



# FY25: CENTER FOR PREVENTION SERVICES IMPACT REPORT

*Data, Outcomes, and Impact of our Prevention and Harm Reduction Initiatives*



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## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Center for Prevention Services (CPS) is proud to continue advancing its core mission of promoting health and resilience through progressive approaches that integrate evidence-based substance use prevention programming, harm reduction, and multifaceted systems of care. This report highlights some the successes of our programs in working to create a healthier and more resilient community in Cabarrus, Davidson, Mecklenburg, Rowan, Stanly, and Union counties.

This past year marked a time of considerable growth and improvement. We are excited to share that we recently moved into our new space on 201 McCullough Dr. Our new building provides expanded offices space for our staff and meeting spaces for our programs and activities. We are thrilled to be in our new building and encourage our community to come and visit!



Our growth, however, is marked not only by new buildings and meeting spaces, but also in the success of our programs and services. I'd like to highlight a few from this report:

- Our prevention and harm reduction services distributed over 17,000 naloxone kits leading to 597 reported reversals, potentially saving hundreds of lives of North Carolinians.
- Our evidence-based programs reached over 5,000 individuals across our six counties. In one example, our Familia Adelante program showed that parent participants reported statistically significant reduction in parent stress and an increase in youth perception of risk in using substances.
- Our Spanish programs worked diligently through community-based advocacy campaign efforts to ensure the inclusion of substance use prevention and culturally tailored services in the Mecklenburg County Behavioral Health Strategic Plan.
- Our housing-first program provided housing assistance to 107 individuals, supporting them with wrap-around supports and care as they work towards stability and healthy living.

We are optimistic that these efforts are also contributing to population-level improvements in key substance use indicators. We are observing overall downward trends in youth alcohol, cigarette, and vaping use. We also saw a significant drop in overdose death rates in 2024 relative to 2023, suggesting that we may finally be stemming the damage caused by the opioid epidemic. We are grateful for the support of our community and look forward to continuing this work into the future.

In Community,



Angela Allen, MA  
Chief Executive Officer  
Center for Prevention Services

# ABOUT THE CENTER FOR PREVENTION SERVICES

The **Center for Prevention Services (CPS)** is a nonprofit organization based in Charlotte, North Carolina, dedicated to improving the health and well-being of individuals and communities through evidence-based strategies to prevent substance use and reduce related harms. Founded in 1971, CPS has a long-standing commitment to addressing substance use challenges through a public health lens, offering services that are grounded in compassion, collaboration, and community responsiveness.



CPS operates across two core program areas: **prevention** and **harm reduction**. While both are essential parts of a comprehensive approach to substance use, they serve distinct functions and populations.

## PREVENTION: GREATER PIEDMONT COMMUNITY RESILIENCE



Prevention focuses on reducing the risk of substance use before it begins. CPS's **Greater Piedmont Community Resilience** initiative offers school- and community-based prevention programming for youth and families that promotes healthy decision-making, resilience, and protective factors. These services include evidence-based curricula, education campaigns, and early intervention efforts that equip individuals—especially young people—with the tools they need to avoid the initiation of substance use.

Examples of prevention programs at CPS include Too Good For Drugs, Unique You, and Familia Adelante. CPS also houses the local Latino-serving youth drug coalition Alianza. Prevention also involves addressing the environmental factors that contribute to substance use through initiatives like communications campaigns, medication take-back events, advocacy, and policy change.

## QUEEN CITY HARM REDUCTION



Harm reduction, on the other hand, meets people where they are, offering practical strategies and support to reduce the negative consequences of substance use without requiring abstinence. CPS's harm reduction services, known as **Queen City Harm Reduction (QCHR)**, include syringe access, naloxone distribution, overdose prevention education, and linkage to care for individuals who use substances. In FY 25, QCHR also started a housing program to help provide housing services to individuals in need. These programs aim to save lives, prevent disease transmission, and create pathways to wellness and recovery.

Together, these two approaches reflect CPS's holistic and person-centered philosophy: supporting communities with the knowledge, resources, and dignity they need to thrive, no matter where they are on their journey.

# WHO WE SERVE

CPS provides prevention and harm reduction services to residents across six counties: Cabarrus, Davidson, Mecklenburg, Rowan, Stanly, and Union. The following data describe who CPS serves.

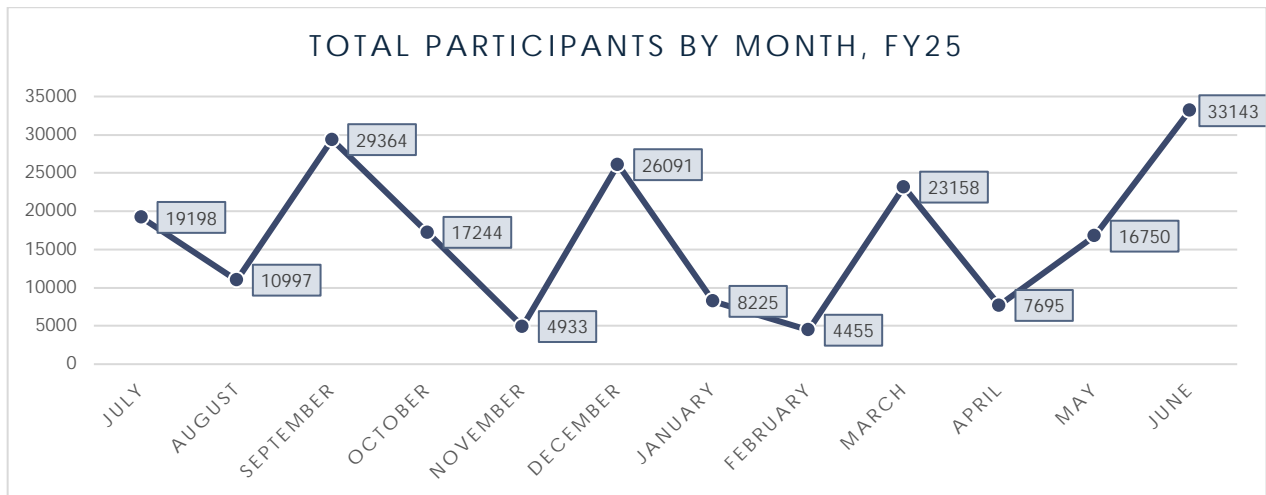
## PREVENTION: NUMBER SERVED

Prevention services programs, communications, and activities at CPS **reached over 200,000 people** over the course of FY25, with some monthly engagement variations throughout the year.

September, December, March, and June – months at the end of the quarter – each recorded the highest number served. It is possible that this may be due to reporting at the end of a round of programming taking place over the course of the quarter period.

**?** *What is the difference between Duplicated vs. Unduplicated Counts?*

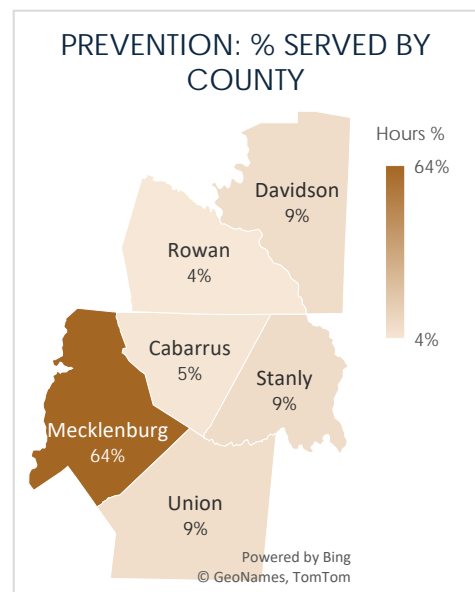
*Duplicated counts means that some individuals may have been served multiple times by different programs or events.*



These trends reflect the cyclical nature of prevention programming, with peaks often aligned with the school calendar, seasonal outreach events, community engagement strategies, and end of quarter reporting.

CPS distinguishes between individuals who were directly served, for example, those in youth prevention programs, and population-level interventions that reach a broad group of people, such as communications campaigns or other community-level initiatives. **Of the 201,253 reached, the prevention team served over 5,000 youth and adults directly through youth programs and services.**

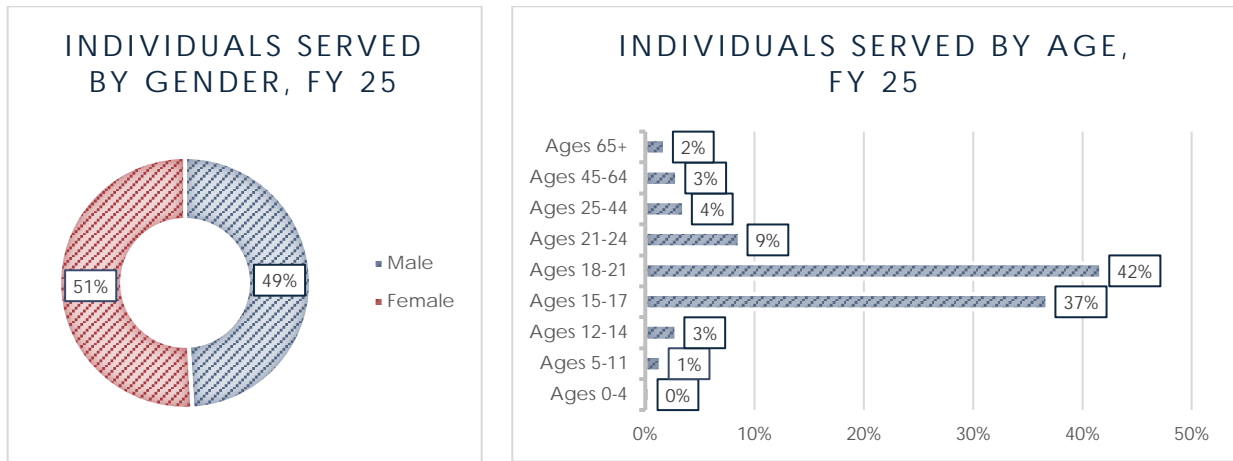
The CPS Prevention Department also serves individuals and families across a six-county catchment area, including Cabarrus, Davidson, Mecklenburg, Rowan, Stanly, and Union counties across the central piedmont region of North Carolina.



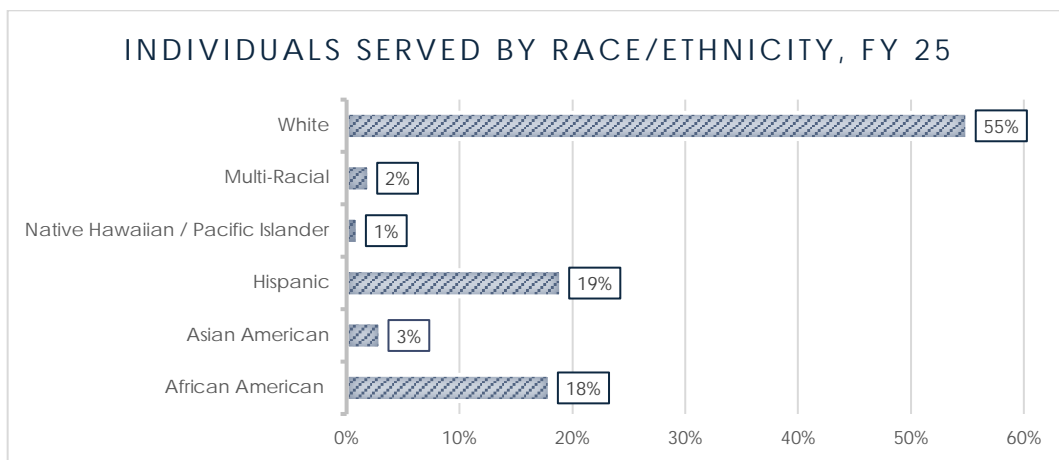
The majority of services are provided in Mecklenburg County, which is the county with the largest population and is home to the city of the Charlotte. The proportion of numbers served roughly reflects the proportion of individuals living within each county.

