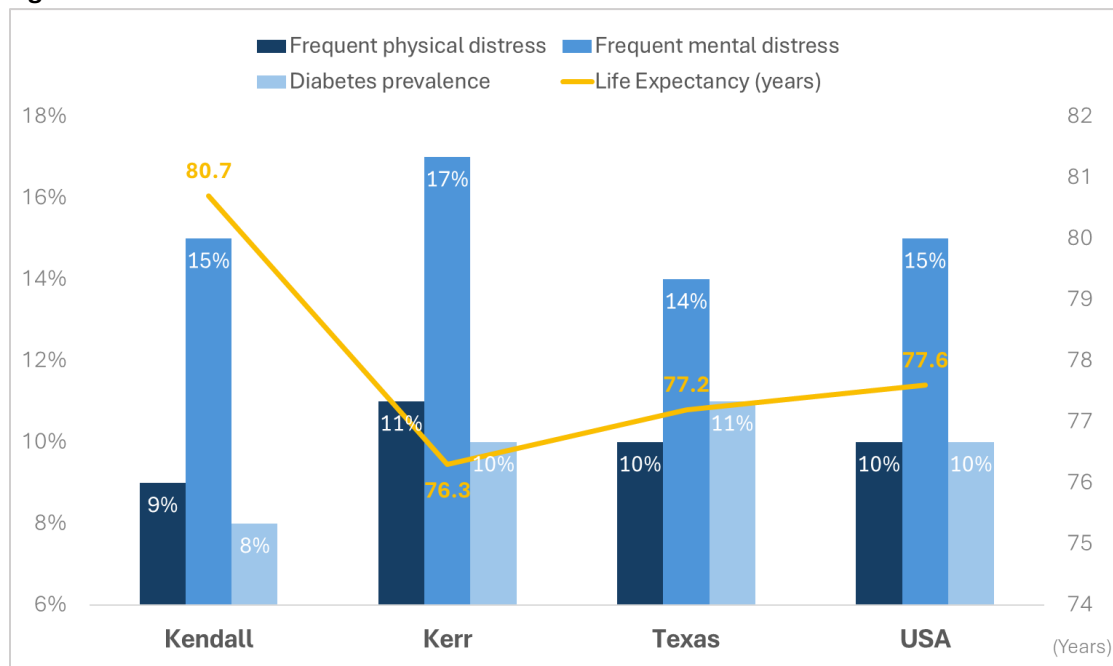
	Kendall	Kerr	Texas	USA
Less than 9th grade	3.1%	4.4%	7.3%	4.7%
9th to 12th grade, no diploma	3.4%	5.3%	7.0%	5.9%
High school graduate (includes equivalency)	16.6%	29.1%	24.3%	26.2%
Some college, no degree	20.4%	21.5%	20.6%	19.4%
Associate's degree	7.5%	8.5%	7.7%	8.8%
Bachelor's degree	31.6%	19.5%	21.1%	21.3%
Graduate or professional degree	17.6%	11.7%	11.9%	13.7%

Source: U.S. Census Bureau. (2019-2023). Selected Social Characteristics in the United States. American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates. <https://data.census.gov>

Health Outcomes. Health outcomes vary significantly between Kendall and Kerr counties, with Kendall County demonstrating stronger overall indicators. Kendall reports the highest life expectancy at 80.7 years (Figure 3), surpassing Kerr County at 76.3 years, as well as both the Texas and national averages of 77.2 and 77.6 years. Kendall also reports the lowest rates of frequent physical distress at 9% and frequent mental distress at 15%. In contrast, Kerr County shows poorer health outcomes, including the highest rate of frequent mental distress at 17% and

the highest rate of physical distress at 11%. Diabetes prevalence is also higher in Kerr at 10%, compared to 8% in Kendall. Additionally, out of Texas' 254 counties, Kendall ranks 7th in overall County Health Rankings, while Kerr ranks 92nd (Table 7). Kerr also has more mentally unhealthy days reported in the past 30 days (5.1) compared to Kendall (4.8) and the Texas and national averages. However, HIV prevalence is lower in Kerr (132 per 100,000 residents) than Kendall (154), though both remain well below state and national rates. These disparities suggest that residents in Kerr County experience greater physical and mental health challenges, which may contribute to increased vulnerability to substance use. Youth substance use prevention efforts in Kerr may need to address underlying health stressors and community well-being

Figure 3. Health Outcomes.



Source: University of Wisconsin Population Health Institute. (2024). Texas. County Health Rankings & Roadmaps. <https://www.countyhealthrankings.org>

TABLE 7. County Health Rankings and HIV Prevalence

	Kendall	Kerr	Texas	USA
County Health Ranking	7	92	N/A	N/A
Poor mental health days	4.8	5.1	4.6	3.8
HIV prevalence (count per 100,000 residents)	154	132	415	382

Source: University of Wisconsin Population Health Institute. (2024). Texas. County Health Rankings & Roadmaps. <https://www.countyhealthrankings.org>

Summary. Kendall and Kerr counties share similar racial and ethnic profiles, with predominantly White populations and Hispanic/Latino communities comprising about a quarter of residents. Kerr County has a notably older population, with nearly 29% aged 65 and older, which is more than double the state average, while Kendall has a slightly younger demographic profile. Educational attainment differs significantly, with Kendall showing higher levels of college completion, suggesting greater access to economic and health resources. Health outcomes are also stronger in Kendall County, which reports lower rates of physical and mental distress and higher life expectancy than Kerr. Such demographic, educational, and health disparities highlight the need for tailored prevention strategies that address local conditions and service gaps in each county.

Part IV: COMMUNITY STRENGTHS and PROTECTIVE FACTORS

1. Characteristics of the Community

Kendall and Kerr counties are characterized by strong, close-knit communities where generational ties foster trust and collaboration. Residents often describe the region as having a “Bible Belt” culture, with high church attendance viewed as a key protective factor supporting youth and family resilience. Community pride runs deep, especially in Kendall County, where long-standing families engage alongside newcomers in local traditions like Boerne’s Dickens on Main and Comfort’s Christmas in Comfort. In Kendall County, Boerne ISD is notably diverse, with students speaking dozens of languages, while Comfort ISD serves a predominantly Hispanic student population. Both counties exhibit a strong sense of civic involvement and respect for law enforcement, where officer engagement is widely trusted and influential in shaping community norms. Economically, Kendall is a high-income, white-collar county, though this may mask disparities faced by lower-income residents. Kerr County is known as a recovery-friendly community, with a visible recovery population and the Kerrville Recovery Community Coalition that supports integration of recovery homes in the community. These community characteristics serve as both assets and important context for local prevention efforts.

2. Accessible Resources

Prevention Resource Center, Prevention Providers, and Coalitions. The Region 8 Prevention Resource Center, operated by the San Antonio Council on Alcohol and Drug Awareness (SACADA), supports coalition efforts in Kendall and Kerr counties through data, training, and prevention resources. In Kendall County, Drug Free Comfort and the Kendall County Behavioral Health Advisory Coalition enhance outreach and awareness about youth prevention initiatives. In Kerr County, the Kerrville Recovery Community Coalition plays a vital role in promoting recovery visibility and supporting local recovery efforts. Texans for Safe and Drug-Free Youth (TxSDY) further supports local coalitions through initiatives like retail compliance checks and public education to reduce youth access to alcohol and other substances.

Direct Treatment Providers. Kerr and Kendall counties offer a range of treatment options to support individuals with substance use disorders. In Kendall County, the Kendall County Mental Health Center provides outpatient behavioral health services, while Rise Recovery (in nearby Bexar County) offers counseling and peer support for youth and families impacted by substance use. However, there are no dedicated residential or inpatient substance use treatment in Kendall County currently. In Kerr County, treatment resources include the Kerr County Mental Health Center and Hill Country MHDD Centers Outpatient Treatment Services, which provide mental health and substance use treatment for youth and adults. Residential treatment options are also available, including La Hacienda Treatment Center, a nationally recognized facility offering medical detox and residential rehabilitation, and Starlite Recovery Center, which specializes in comprehensive inpatient treatment for co-occurring disorders. These providers play a critical role in bridging service gaps and ensuring access to care across the Hill Country region.

Mental Health Services. Kendall and Kerr counties are home to a growing network of mental health providers that offer counseling, therapy, and behavioral health support. In Kendall County, In The Here and Now Counseling PLLC, Trellis Counseling Co, Forever Hope Counseling & Educational Services LLC, Mindscapes Behavioral Health, and EMI Counseling, PLLC provide a broad spectrum of outpatient services for children, adolescents, and adults. These providers address issues such as anxiety, depression, trauma, and family dynamics using a variety of therapeutic approaches. In Kerr County, Cardinal Counseling Services and New Hope Counseling Center deliver accessible, client-centered care for individuals and families facing mental health

challenges. These providers help bridge service gaps in rural areas where formal mental health infrastructure is limited and play a key role in promoting community wellness and resilience.

Healthcare Providers. In Kendall County, Hill Country Mission Health provides primary care and support services to uninsured and underinsured residents, while CommuniCare Health's Boerne campus offers integrated medical, dental, and behavioral health care to families across income levels. In Kerr County, The Pregnancy Resource Center delivers health education, prenatal support, and maternal care services for young women and families. The Kerrville VA Medical Center serves local veterans by offering comprehensive medical and mental health services, including substance use treatment. These providers help address healthcare disparities and strengthen the safety net for underserved populations in the region.

Community-Based Programs and Services. Community-based programs and services provide essential support to residents through youth development, family services, healthcare access, and community engagement. In Kendall County, organizations such as the Boerne and Comfort Boys and Girls Clubs, the Hill Country Family YMCA, and Girl with Grit offer enrichment and mentorship for youth. Texas Workforce Solutions in Boerne connects residents with job opportunities and vocational resources. Hill Country Family Services and the Hill Country Pregnancy Care Center offer essential needs assistance and family support, while the local WIC Clinic ensures maternal and child nutrition. In Kerr County, youth services are supported by groups like Big Brothers Big Sisters, Hill Country CASA, and Young Life. Crisis intervention and housing support are supported by the Hill Country Crisis Council and Habitat for Humanity. The Salvation Army Kroc Center and Doyle Community Center offer essential living and family resources, and media partners like Kerrville Daily Times and Encore Radio Station help promote community awareness. The Kerr County Women's Chamber Supports women's initiatives and community involvement. Alamo Regional Transit and Kerr Konnect improve accessibility through transportation services. Together, these agencies and others enhance well-being and prevention capacity across Kendall and Kerr counties.

