

**Martha's Vineyard
Middle School
Parent Survey 2008
Results**

**Reported by Health Care of Southeastern MA,
Inc.**

Methodology

Survey was mailed to 327 Middle School (7th and 8th grade) parents in Martha's Vineyard, MA on June 3, 2008. One survey was returned with an incorrect address. A letter from the Youth Task Force accompanied the survey explaining its' purpose. Parents were assured that surveys would remain anonymous and confidential. This survey was also made available online through surveymonkey.com on July 17th. All households were sent a postcard letting them know of the option to take the survey online if they had not yet sent in the hard copy.

For all questions regarding their own Middle School student, parents were asked to base their answers on their oldest Middle School student. Perception of parent's beliefs and behaviors were gauged by asking participants what they believe "the typical Martha's Vineyard 7th or 8th grade parent does or believes." This was done to assist the Youth Task Force in their Social Norms Campaign. Social Norms theory states that people underestimate protective behaviors of others compared to them and overestimate risky behaviors of others. When a gap in misperception is found, it will be highlighted and noted. A gap in misperception exists when MOST (50% or more) parents believe or engage in a certain behavior, but parents do not believe the TYPICAL parent believes or engages in the same behavior.

Once completed, participants were asked to return the survey through the mail with a self- addressed, stamped return envelope provided. Data was compiled, analyzed and reported by Health Care of Southeastern Massachusetts, Inc.

Survey Sample

This survey was mailed to 326 households out of which 105 completed and returned the survey. The hard copy survey was returned by 97 parents and 8 parents filled out the online survey. This generates a total return rate of 32%.

Demographics

Parent Profile

Number of children

- 10% : 1 child
- 50%: 2 children
- 21%: 3 children
- 14%: 4 children
- 5%: 5 or more children

Number of children in middle school

- 83%: 1 child
- 12%: 2 children
- 1%: 3 children

Relationship of respondent to student

- 89%: mother
- 4%: step-mother
- 7%: father

Racial Identification

- 88%: White/Caucasian
- 2%: African American
- 2%: Asian/Pacific Islander
- 2%: Brazilian
- 1%: Native American
- 3%: Other

Student Profile

Gender of oldest middle school student:

- 48%: male
- 53%: female

Grade of oldest middle school student:

- 52%: 7th grade
- 47%: 8th grade

FINDINGS

Parent perception of current drug use

Alcohol

- When asked about their own Middle School student's alcohol use, 99% of parents believed that their middle school student had **not** used alcohol in the past 30 days. However, 11% of Middle School students have actually used alcohol in the past 30 days (*According to the Teen Norms Survey, 2008*).
- 59% of parents overestimated the current alcohol use of students. 11% of Middle School students are currently using alcohol.
- Overall, parents accurately perceive that **MOST** Middle School students are not using alcohol. (89% of Middle School students are non-drinkers)

Parents were also asked their perception of alcohol use among Martha's Vineyard High School students:

- 57% of respondents believed **MOST** High School students have used alcohol in the past 30 days.

Marijuana

- When asked about their own Middle School student's marijuana use, 99% of parents believed that their Middle School student had **not** used marijuana in the past 30 days. However, 3% of Middle School students have actually used marijuana in the past 30 days (*According to the Teen Norms Survey, 2008*).
- 94% of parents overestimated the current marijuana use of students.
- Overall, parents accurately perceive that **MOST** Middle School students do not use marijuana. (97% of middle school students are non-users)

Parents were also asked their perception of marijuana use among Martha's Vineyard High School students:

- 60% of respondents believed that **MOST** High School students have **not** used marijuana in the past 30 days.

Parents providing alcohol to middle school students

- 2% of parents have provided alcohol to their own minors in the last year (not including for religion reasons). 12% of parents believe that other parents provide alcohol to their own Middle School students (not including for religion reasons).
- No parents stated that they had provided alcohol to other minors in the last year. 13% of respondents believe that other parents provided alcohol to other minors (not including for religion reasons).

Parent/Child Discussions About Alcohol

Number of times parents spoke to child regarding family rules about alcohol non-use (in past 30 days) [Percentage]

	Never	Once a Month	Couple of times a month	Once a week	Daily
Actual	17	37	19	7	1
Perceived	16	37	10	0	0

* MOST (64%) parents speak to their child at least once a month regarding family rules about alcohol non-use

Parents were asked to select which statement best characterizes their most recent discussion with their Middle School aged child regarding alcohol [Percentage]

Characterization of alcohol-related discussion	Actual	Perceived
Spoke to child about alcohol-related incident	49	N/A
Did not talk to child about alcohol non-use	24	42
Told child that drinking is always bad and he/she should never try it	6	9
Told child about the risks of underage drinking and expect him/her not to drink*	69	41
Told child that a few drinks, on special occasions, are all right.	1	6
Told child that he/she will have to decide for him/herself how much to drink.	0	2

*Row shaded show a gap in misperception among parents. MOST parents engage in these behaviors; however MOST parents do not believe the TYPICAL parent does.