## PREVENTION: DEMOGRAPHICS

In FY25, the Center for Prevention Services reached a demographically diverse population through its prevention and harm reduction efforts. Gender representation was nearly balanced, with 51% of individuals identifying as female and 49% as male.



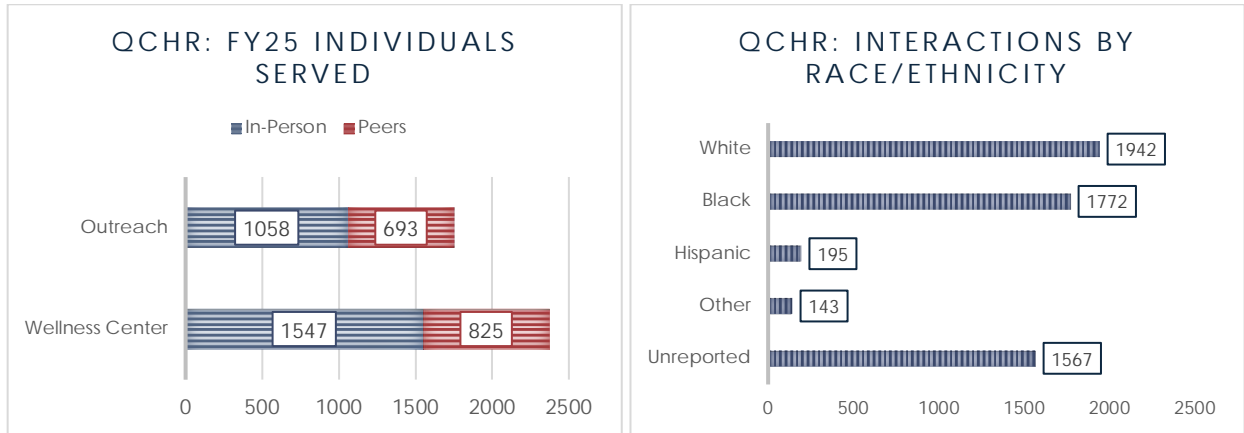
The majority of those served were young people, with 42% between the ages of 18–21 and 37% between 15–17, underscoring the organization’s strong emphasis on youth-focused prevention. Smaller portions of individuals served fell within the 21–24 age range (9%) and other age groups, with less engagement with very young children and older adults.



In terms of race and ethnicity, 55% of participants identified as White, followed by 19% Hispanic and 18% African American. Asian American (3%), Multiracial (2%), and Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander (1%) individuals made up a smaller portion of those served. These data reflect CPS’s continued commitment to reaching youth and engaging diverse communities across its service region.

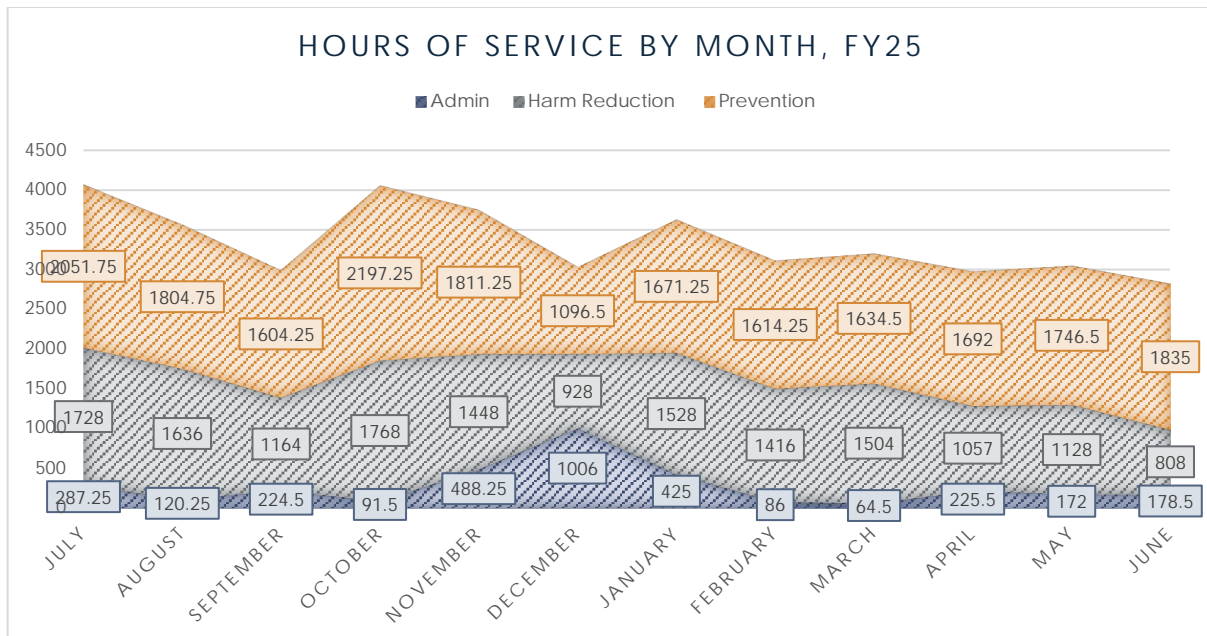
## HARM REDUCTION: NUMBER SERVED & DEMOGRAPHICS

CPS's Queen City Harm Reduction (QCHR) program improves the health & wellness of individuals and their communities in Charlotte, NC. **In FY25, QCHR provided 4,123 service interactions with people through its outreach and wellness center.**



## OUR SERVICES

CPS staff members logged a dynamic and sustained level of effort across its program areas throughout FY25, with a total of **40,241 service hours contributed by 28 staff members** in both prevention and harm reduction.



**In general, about 52% of time is spent on prevention programs, 40% spent on harm reduction services, and 8% of administrative work.** Of these hours, the majority are spent directly in service to individuals, families and communities in need. A total of 60% of hours are spent in direct service, with 24% of hours in planning, 11% in documentation, and 4% in travel and training.

# ACTIVITIES: GREATER PIEDMONT COMMUNITY RESILIENCE

The Greater Piedmont Community Resilience (GPCR) initiative implements a broad range of environmental strategies and prevention programs to reduce youth substance use across six counties. These activities are aligned with the CSAP strategies established by SAMHSA to guide comprehensive, evidence-based approaches to substance use prevention and the reduction of harm. Each strategy plays a unique role in supporting individuals and communities in reducing risk factors and strengthening protective factors.

## WHAT ARE CSAP STRATEGIES?

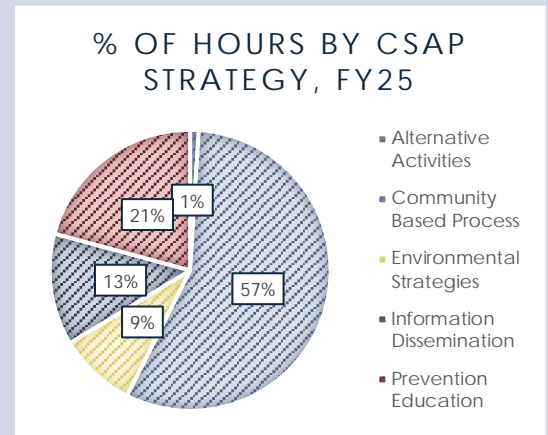
**Alternative Activities:** Offers substance-free after-school programs, sports, arts, and community events to keep youth engaged in healthy, connected environments.

**Community-Based Processes:** Strengthens coalitions and organizations through mobilization, leadership training, and technical assistance so they can plan and sustain prevention efforts collaboratively (e.g., Alianza Drug-Free Coalition meetings).

**Environmental Strategies:** Changes the broader context by modifying laws, policies, and norms—such as local ordinances, alcohol compliance checks, and advocacy—to limit youth access to substances.

**Information Dissemination:** Raises awareness via campaigns, health fairs, printed/web materials, and presentations that deliver timely, culturally relevant facts about substance use risks.

**Prevention Education:** Provides interactive programs in schools, communities, or families that teach knowledge, skills, and attitudes for healthy choices (e.g., CPS’s Youth Prevention Education programs like Unique You, Too Good For Drugs, Familia Adelante).



## ALTERNATIVE ACTIVITIES

GPCR engaged in community-driven alternative activities, including the Rowan County Art Contest, Corriher-Lipe’s Buzz Empowerment Team, and Safe Kids of Stanley County to harness creative expression, social-emotional learning, and youth-led events to promote substance-use prevention in engaging, substance-free settings.

### SAFE KIDS OF STANLY COUNTY

GPCR launched a series of free Middle-School Skate Nights in February and March 2025 that brought together students from local schools, law-enforcement officers, and recovery professionals for a safe, substance-free evening of skating, food, and education. Each event



featured a brief talk on the risks of underage drinking followed by informal outreach that prompted at least one student to seek further help. The initiative not only drew nearly 100 youth per night but also strengthened partnerships among schools, police, and community agencies, positioning Safe Kids as a trusted hub for pre-teen engagement.

## **ROWAN COUNTY ART CONTEST**

The Rowan County Art Contest offered students a creative outlet for expressing substance-use prevention messages through visual media. Participants designed and displayed posters that highlighted the dangers of drug misuse, the benefits of healthy living, and strategies for peer support. The exhibit not only showcased artistic talent but also reinforced prevention concepts in an engaging, youth-centric format, demonstrating how creative expression can be leveraged as a powerful alternative activity within community outreach efforts.



## **CORRIHER-LIPE BUZZ EMPOWERMENT TEAM**

At Corriher -Lipe Middle Schools, the Buzz Empowerment Team, which is an initiative spearheaded by students and faculty, offered a dynamic suite of social-emotional learning events that served as an engaging alternative to substance-use risk activities. The team organized:

- A “Do-Nut” Bully Day, where participants shared stories and received actual doughnuts to celebrate kindness,
- A “Mix It Up” luncheon that brought together diverse peer groups for collaborative discussion; a creative program featuring Inside Out characters from the Disney film, which helped students articulate complex emotions through familiar story arcs, and
- A Teacher Appreciation Day that reinforced positive relationships between youth and educators.

These activities provided students an opportunity to explore empathy, self-awareness, and community connection, all protective factors known to be important in contributing to preventing youth substance use. With the support of GPCR, the Buzz Empowerment Team at Corriher-Lipe was able to offer constructive activities that promote resilience and healthy decision-making among middle-school students.



## COMMUNITY-BASED PROCESSES: COALITIONS AND PARTNERSHIPS

GPCR is deeply involved in the community in Charlotte/Mecklenburg and surrounding counties. One way the community is engaged is through processes that link organizations doing similar work around the shared goal of substance use.

### COALITIONS

Collaboration and coalition-building are essential components of effective, community-based substance use prevention work. Substance use is shaped by complex social, environmental, and cultural factors, and no single organization can address these influences alone. These collaborations and coalitions bring together schools, families, youth, service providers, faith-based organizations, healthcare partners, and local leaders, coalitions to create shared ownership of prevention efforts, align resources, and ensure strategies are culturally responsive and grounded in community strengths. This collective approach increases reach, sustainability, and impact, helping communities build protective factors and reduce substance use over time.

The following outlines the coalitions and partnerships that GPCR staff members regularly lead, participate in, and attend meetings for.

