

Community Prevention & Wellness Initiative

Partners for Healthy Communities

Coalition Mission

To reduce and prevent underage drug & alcohol use by engaging, educating, and empowering all sectors of our community.

The vision of VARSA is for Vashon Island to be “a community united in developing and sustaining an environment where youth can grow up drug and alcohol free.



A 501(c)(3) Nonprofit Organization

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VARSA Vashon Alliance to Reduce Substance Use Vashon island, WA



About the Community Prevention and Wellness Initiative (CPWI)

CPWI is a partnership of state agencies, counties, schools and local prevention coalitions supporting communities in preventing alcohol and other drug abuse and its negative consequences. CPWI priorities include reducing underage drinking, marijuana use and opioid misuse/abuse among middle and high school aged youth. By providing evidence-based practices and promoting the positive changes in communities, we can build healthier communities.

About the Coalition: Communities & Schools Working Together

Vashon Alliance to Reduce Substance Abuse (VARSA) grew out of earlier community coalition work. Starting in 2009, VARSA received five years of funding through a federal Drug Free Communities grant. This grant aimed to: (1) strengthen collaboration in the community to prevent and reduce substance abuse among youth; and (2) reduce substance use among youth and over time among adults. Additionally, in August 2011, Vashon Island was selected as one of the first CPWI communities, working to implement alcohol and other drug prevention with a community-wide approach.

VARSA works closely with community partners, which include Vashon Island School District (VISD), The DoVE Project (domestic violence), King County Library System – Vashon Branch, Seeds4Success, and the Vashon-Maury Island Food Bank. Many local businesses have partnered with VARSA to assist with youth events, environmental changes, parent education, community forums and town hall meetings.

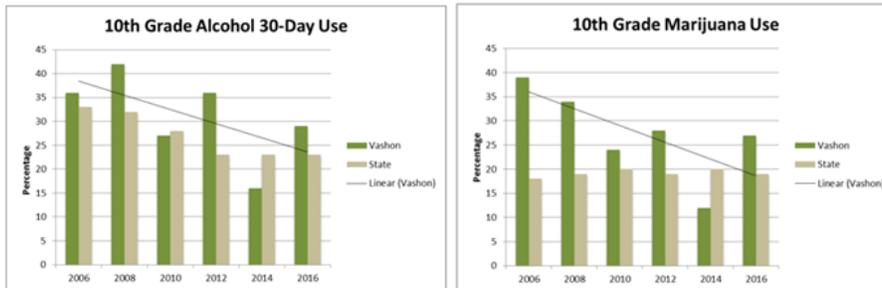


About Our Community

Vashon Island is 37 square miles of rural land in the middle of South Puget Sound, located in unincorporated King County. A true island with no bridge connections, the Washington State Ferry System provides access with the mainland at West Seattle, North Tacoma, and Port Orchard. The Vashon community prides itself as being a great place to raise children, with safe streets, abundant activities, and good schools. It comes up lacking when those children become teenagers, competing for the few part-time jobs and looking for leisure/recreation activities that the small population (10,624) cannot sustain.

Overall the population is 92.3% white, while the schools are more racially diverse with a growing population of Hispanic students. The median household income is \$74,913 (25% higher than the state average), but contrasted by the 21.6% of the 1,602 students receiving free or reduced meals.

Healthy Youth Survey data results for the last ten years have shown alcohol and marijuana use rates consistently above the state norm. Through the efforts of VARSA, the Vashon Island School District, and community partners, these trends are declining.



About Prevention Programs in our Community

Using results from the Healthy Youth Survey (VISD students in grades 6-12), the Community Survey (Vashon Island adults), and local assessment, VARSA has identified the following factors that increase the risk of youth substance use:

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|---------------------------------------|--|
| Community Disorganization | Friends who Engage in the Problem Behavior |
| Favorable Attitudes Towards Drug Use | Perceived Risks of Use |
| Laws and Norms Favorable to Drug Use | Friends' Use of Drugs |
| Parental Tolerance of Substance Use | Opportunities for Prosocial Involvement |
| Poor Family Management | Depression/Suicide Ideation |
| Availability of Drugs – Social Access | |

VARSA's strategies to reduce underage use of alcohol and other drugs include funding paid coalition and school-based staff as well as the following:

- Partner with healthcare providers and the Vashon Pharmacy to promote safe storage and disposal of over-the-counter and prescription medication.
- Community events, media campaigns, and environmental strategies.
- Second Step Social-Emotional learning curriculum given to all McMurray Middle School students.
- Strengthening Families program for English-speaking families.
- Guiding Good Choices program for Spanish-speaking parents.
- Partner with local organizations to host social events for teens.

Other Contacts



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CPWI is funded by

Washington State
Health Care Authority

For more information
about CPWI visit
www.TheAthenaForum.org