

# What parents need to know:

## Using SHARP data to protect your kids



### SHARP is **important**.

The Utah Student Health and Risk Prevention (SHARP) survey is the **most comprehensive source of information** about the challenges and opportunities our youth face—because the data comes straight from the students themselves. We know parents and caregivers make the best decisions for their children when they have the information they need, at the right time. This report can help you know the types of challenges your child is up against, so you can talk about them with your child and **help them navigate the world** around them.

Life and parenting can feel really hard sometimes. But we've learned from decades of data and thousands of Utah kids that most of the time it's the **little things** you do in your family that make the most difference, like eating family meals, getting enough sleep, and having important conversations.

### Students' real-world experiences shape stronger families and communities.



SHARP data helps us build stronger families and communities. For more than **20 years**, parents, schools, teachers, public health, local prevention coalitions, and community leaders have worked together to help Utah kids.



Educational campaigns for parents (like Strong Families, LiveOn Utah, Social Harms, Gray Matters, Parents Empowered, and See Through the Vape).

Learn more at [sharp.utah.gov](https://sharp.utah.gov)



Interventions (like SafeUT, Foster Grandparents, Youth Garden Project, and youth mentoring programs).



Policy and legislation (like removal of flavored vape products, restricting where vape products can be sold, expanded mental and behavioral health services, and being the **1st state in the nation** to protect kids from the harms of social media).



Local prevention coalitions where parents can take an **active role** in shaping a safer school and community for their child.

## What we've learned from the latest SHARP data: Utah youth are making better choices and feeling better.

The latest SHARP data show Utah youth are **making healthier choices** and **feeling more connected** to their families and school. This is a sign that what we're doing as parents and in our communities is **making a difference** in the lives of our kids. This is a big win, but there is still work we can all do to address concerns.



### Alcohol

The rates in Utah for alcohol use among youth have always been among the **lowest in the nation**.

**3.8%**

of students report drinking in the last 30 days, compared to **12.5% nationally**.

**10.9%**

of students have ever experimented with alcohol. This continues to **trend down**.

### Fewer kids are using drugs and alcohol.

SHARP data show fewer students are using drugs and alcohol **across all grades**.



Learn more at [sharp.utah.gov](https://sharp.utah.gov)



## Drugs

The number of students who have ever used marijuana is also **trending down in an impressive way.**



The number of students who have ever used marijuana **decreased by 34.7%** from the last survey (from 9.5% in 2023 to 6.2% in 2025).



Those reporting marijuana use in the last 30 days **decreased by 32.6%** (from 4.3% in 2023 to 2.9% in 2025).



## Vaping and tobacco products

Another reason to celebrate is the decrease in vaping among Utah youth. We've seen a profound and exciting change in a very short time.



The number of students experimenting with vape products **decreased by 33.6%** from the last survey (from 12.2% in 2023 to 8.1% in 2025).



About **42% fewer students used vape products** in the last 30 days (6.0% in 2023 to 3.5% in 2025).

## The decrease in marijuana use by Utah youth is something to be really excited about.



It's important for parents to understand and talk to their children about how the marijuana available to today's youth is **far more potent** than what previous generations experienced. Even experimenting casually with today's marijuana products show **harmful effects on adolescent brain development**, their mental and emotional health, and puts them at an **increased risk of addiction.**

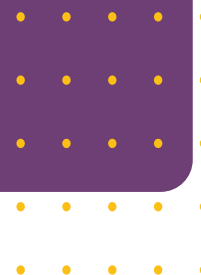
## However, we want to make parents aware of a growing area of concern: **nicotine pouches**.



We've seen an increase in the number of youth using nicotine pouches over the last few years. The number of **Utah youth who used a nicotine pouch to try tobacco for the first time increased by 300% for all grades** (from 1.6% in 2023 to 3.4% in 2025).

It's important to talk to your children about the dangers of nicotine pouches and help them make healthy choices by setting clear rules about using them, just like you would with alcohol, marijuana, and vaping. **Nicotine pouches are smokeless tobacco and are addictive.**

SHARP data show kids are less likely to experiment with **any** substance when their parents have discussed clear rules and expectations about substance use.