Coalition	County
Alianza Drug Free Communities (DFC) Coalition	Mecklenburg
Healthy Union	Union
Healthy Cabarrus	Union
Healthy Rowan	Rowan
Local Interagency Coordinating Council (LICCs)	Cabarrus, Davidson, Stanly
Learning Collaboratives	Cabarrus, Rowan
Opioid and Prescription Drug Abuse Advisory Committee (OPDAAC)/ DC Connect Advisory Council	Davidson
Opt OUT	Cabarrus, Mecklenburg, Rowan, Union
Partners Collaboration	Cabarrus, Davidson, Stanly, Union
Partners in Health	Stanly
Project Lazarus	Stanly
Safe Kids	Cabarrus, Mecklenburg, Stanly, Union
Substance Use Taskforce	Union
Substance Use Taskforce	Mecklenburg
YSUP Rowan	Rowan



## SPOTLIGHT: ALIANZA COALITION



Established in Charlotte, North Carolina as the first Latino-led youth substance-use prevention coalition in the region, the Alianza Coalition engages Latino youth, families, and community stakeholders in prevention, education, advocacy, and culturally informed programming to strengthen resilience, reduce substance use, and promote behavioral-health equity within the Latino community. Alianza collaborates with a network of organizations across the city and is housed and supported within CPS.

Alianza carries out its mission through several interrelated activities. The coalition coordinates the delivery of core prevention programs, including:

- **Familia Adelante**, a prevention program for Latino families with youth ages 10-14
- **AmarTeatro**, a theater-based substance use prevention intervention for youth ages 9-18
- **Mi Vida Quince**, a program offering alcohol-free quinceañeras alongside prevention education
- **Digital Impact**, a photography-based prevention program
- **Unidos Together**, a leadership and prevention program for Latino youth

These programs focus on life skills, family communication, youth leadership, mental-health awareness, substance-use prevention, cultural identity and healthy behaviors.

The coalition is also deeply engaged in the Charlotte community, participating in town halls, resource fairs, cultural events (e.g. Latino festivals) concurrently building community connection and promoting prevention messaging.

## ADVOCACY: MECK BEHAVIORAL HEALTH STRATEGIC PLAN

Beyond direct programming, Alianza plays an active role in advocacy—mobilizing public comment campaigns, convening town halls for professionals and community members, and engaging with county planning processes to ensure behavioral-health systems are responsive to Latino community needs.

In FY25, the Alianza Coalition has played a pivotal role in shaping Mecklenburg County's Behavioral Health Strategic Plan (BHSP), ensuring that the needs and experiences of the Latino community are meaningfully reflected in the county's behavioral-health priorities. Their work represents a coordinated effort that blends advocacy, community mobilization, and strategic partnership with county leadership.



The coalition's involvement began when the county released its draft BHSP for public comment. Recognizing that the initial document lacked sufficient attention to the behavioral-health realities facing Latino residents, Alianza launched a targeted advocacy campaign urging stakeholders to support updated language in the plan. The coalition quickly mobilized community members, service providers, and allied organizations to submit comments emphasizing three essential priorities: strengthening substance-use prevention (particularly among youth), building a bilingual/bicultural behavioral-health workforce, and ensuring that services and programs are culturally tailored for diverse communities.



The coalition also facilitated structured opportunities for dialogue among community stakeholders. For example, in September 2024, Alianza convened a town hall of Latino-serving providers across health, education, and social-service sectors to examine how the BHSP could be operationalized in ways that authentically respond to the linguistic, cultural, and systemic barriers faced by Latino residents. Participants identified key strategies, including building a diverse workforce, enhancing trauma-informed outreach, and embedding culturally grounded prevention programs for youth and families.

This professional convening was followed by a broader community town hall in November 2024, which brought together parents, youth, and community advocates. The event created space for residents to articulate their own experiences navigating behavioral-health systems, highlighting barriers such as language access, lack of trust, and limited culturally appropriate programs. Participants also identified solutions—from two-generation engagement models to information-sharing through trusted community hubs such as churches, schools, and local businesses.

The county's Behavioral Health Strategic Plan now aims to recruit and retain bilingual and bicultural clinicians, expand culturally tailored prevention programs, and ensure that services across the continuum of care are responsive to the diverse cultural landscape of Mecklenburg County.

Collectively, these advocacy and engagement efforts significantly influenced the county's final Behavioral Health Strategic Plan. The county's Behavioral Health Strategic Plan now integrates explicit commitments to recruit and retain bilingual and bicultural clinicians, expand culturally tailored prevention programs, and ensure that services across the continuum of care are responsive to the diverse cultural landscape of Mecklenburg County. The inclusion of these elements reflects not only policy change but also a shift toward a more equitable and community-informed behavioral-health system.

## ENVIRONMENTAL STRATEGIES

GPCR environmental strategies aim to change the context in which youth are living to reduce youth substance use. This can take the form of advocacy around modifying laws as well as through strategies to remove access to substances. In addition, it can also involve removing access to substances that can harm youth. GPCR accomplishes this work through administering alcohol locks, medication take-back events, and naloxone distribution.

## SECURE STORAGE AND MEDICATION TAKE-BACKS

As part of the GPCR prevention strategy, initiatives focused on secure medication storage and proper disposal played a key role in FY25. Staff members would table at events and fairs to distribute literature, offer safe storage devices like medication lockboxes or alcohol locks, and securely dispose of expired and unused medications. In FY 25, 12 medication take-back events were held in Rowan County. These led to the reclamation of 250 pounds of medication and the distribution 300 lock boxes and 260 chemical disposal kits.



## NALOXONE DISTRIBUTION

GPCR also works to reduce drug overdose through the distribution of naloxone in the community, a medication that can reverse an opioid overdose (heroin, fentanyl, oxycodone, etc.) The Prescription Drug Overdose (PDO) grant in Stanly County is focused on naloxone awareness, education, training, and distribution. GPCR works alongside partner organizations including Uwharrie Harm Reduction Initiative (UHRI), Daymark Recovery Services (Daymark), Stanly County Health Department (SCHD), and Stanly County EMS Community Paramedics (SC-CP). Through the PDO grant, GPCR was able to purchase approximately \$17,000 worth of naloxone kits for community distribution in FY 25. CPS distributed over 5,250 naloxone kits to our community partners this past fiscal year. Additionally,



GPCR staff distributed over 5,528 naloxone kits directly to community members during community events this fiscal year through the PDO grant alone.

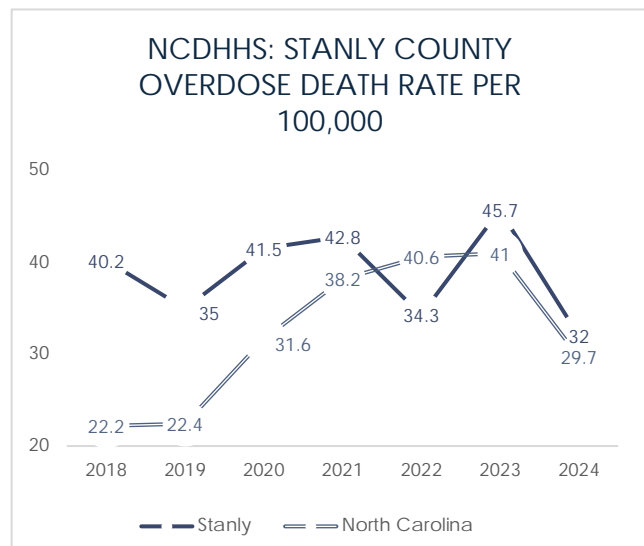
## Over 10,000 naloxone kits were distributed by GPCR, primarily in Stanly County, leading to 188 reported opioid overdose reversals

GPCR staff trained over 92 community members in naloxone and overdose education via on-the-spot trainings during events. GPCR additionally hosted four community naloxone and overdose trainings, with 56 participants completing the training. There were over 188 opioid overdose reversals reported to community partners from January - June 2025. Throughout the FY 24-25, more than 226 individuals and families received peer support sessions and 42 individuals received MAT. Over 120 medication lock boxes and 256 chemical medication disposal kits were distributed by CPS staff, although our partner organizations also separately distribute these items.

Alongside partners, GPCR works tirelessly to change the landscape of the opioid epidemic in Stanly County on a daily basis. Since the inception of the PDO grant in Stanly County, opioid overdose emergency department visits have been steadily decreasing every year. Comparing May 2024 to May 2025, opioid overdose ED visits have decreased 38%. Additionally, fentanyl positive deaths in Stanly have also decreased yearly, from 17 fentanyl related deaths in 2022 to 11 in 2024 (NCDETECT), a decrease in the rate per 100,000 from 34.3 to 29.7.

## Opioid-related emergency department visits and deaths have been decreasing in Stanly County.

GPCR staff and our partners also make sure to stay up to date on the additional substances known to be combined with opioids one might access on the street (i.e. tizanidine). We now also provide participants in the UHRI program access to tizanidine testing strips so that they may make more informed decisions about their use.

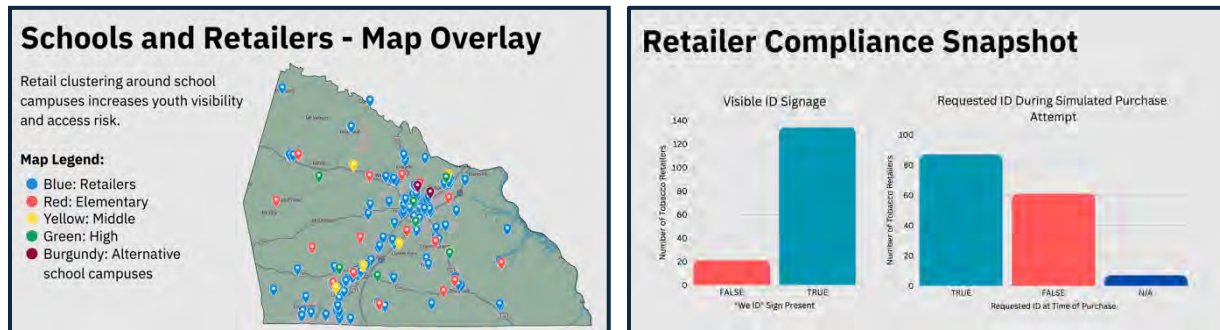


## SPOTLIGHT: ROWAN COUNTY TOBACCO RETAILER STUDY

Effective prevention work requires a data-informed approach that utilizes best-in-class research and data methods to understand and respond to substance use challenges in the community. One example of how we use a data-informed approach was the comprehensive Tobacco Retailer Coverage Study. Completed in Q4 of FY 25 by Grace Turlington, MPH student, the study examined the full landscape of tobacco sales across Rowan County and assessed how well retailers complied with federal age-restriction laws.

Field verification teams identified 155 active outlets spanning 13 municipalities, with gas-station and convenience stores comprising more than half of all locations. Vape shops, grocery/market venues, and general retail outlets also made up a significant share, while five ZIP codes—28144, 28147, 28146, 28023, and 28083—contained the majority of retailers, concentrating risk in Salisbury, China Grove, and adjacent suburbs.

During on-site visits at tobacco retailers, we observed that 55% of retailers were noncompliant with tobacco sales laws. “We ID” signage required by law was missing from nearly one-sixth of outlets. Data integrity emerged as another critical issue; roughly 30 newly opened businesses were absent from the Synar database, an additional 30 had changed names or ownership, and 26 had closed—underscoring the need for a dynamic, county-wide licensing system.



The study also mapped retailer locations against public school sites, revealing that two-thirds of Rowan County’s schools were within a one-mile radius of at least one tobacco vendor. Salisbury and Southeast communities experienced the highest clustering, with some campuses surrounded by four or more outlets—a pattern that heightens youth visibility and access risk.

