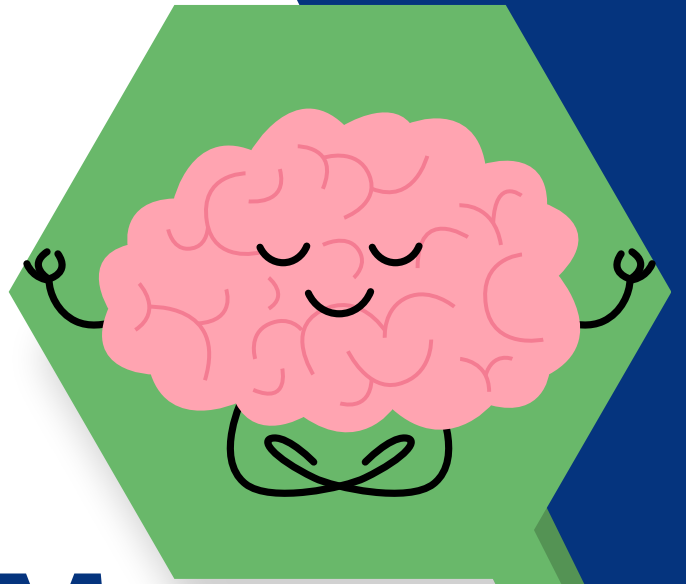




PROGRAM OVERVIEWS: MIDDLE/HIGH 2026-2027



PROGRAM OVERVIEWS

2025-2026

Introduction

The Council on Chemical Abuse developed and designed the supplemental programs outlined in this document to help reduce substance use among Berks County youth. Each overview listed provides the program objectives, target audience, education and activities offered and the highlighted prevention skills. All programs encourage students to practice critical thinking skills which are crucial for independent decision making.

Program Overviews

Escape the Vape: Middle School
Escape the Vape – SAVE (Middle/High School)
Teens and Technology (Middle/High School)
Marijuana Real Talk
Friendships Matter
The Upstander
Clear and Present Danger (Middle/High School)

Additional Program information

- Programs are facilitated by trained prevention specialists.
- Program length – Programs are designed for a full hour, however lessons easily adapt for a 40-minute class period.
- Data collection surveys required for each program. Two-part programs include a pre/post survey.
- COCA provides an optout letter for parents that explains the program and survey. Parents can opt out of the program, survey, or both.
- COCA requests faculty complete our teacher feedback survey.
- All surveys are completed electronically via survey links emailed to school contact person.
- **Parent/Professional Programs available for all programs**

For additional information please contact:

Alicia Kline
Prevention Program Supervisor
610-451-9399
akline@cocaberks.org

Prevention Program Overview

Program: **Escape the Vape: Taking Care of you**

Program Objective

Escape the Vape engages students in conversations and activities regarding the dangers surrounding vaping and the use of addictive substance such as nicotine.

This program teaches students to:

- Understand how Electronic Cigarettes work to deliver harmful chemicals.
- Identify the chemicals in E-liquid.
- Understand the potential harm vaping causes the lungs and heart.
- Understand why nicotine is addictive and disrupts healthy brain development.
- Identify strategies to protect the brain.
- Introduction to the concept of self-care.
- Identifying self-care strategies.

Program Summary

Sessions	One
Population	Appropriate for 6th-8th grade
Education	<p>Part 1- Devices and Effect to the Lungs</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">· Gage students' knowledge on different devices and names· Explain the operational components found in all devices· Explain E-Liquid and identify ingredients· Define differences between water vapor and aerosol· Discuss the dangers of chemicals in the lungs from vaping <p>Part 2 – Nicotine, addiction, and the brain</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">· Identify Nicotine as the addictive substance delivered during vaping· Explain how nicotine effects the body including the brain· Discuss addiction and brain development· Identify ways to protect the brain during development <p>Part 3-Self-Care</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">· Discuss and define self-care· Identify self-care strategies· Resources
Activities	<p>Students engage in discussion designed to practice critical thinking skills as they explore their thoughts and ideas around health, addiction and self-care. This program also includes three larger activities that include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• What's in the Vape Challenge - Students identify vaping chemicals• Picture This Game - Helps explain Dopamine and Addiction• Refusal Skills Game - Refresher on ways students can avoid substance use
Skill	This program teaches the concept of self-care and appropriate techniques to manage emotions in the moment.