Schools and School-Based Programs. Schools in Kerr and Kendall counties play a critical role in substance use prevention through dedicated education programs and health-focused partnerships. In Kendall County, Boerne and Comfort ISDs support prevention efforts through active School Health Advisory Councils (SHAC) and Disciplinary Alternative Education Programs (DAEP) that are key points of early intervention. In Kerr County, education prevention is supported by the Kerrville and Ingram ISDs, both of which also operate SHACs and DAEPs. Parent Teacher Associations (PTAs) reinforce family-school engagement and help strengthen the connection between schools and the communities they serve. Additional support for youth includes Hill Country Youth Ranch's Enhanced Horizons, a residential transitional living and education program, and Pathways Youth and Family Services' 3H Youth Ranch, which provides therapeutic residential care. Elevate Adult Education assists at-risk youth and adults in completing high school and building life skills.

Law Enforcement. In Kendall County, the Kendall County Sheriff's Office, including its Crisis Intervention team, works closely with the Kendall County Jail and the Kendall County Juvenile Probation Department to address youth substance use and ensure coordinated responses. In Kerr County, the Kerr County Sheriff's Office and Kerr County Jail provide frontline services, while the Kerrville Citizens Police Academy Alumni enhance community engagement through public safety education and participation in local events. These agencies collaborate with HCCADA coalitions to promote safe environments, prevent underage drinking, and support early intervention strategies that reduce substance use and related harms.

3. Community Protective Factors

Faith and Emotional Support Opportunities. Faith-based organizations across Kerr and Kendall counties serve as vital sources of guidance, resilience, and mental wellness. In Kendall, St. Peter the Apostle Catholic Church's programs offer spiritual education and mental health support that promote emotional well-being. Similarly, Kerr County is home to programs like Light on the Hill at Mount Wesley, First United Methodist Church Kerrville, and Mercy Gate Ministries, which provide spiritual counseling, support groups, and community outreach. These organizations foster a culture of compassion, stability, and connectedness, which are known protective factors against youth substance use and behavioral health risks.

Mentoring and Life Skills Education. Youth mentoring and adult skill-building programs are prominent in both counties. Big Brothers Big Sisters of the Texas Hill Country pairs youth with positive role models, building trust and reinforcing healthy choices. In Kerr, the Christian Men's Life Corps and Christian Women's Job Corps offer life skills, career readiness, and mentorship for adults navigating economic or personal transitions. Hill Country Daily Bread Ministries in Kendall County provides mentoring and case management to families, addressing barriers to self-sufficiency. Together, these services build confidence, reinforce accountability, and reduce risk factors for substance use.

Basic Needs and Family Stability Programs. Access to housing, nutrition, employment, and benefits are crucial protective factors supported by a range of local organizations. Habitat for Humanity Kerr County and the Doyle Community Center address housing and stability, while the Pregnancy Resource Center and Hill Country CASA advocate for maternal health and child safety. In both counties, the Texas HHS Benefits Offices in Boerne and Kerrville help families access healthcare, food assistance, and financial support. The Salvation Army Kroc Center, Roberts Ranch YMCA, Hill Country Daily Bread, and Society of St. Vincent de Paul offer emergency assistance, youth programs, and recreational activities. These wraparound supports reduce family stress, enhance stability, and create protective environments for youth.

Summary. The service and support network across Kendall and Kerr counties demonstrates several strengths and weaknesses. Community collaboration is robust, with active coalitions, civic engagement, and trusted law enforcement partnerships enhancing prevention and recovery visibility. Strong recovery infrastructure in Kerr County, alongside a wide range of mental health, youth development, and faith-based programs in both counties, supports resilience and community well-being. However, access gaps persist, most critically with a lack of direct treatment providers in Kendall County, and both counties face challenges related to transportation and service accessibility for lower-income populations. These strengths and limitations shape the effectiveness and reach of prevention strategies across the region.

Part V: LIMITATIONS, GAPS, and RISK FACTORS

1. Prevention Gaps

Food Access. Table 8 presents key food access indicators, highlighting Kendall County's stronger food environment compared to Kerr County, Texas, and the United States. Kendall County had the highest Food Environment Index score (8.7), surpassing Kerr County (7.4), Texas (5.9), and the national average (7.7). Both Kendall (1%) and Kerr (5%) had lower rates of limited access to healthy foods than Texas (8%) and the U.S. (6%). However, food insecurity rates differ significantly: Kerr County experiences a higher food insecurity rate (14%), the same as Texas (14%), while Kendall County reports a lower rate (10%) similar to the national average.

TABLE 8. Food Access

	Kendall	Kerr	Texas	USA
Food environment index	8.7	7.4	5.9	7.7
Limited access to healthy foods	1%	5%	8%	6%
Food insecurity	10%	14%	14%	10%

¹Source: University of Wisconsin Population Health Institute. (2024). County Health Rankings & Roadmaps.

<https://www.countyhealthrankings.org>

Transportation Barriers. Kerr County shows weaker transportation outcomes, with 1.9% of households having no vehicle and 16.3% relying on a single vehicle, both above Kendall County's rates of 0.5% and 12%, respectively (Table 9). Kendall outperforms state and national averages in vehicle access, with 46% of households owning three or more vehicles, compared to 34.6% in Texas and 34.8% nationally. However, Kendall's average commute time is the longest at 29 minutes, exceeding Kerr's 20.5 minutes and the state and national averages of 26.7 and 26.6 minutes. These patterns suggest Kendall offers more mobility, while Kerr may face greater barriers in transportation access. Limited vehicle availability in Kerr may reduce youth participation in prevention programs, especially those requiring travel.

TABLE 9. Transportation (Workers 16 years and older)

	Kendall	Kerr	Texas	USA
Vehicles Available per Occupied Housing Unit				
No vehicle available	0.5%	1.9%	2.4%	4.3%
1 vehicle available	12.0%	16.3%	20.6%	20.6%
2 vehicles available	41.6%	46.3%	42.4%	40.2%
3 or more vehicles available	46.0%	35.6%	34.6%	34.8%
Commute				
Mean travel time to work (minutes)	29.0	20.5	26.7	26.6

Source: U.S. Census Bureau. (2019-2023). American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates, S0801. <https://data.census.gov>

Childcare Access. Kerr County experiences the most significant childcare challenges, with 21% of children living in single-parent households and a childcare cost burden of 31%, both higher than Kendall County and the state and national averages (Table 10). Childcare cost burden is the percent of median household income spent on childcare for households with 2 or more children. In contrast, Kendall County reports more favorable outcomes, with only 16% of children in single-parent households and a much lower childcare cost burden of 15%. The counties meet or exceed the state and national averages in childcare center availability per 1,000 children under age 5. High childcare cost and limited family support in Kerr County may increase stress and reduce supervision, elevating youth risk factors for substance use.

TABLE 10. Childcare

	Kendall	Kerr	Texas	USA
Children in single parent households	16%	21%	26%	25%
Childcare centers per 1,000 children under age 5	7	5	5	7
Childcare cost burden	15%	31%	26%	27%

Source: University of Wisconsin Population Health Institute. (2024). *County Health Rankings & Roadmaps*.
<https://www.countyhealthrankings.org>

Public Programs Access. Kerr County shows a greater need for public assistance than Kendall, with 2,003 SNAP cases compared to 794 in Kendall, and 6.9% of Kerr households receiving SNAP benefits versus 4.3% in Kendall (Table 11). The population-to-SNAP case ratio in Kerr is 26 to 1, which is less favorable than Kendall's 59 to 1, and may reflect both higher need and more effective enrollment. However, despite economic challenges in Kerr, the number of TANF cases remains low, suggesting potential underutilization of available support programs. Kendall's low assistance rates appear more aligned with its high median income and lower levels of economic distress. For Kerr, increasing awareness and access to support services like TANF could provide critical stability for families and help reduce youth substance use risk driven by financial stress and unmet basic needs.

TABLE 11. Parent and Family Support Programs

	Kendall	Kerr	Texas
SNAP recipients (% of households) ¹	4.3%	6.9%	11.4%
SNAP cases ²	794	2,003	1,653,564
Population to SNAP cases ratio	59 to 1	26 to 1	18 to 1
TANF cases ³	5	5	9,872
Population to TANF cases ratio	9,394:1	10,633:1	3,002:1

¹Source: U.S. Census Bureau. (2019-2023). *American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates, S2201*. <https://data.census.gov>

²Source: Texas Health and Human Services. (December 2024). *Texas State Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) statistics*. <https://www.hhs.texas.gov>

³Source: Texas Health and Human Services. (November 2024). *Texas State Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) statistics*. <https://www.hhs.texas.gov>

2. Risk Factors

Labor Force Participation and Pay Disparities. Kendall County has a higher labor force participation rate (60.7%) than Kerr, suggesting more working-age residents are engaged in the economy, although it still falls below state and national benchmarks (Table 12). Notably, there is a large gender pay gap in Kendall (\$0.67), which is significantly worse compared to Kerr, the state, and the U.S. This points to economic inequities for women. Kerr County has a smaller gender pay gap (\$0.84), better than Texas and the U.S., indicating relatively better wage equity for women. Kerr also has the lowest labor force participation rate (54.4%), lower than Kendall and the state and national averages, although this could be driven by Kerr's larger older population (65+). For youth substance use prevention, overall lower labor force participation rates and Kendall's significant gender pay gap highlight the importance of investing in younger generations through education, job readiness, and mentorship to support long-term community stability.

