

# Washington Healthy Youth (WHY) Coalition

## Overview

The Washington Healthy Youth (WHY) Coalition represents more than 15 state agencies and organizations.

Historically the WHY Coalition had focused exclusively on underage drinking prevention. However, in 2014 the group added focus on underage marijuana use prevention in response to the statewide legalization of marijuana/cannabis use for persons 21 and older.

### The coalition focuses on:

- Promoting changes in industry policy and practices
- Educating policy makers on prevention issues and best practices
- Monitoring impacts of policy on prevention
- Supporting prevention efforts through development and distribution of educational materials and resources
- Increasing statewide education, collaboration, and partnerships to reduce youth access to alcohol and marijuana use

Coalition members share information about environmental and policy changes in schools and communities regarding minors' access to, and use of, alcohol and marijuana, especially following passage of Initiative 1183, which deregulated the sale and distribution of hard liquor and Initiative 502, which legalized recreational marijuana use. For example, in 2019 the coalition promoted prevention practices by providing feedback to the Washington State Liquor and Cannabis Board regarding marijuana packaging and labeling and the potential impact on children and youth.

### Strategic action plan


In the fall of 2018, coalition members revisited the coalition's strategic action plan and outlined action items to support the group's purpose, including:

- Connect with local coalitions around the state to determine what issues they face (policy, communication, information, and activity), and how the coalition can support them in their prevention efforts
- Ensure that the WHY Coalition is represented by multiple community sectors
- Increase policy effectiveness
- Increase cannabis impairment awareness in courts, adult consumers, and legislators
- Oversee and assess use of social media promotion of cannabis and alcohol use
- Synthesize and collect data

Members agreed that the Communications Workgroup will collaborate with other agencies to continue the work set out by the State Prevention Enhancement Consortium.

The website <https://www.starttalkingnow.org/> is maintained by the WHY Coalition Communications Workgroup and is a substance use disorder prevention resource for parents and other adult influencers. This website was redesigned in 2017; the team continues to review and update the website's data. The WHY Communications Workgroup also developed a prevention brochure for parents, which has been distributed statewide.

The WHY Communications Workgroup also developed a statewide community involvement campaign called the 4.20 Parent Call to Action. This social media outreach piggybacked off of the Governor's 2016 Proclamation to make April 20, "talk with your kids about not using marijuana day." Community organizations and coalitions participated by sharing Facebook posts developed by the WHY Coalition Communications Workgroup and shared on the Start Talking Now website, and by purchasing display advertisement space on social media to spread the message of encouraging parents and guardians to talk with their children about not using marijuana. The Communications Workgroup has



served as an advisory team for the Department of Health Youth Marijuana Prevention and Adult Influence campaign, the Rethinking College Drinking campaign and the DBHR Underage Drinking Prevention media campaign.

### **Partners**

The statewide Washington Healthy Youth Coalition is co-chaired by the Liquor and Cannabis Board and HCA. Coalition members include the Department of Health, Educational Service Districts, Washington Association for Substance Abuse and Violence Prevention, Northwest High Intensity Drug Trafficking Areas, Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction, Washington Traffic Safety Commission, Department of Licensing, Washington Poison Control, Foundations for Healthy Generations, Washington State Patrol, Washington Association of Juvenile Court Administrators, and Seattle Children’s Hospital.

### **Oversight**

HCA provides semi-annual reports to federal funders and convenes monthly coalition meetings.

### **For more information**

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Websites:

- <https://www.hca.wa.gov/about-hca/behavioral-health-and-recovery>
- <https://www.starttalkingnow.org/>