Prevention Program Overview

Program: Teens and Technology

Program Objectives

Teens and Technology is a two-part series that engages students in activities regarding appropriate technology use and creating a balance between life on and offline. In addition, this program provides an awareness to the risk of addiction associated with technology use and helps students gain insight to their own use of technology and the feelings associate with spending time online. Technology remains a large part of our daily lives and teens need the opportunity to build skills to successfully navigate both worlds.

This program teaches students to:

- Define Digital Citizenship and characteristics of a positive digital citizen
- Identify online safety risks
- Create safety for others online
- Maintain healthy balance between on and offline activity
- Define addiction and the risks associate with technology use and gambling
- Understand how technology is designed to keep people engaged
- Recognize the warning signs of addiction
- Identify support resources

Program Summary

Sessions	Two
Population	Appropriate for 6th-8th grade students
Education	<p>Part 1 - Digital Citizenship</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Examine personal use of technology and identify concerns• Warning signs of online scams and dating abuse• Dangers of sexting• Definition of balance• How to create and maintain balance <p>Part 2 - Designed for addiction</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Money and technology• Gaming and gambling• Design Techniques that keep teens engage• Risk and warning signs of addiction• Maintaining balance• Where to seek support
Activities	<p>Part 1 - Provides students with critical thinking exercises that help examine their technology use and recognize those red flags to warn against online scams and personal safety risks</p> <p>Part 2 - Students participate in activities that provide examples of how social media and gaming designers use the behavior concepts of positive reinforcement and classical conditioning.</p>
Prevention Skill	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Online safety strategies.• Strategies to maintain balance on and offline• Emotional coping skills

Prevention Program Overview

Program: Marijuana Real Talk

Program Objectives

Marijuana Real Talk: Engages students in discussions and activities on marijuana dangers, myths and consequences.

The program teaches students to:

- Understand the chemical breakdown of marijuana.
- Understand the complexities of the effects marijuana has on the brain.
- Understand effects of marijuana on central nervous system and heart.
- Identify negative peer pressure.
- Utilize critical thinking and refusal skills.

Program Summary

Sessions	One
Population	Appropriate for 7th-10th grade students
Education	<p>Effect of Marijuana</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Chemical makeup of marijuana• THC and CBD interaction with the body.• Effects of marijuana on the brain, central nervous system and heart <p>Consequences to Using Marijuana</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Addiction• School and home life• Critically thinking about choices regarding marijuana use. <p>Refusal Skills and Alternatives</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Discussion on positive and negative peer pressure.• Recognizing alternatives to using marijuana• Utilizing refusal skills
Activities	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Role play scenario activity.• Group discussions and resolutions
Prevention Skill	Program teaches decision making, refusal and critical thinking skills. Students are educated on the dangers of marijuana use and encouraged to make decisions while critically evaluating all consequences.

Prevention Program Overview

Program: Friendships Matter

Program Objectives

Friendships Matter helps students build healthy friendships, recognize positive and negative peer influences, and develop skills for maintaining supportive relationships. Through discussions, group activities, and real-life scenarios, students learn how friendships impact their well-being and decision-making.

The program teaches students to:

- Identify characteristics of healthy and unhealthy friendships.
- Understand how peers influence choices and behavior.
- Practice healthy communication and boundary-setting.
- Develop strategies for handling peer pressure and friendship conflicts.
- Identify trusted supports and strengthen their social connections.

Program Summary

Sessions	One
Population	Appropriate for 7th-9th grade students
Education	<p>Key Learning Concepts</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Healthy friendships are built on trust, respect, honesty, kindness, and communication.• Friends can influence decisions in both positive and negative ways.• Setting boundaries is an important part of healthy relationships.• Positive peer connections support emotional well-being and resilience.• Seeking help from trusted adults is a sign of strength.
Activities	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Friendship Opinion Continuum• Friendship Strengthening Circle• Friendship Circles Reflection Activity• Friendship Challenges Scenario Discussions• Group Problem-Solving Activities• Friendship Action Plan Exit Ticket
Prevention Skill	Program teaches decision making, refusal and critical thinking skills. Students strengthen their communication skills and learn how to set appropriate boundaries.

Prevention Program Overview

Program: The Upstander

Program Objectives

The Upstander empowers students to recognize their influence in bullying situations and develop the confidence to take safe, positive action. Rather than focusing solely on the harms of bullying, the program emphasizes the power of students to create a culture of inclusion, respect, and support within their school community. Through discussion, scenario-based problem solving, and teamwork, students learn how to move from passive bystanders to active upstanders.