TABLE 12. Labor Force Participation and Gender Pay Gap

	Kendall	Kerr	Texas	USA
In labor force ¹	60.7%	54.4%	65.3%	63.5%
Gender pay gap ²	\$0.67	\$0.84	\$0.80	\$0.81

¹Source: U.S. Census Bureau. (2019-2023). *Selected Economic Characteristics. American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates.* <https://data.census.gov>

²Source: University of Wisconsin Population Health Institute. (2024). *County Health Rankings & Roadmaps.* <https://www.countyhealthrankings.org>

Socioeconomic Status. Table 13 shows the socioeconomic indicators for the coalition counties. Kerr County experiences greater socioeconomic challenges than Kendall County, despite having a lower unemployment rate of 2.9% compared to Kendall's 4.7%. This may be due to a higher share of lower-wage or seasonal employment in Kerr, which can mask deeper economic instability. Kerr's median household income is \$67,927, significantly lower than the state and national averages, and 60% of students are economically disadvantaged. Additionally, 19% of children live in poverty and 58% qualify for free or reduced-price lunch, indicating widespread financial hardship. In contrast, Kendall County shows stronger economic health, with a median income of \$110,498 and only 9% of children in poverty. Just 23% of Kendall students are economically disadvantaged. These disparities suggest that youth in Kerr County may face greater risk factors for substance use due to economic stress and fewer protective supports.

TABLE 13. Economic Characteristics

	Kendall	Kerr	Texas	USA
Unemployment rate ¹	4.7%	2.9%	5.1%	5.2%
Median household income ¹	\$110,498	\$67,927	\$76,292	\$78,538
Economically disadvantaged students ²	23%	60%	62%	N/A
Children in poverty ³	9%	19%	19%	16%
Children eligible for free or reduced lunch price ³	22%	58%	61%	51%

¹Source: U.S. Census Bureau. (2019-2023). *American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates, DP03.* <https://data.census.gov>

²Source: Texas Education Agency (TEA). (2022-2023 School Year). *Texas Economically Disadvantaged Students.* <https://rptsvr1.tea.texas.gov>

³Source: University of Wisconsin Population Health Institute. (2024). *County Health Rankings & Roadmaps.* <https://www.countyhealthrankings.org>

Housing Instability. Kerr County shows slightly higher housing instability than Kendall, with 85.6% of residents remaining in the same residence over the past year compared to 86.6% in Kendall (Table 14). While both counties have relatively low rates of overcrowding, Kerr has a slightly higher share of units with more than 1.5 occupants per room at 0.9%. Kerr also reports a lower rent burden, with median gross rent equaling 28.2% of household income, which is less than the state and national averages. In contrast, Kendall residents spend 32.8% of their income on rent, indicating higher financial pressure despite greater housing stability. Addressing housing-related stressors in Kerr may help reduce youth vulnerability to substance use by promoting safer and more stable living conditions.

TABLE 14. Housing Instability

	Kendall	Kerr	Texas	USA
Occupied housing units ¹	17,249	22,267	10,747,240	127,482,865
Occupants per room 1.00 or less ¹	97.1%	96.7%	95.2%	96.6%

Occupants per room 1.01 to 1.50 ¹	2.2%	2.4%	3.2%	2.2%
Occupants per room 1.51 or more ¹	0.7%	0.9%	1.6%	1.2%
Same Residence One Year Ago ²	86.6%	85.6%	85.7%	87.3%
Median gross rent as a percentage of household income ³	32.8%	28.2%	30.4%	30.2%

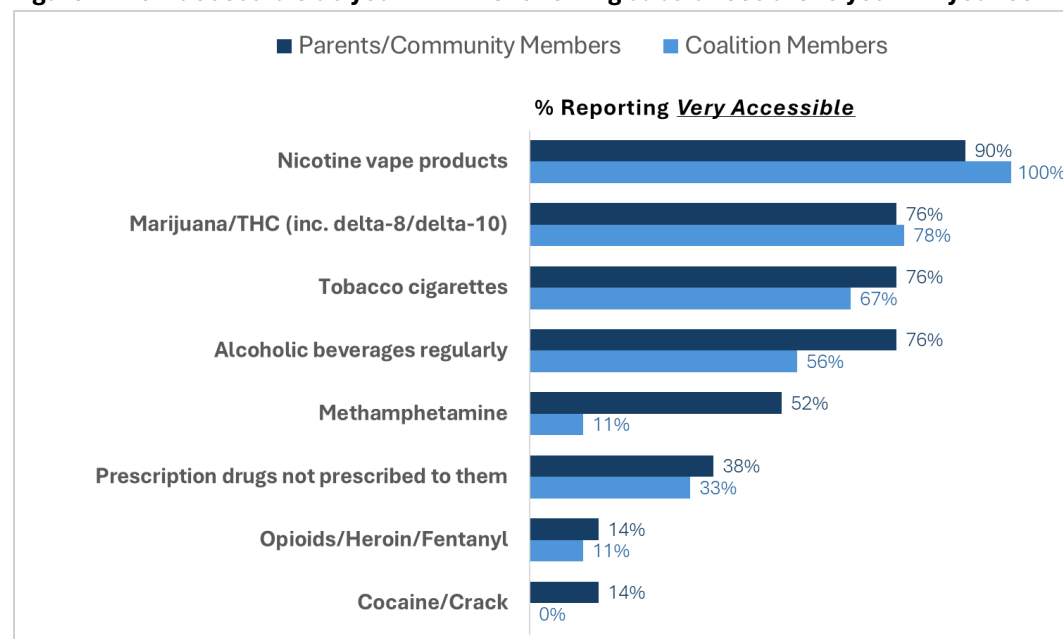
¹Source: U.S. Census Bureau. (2019-2023). American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates, DP04. <https://data.census.gov>

²Source: U.S. Census Bureau. (2019-2023). American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates, DP02. <https://data.census.gov>

³Source: U.S. Census Bureau. (2019-2023). American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates, B25071. <https://data.census.gov>

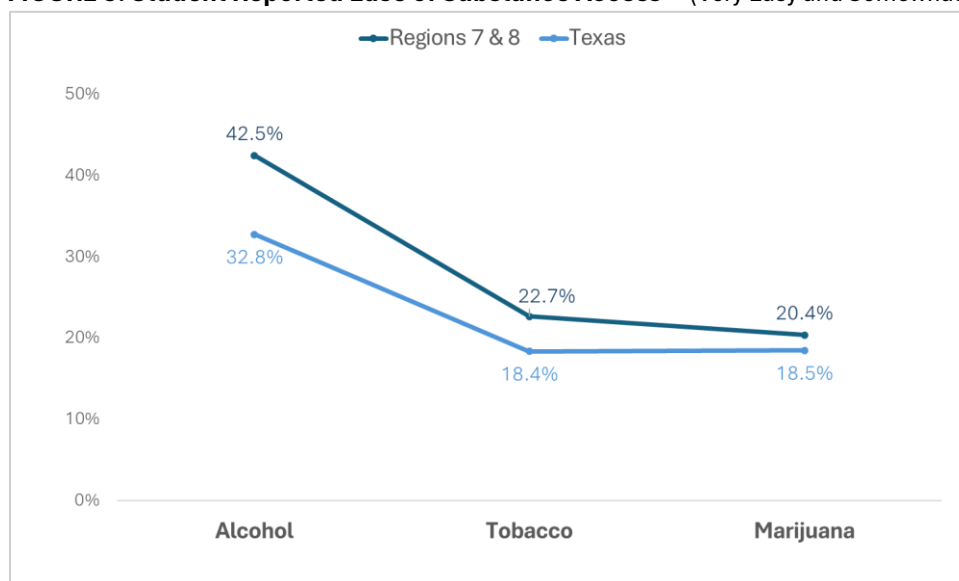
Ease of Youth Access to Substances. Community survey findings indicate widespread concern about the accessibility of nicotine vape products and marijuana to youth in Kendall and Kerr counties (Figure 4). Among local respondents, 90% of parents and 100% of coalition members rated vape products as “very accessible,” while more than 75% of both groups said the same for marijuana, including delta-8 and delta-10 products. Tobacco cigarettes and alcohol were also identified as highly accessible, with 67% to 76% of respondents expressing concern. These shared perceptions suggest that youth in the region face frequent opportunities to obtain substances that are either legal or loosely regulated in the community. Data from the 2024 Texas School Survey (TSS) further supports these findings. Students in Regions 7 and 8 (Region 8 includes Kendall and Kerr counties) report significantly higher levels of perceived access compared to the statewide average (Figure 5). In these regions, 42.5% of students said it was “very easy” or “somewhat easy” to obtain alcohol, much higher than the 32.8% reported statewide. Perceived access to tobacco was also elevated, with 22.7% of students in regions 7 and 8 reporting ease of access compared to 18.4% in Texas. For marijuana, 20.4% of students in the region reported it was easy to obtain, above the state average of 18.5%. The convergence of community and student data underscores the urgent need for prevention programming to reduce substance use.

Figure 4. How accessible do you think the following substances are to youth in your community?



Source: HCCADA CCP Coalition Member Needs Assessment Survey, Parent and Community Member Needs Assessment Survey

FIGURE 5. Student Reported Ease of Substance Access^{1,2} (Very Easy and Somewhat Easy)

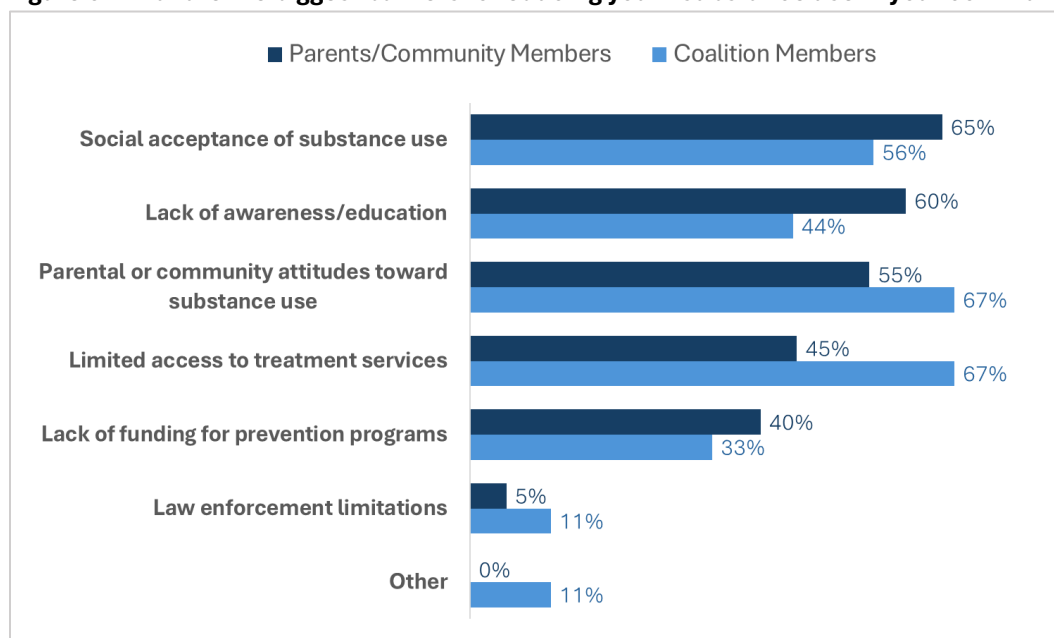


¹Source: Texas School Survey. (2024). [Regions 7 & 8 Report](#).