## Mental health is improving.

Data shows a positive trend in mental health for Utah youth. **Fewer students report having symptoms of depression.** This is a **55.8% increase from 2023 to 2025** in the number of students who report no symptoms of depression. Students with high or moderate symptoms of depression are also down.



We saw a 28.4% **decrease** in the number of students who seriously considered suicide from 2023 to 2025 (17.6% to 12.6%).

Plans of suicide **decreased for all grades** by 28% from 2023 to 2025 (13.2% to 9.5%).

Actual suicide attempts **decreased for all grades** by 23.3% from 2023 to 2025 (7.3% to 5.6%)



These are fantastic improvements in students' mental and emotional health. More students are talking to their parents, friends, and even school counselors when they feel very sad or hopeless. However, it's important to continue to provide support for those who are struggling or at risk. The message about talking to someone and asking for help is getting through to kids.

It can be hard to talk to your kids when they're struggling. The most important thing parents should know is that **they are not alone**. One of the best things you can do as a parent is to make sure your child knows you are always there to listen without judgement, no matter how big or small the problem.

There are a lot of resources you can turn to for support.



## School and learning are important to Utah youth.

More than half of Utah students believe that what they learn in **school is important for their future lives** (51%) and 37% of students feel their school work is **meaningful and important**.



Utah teachers deserve a real shout out! **More than 60% of students said that their teachers' praise and support made school a more positive place to be.** This is a clear sign Utah teachers make a real difference in the lives of their students.



# Parents matter and play a critical role in their child's success.

There's no doubt about it, you have a **critical** impact on your child's health and well-being.



Data show the majority (**81.7%**) of students report their parents **have rules about screen time** and rules about content, apps, and when devices can be used. However, **only half** say their parents enforce family rules around screentime—and almost **1 in 3** students say their parents never do. These rules help with important issues like getting enough sleep, finishing schoolwork, and spending time with family.



## Sleep

Sleep is essential for healthy growth during childhood (and yes, during the teen years too). SHARP data shows a strong relationship between screen time and lack of sleep, thoughts of suicide, substance use, and grades. When kids get the sleep their bodies and brains need, they get **better grades, and report better mental health**. They're also less likely to use substances like alcohol or drugs, and spend less time on screens and devices. In fact, **85.4% of students who got 8 hours of sleep or more a night reported mostly A and B grades**.





## Family meals

It's hard to believe, but **one of the most important things we've learned over the years at the Utah Department of Health and Human Services is the importance of family meals.** It's so simple, but eating meals together as a family—as often as you can—has a long-lasting positive impact on the rest of your child's life.

Data show **60%** of families eat at least 1 meal together 5 or more times a week. Kids who have regular family meals make healthier food choices, feel closer to their families, and do better in school.

Utah youth who eat at least one meal a week with their family are:

**32%** less likely to feel depressed.

**49%** less likely to vape.

**34%** less likely to consider suicide.

Start small—**connection grows from consistency.** Start with a few meals a week that work for everyone's schedule.



## How can parents use research and SHARP data to build stronger families?

**No one knows your child better than you do.** But being a parent isn't easy—and **no** parent has all the answers or does it right all the time.

- ☒ Get more insights into the things kids are experiencing, and what you can do as a parent to help them, at [sharp.utah.gov](https://sharp.utah.gov).
- ☒ Visit [strongfamilies.utah.gov](https://strongfamilies.utah.gov) for expert tips.
- ☒ Make a goal to **connect with your child** every day—even 10 to 15 minutes of time together can make an impact. Family meals are a great way to connect!
- ☒ Ask questions and talk to your child about their experiences (or their friends' experiences) with the topics mentioned in this report.
- ☒ Set clear expectations when it comes to substance use, screens, and sleep time.
- ☒ Remind your kid it's OK to ask for help when life gets hard.
- ☒ And don't be afraid to reach out for help yourself if you're worried about your child's emotional or mental health. There are many free resources to help—a good place to start is by calling or texting 988. It's free and confidential.



Learn more at [sharp.utah.gov](https://sharp.utah.gov)