The program teaches students to:

- Define bullying and identify the elements of repetition and power imbalance.
- Distinguish between cyberbullying and in-person bullying.
- Recognize the four roles present in bullying situations: target, bystander, reinforcer, and upstander.
- Understand the impact of exclusion and the importance of inclusion.
- Identify barriers that prevent students from speaking up.
- Practice safe and effective strategies for responding to bullying.
- Recognize when adult support is needed.

Program Summary

Sessions	One
Population	Appropriate for 7th–9th grade students
Education	Key Learning Concepts <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Bullying involves a misuse of power and repeated harmful behavior.• The actions of bystanders can either reinforce or stop bullying.• Inclusion promotes belonging, safety, and respect.• Cyberbullying can occur through social media, messaging apps, group chats, and other digital platforms.• Students have multiple options for responding safely when witnessing bullying.• Seeking help from trusted adults is a sign of strength, not weakness.• Positive peer influence can help create healthier school environments.
Activities	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Inclusion vs. Exclusion Brainstorm: Students identify emotions associated with being excluded and included.• Upstander Toolbox Creation: Students develop a collection of practical response strategies.• Student Solutions Team Activity: Small groups analyze realistic bullying scenarios and develop safe, respectful solutions.• Group Debrief: Students share recommendations and discuss how their actions can positively impact school culture.
Prevention Skill	Students learn positive relationships and how responsible decisions contribute to a safe and respectful school environment. Students strengthen empathy, communication, problem-solving skills while learning safe strategies to support others and respond to bullying situations.

Prevention Program Overview

Program: Escape the Vape SAVE (Skills for Awareness and Vape Free Empowerment)

Program Objectives

Escape the Vape SAVE: Provides and education program as an alternative or in addition to suspension for students who violate school district vaping policies. The SAVE program educates students on the physical health risks of vaping but also allows students to examine their vaping use to determine the need for additional support.

This program teaches students to:

- Understand the health risks associated with electronic cigarettes.
- Identify the ingredients contained in electronic cigarettes.
- Define addiction and withdrawal and dependency.
- Understand advertising techniques used by the industry.
- Recognize the reason for using electronic cigarettes.
- Assess their own electronic cigarette use.
- Develop a support system and alternatives to vaping.

Program Summary

Sessions	Two 1 hour session
Population	Appropriate for 8th-12th grade students
Education	<p>Part 1 - Facts</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Define electronic cigarettes and the operational design.• Determine the chemical contents of e-liquid.• Understand current research on the health effects of vaping.• Define addiction.• Understand addiction to Nicotine and other vaping substances. <p>Part 2 - Education</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Media's story of addiction vs Reality of Addiction• Advertising techniques targeting youth.• Why vaping?• Understanding stress and emotions.• Alternatives to managing stress and emotions.• Hope of recovery and changing the narrative of youth use• Resources
Prevention Skills	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Critical thinking• Comprehend and process stress and emotions.• Discover healthy alternatives to managing emotions.• Strategies to help remain substance free.

Prevention Program Overview

Program: Clear and Present Danger

Program Objectives

Clear and Present Danger engages students in conversations regarding importance of safe medication practices and understanding the connection between prescription opioids and an addiction to heroin. Early awareness helps youth build protective decision-making habits. Additionally, equipping youth with skills and hope for recovery shifts school culture and saves lives.

Key Objectives are:

- Identifying prescription and over-the-counter medications.
- Definitions and dangers of misuse.
- Medication display (visual examples).
- Peer pressure and refusal methods.
- The reality of addiction: how it develops over time.
- How overdose occurs and why fentanyl is so dangerous.
- Signs and symptoms of overdose.
- Safe response: Narcan and calling for help.
- Alternatives to managing stress and emotions.

Program Summary

Sessions	One
Population	Appropriate for 6th–9th grade students
Education	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• The reality of addiction: how it develops over time.• How overdose occurs and why fentanyl is so dangerous.• Signs and symptoms of overdose.• Safe response: Narcan and calling for help.• Alternatives to managing stress and emotions.
Activities	Students compete in a Kahoot quiz to test knowledge, spark discussion, and reinforce learning.
Prevention Skill	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Coping Skill Strategies