²Source: Texas School Survey. (2024). [Texas State Report](#).

Social Norms and Community Attitudes. Survey data indicate that prevailing social attitudes and permissive views among adults are major barriers to reducing youth substance use in Kendall and Kerr counties (Figure 6). There were 65% of parents and 56% of coalition members that reported the social acceptance of substance use is a key challenge. In addition, 55% of parents and 67% of coalition members cited permissive parental or community attitudes, and 60% of parents and 44% of coalition members pointed to a general lack of awareness or education about substance use and its consequences. These findings suggest that both social normalization and limited understanding reduce the effectiveness of prevention efforts.

Figure 6. What are the biggest barriers to reducing youth substance use in your community?



Source: HCCADA CCP Coalition Member Needs Assessment Survey, Parent and Community Member Needs Assessment Survey

Summary. Kerr County faces several interconnected challenges that increase youth vulnerability to substance use, including higher food insecurity, limited transportation, and a greater burden of childcare costs. Access to public assistance programs like SNAP is higher in Kerr, yet TANF usage remains low, suggesting possible underutilization of available supports. Both counties report concerns around youth access to substances, with community and student surveys indicating that nicotine vapes, marijuana, tobacco, and alcohol are widely accessible. In addition, permissive community attitudes and low awareness about substance use risks undermine prevention messaging. Economic stressors, housing instability, and gaps in family support services further compound these risks. Addressing these limitations through targeted outreach and public education will be essential to reducing substance use among youth in the region.

Part VI: PROGRAM ANALYSIS

1. Patterns and Consequences

The following section outlines key patterns of substance use and related consequences observed in Kendall and Kerr counties, with a focus on youth behaviors and community impacts.

1.1. Societal Domain

Economic Outcomes. Kerr County faces significant economic challenges that increase youth vulnerability to substance use. Despite a fairly narrow gender pay gap of \$0.84, Kerr has a lower labor force participation rate (54%), likely influenced by its older population (see Table 12). The county's median household income is \$67,927, well below the state and national averages and substantially lower than Kendall County's \$110,498 (see Table 13). Economic strain is further reflected in Kerr's high rate of economically disadvantaged students (60%), the high rate of children in poverty (19%), and the large share of children qualifying for free or reduced-price lunch (58%). SNAP assistance is more common in Kerr, with nearly 7% of households enrolled, compared to only about 4% in Kendall, yet TANF participation remains very low. In contrast, Kendall County's stronger economic indicators, such as higher income levels, lower child poverty (9%), and fewer economically disadvantaged students (23%), are counterbalanced by a significant gender pay gap of \$0.67, indicating persistent pay inequities that warrant attention. These economic disparities highlight the need for youth substance use prevention strategies that reduce financial stress and expand support services in Kerr, while addressing hidden vulnerabilities and promoting equity in Kendall.

1.2. Community Domain

Educational Attainment of Community. Educational attainment of the communities in Kerr and Kendall counties differs and may influence youth substance use risk and prevention approaches. In Kendall County, 49.2% of adults hold a bachelor's degree or higher, surpassing both the Texas and U.S. averages (see Table 6). In contrast, only 31.2% of Kerr County residents have attained this level of education, with a larger proportion holding just a high school diploma (29.1%) or less. Kerr also has slightly higher rates of adults without a high school diploma, including 4.4% with less than ninth-grade education. These disparities suggest that prevention efforts in Kerr may require more intensive education and outreach to effectively engage families and promote health literacy.

Community Conditions. Table 15 shows there are community conditions indicating greater substance use concerns in both Kerr and Kendall counties. Despite lower reported rates of excessive/binge drinking in Kerr County, Kerr reports significantly more DWI incidents at 600 per 100,000, over three times Kendall's 181 and more than double the state rate of 287. Alcohol or drug-involved crash fatalities are also higher in Kerr at 35%, compared to 32% in Kendall and 25% across Texas. Kendall has marginally more alcohol-related arrests at 326 per 100,000 compared to Kerr's 303, but both exceed the Texas average of 225. Drug-related arrests are elevated in both counties, with Kerr at 540 per 100,000 and Kendall at 458, surpassing the state average of 285. Kerr's overdose death rate also exceeds the Texas rate. Although Kendall County has a higher juvenile violent crime arrest rate than Kerr (78 per 100,000 compared to 43), both are well below the Texas average of 144.5. These patterns emphasize the need for prevention strategies addressing alcohol misuse, impaired driving, and drug-related risks in both counties. Additionally, between 2021 and 2024, felony marijuana/THC-related juvenile probation referrals in Kendall County more than tripled, rising from 7 to 24, while misdemeanor referrals remained consistently low (Figure 7). During the same period, THC-related juvenile probation referrals

increased from 23% to 35% of all referrals. This upward trend suggests a growing need for early intervention strategies focused on youth drug use prevention and diversion in Kendall County.

TABLE 15. Substance Use Incidents, Arrests, and Deaths

	Kendall	Kerr	Texas
Juvenile violent crime arrests (Rate per 100,000 children ages 10-17) ¹	78	43	144.5
Excessive Drinking ²	20%	17%	18%
Alcohol/drug involved crash fatalities ²	32%	35%	25%
Reported DWI per 100,000 population ^{3*}	181	600	287
Alcohol-related arrests per 100,000 population ^{4*}	326	303	225
Drug-related arrests per 100,000 population ^{4*}	458	540	285
Drug Overdose Deaths per 100,000 population ²	suppressed	16	14

*Rate estimates calculated from raw counts and using the total population reported in Table 3.

¹Source: Texas Department of Family and Protective Services. Texas Juvenile Violent Crime Arrests, 2019.

<https://datacenter.aecf.org>

²Source: University of Wisconsin Population Health Institute. (2024). Texas. County Health Rankings & Roadmaps.

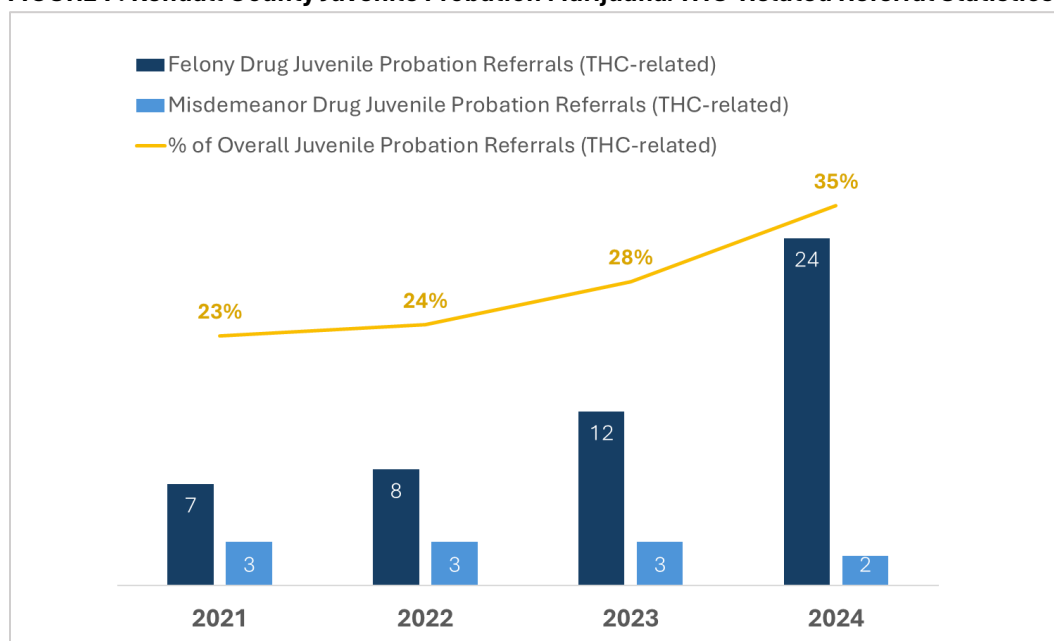
<https://www.countyhealthrankings.org>

³Source: Texas Crime Records Reports and Statistical Information. (2024). DWI Completeness Report (2023 Outcomes).

<https://www.dps.texas.gov>

⁴Source: Texas Department of Public Safety. (2024). Arrestee Summary Report. <https://txucr.nibrs.com>

FIGURE 7. Kendall County Juvenile Probation Marijuana/THC-Related Referral Statistics



Source: Kendall County Juvenile Probation Dept. and Kendall County Community Coalition

Healthcare Access. Kerr County reports significantly worse outcomes in healthcare access compared to Kendall County, Texas, and national averages (Table 16). A concerning 21.8% of children in Kerr are uninsured, nearly double the state rate of 11.8% and four times the national average of 5.4%. Among adults aged 19 to 64, 24.1% lack insurance in Kerr, compared to 13.6% in Kendall, 20.3% statewide, and 10.5% nationally. Overall, 17.8% of Kerr's civilian noninstitutionalized population is uninsured, exceeding both the Texas average of 17.4% and the national average of 8.6%. In contrast, Kendall shows comparatively better access, with uninsured

rates below both state and national levels in most categories. Limited healthcare coverage in Kerr may reduce access to physical and behavioral health services, increasing the likelihood that youth needs go unmet.