**55% of tobacco retailers in Rowan County were noncompliant with tobacco sales laws.**

Informed by these data, the report outlined a series of policy recommendations. At the local level, the report recommends adopting local tobacco retailing ordinances to track retailers, enforce ID checks, and monitor compliance. In addition, zoning regulations could be adopted to prevent new retailers from opening near schools. At the state level, the report recommended adopting a statewide Tobacco 21 law to align with federal age restrictions and allow for enforcement at the local level. In addition, the report recommended authorizing local inspection to empower counties to enforce compliance and also to develop a licensing system to maintain a tobacco retailer database.

## SYNAR: TOBACCO MERCHANT COMPLIANCE

GPCR conducts SYNAR compliance activities across the six counties in its catchment area (Cabarrus, Davidson, Mecklenburg, Rowan, Stanly, and Union), ensuring adherence to federal and state regulations designed to reduce youth access to tobacco products. SYNAR refers to the Synar Amendment, named for US Rep. Mike Synar, which works to 1) enforce laws prohibiting the sale and distribution of tobacco to minors, 2) conduct annual compliance checks to ensure retailers aren't selling to underage youth, and 3) report their retailer violation rates to SAMHSA.

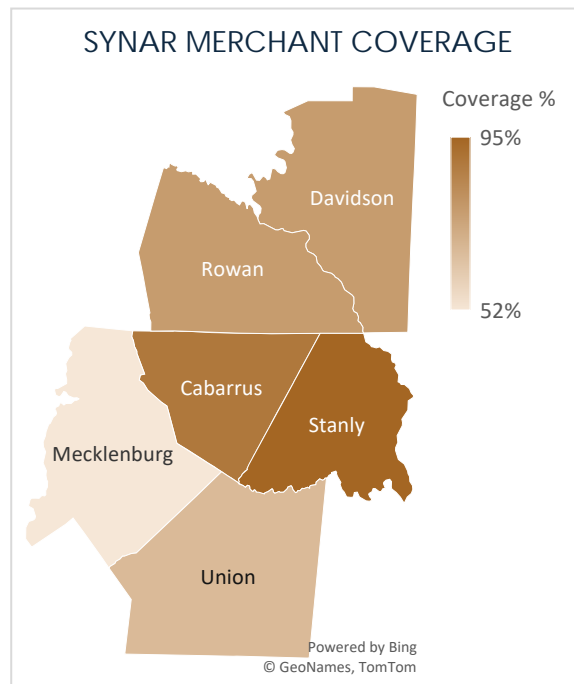
As part of this work, GPCR coordinates annual unannounced merchant inspections, collaborates with local law enforcement and community partners, and provides technical assistance to retailers to support compliance with youth-access laws. These efforts not only help each county meet requirements and benchmarks but also strengthen environmental prevention strategies by reducing the availability of tobacco products to minors.

Table 1: FY25 SYNAR Merchant Coverage

	Cabarrus	Davidson	Mecklenburg	Rowan	Stanly	Union	Total
<b>Completed Inspection</b>	154	102	354	105	70	110	891
<b>Completed - Ineligible</b>	25	49	83	17	0	5	179
<b>Total Inspected</b>	179	151	437	122	70	115	1074
<b>Total Merchants</b>	202	197	847	159	74	172	1651
<b>Completed %</b>	89%	77%	52%	77%	95%	67%	65%

Table 1 outlines our coverage through SYANAR efforts. The first row indicates merchants with completed inspections, the second indicates merchants who were ineligible (e.g. no longer in business, no longer sell tobacco). The fourth row contains all suspected merchants in the county. In FY25, GPCR covered nearly all retailers in Cabarrus and Stanly Counties, with strong coverage in Davidson and Rowan. We were able to reach the most merchants in Mecklenburg – approximately 354, or 52% - but had limitations due to county size and turnover in retailers in reaching all. It should be noted that the total list of merchants uses historic data on merchants but is not always reflective of actual merchants.

GPCR has set a goal that by the end of FY26, all counties will have SYNAR inspections completed at a rate of 90%.



## INFORMATION DISSEMINATION

GPCR engages in information dissemination to educate the public on the risks of youth substance use and strategies to reduce youth use. Information dissemination is conducted through a variety of strategies but takes place primarily through professional development trainings and communications campaigns.

### PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT AND TRAININGS

CPS is also a leader on professional development and training opportunities in Charlotte-Mecklenburg and the surrounding region. In FY25, we offered 12 trainings. Example titles of trainings include Introduction to Trauma, Substance Misuse Prevention for Youth with ACEs, Harm Reduction 101, HIV Updates and Intersectionality, Introduction to Trauma, and more.

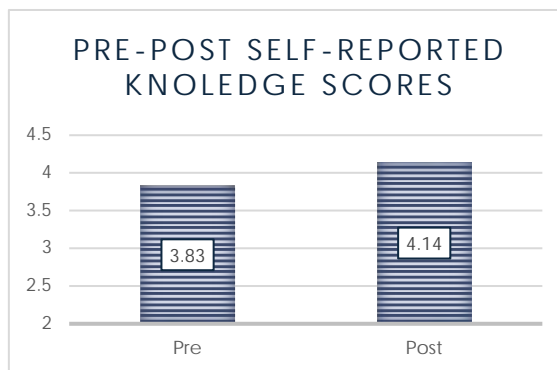
A total of 129 individuals registered for trainings. All but one training was held virtually on zoom.



Individuals were asked to reply to the question, “On a score of 1-10, how likely are you to recommend this training” – also known as an NPS score. Results from this question were used to calculate an NPS score of 52 for the trainings in FY25. While there is no industry-standard benchmark for training NPS scores, similar programs and approaches would identify scores of 50-70 as good/strong and above 70 as excellent. The NPS score of 52 for CPS trainings indicates a strong training program but that there are still areas for improvement.

Participants were also asked to provide an estimate of their knowledge of the topic before and after the training on a scale of 1 (very little) to 5 (a great deal). On average, the score was 3.83 before the training and 4.14 after the training.

Scores for 1-5 ratings of the teaching methods, teaching materials, and instructor knowledge were each above 4.0. **Results indicate that training participants reported improved knowledge of substance use topics following their training.**



### COMMUNICATIONS CAMPAIGNS

Effective youth substance use prevention relies on consistent engagement with families, caregivers, and the broader community. Strategic communication campaigns strengthen this engagement by increasing awareness, shaping healthy norms, and providing adults with practical tools to support young people.

This year, GPCR the “**Lock Your Meds**” campaign in Stanly County to address concerns related to prescription drug misuse. The campaign encourages families to secure medications, monitor quantities, and dispose of unused prescriptions safely. These simple steps help reduce accidental or intentional access to high-risk medications. With the support of the Partnerships for Success (PFS) SAMHSA grant, CPS used a geofencing approach which targeted Stanly County youth with prevention messaging on social media and

directed them to our page to reduce youth vaping. This geofencing campaign had a total of 333,913 impressions and 534 clicks.

	July	August	September	Total
Impressions	135,271	136,515	62,127	333,913
Clicks	191	218	125	534

Together, these campaigns form a comprehensive communication strategy that supports prevention at the family and community levels. Each initiative offers practical guidance, reinforces protective norms, and strengthens the capacity of adults to guide youth toward healthy choices. With consistent messaging and accessible resources, GPCR contributes to safer environments and stronger foundations for youth well-being.

## CULTURAL FESTIVALS

GPCR also maintains community presence through participating in cultural events and festivals. For example, in September 2024, the Alianza Coalition attended the Latin American Festival, hosted and coordinated by the Latin American Coalition. Alianza contributed in two ways:

- Alianza staffed a dedicated booth featuring educational materials, prevention resources, and interactive learning games designed for both youth and adults.
- Alianza supported alcohol-safety efforts by helping check IDs of festival attendees and issuing wristbands to those aged 21 or older to align with legal regulations and reduce underage access.

This presence reflected CPS's and Alianza's broader mission to advance environmental prevention, education, and community collaboration—specifically oriented toward reducing substance use among Latino youth in the Charlotte-Mecklenburg area.



## PREVENTION EDUCATION: YPE PROGRAMS

CPS offers a comprehensive suite of evidence-based prevention programs designed to support youth and families, build resilience, and prevent the onset of risky behaviors. Each program targets specific age groups and cultural contexts, reflecting our commitment to relevance and effectiveness.

### CPS's Greater Piedmont Community Prevention programs reached over 5,000 youth in FY25

Together, these offerings reflect GPCR integrated approach, which combines culturally responsive programming, developmental appropriateness, and interactive learning designed to build protective factors, reduce risk, and empower youth and families in the communities we serve.

Program and Description	FY 25	
	# of Programs / Schools	# People Complete
<b>Unique You</b> (3rd–4th grade) is CPS's in-house curriculum that promotes self-esteem, emotional awareness, communication, teamwork, and assertiveness over eight sessions.	13	153
<b>Too Good for Drugs</b> spans K–8 and includes ten lessons focused on healthy decision-making, peer pressure resistance, and building positive relationships.	10 (Rowan/Meck) 11 schools (Stanly)	99 (Rowan/Meck) 1714 (Stanly)
<b>Familia Adelante</b> is a culturally tailored intervention for Latino youth (10–14) and their families, strengthening life skills while preventing substance misuse.	8	119
<b>Strong African American Families</b> offers seven sessions for African American youth (10–14) and their caregivers, building on family strengths to support healthy transitions to adolescence and reduce risk behaviors.	<i>None in FY25, Planned for FY26.</i>	
<b>AmarTeatro Theater Program</b> engages Latino youth (9–18) through a 15-week theater curriculum that explores mental health and substance use through performance and dialogue in a culturally resonant manner.	<i>None in FY25, Planned for FY26.</i>	
<b>Botvin Life Skills Training (LST)</b> serves middle and high school students with structured sessions to build social, emotional, and decision-making skills that prevent substance abuse and violence.	11 schools	2160
<b>HALO</b> (Healthy Alternatives for Little Ones) is an early childhood program (preschool–kindergarten) offering 12 sessions on emotions, relationships, and healthy choices.	<i>None in FY25.</i>	
<b>Reconnecting Youth</b> addresses at-risk teens through a semester-long classroom-based intervention for small groups, supporting students one-on-one and in group settings to prevent dropout and substance use.	5	41
<b>AVOID</b> (Anti-Vaping Online Information Dissemination) is a digital program for ages 12–16, using youth-led videos and interactive content to dispel myths and raise awareness about the dangers of vaping. Offered in Rowan (177 youth) and Stanly Counties (663 youth)	8 (Rowan) 5 schools (Stanly)	840
<b>Safe Dates</b> is a ten-session program for middle and high school students that promotes healthy relationships and prevents dating violence. It teaches youth to recognize unhealthy behaviors, manage conflict, and support peers.	3	<10
<b>Digital Impact</b> – is a photography and arts-based approach to youth substance use. Youth learn a skill (photography) while receiving a prevention curriculum.	2	10
<b>Unidos Together</b> – this leadership program partners with youth to identify projects that can advance prevention efforts in school and faith-based settings.	1	6



## SPOTLIGHT: FAMILIA ADELANTE PROGRAM

Since launching in 2020, Familia Adelante (FA) has grown into a transformative youth prevention program supporting Latino families across Mecklenburg County. Originally a small pilot program run by the Alianza Coalition with the support of CPS/GPCR and ReCAST II Mecklenburg County, Familia Adelante now reaches more parents, caregivers, and youth, fostering resilience, preventing substance use, and strengthening family connections.