Relationship between parent and child

Statement	Actual %	Perceived %
Relationship with child (good, very good and excellent)	99	95
When my child is not home, I or the other parent know where he/she is and who he/she is with	98	52
When my child has a serious problem, he/she discusses it me with (usually or always)*	88	32
I know when my child does not come home on time	94	54

*Row shaded show a gap in misperception among parents. MOST parents engage in these behaviors; however MOST parents do not believe the TYPICAL parent does.

Parental Influence

- 88% of parents believed they have great influence over their child's decision not to drink alcohol.
- 51% of parents believed the TYPICAL parents thought they had great influence over their child's decision not to drink alcohol.

***Whom parents believe is most responsible for children starting to use drugs
[Percentage]***

	Child themselves	Child's parents	Child's friends	Older- trend setting young adults	Our culture, in general
Child starting to drink alcohol (<i>Actual</i>)	19	31	24	8	10
Child starting to drink alcohol (<i>Perceived</i>)	17	16	27	9	15
Child starting to use marijuana (<i>Actual</i>)	19	19	38	11	8
Child starting to use marijuana (<i>Perceived</i>)	14	10	41	8	12

Whom parents believe is most responsible for preventing children from starting to use drugs [Percentage]

	Child themselves	Child's parents	Child's friends	Child's school	Local police	Community Organizations
To prevent child from starting to drink alcohol (<i>Actual</i>)	10	98*	3	0	0	2
To prevent child from starting to drink alcohol (<i>Perceived</i>)	16	43	8	6	2	7
To prevent child from starting to use marijuana (<i>Actual</i>)	1	74*	5	15	1	1
To prevent child from starting to use marijuana (<i>Perceived</i>)	18	36	14	5	3	5

***MOST** parents believe the child's parents are most responsible for preventing children from starting to drink alcohol or use marijuana

Other Parental Beliefs/ Behaviors

Beliefs	Actual %	Perceived %
Alcohol use by 7 th or 8 th grader is a “normal rite of passage” (agree or strongly agree)	1	17
Alcohol use by 7 th or 8 th grade students is harmful (agree or strongly agree)	97	87
Support Martha’s Vineyard police in enforcing underage drinking laws (agree or strongly agree)	97	81
Schools should exclude a student from school activities for out-of-school alcohol use (agree or strongly agree)	68	52
There are clear rules in my house about alcohol non-use (agree or strongly agree)	98	74
Marijuana use by 7 th or 8 th grade students is harmful (agree or strongly agree)	99	82
There are clear rules in my house about marijuana non-use (agree or strongly agree)	99	84
If my 7 th or 8 th grade child was going to a friend’s house for a social gathering, I would call the parents to inquire about adults supervision (agree or strongly agree)	90	52
If 7 th or 8 th graders were coming to my home for a social gathering, I would feel comfortable if a parent called me about adult supervision (agree or strongly agree)	97	75
If parents let 7 th or 8 th graders drink in their home it will help reduce risky behavior such as preventing drinking and driving	4	22
If parents let 7 th or 8 th graders drink in their home it sends the wrong message. Parents should not allow their 7 th or 8 th graders to drink in the home.	96	78
Behaviors	Actual %	Perceived %
Child has a set time to return home (curfew)	29	12
Set [curfew] each evening he/she goes out depending on circumstances*	67	31
Provided alcohol to own child in the last year	2	12
Likely to allow child and their friends to drink in home	0	13
Provide alcohol to other minors in the last year	0	13
Allow child to drink in home with parents or other adults, even if it is a small glass of wine or beer with dinner (not including for religious purposes)	6	25

*Row shaded show a gap in misperception among parents. MOST parents engage in these behaviors; however MOST parents do not believe the TYPICAL parent does.

Interpretations

- MOST (99%) parents believe they have a good relationship with their child.
- MOST parents have protective attitudes/behaviors around middle school student alcohol use. (See chart above- all positive statements have agreement at 50% or greater).
- MOST (59%) parents overestimate the current use of alcohol and marijuana among Martha's Vineyard Middle School students. However, MOST (99%) parents believe that their own child has not used alcohol or marijuana. Therefore, parents underestimate use among their own children, but overestimate the use among middle school students as a whole.
- MOST (64%) parents are speaking to their children regularly about alcohol non-use.

Honesty in Reporting

- 99% of parents reported they were honest in completing this survey.
- 78% of parents believed the TYPICAL parent was honest in completing this survey.