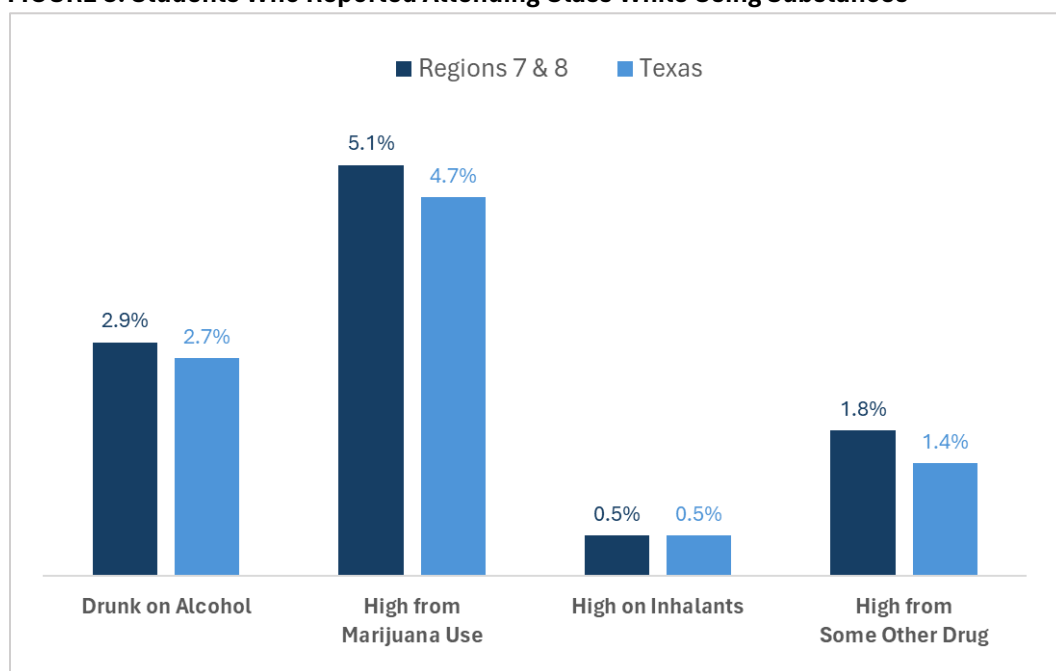
TABLE 16. Health Care/Service System

	Kendall	Kerr	Texas	USA
Uninsured children	9.2%	21.8%	11.8%	5.4%
Uninsured 19-64	13.6%	24.1%	20.3%	10.5%
Uninsured civilian noninstitutionalized population	11.3%	17.8%	17.4%	8.6%

Source: U.S. Census Bureau. (2019-2023). American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates, S2701. <https://data.census.gov>

School Conditions. Kendall and Kerr counties (located in HHS Region 8) are included in the combined Regions 7 & 8 report of the 2024 TSS, which provides insight into student behavior and school climate across the region (Figure 8). Data shows that 2.9% of students in the region attended class while drunk, slightly higher than the statewide average of 2.7%. Similarly, 5.1% reported attending class while high from marijuana use, again above the Texas average (4.7%), indicating increased substance use among students. Use of inhalants (0.5%) was on par with the state, while 1.8% of students attended class under the influence of other drugs, exceeding the statewide rate of 1.4%. These differences point to consistent patterns of elevated substance use in school settings across HHS Region 8, which is a concern for academic success, student safety, and long-term health.

FIGURE 8. Students Who Reported Attending Class While Using Substances^{1,2}



¹Source: Texas School Survey. (2024). [Regions 7 & 8 Report](#).

²Source: Texas School Survey. (2024). [Texas State Report](#).

Retail Access. Alcohol retail access is slightly higher in Kerr County, with an alcohol retail density of 11.4 per 100,000 residents compared to 11 in Kendall County. Both counties exceed the Texas average of 8 and are above the national rate of 10.9, suggesting elevated availability of alcohol in the community. Kerr also has more liquor stores than Kendall, with 6 compared to 5, despite

having a similarly sized population. While these differences are small, even slight increases in retail access can affect youth exposure and ease of acquisition. According to the 2023 PRC8 Regional Needs Assessment, the alcohol retailer density in Region 8 increased from 16.6 licenses per 100 square miles in 2018 to 19.2 licenses per 100 square miles in 2022. The tobacco retailer density in Region 8 also increased substantially, from 83.4 licenses per 100,00 persons in 2018 to 174 licenses per 100,000 persons in 2022. However, Table 17 shows that the tobacco retailer density for both Kendall and Kerr is lower than the rate for Texas, although Kerr is still higher and approaching the state average. Members of the Kendall and Kerr coalitions participate in auditing the practices of local retail alcohol distributors. Coalition members assist the Texans for Safe and Drug Free Youth (TxSDY) in Retail Alcohol Survey data collection, where members visit alcohol retailers to determine if high risk alcohol is placed or promoted to youth. Recent auditing included retailers selling alcohol including local convenience stores and gas stations such as QuikTrip, Circle K, Walgreens, Dollar General, and CVS. The presence of more retail outlets increases the accessibility of alcohol and tobacco which, in turn, increases the likelihood that youth can obtain and use substances.

TABLE 17. Retail Access

	Kendall	Kerr	Texas	USA
Number of liquor stores ¹	5	6	2,334	36,173
Alcohol retail density (<i>per 100,000</i>) ¹	11.0	11.4	8.0	10.9
Tobacco retail density (<i>per 100,000</i>) ²	146.8	195.8	205.9	N/A

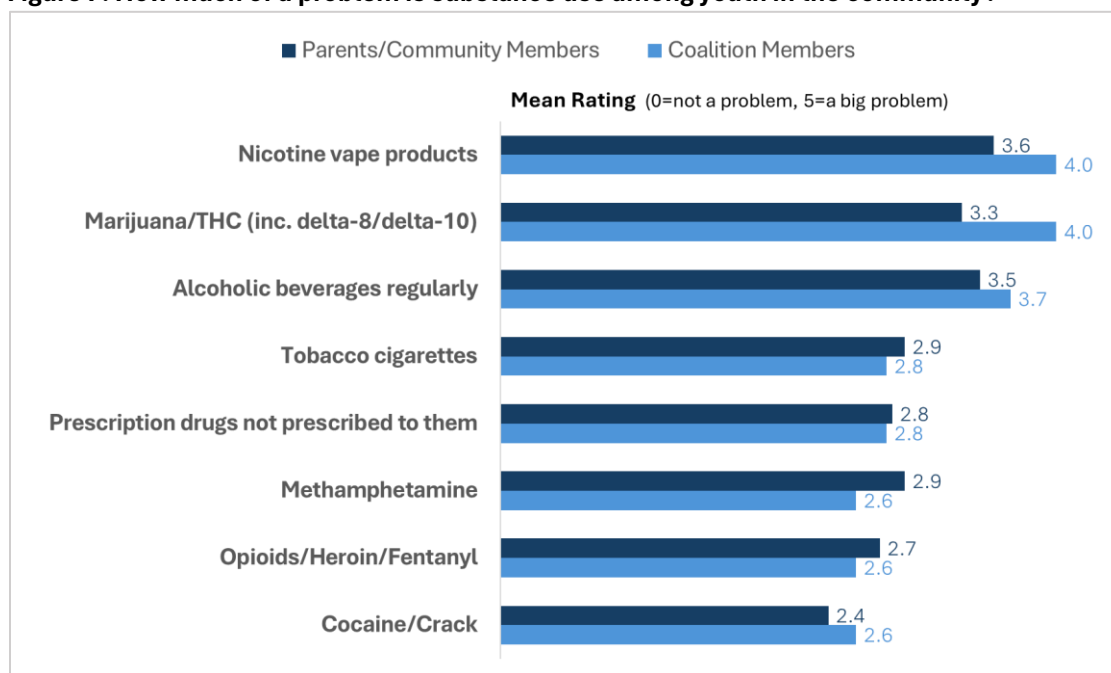
¹Source: U.S. Census Bureau. (2022). ECNSVY Business Patterns County Business Patterns, CB2200CBP.

<https://data.census.gov>

²Source: Region 8 Prevention Resource Center. (2023). Regional Needs Assessment, Region 8 Tobacco Retail Density by county for 2022. <https://prcregion8.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/10/Final-FY23-PRC-Region-8-RNA-Revised.pdf>

Local Prevention Priorities. Survey results from parents/community members and coalition members show strong agreement that local youth substance use is a significant concern (Figure 7). Nicotine vape products received the highest problem rating from both groups (3.6 and 4.0 out of 5), followed closely by marijuana/THC products, including delta-8 and delta-10, which coalition members also rated at 4.0. Alcohol use was another key area of concern, with scores of 3.5 from parents and 3.7 from coalition members. Lower but still notable concern was reported for tobacco, prescription drug misuse, methamphetamine, and opioids. The high agreement between stakeholder groups indicates that vaping, marijuana, and alcohol are top local prevention priorities.

Figure 7. How much of a problem is substance use among youth in the community?



Source: HCCADA Coalition Member Needs Assessment Survey, Parent and Community Member Needs Assessment Survey

Protective Factor: Social Associations. Table 18 highlights data on social associations, an important community-level protective factor. These include civic, political, religious, sports, and professional organizations that help foster connection and support among residents. Kerr County reports 14.5 social associations per 100,000 people, a notably higher rate than Kendall County at 8.5, as well as the Texas average of 7.4 and the U.S. average of 9.1. This suggests that residents in Kerr may benefit from stronger community engagement and access to supportive social networks.

TABLE 18. Social Associations

	Kendall	Kerr	Texas	USA
Social Associations	8.5	14.5	7.4	9.1

Source: University of Wisconsin Population Health Institute. (2024). *County Health Rankings & Roadmaps*.
<https://www.countyhealthrankings.org>

Protective Factor: Healthcare Provider Supply. Kerr County has a strong supply of primary care physicians, with 106.8 per 100,000 people, the highest among the counties and well above the Texas average of 79.1 (Table 19). Kerr maintains a moderate supply of dentists at 54.3 per 100,000, which is above the state average but lower than Kendall's supply. However, there is a significant shortage of physician assistants in Kerr compared to state averages. Compared to state rates, Kendall County excels in its supply of primary care physicians, dental care providers, and physician assistant availability. This data suggests that, despite demographic and socioeconomic differences, both Kerr and Kendall counties have managed to maintain relatively strong amounts of healthcare providers in the area. These strengths in provider availability, particularly in primary care and dental services, help support overall community health outcomes.