FA is a 12-session, culturally responsive program for Latino youth ages 10–14 and their caregivers, designed to reduce family stress, support behavioral health, and prevent substance use. The program strengthens family communication, builds coping and life skills, and addresses acculturation stress and discrimination. Through interactive sessions, families explore topics such as emotional regulation, peer and school relationships, and cultural identity, while reinforcing protective factors rooted in Latino cultural values.

A recent evaluation was conducted on the FA program using a pre-post quantitative design. Results highlights important program successes: **First, there was an observed reduction in Latino parent/caregiver stress through pre-post surveys, with participants reporting lower rates of stress after completing the program.** Parents and caregivers expressed strong appreciation for the program’s role in fostering a sense of community and providing a space to discuss challenging topics related to parenting, relationships with youth and spouse, acculturation stress, and adolescent risk behaviors.

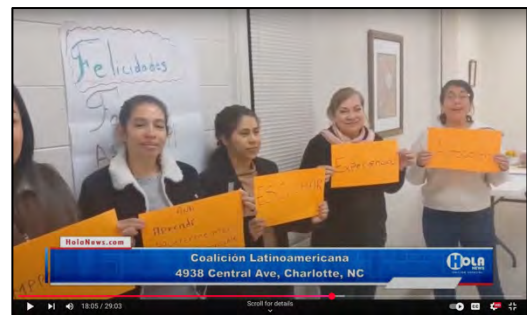


Figure 1: Familia Adelante [Featured on Hola News](#), Feb 5, 2025

Table 2 presents a summary of quantitative evaluation results for the Familia Adelante program for Latino parents and caregivers. Table results suggest that the average stressor rating reduced from 1.43 to .98, a statistically significant reduction in stress rating by Latino parents.

Table 2: Hispanic Stress Inventory Analysis

	Pre		Post	
	N	%	N	%
Number of parent/caregivers	41		62	
Number of parent/caregivers who experienced at least one stressor	28	68.3%	51	82.3%
Average number of stressors per parent/caregiver	4.27		4.26	
Average stressor rating (1-5) of parent/caregivers who experienced at least 1 stressor across all 12 stressors.	1.43 (.18)		0.98 (.09)	

In addition, youth participants demonstrated positive shifts in perceptions of peer disapproval for some substances and increased awareness of the risks associated with vaping and prescription drug misuse. These differences pre-post were significant for both prescription drugs ( $p < .05$ ) and marijuana ( $p = .05$ ).

**Taken together, these data suggest that youth who participated in the program increased perceptions of risk of prescription drugs and nicotine vapes and reported higher peer disapproval for prescription drugs and marijuana use.**

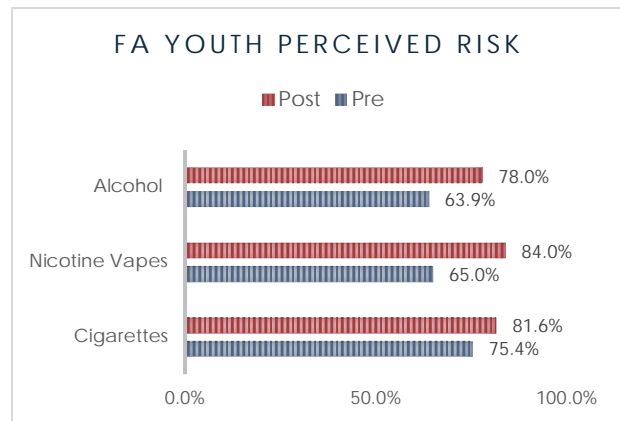


Figure 2: Pre-post results for perceived risk (% of youth who think there is 'moderate' or 'great' risk in using the substance).

Qualitative feedback from the evaluation emphasized the value and appreciation of the program. Participants also shared feedback for improvements to the program, focusing on expanding content areas and increasing accessibility.

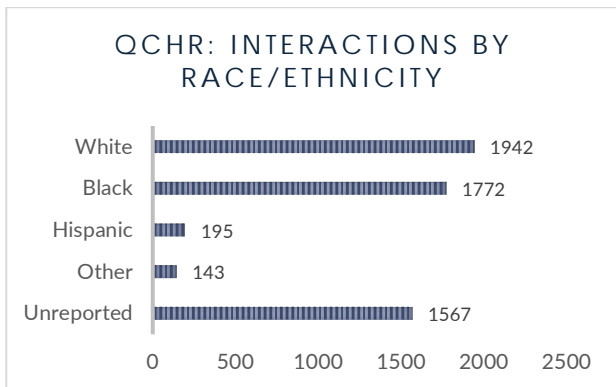
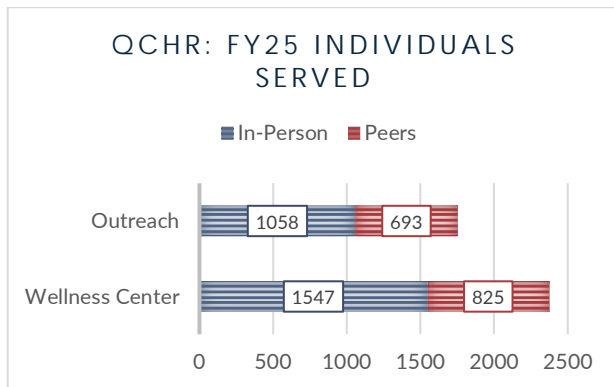
We are hopeful that these findings speak to the positive impact of the FA program for Latino youth and families – that having conversations with youth at a young age *before* onset can help to prevent future problems in adolescence and throughout the life course.



# ACTIVITIES: QUEEN CITY HARM REDUCTION

CPS's Queen City Harm Reduction (QCHR) program improves the health & wellness of individuals and their communities in Charlotte, NC. QCHR provides direct services to people who use drugs and who are at high risk for Hepatitis C, HIV, overdose, and other major health problems. QCHR staff and volunteers offer free sterile equipment and Naloxone (Narcan) to people who use drugs, people who use hormones, people who do sex work, and other marginalized groups. These services help to prevent the spread of infectious disease and overdose fatalities. Recently, QCHR has also started a housing-first program to help provide access to secure housing for individuals who use drugs.

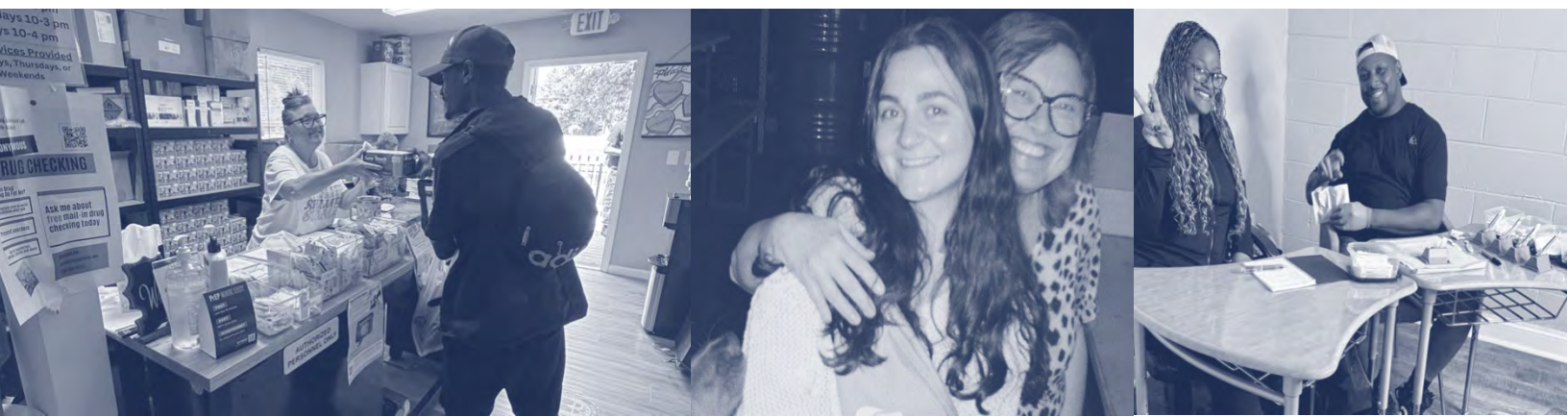
In FY25, QCHR provided 4,123 service interactions through its outreach and wellness center.

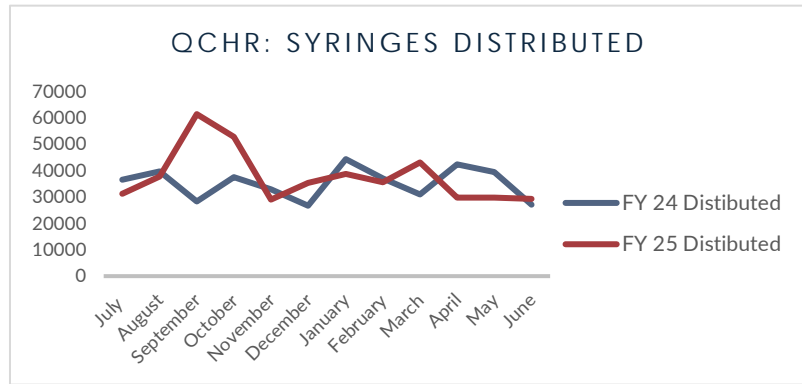


## SYRINGE SERVICES PROGRAM

QCHR's syringe services program provides individuals who use drugs with safe-use supplies, evidence-based education, and nonjudgmental support. The program reduces the transmission of bloodborne infections, prevents injection-related injuries, and serves as a reliable point of contact for people who are often disconnected from traditional healthcare systems. QCHR uses both outreach and services at its brick-and-mortar location to build trusting relationships that create opportunities for engagement, risk reduction, and linkage to care.

Key Performance Indicators: QCHR Syringe Service Program	FY 25
(#) Number of individuals served by the SSP	1326
(#) Number of total contacts (e.g. interactions) the program had with all participants	6616
(#) Total number of syringes distributed	450,580





### Mercy's Story

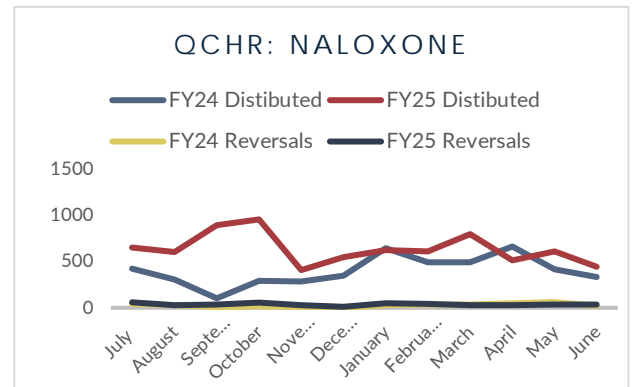


I first came to QCHR because I needed a clean syringe. Someone told me where to go, so I decided to check it out. What I found was more than I expected. Now, I come here because I feel comfortable. It's a safe, non-judgmental space where I can just be myself. I can grab a snack, rest for a bit, and not feel like I'm being looked down on. It might seem small, but having a place like this – **where you're treated like a human being** – makes a big difference.

### NALOXINE DISTRIBUTION

Naloxone distribution is a core component of QCHR's harm reduction work. The program supplies the overdose-reversal medication to people who use drugs, their families, and community members, so that those groups are in turn empowered to respond to an overdose when it happens. QCHR staff also offer brief training on recognizing overdose symptoms and responding effectively. These efforts strengthen community safety and have prevented many otherwise fatal overdoses.

In FY 25, QCHR has tracked **437** known cases of overdose reversal, leading to potentially hundreds of lives saved.