TABLE 19. Health Profession Supply

	Kendall	Kerr	Texas
Primary care physicians per 100,000 population	87.8	106.8	79.1
Physician assistants per 100,000 population	59.7	28.1	38.4
Dentists per 100,000 population	74.7	54.3	49.4

Source: Texas Department of State Health Services. (2024). Health Profession Supply.

<https://healthdata.dshs.texas.gov/>

Protective Factor: Mental Health Services Provider Supply. Kendall County shows the weakest overall mental health provider supply with a population-to-provider ratio of 430 to 1, higher than Kerr County at 300 to 1 but still better than the Texas average of 640 to 1 (Table 20). Kerr County outperforms Kendall and state rates in several categories, including psychiatrists at 26.2 per 100,000 and chemical dependency counselors at 108.7, well above Kendall's 11.2 and 31.7, and Texas averages of 8.8 and 18.5. Kendall County leads in licensed professional counselors with 175.5 per 100,000, compared to Kerr at 138.7 and Texas at 86.2. Overall, both counties have relatively strong supplies of mental health service providers. These resources enhance early intervention capacity and reduce youth substance use risk across the region.

TABLE 20. Mental Health Profession Supply

	Kendall	Kerr	Texas
Ratio of population to mental health providers ¹	430:1	300:1	640:1
Licensed school psychology specialists per 100,000 population ²	20.5	16.9	13.1
Psychiatrists per 100,00 population ²	11.2	26.2	8.8
Licensed clinical social workers per 100,00 population ²	33.6	58.1	38.1
Licensed professional counselors per 100,00 population ²	175.5	138.7	86.2
Licensed chemical dependency counselors per 100,000 population ²	31.7	108.7	18.5

¹Source: University of Wisconsin Population Health Institute. (2024). County Health Rankings & Roadmaps.

<https://www.countyhealthrankings.org>

²Source: Texas Department of State Health Services. (2024). Health Profession Supply. <https://healthdata.dshs.texas.gov>

Protective Factor: Prescription Monitoring Program. Another protective factor is the Prescription Monitoring Program (PMP), managed by the Texas State Board of Pharmacy. The PMP includes all cities in the state and collects data on all Schedule II through V controlled substances dispensed by pharmacies in Texas or to Texas residents from out-of-state pharmacies. Prescribers and pharmacists can access the controlled substance prescription histories of patients, which aids in identifying potential prescription drug misuse and supports informed clinical decision-making.

1.3. Interpersonal Domain

Family Environment. Kerr County shows significantly worse outcomes in the family environment compared to Kendall County and statewide averages (Table 21). The confirmed child abuse rate in Kerr is 14.4 per 1,000 youth, much higher than both the Texas average of 9.1 and Kendall County's lower rate of 5.1. Similarly, Kerr reports 0.9 children in foster care per 1,000 youth, which, while below the Texas average of 1.6, is still nearly double Kendall's rate of 0.5. These data suggest higher levels of family instability and trauma exposure in Kerr County. Strengthening family support systems and early intervention services in Kerr may be critical to reducing youth substance use risk linked to adverse childhood experiences.

TABLE 21. Family Environment

	Kendall	Kerr	Texas
Confirmed victims of child abuse (rate per 1,000 youth ages 0-17) ¹	5.1	14.4	9.1
Children in foster care (rate per 1,000 youth ages 0-17) ²	0.5	0.9	1.6

¹Source: Annie E. Casey Foundation (AECF). (2020). Kids Count Indicators for Counties in Texas. <https://datacenter.aecf.org/>

²Source: Annie E. Casey Foundation (AECF). (2022). Kids Count Indicators for Counties in Texas. <https://datacenter.aecf.org/>

Perceived Parental Attitudes. Research shows that youth who perceive strong parental disapproval are less likely to engage in substance use (SAMHSA, 2019). Student reported parental disapproval rates of alcohol use (69.8%) use in regions 7 and 8 are lower than the overall Texas averages, but rates are similar for marijuana use (Table 22). Parent disapproval for tobacco was rated higher (85.5%) than the Texas state average. Overall, fewer students in the region reported that their parents strongly disapproved or mildly disapproved of alcohol use. These trends suggest that parents in Kendall or Kerr counties could potentially have more lenient attitudes toward substance use compared to the broader Texas population, which may lead to higher substance use behaviors.

TABLE 22. Student Reported Parental Disapproval (Strongly Disapprove or Mildly Disapprove)

	Regions 7 & 8 ¹	Texas ²
Alcohol	69.8%	74.1%
Tobacco	85.5%	84.8%
Marijuana	83.4%	83.3%

¹Source: Texas School Survey. (2024). [Regions 7 & 8 Report](#).

²Source: Texas School Survey. (2024). [Texas State Report](#).

Peer Use. According to the 2024 TSS, students in regions 7 and 8 reported greater peer use of substances compared to the state average (Table 23). Only 55% of students in these regions reported that none of their close friends use alcohol, compared to 67% statewide. Fewer students reported no peer tobacco use (82%) compared to Texas (86%). Additionally, only 72% of students reported no close friends use marijuana, compared to 78% for Texas. These outcomes suggest that students in these regions may view substance use as more common among peers, which can influence their own attitudes and behaviors.

TABLE 23. Student Reported Substance Use by Close Friends

	Regions 7 & 8 ¹	Texas ²
None Use Alcohol	54.9%	67.4%
None Use Tobacco	81.8%	86.2%
None Use Marijuana	71.8%	77.6%

¹Source: Texas School Survey. (2024). [Regions 7 & 8 Report](#).

²Source: Texas School Survey. (2024). [Texas State Report](#).

Perceived Substance Availability. Students in regions 7 and 8 report substantially greater ease of access to substances compared to the statewide average (see Figure 5). Approximately 43% of students in these regions say alcohol is easy to obtain, notably higher than the 33% reported statewide. Access to tobacco is also higher, with 23% in regions 7 and 8 versus 18% across Texas. Similarly, 20% of students in these regions report easy access to marijuana, compared to 19% statewide. Similarly, students in regions 7 and 8 reported notably higher rates of alcohol and drug use at parties compared to the Texas average (Table 24). Research reveals that easy access

to alcohol and illegal drugs at home during adolescence is commonly linked to an earlier initiation of substance use and this data indicates that students in regions 7 and 8 may find it easier to obtain these substances generally (Broman, 2016). Indeed, a significant portion of responding members of the Parent/Community Member and Coalition Member Needs Assessment Surveys rated nicotine vapes, marijuana, and alcohol as being very accessible among youth in the community (see Figure 4).

TABLE 24. Student Reported Substances at Parties this School Year (Always or Most of the Time)

	Regions 7 & 8 ¹	Texas ²
Alcohol Use (Q31a)	16.6%	10.8%
Drug Use (Q31b)	8.7%	5.5%

¹Source: Texas School Survey. (2024). [Regions 7 & 8 Report](#).

²Source: Texas School Survey. (2024). [Texas State Report](#).

1.4. Individual Domain

Protective Factor: Academic Achievement. Both Kendall and Kerr counties outperform the Texas average in academic achievement. Kendall County reports a graduation rate of 97.6% and a dropout rate of 0.5%, while Kerr County shows a graduation rate of 94.9% and a slightly lower dropout rate of 0.4% (Table 25). These outcomes are notably better than the Texas average of 93.7% graduation and 2% dropout. Strong academic performance in both counties may serve as a protective factor against youth substance use by promoting school connectedness, goal setting, and positive peer environments.

TABLE 25. Academics

	Kendall	Kerr	Texas
High School Dropout Rate (22-23 SY) ¹	0.5	0.4	2.0
Longitudinal High School Graduation Rate (22-23 SY) ²	97.6%	94.9%	93.7%

¹Source: Texas Education Agency. (2024). *Annual Dropout Data (2022-23 SY)*. <https://tea.texas.gov>

²Source: Texas Education Agency. (2024). *Four-Year Graduation and Dropout Data (Class of 2023)*. <https://tea.texas.gov>

Youth Mental Health. The PRC Region 8 Regional Needs Assessment tracked Texas Youth Risk Behavior Surveillance Survey (YRBSS) indicators of adolescent mental health. One key measure reflects the percentage of students who reported feeling sad or hopeless almost every day for at least two consecutive weeks, to the point that they stopped participating in some of their usual activities. Between 2017 and 2021, the share of Texas adolescents reporting these symptoms rose by 30.4%, indicating a concerning upward trend in depressive experiences among youth (PRC8 Regional Needs Assessment, 2023).

Youth Perception of Risk. Research suggests that how individuals perceive risk influences their behavior (Berg et al., 2014). Table 26 shows the perceived risk of various substances among students in regions 7 and 8 compared to Texas overall. While the perceived risk in these regions is generally similar to the statewide averages, some differences emerge. About 75% of students in regions 7 and 8 view alcohol use as risky, slightly lower than the 81% reported statewide. Tobacco is seen as risky by 85% of students in regions 7 and 8, compared to 88% across Texas. Similarly, 78% perceive marijuana as risky in these regions, just below the 81% state average. The perceived risk of vaping is 83% locally and 85% statewide, while prescription drug use is considered risky by 87% of students in both groups. These small but consistent gaps may suggest a need for enhanced education efforts in regions 7 and 8 to reinforce the risks associated with substance use.

TABLE 26. Student Reported Perceived Risk (Very Dangerous and Somewhat Dangerous)

	Regions 7 & 8 ¹	Texas ²
Alcohol	75.2%	80.9%
Tobacco	84.8%	88.3%
Marijuana	78.1%	80.7%
Electronic Vapor Products	83.3%	84.9%
Prescription Drugs	87.2%	87.4%

¹Source: Texas School Survey. (2024). [Regions 7 & 8 Report](#).

²Source: Texas School Survey. (2024). [Texas State Report](#).