Key Performance Indicators: Naloxone Distribution	FY 24	FY 25
(#) Number of naloxone kits distributed by the program	4790	7515
(#) Number of overdoses reversed with naloxone that have been reported	329	437





QCHR also distributes a range of essential health supplies that support safer use and overall well-being. Staff provide basic wound-care materials such as bandages, sterile wipes, and antibiotic ointment. They also offer over-the-counter medications, including ibuprofen and other nonprescription remedies, to help participants manage pain and minor illnesses. Contraceptives and related sexual-health items are available to reduce the risk of unintended pregnancy and sexually transmitted infections. Lastly, QCHR also provides access to basic needs including food and clothing for program participants. These materials address immediate health needs, prevent complications, and strengthen the organization’s role as a reliable point of contact for individuals who have limited access to traditional medical care.

## REFERRALS AND TESTING

QCHR also maintains a strong referral system that links participants to critical services. Individuals are connected to treatment for substance use disorders, mental health providers, and ongoing recovery supports. Staff help clients access housing resources and HIV and Hepatitis C testing. QCHR also conducts HIV and Hepatitis C testing and connects participants to follow-up care and services when needed. This wholistic and integrated approach to serving individuals who use drugs promotes stability, supports improved health, and creates pathways to long-term well-being.

Key Performance Indicators: Referrals	FY 25
(#) Number of referrals made for substance use disorder	87
(#) Number of referrals made for treatment of mental health disorders	15
(#) Number of referrals made for food and nutrition assistance	87
(#) Number of referrals made for housing assistance	96
(#) Number of referrals made for primary medical care	35
(#) Number of referrals made for case management / wrap around services	137
(#) Number of tests conducted for HIV	740
(#) Number of tests conducted for Hepatitis C	734
(#) Number of people linked to treatment for HIV or Hepatitis C	27

### Lorenzo's Story

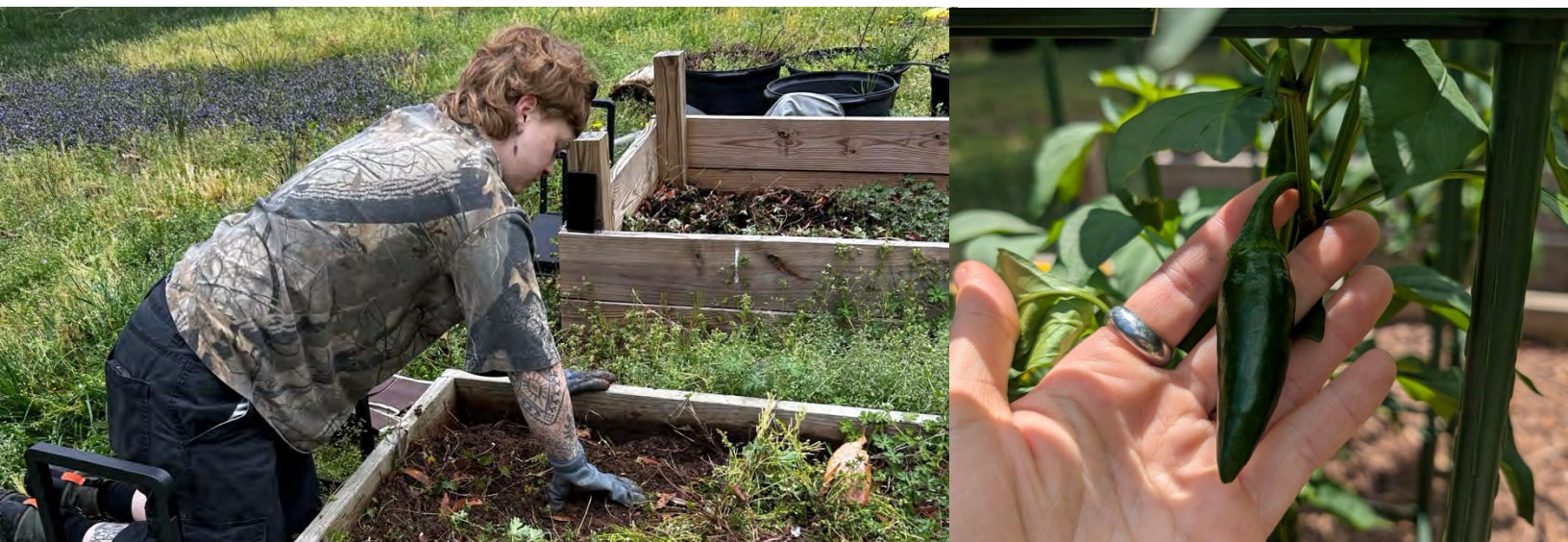
I came to Charlotte in 2022 after serving 14 years in prison. Since then, it’s been a tough road – I’ve struggled with relapse, homelessness, and trying to get back on my feet. Coming to this center has really helped me feel safe. I can get clean supplies without judgment and just take a breath.



After my recent surgery, Lena (outreach staff) gave me a wound care kit and some cleaning supplies to help take care of myself. That meant a lot. Not many people think to do that – she really looked out for me. **I’m hoping to get into detox soon, talk to the housing coordinator, and eventually reconnect with my daughter.** I’m still facing challenges like transportation and finding work, but having a place like this gives me a little hope.

## COMMUNITY GARDEN

Recently, QCHR launched a community garden to promote wellness and healthy living for program participants. The garden provides a shared space where participants, volunteers, and staff grow fresh produce and learn basic gardening skills. It supports food access for individuals who face economic and health challenges and offers a constructive, community-centered activity that builds connection and routine. The project has become a gathering point that fosters trust, reduces isolation, and encourages positive participation in the broader community.



## HOUSING PROGRAM

The Harm Reduction team expanded its scope this year by integrating housing support into its existing syringe-exchange and outreach services. Through funding from the multi-state opioid-settlement agreements, Queen City Harm Reduction launched a Housing First-oriented initiative designed to help individuals who use drugs secure safe, stable, and affordable housing. The program is grounded in the recognition that housing is a prerequisite for health, stability, and long-term recovery, rather than an outcome reserved for those who have already achieved sobriety.

Key Performance Indicators: QCHR Housing Program	FY 24	FY 25
(#) Number of meetings with housing participants	937	1751
(#) Number of total participants enrolled in QCHR housing program	98	107
(#) Number of social service and healthcare referrals for QCHR housing participants	1105	1105

The initiative focuses on serving individuals who face significant barriers to traditional rental housing. Many participants have limited income, poor or nonexistent credit, eviction histories, criminal-justice involvement, or lack essential documentation required for leasing. To address these barriers, QCHR engages clients directly through harm-reduction services, builds trusting relationships with county residents, and identifies and supports those who are ready for housing support. Case managers assist participants in obtaining identification, help to complete rental applications, prepare participants for

property-manager interviews, and locate units that meet their needs. The program also provides short-term rental subsidies and ongoing case-management to ensure a successful transition into housing.

### Robert's Story

When I first reached out for help, I didn't know where to start. I was struggling with my health, didn't have insurance, and was at risk of becoming homeless. But the team at Queen City Harm Reduction stood by me and became my advocates in ways I never expected. They helped me get into healthcare, find the right insurance, and start the medication I needed for my HIV. That alone was life-changing. But they didn't stop there.

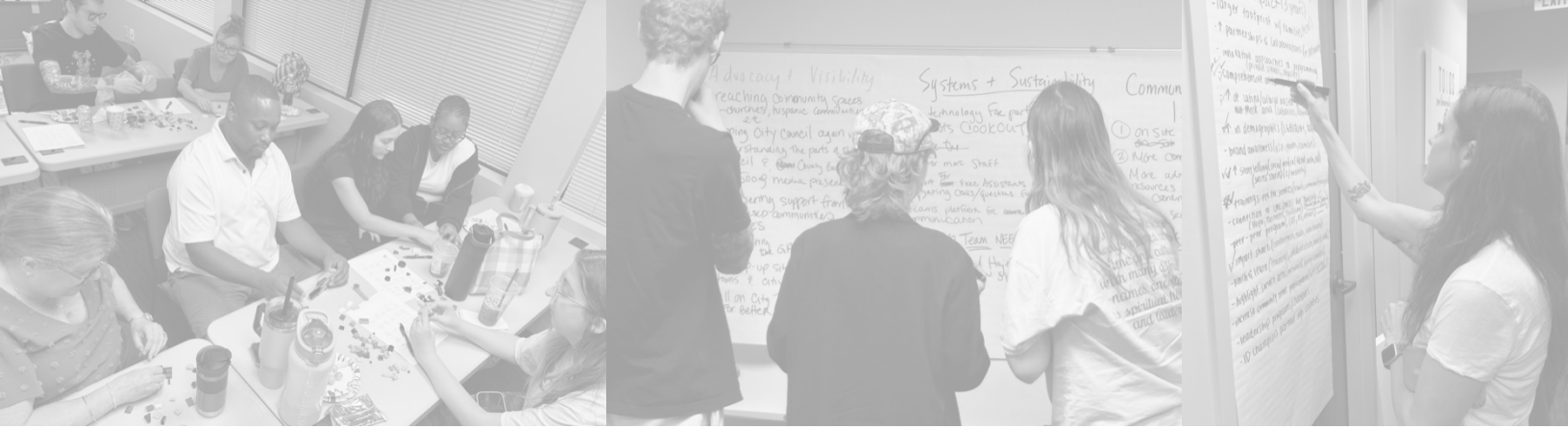
Through their housing program, **I was able to secure a stable, long-term place to live** – something I hadn't had in a long time. It gave me peace of mind and a chance to focus on my future instead of just surviving day to day. They also supported me in some unconventional ways, including helping me navigate a few legal issues. No judgment – just real support when I needed it most.

Thanks to them, **I finally feel like I have a foundation under me** and a path forward.

## HOUSING PROGRAM OUTCOMES

This work has already produced considerable outcomes. In FY25, the program secured housing for 107 individuals. Participants who obtained housing reported an 75% reduction in drug use, a finding that underscores the stabilizing impact of safe living conditions. Many clients also experienced improved employment outcomes, including increases in work hours, movement from part-time to full-time jobs, and entry into fields such as customer service, hospitality, security, manual labor, and healthcare support. Importantly, the program has not had any evictions among participants placed into housing.

Overall, the housing-stability program illustrates the powerful role that harm-reduction organizations can play in addressing the social determinants that shape substance-use outcomes. The housing program's success provides some evidence that a housing-first approach can help to reduce the burden of substance use challenges and assist Charlotte residents in obtaining safe and affordable housing.



## PLANNING FOR OUR FUTURE

In the summer of 2025 CPS undertook a full-scale strategic planning cycle to chart out its future. The strategic planning process included a data collection process including quantitative and qualitative data through the use of key informant interviews, a staff survey, and a board survey. CPS Board and Staff engaged in a planning retreat to interpret data findings and address these challenges and opportunities.

Participants agreed that CPS must strengthen its brand identity, leverage social media storytelling, deepen relationships with schools, families, faith communities, and policymakers; formalize internal processes such as budgeting, donor tracking, and performance reviews; and build scalable outreach infrastructure for harm-reduction teams. They also called for expanding reach to underserved groups, integrating services through mobile outreach and on-site counseling, and institutionalizing data collection and impact storytelling.

The retreat distilled three cross-cutting priorities: **advocacy & visibility**, **systems & sustainability**, and **community & program impact**. The following describes these priority areas and key goals for each priority.

### PRIORITY 1: COMMUNITY + PROGRAM IMPACT

Goal: Expand programs and services to demonstrate broader community impact in prevention and harm reduction.



### PRIORITY 2: SYSTEMS + SUSTAINABILITY

Goal: Develop best-in-class operations and procedures to ensure the long-term sustainability of CPS.

### PRIORITY 3: ADVOCACY + VISIBILITY

Goal: Establish Center for Prevention Services as the premier prevention and harm reduction provider across region.

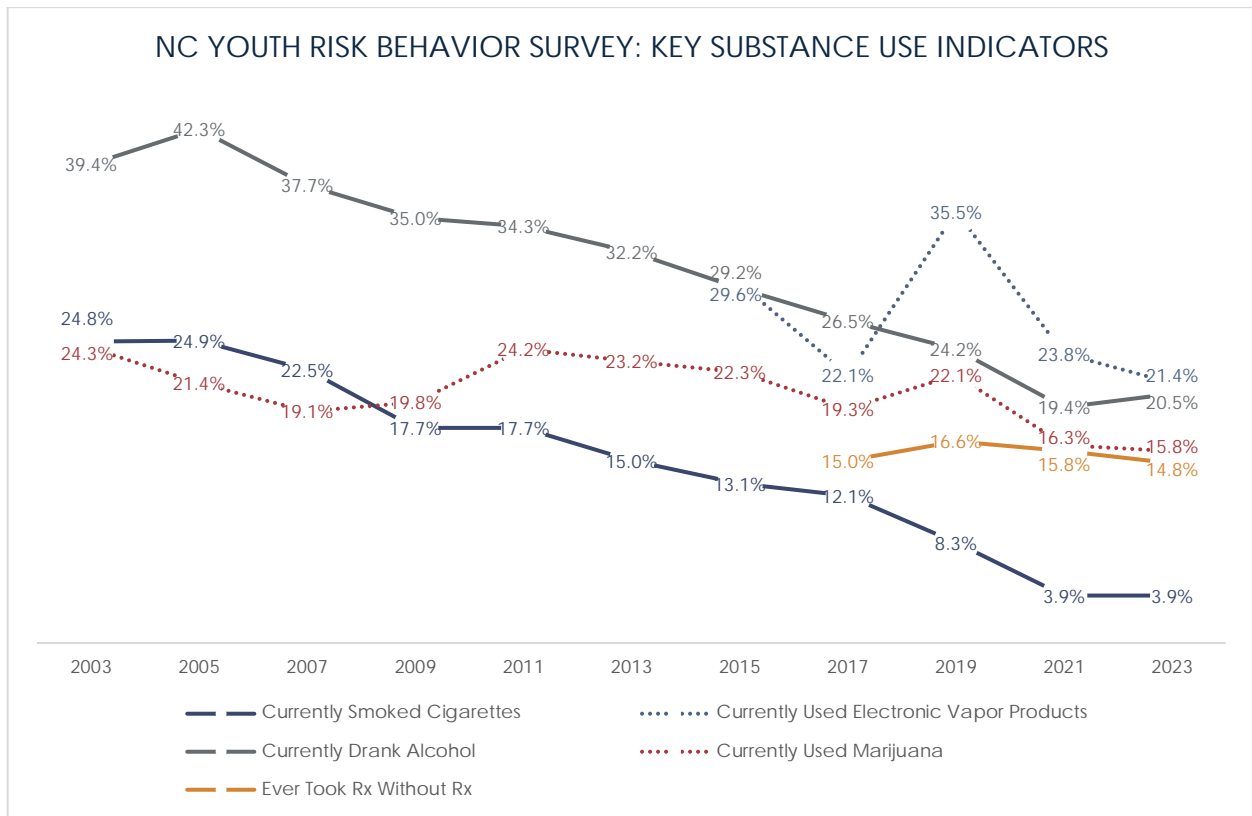
Informed by these priorities, CPS has developed a strategic plan that includes process, output, and outcomes indicators for each priority. These Key Performance Indicators also have associated targets that will allow the organization to track progress toward agreed upon goals over the next three years FY26-FY28.

# APPENDIX: SUBSTANCE USE TRENDS

Understanding current substance use trends is essential to guiding prevention, treatment, and recovery strategies across North Carolina. This section provides an overview of the most recent data on youth and adult substance use, with a focus on statewide patterns as well as trends within key counties served by the Center for Prevention Services. By examining indicators such as alcohol use, tobacco and vaping, marijuana, and prescription drug misuse, this data offers insight into emerging challenges and progress made through prevention efforts. These trends help inform strategic planning, resource allocation, and continued advocacy for evidence-based interventions that support community health and well-being

## YOUTH SUBSTANCE USE

Perhaps one of the clearest long-term trends in youth substance use is that more youth are choosing to avoid using alcohol and other drugs. For example, data from the North Carolina Youth Risk Behavior Survey indicate a steady decline in substance use among youth across nearly all categories over the past two decades.



The trends in the data demonstrate:

- Cigarette use has seen a dramatic decline, dropping from 24.8% in 2003 to 3.9% in 2023.
- Alcohol use has been reduced by half, from 39.4% in 2003 to 20.5% in 2023.
- Marijuana use fluctuated slightly over time but ultimately declined from 24.3% in 2003 to 15.8% in 2023.

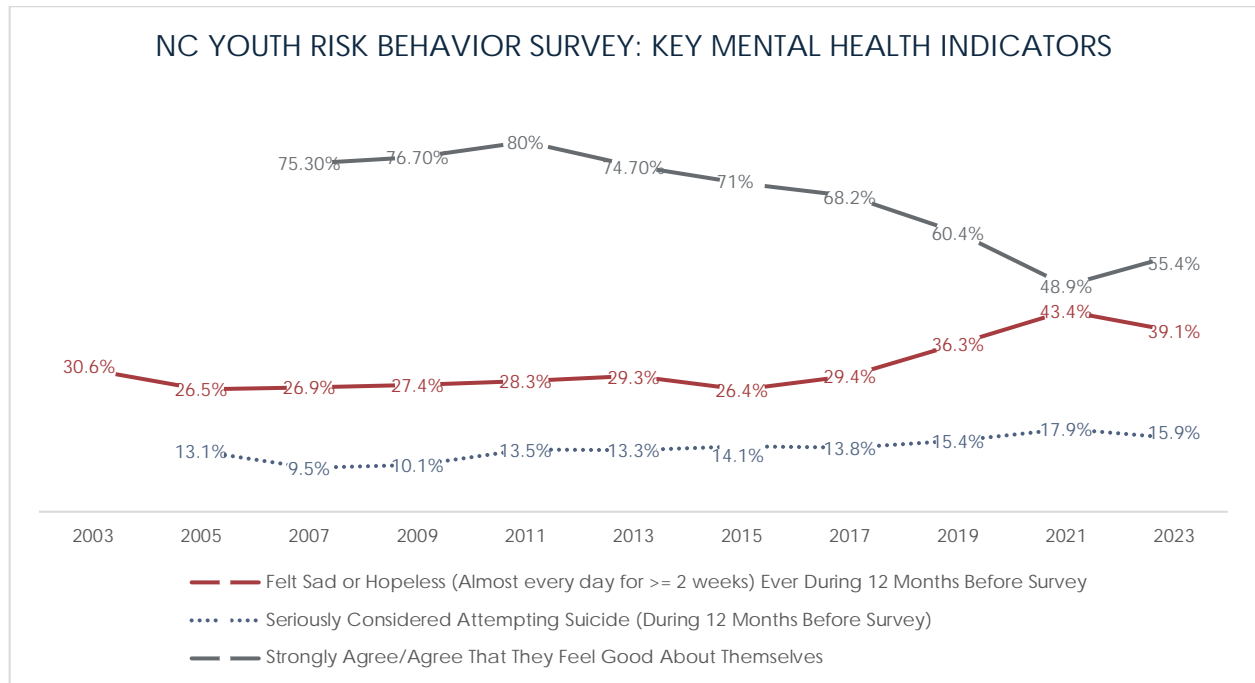
- Misuse of prescription drugs (ever taken without a prescription), tracked since 2017, declined from 15.0% to 14.8%.
- Electronic vapor product use, which peaked at 35.5% in 2019, has dropped to 21.4% by 2023.

These downward trends offer encouraging evidence of the potential impact of statewide and local prevention efforts, including the work of organizations like the Center for Prevention Services. Sustained investment in youth prevention programming may be contributing to meaningful reductions in risk behaviors over time.

## YOUTH MENTAL HEALTH

Data from the North Carolina Youth Risk Behavior Survey (YRBS) reveal significant shifts in youth mental health over the past two decades. Three key indicators—emotional distress, suicidality, and self-perception—offer insight into the evolving mental health landscape for adolescents:

- Feelings of sadness or hopelessness have sharply increased, rising from 30.6% in 2003 to a peak of 43.4% in 2021, before a slight decline to 39.1% in 2023.
- Serious consideration of attempting suicide also rose over time, from 13.1% in 2003 to 15.9% in 2023, peaking at 17.9% in 2021.
- Positive self-perception—youth who strongly agreed or agreed that they feel good about themselves—declined from 75.3% in 2003 to a low of 48.9% in 2021, recovering slightly to 55.4% in 2023.



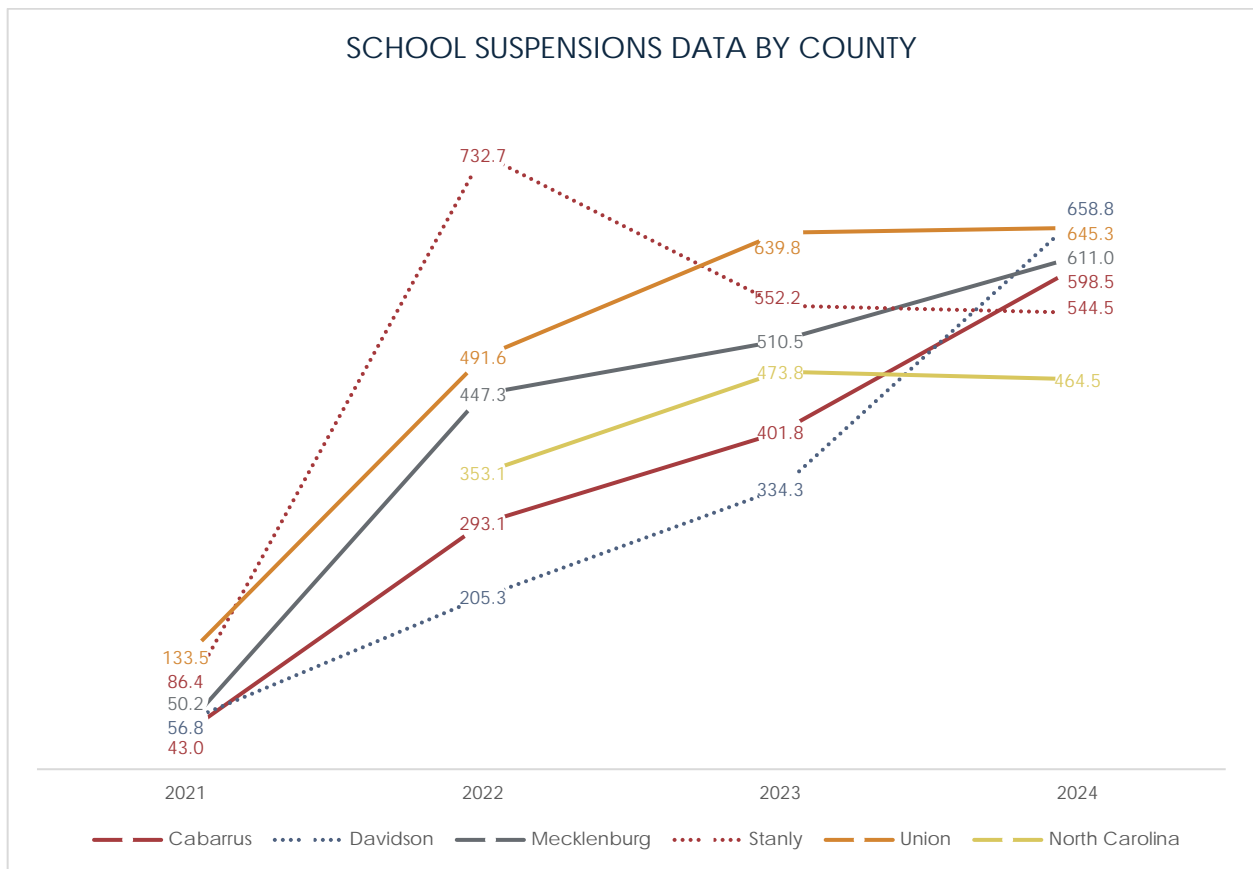
While recent data suggest a modest improvement from the 2021 COVID-era peak, overall trends highlight growing mental health challenges for North Carolina youth. The declining sense of self-worth and rising rates of sadness and suicidal ideation underscore the importance of continued investment in programs and services assisting youth.