Youth Substance Use. Students in regions 7 and 8 report higher past 30-day substance use rates across all categories when compared to the Texas state average (Figure 8). Over a quarter of region 7 and 8 students reported using alcohol in the past month (25%), compared to just 20% statewide. Tobacco use is also elevated at 10% in the regions versus 8% for Texas overall. Similarly, electronic vape usage is higher in these regions (7.3%) than the state average (5.8%). Marijuana use (8% vs. 7.8%) and non-prescribed prescription drug use (4.4% vs. 4.3%) are also slightly higher. Substance use in the past 30 days for cocaine, heroin, and methamphetamine were all reported at rates of <1% for the region and state. Additionally, the 2025 Texas Youth Tobacco Survey found that 17.1% of high school students in Texas have used e-cigarettes, with 9.5% using them in the past month. E-cigarette use was even higher among 12th graders (20%), with past month use at a rate of 12.1% (Texas Department of State Health Services, 2025). The PRC8 Regional Needs Assessment (2023) reported a notable 16% increase in reported e-cigarette/vape use between 8th graders (middle school) and 9th graders (high school). Overall, these patterns underscore a trend of elevated substance use in the region that includes Kendall and Kerr counties.

Early Initiation of Use. The average age of first substance use in regions 7 and 8 is generally later than the Texas average (Table 27). Alcohol and tobacco use begin slightly later in regions 7 and 8, at ages 12.8 and 13.2 respectively, compared to 12.5 and 12.7 statewide. Marijuana use also starts later in these regions, with an average initiation age of 14, compared to 13.6 across Texas. The most notable difference is that cocaine use begins later in regions 7 and 8 (age 15), compared to just 14.2 statewide. Heroin use in the region begins at age 11.9, slightly later than the Texas average of 10.8, while methamphetamine use starts at 12.5, more closely aligning with the state average of 12.4. Overall, this suggests a delayed onset of harder drug use in regions 7 and 8.

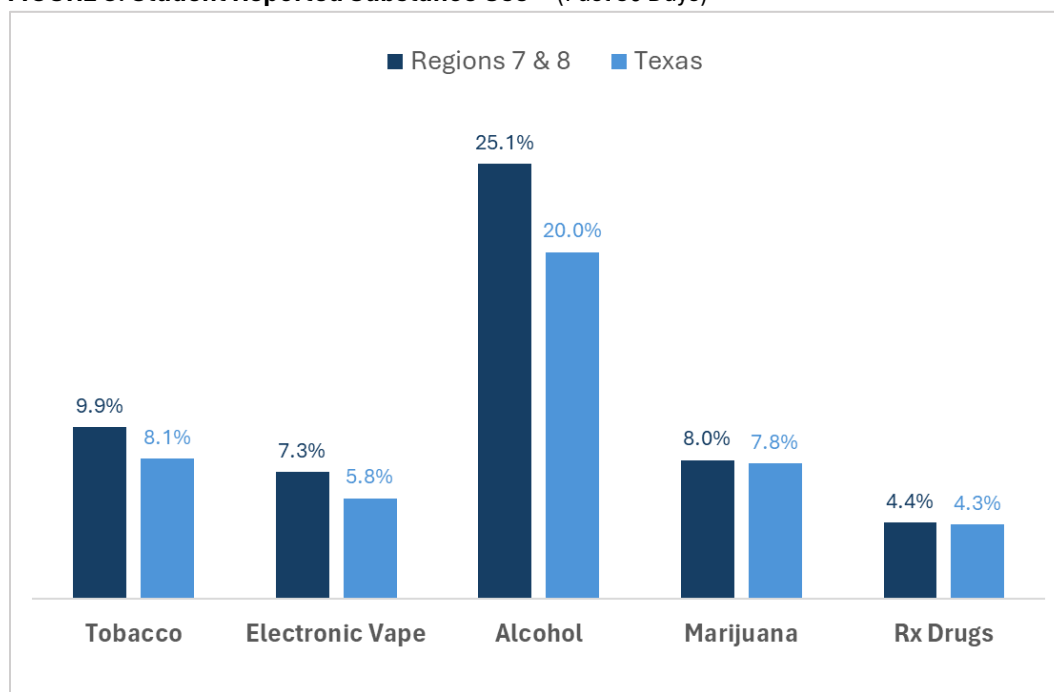
TABLE 27. Average Age of First Use Reported by Students

	Regions 7 & 8 ¹	Texas ²
Alcohol	12.8	12.5
Tobacco	13.2	12.7
Marijuana	14.0	13.6
Cocaine	15.0	14.2
Heroin	11.9	10.8
Methamphetamine	12.5	12.4

¹Source: Texas School Survey. (2024). [Regions 7 & 8 Report](#).

²Source: Texas School Survey. (2024). [Texas State Report](#).

FIGURE 8. Student Reported Substance Use^{1,2} (Past 30 Days)



¹Source: Texas School Survey. (2024). [Regions 7 & 8 Report](#).

²Source: Texas School Survey. (2024). [Texas State Report](#).

2. Patterns

Community and Economic Disparities. Kerr and Kendall counties show contrasting patterns in community and economic conditions that shape youth vulnerability to substance use. Kerr County experiences more economic stress, with more families facing poverty, fewer adults with higher education, and more residents without health insurance. These conditions can increase household instability and limit access to care and support services. In contrast, Kendall County is more economically stable, with higher income levels and stronger educational attainment among adults. However, it still faces challenges such as income inequality and significant pay gaps, particularly affecting women. These disparities suggest that while both counties require prevention efforts, the strategies must be tailored. In Kerr, there is a need to expand basic supports and outreach, while in Kendall, prevention can build on existing strengths but must also reach those who are economically or socially marginalized.

Elevated Youth Risk Environment. The data show that youth in Kerr and Kendall counties face a high-risk environment for substance use. TSS survey results from HHS Regions 7 and 8 reveal that students in the region report higher 30-day use rates for alcohol (25%), tobacco (10%), vaping (7.3%), marijuana (8%), and prescription drugs (4.4%) than their peers statewide. Youth in the region are also more likely to attend class under the influence of substances and report greater peer use. Almost 43% of the students report that alcohol is easy to obtain, a significantly higher rate than the statewide average of 33%. These trends are reinforced by community perceptions, with parents and coalition members ranking vapes, marijuana, and alcohol as highly accessible to youth. Together, these findings suggest widespread exposure and normalization of substance use among young people in the area. These conditions underscore the urgency of implementing early, community-wide youth substance use prevention strategies.

Key Protective Factors. Kerr and Kendall counties each possess important protective factors that can help buffer youth against substance use. Both counties report high graduation rates and low dropout rates, which are associated with stronger school engagement and better long-term outcomes for youth. Supply of mental health providers is relatively strong in both counties compared to state averages, though the type and distribution of providers vary. Kerr County has more specialized professionals such as psychiatrists and chemical dependency counselors, while Kendall County has a high number of licensed counselors who serve a broad range of needs. In addition, social associations and community groups in both counties offer opportunities for youth and families to build connection and support. These assets create a foundation for positive development and can reduce risk when prevention programs actively build on them. Leveraging these protective factors more fully, especially through schools, healthcare systems, and community partnerships, can help reduce the likelihood of youth substance use.

3. Intervening Variables

Easy Retail Access. Easy retail access to alcohol and tobacco is a growing concern in Kerr and Kendall counties, particularly in relation to alcohol availability. Both counties exceed the state and national averages for alcohol outlet density, with Kerr slightly higher than Kendall. While tobacco retailer density in both counties remains below the Texas average, Kerr is approaching the state rate. The PRC8 Regional Needs Assessment (2023) observed a broader trend of increasing alcohol and tobacco license density in Region 8, with tobacco retailer licenses more than doubling over a four-year span. Even small increases in local outlet density can lead to greater youth exposure and ease of access. Members of the Kendall and Kerr community coalitions actively audit alcohol retailers to monitor youth-targeted placement and promotions, but the growing number of outlets remains a risk factor. Addressing retail access through education, compliance checks, and policy strategies is essential to reducing opportunities for youth to obtain and use substances.

Law Enforcement. Law enforcement serves as a key intervening variable that influences both the visibility of substance use and the effectiveness of community response. In Kendall and Kerr counties, law enforcement agencies not only enforce laws but also collaborate with community coalitions to prevent underage substance use and promote public safety. Their role extends beyond arrests to include crisis intervention, education, diversion, and outreach efforts. In Kendall County, law enforcement is closely involved with juvenile probation and early intervention services. This is especially critical given the rise in felony drug-related juvenile referrals, which have increased significantly over the past four years (see Figure 7). In Kerr County, high rates of alcohol and drug-related incidents and deaths reflect the broader substance use challenges facing the community. Expanding prevention-focused policing and community engagement with frontline partners can help reduce youth substance use and its long-term consequences.

Social Access. Social access plays a significant role in how youth in Kendall and Kerr counties obtain substances such as nicotine vapes, marijuana, alcohol, and tobacco. Community surveys reveal that parents and coalition members overwhelmingly perceive these substances as very accessible to youth, particularly through social sources like friends, older peers, or adults. TSS data aligns with these concerns, with students reporting that many of their close friends use alcohol, tobacco, or marijuana and that these substances are commonly available at social gatherings. Students in the region report higher levels of perceived access to substances than the statewide average. These patterns suggest that even when retail restrictions are in place, youth can still easily access substances through their social environment. Prevention efforts must

address social access directly by engaging families, strengthening peer norms, and educating communities about the risks of informal sharing.

Social Norms and Perceived Risk. Social norms and perception of risk play a powerful role in shaping youth behavior around substance use. When youth perceive certain substances as less risky, they are more likely to engage in use. TSS data from Regions 7 and 8 show students reporting slightly lower perceptions of risk associated with alcohol, tobacco, marijuana, and vaping compared to statewide averages. These small gaps in perceived harm are concerning given that past 30-day substance use among youth in the region is consistently higher than across Texas. Elevated use of alcohol, tobacco, vapes, and marijuana suggests that social acceptance of these substances may be contributing to more frequent experimentation and regular use. Despite slightly delayed initiation for some substances, the consistent presence of use in early adolescence points to a community environment where norms may downplay the dangers of use. Strengthening prevention messaging that increases risk perception and shifts social norms is essential to reducing youth substance use in the region.

Alcohol Promotion. Alcohol promotion through retail visibility and placement is an important intervening variable that influences youth access and attitudes. In both Kendall and Kerr counties, alcohol outlet density exceeds state and national averages, increasing youth exposure to alcohol marketing and availability. The increase in alcohol license density across the region reinforces concern that promotion and accessibility are rising simultaneously. Coalition members actively participate in auditing local retailers to assess whether alcohol products are placed in ways that appeal to or are easily accessible by youth. These audits, supported by Texans for Safe and Drug-Free Youth (TxSDY), target common retail sites such as convenience store chains and gas stations. When alcohol is prominently displayed and readily available, it can contribute to normalization of use among youth. Prevention efforts should sustain retail audits and facilitate policy advocacy to limit the promotion of high-risk alcohol products to youth.

Pricing. Pricing is an important intervening variable that can influence youth access to alcohol and nicotine. Disposable e-cigarettes have dropped in price by nearly 70% between 2017 and 2022 (Truth Initiative, 2024). Additionally, when high alcohol content beverages are sold at low prices, they become more accessible to underage individuals. Table 28 shows results from a recent retail alcohol price audit conducted by the Kendall and Kerr coalitions, in partnership with TxSDY. The audit took place between February 13, 2025, and February 27, 2025, and found that products like Four Loko, Steel Reserve, and Bud Light were commonly sold at convenience stores, gas stations, and national chains for under \$4. These are considered high volume, high alcohol content drinks, with ABV levels ranging from 4.2% to nearly 14%. The low cost of alcohol makes it easier to access, increasing the prevalence of alcohol and youth exposure to these products. Monitoring alcohol pricing and its placement in local stores is a key strategy for reducing underage access. Prevention strategies should continue to monitor retail practices and promote policies that reduce youth alcohol access.

Table 28. TxSDY Retail Alcohol Survey Data Collection - Price Audit Outcomes

	Total Observations	Average Price
Steel Reserve Alloy Series Seltzer [8% ABV, 24oz can]	4	\$3.16
Steel Reserve [8.1% ABV, 24oz can]	6	\$3.16
Bud Light [4.2% ABV, 25oz can]	11	\$3.55
Four Loko [13.9%-14% ABV, 23.5oz can]	9	\$3.72

Source: Kendall County and Kerr County Community Coalitions, Texans for Safe and Drug-Free Youth

PART VII: ASSET-BASED MAP

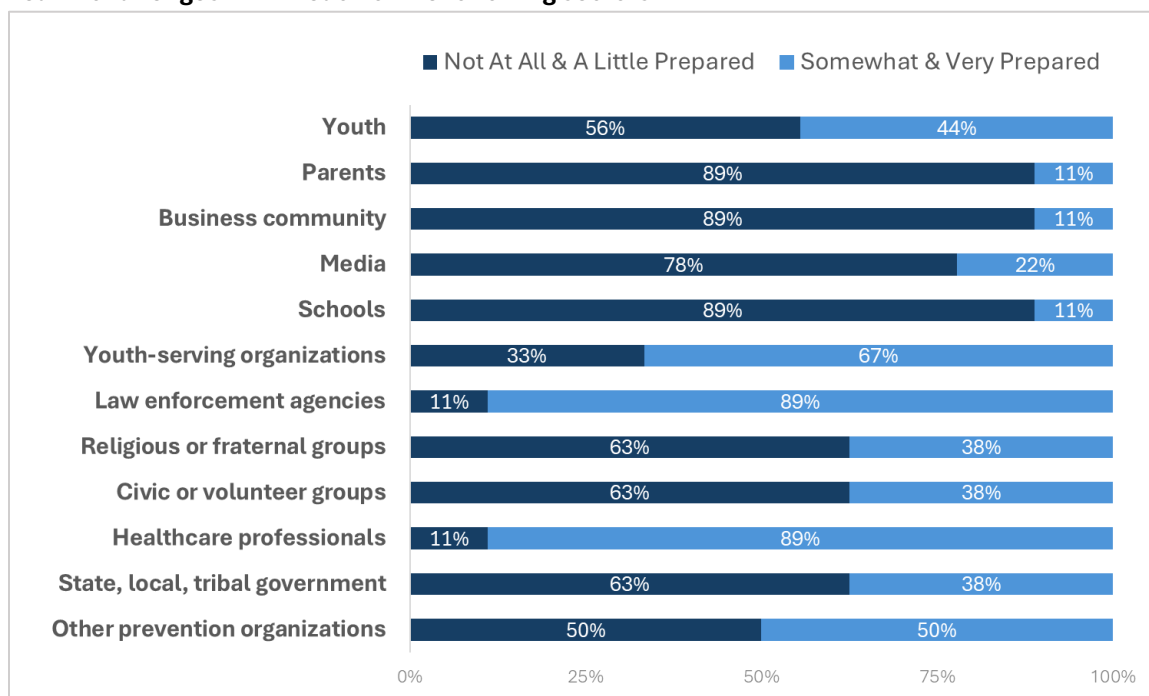
As part of the FY25 needs assessment, the Kendall County and Kerr County Community Coalitions compiled a robust asset map cataloging over 100 local organizations, agencies, and institutions actively engaged in substance use prevention, youth development, behavioral health, and community wellness. These assets span a wide range of sectors, including schools, healthcare providers, law enforcement, libraries, youth-serving organizations, civic groups, and faith-based entities. Kendall County demonstrates notable engagement from law enforcement, while Kerr County shows a broader base of community-based programs. This suggests stronger institutional partnership in Kendall County, and a wider variety of programs focused on youth development and outreach in Kerr County. These patterns have important implications for youth substance use prevention, indicating opportunities to tailor strategies to local strengths in Kendall and Kerr counties.

Despite this solid foundation, the asset map also reveals key service gaps. Kendall County has fewer direct residential or inpatient substance use treatment assets and relies more on the neighboring Bexar County for such services. Kerr County, while richer in substance use treatment options, faces challenges related to rurality and reaching underserved rural populations. Both counties benefit from school-based programs and active coalitions but must contend with uneven access to youth-specific behavioral health services. These findings underscore the need for coordinated investment in prevention programming and service expansion. The asset map points to critical next steps for reducing youth substance use and strengthening protective environments in Kendall and Kerr counties.

Part VIII: COMMUNITY READINESS and AWARENESS

The HCCADA Coalition Member Needs Assessment Survey asked respondents to evaluate how prepared various community sectors are to address substance use and behavioral health challenges. Responses from coalition members reveal considerable variation in perceived readiness across sectors (Figure 9).

Figure 9. How aware and prepared is the community to address substance use and behavioral health challenges within each of the following sectors?



Source: HCCADA CCP Coalition Member Needs Assessment Survey

Sectors with Higher Readiness. Coalition members identified law enforcement agencies and healthcare professionals as the most prepared sectors to address substance use and behavioral health challenges, with 89% rating them as “somewhat” or “very” prepared. Youth-serving organizations were also viewed as ready, reflecting their ongoing involvement with education, mentorship, and prevention programming. Encouragingly, youth themselves and other prevention organizations were seen as having moderate levels of readiness, signaling a growing awareness and willingness to engage. These sectors appear to possess stronger infrastructure, professional capacity, or direct experience in addressing behavioral health issues, making them essential partners in advancing local prevention goals.

Sectors with Lower Readiness. Schools, parents, and the business community were rated as the least prepared to address substance use and behavioral health in the community, with 89% of coalition members reporting low readiness in each of these areas. Media organizations, state and local government, and civic or volunteer groups were also seen as underprepared, despite their potential to influence public perception and policy. Religious or fraternal groups similarly received low readiness scores. These findings highlight critical engagement gaps in sectors that play influential roles in shaping youth environments and community norms. Strengthening these connections through outreach, training, and resource-sharing will be vital to building a comprehensive and inclusive prevention infrastructure.

Part IX: PUTTING IT ALL TOGETHER

1. Strategic Focus Area

Increase social and community connectedness.

The strategic focus area identified is to *increase social and community connectedness*. This is supported by data showing that strong relationships between youth, families, schools, and local organizations are essential to building resilience and reducing youth substance use. The needs assessment revealed that permissive norms, peer influence, and limited parental disapproval contribute to youth substance use. Economic hardship in Kerr County increases youth risk, while Kendall County is experiencing rising rates of juvenile drug-related offenses, underscoring the urgency of early prevention efforts. Strengthening connections between youth, families, schools, and local organizations is essential to increasing engagement, shifting social norms, and reducing youth substance use.

2. Substance Use Behaviors and Intervening Variable/s

Primary Substance Use Issue: Vaping (nicotine or marijuana/THC)

Intervening Variables: Social Norms, Social Access

Vaping, including nicotine and THC, has been selected as the primary substance of focus for both the Kendall and Kerr County Community Coalitions due to clear patterns of elevated youth use and access. Survey data show that nicotine vapes and marijuana are highly accessible to youth, with social acceptance and permissive parental attitudes identified as key barriers to prevention. Youth in the region report greater use of e-cigarettes and marijuana in the past month compared to state averages. Additionally, Kendall County is experiencing rising THC-related juvenile felony probation referrals. These factors make vaping, be it nicotine or marijuana, a high-priority target for community-level prevention strategies.

3. Secondary or Tertiary Substance Use Behavior Issues

Secondary Substance Use Issue: Alcohol Use

Intervening Variables: Social Norms, Social Access

Alcohol use has been selected as the secondary substance of focus for both the Kendall and Kerr County Community Coalitions due to persistent risk indicators across the region. Higher rates of youth in the region report using alcohol in the past month, weaker parental disapproval, and greater ease of access through peers and social settings. Alcohol-related consequences are also evident, with Kendall County showing higher arrest rates and excessive drinking, while Kerr County experiences more DWI incidents and crash fatalities. These patterns reflect concerning levels of social normalization and access, reinforcing the need for targeted prevention strategies focused on shifting norms, educating families, and reducing youth exposure to alcohol-related harm.

4. Community Readiness

Coalition members identified law enforcement, healthcare professionals, and youth-serving organizations as the most prepared sectors to address substance use, noting their strong infrastructure and direct involvement in prevention. Youth and other prevention organizations also showed moderate readiness. In contrast, schools, parents, businesses, media, government, civic groups, and religious organizations were seen as underprepared. These gaps point to the need for greater engagement, training, and collaboration across sectors to strengthen prevention capacity in Kendall and Kerr counties.

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