## YOUTH BEHAVIORS – SCHOOL SUSPENSIONS

Over the past four years, all counties—Cabarrus, Davidson, Mecklenburg, Stanly, and Union—have reported school suspension rates for controlled substances at school (primarily vaping products that exceed the North Carolina state average. This indicates a regional trend of higher disciplinary action compared to state norms.

Between 2021 and 2024, suspension rates rose significantly in every county. Notably:

- Stanly County showed the sharpest spike early on (from 43.0 in 2021 to 732.7 in 2022), before leveling off at 658.8 by 2024.
- Cabarrus County also saw a steady increase, reaching 544.5 in 2024.
- Mecklenburg and Davidson Counties both surpassed 600 suspensions per 10,000 students by 2024, reflecting ongoing increases year over year.
- Union County, while slightly decreasing between 2023 and 2024, remains above the state average at 464.5.

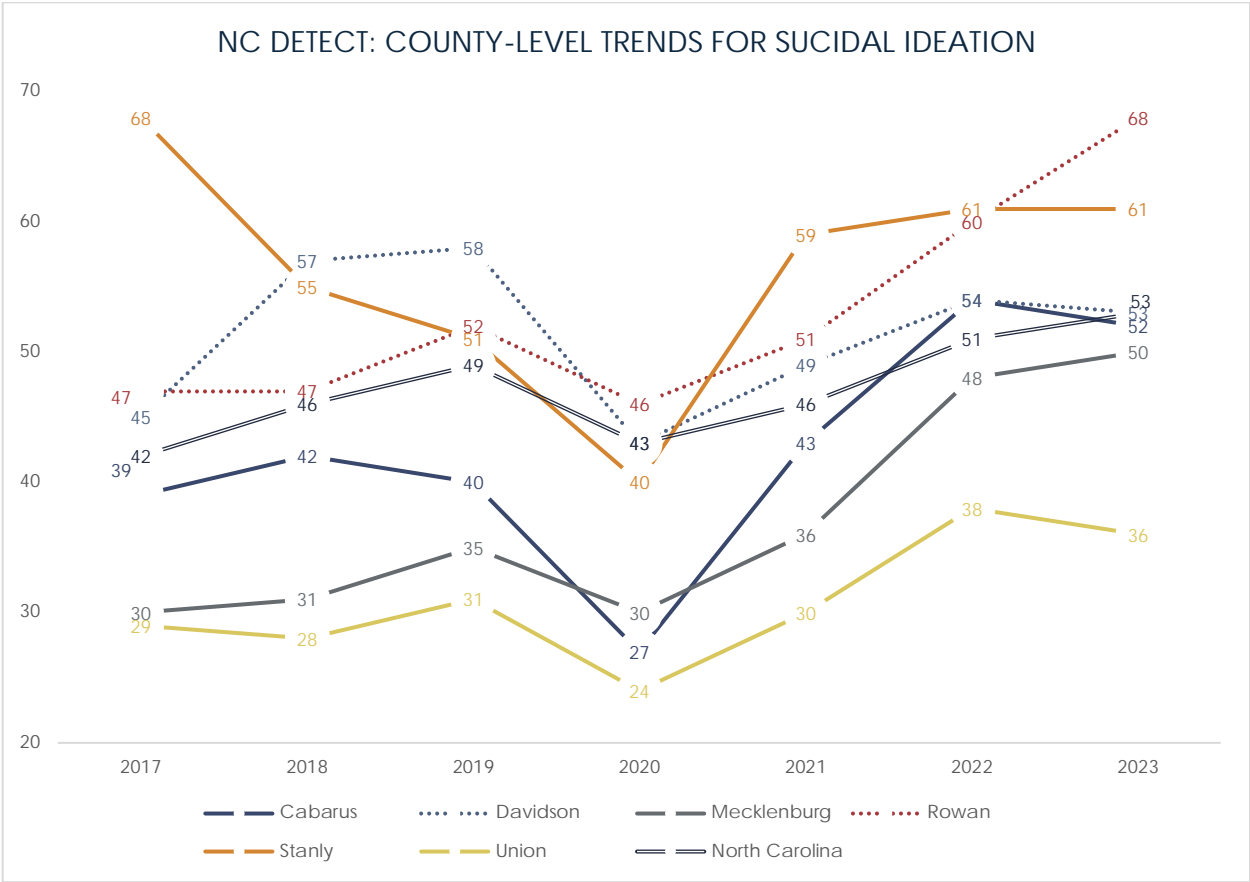


This upward trend is particularly concerning as it demonstrates the consequences of youth vaping for school climate, discipline, and student academic success. These findings suggest a growing need for preventive interventions focused on substance use education, early intervention, and alternatives to suspension, especially among youth.

# EMERGENCY DEPARTMENT VISITS – SUICIDAL IDEATION

Emergency department visits for suicidal ideation (all ages) have shown a trending increase across most counties in the region. From 2017-2023, all counties (except Stanly, who had a high baseline to begin with) observed an increase in emergency department visits due to suicidal ideation. Key highlights:

- Rowan and Stanly Counties both reported the highest rates in 2023 at 68 and 61 (respectively) per 10,000 residents, representing sharp increases from their 2020 pandemic-era lows.
- Davidson and Cabarrus Counties also saw consistent increases from 2020 through 2023, reaching 53 and 52, respectively.
- Mecklenburg County climbed from 30 in 2017 to 50 in 2023, signaling a nearly 70% increase over the course of the seven-year period.
- Union County, while consistently lower than its regional peers, increased from 24 in 2020 to 36 in 2023.

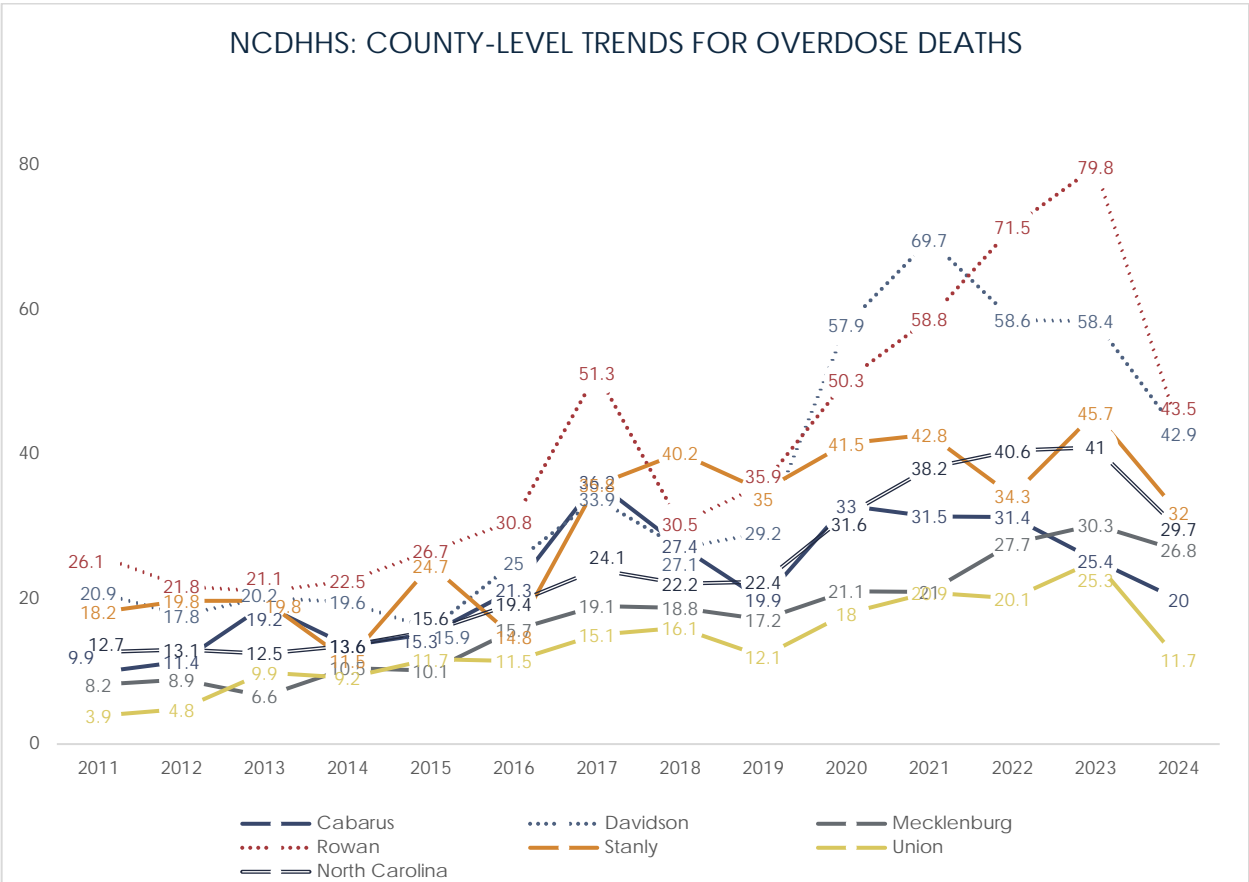


After a notable dip in ED visits during 2020—likely linked to pandemic-related disruptions—all counties experienced a rebound and subsequent rise. These trends suggest growing community needs around mental health support, crisis intervention, and youth and adult suicide prevention, particularly as ED visits serve as a key entry point for care.

# OVERDOSE DEATHS

Over the past decade, overdose death rates have risen significantly across all counties in the analysis—Cabarrus, Davidson, Mecklenburg, Rowan, Stanly, and Union—with several counties consistently reporting rates well above the North Carolina state average.

- Rowan County stands out with the highest rates in the region, peaking at 79.8 per 100,000 in 2023 before a drop to 43.5 in 2024. Its rates have consistently exceeded the state average and other counties since 2016.
- Davidson County also shows sharp increases, reaching 71.5 in 2022 and holding above 58 through 2024.
- Stanly County has seen a steady rise since 2014, reaching 45.7 in 2023 and dropping slightly to 32.0 in 2024, yet still well above the state benchmark.
- Cabarrus, Mecklenburg, and Union Counties show comparatively lower rates but have all experienced upward trends since 2015, with modest declines or plateaus in the most recent year.
- The North Carolina state average itself has climbed from 11.1 in 2011 to 29.7 in 2024, reflecting the broader public health crisis.



After a relatively flat period in the early 2010s, overdose death rates began rising sharply around 2015. Most counties peaked in either 2022 or 2023, with early signs of a potential decline in 2024—but rates remain well above historical averages.