

The Center for Community Health, Education, and Research (CCHERS)

Community Voices Speaking Truth

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The Impacts of Smoking & Vaping on BIPOC Adolescents Mental Health

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The Impacts of Smoking & Vaping on BIPOC Adolescent Mental Health

ABSTRACT:

This paper aims to examine the prevalence of adolescent smoking and vaping in the Boston, Massachusetts area. The research holds significant relevance for the Center for Community Health Education Research and Service (CCHERS), particularly its Community Voices Speaking Truth program. Community Voices is a civic engagement initiative designed to help high school students understand public health topics and issues, health equity and research. Each year, the program hosts two cohorts; summer of 2024, four students from high schools in the greater Boston area participated. These students identified smoking/vaping and mental health as prevalent concerns among their peers. This paper will summarize their research, data collection, and personal insights, all supported by evidence and statistics from peer-reviewed literature. Based on the students' consensus, it is clear that smoking and vaping has a detrimental impact on BIPOC adolescents in Boston, and this paper will provide a comprehensive analysis of this issue.

"Smoking has become more common and accessible, leading to increased mental health concerns, particularly among adolescents (ages 10-19)."

INTRODUCTION:

BIPOC Adolescents are increasingly engaging in smoking and vaping, behaviors that have been associated with a marked rise in mental health issues within this vulnerable age group. The past decade has witnessed a surge in e-cigarette use among teenagers, coinciding with a concerning increase in rates of anxiety, depression, and other mental health challenges. This dual trend has alarmed healthcare professionals and researchers, given the critical developmental stage of adolescence, where the interplay between substance use and mental well-being is especially significant. Understanding how smoking and vaping affect BIPOC adolescent mental health is crucial for crafting effective prevention and intervention strategies. Although substantial research has focused on the physical health impacts of smoking and vaping, there is a notable gap in studies that systematically examine their specific effects on BIPOC adolescent mental health, particularly within the context of emerging substance use trends.

Smoking and vaping is perceived differently across cultures, with some viewing it as inherently harmful while others see it as part of communal rituals, such as fellowship. However, this study narrows its focus to BIPOC adolescents in the United States, specifically those in inner-city Boston. These students bring unique insights into how smoking and vaping manifests among diverse groups in their high schools, reflecting the various neighborhoods of Boston they reside in. The objective of this paper is to explore the complexities of smoking and vaping culture and its impact on BIPOC adolescents, with particular attention to the mental health effects, which are of primary concern to the youth of Boston. While physical, emotional, social, financial, and mental factors all play a role in the smoking and vaping culture, this study highlights the mental health implications as the most pressing issue among Boston's BIPOC adolescents.

LITERATURE REVIEW:

The article “Cardiopulmonary Consequences of Vaping in Adolescents: A Scientific Statement from the American Heart Association” provides a thorough analysis of the physical consequences of vaping, with a particular focus on its harmful effects on the cardiopulmonary system (Wold et al., 2022). Our primary objective is not only to identify the various impacts that vaping has on adolescents but also to take proactive steps to enhance their overall quality of life and mental health through effective prevention strategies. By leveraging the findings in this article, we can educate adolescents about the serious health risks associated with vaping. Additionally, by engaging with them directly, we can encourage healthier lifestyle choices and work towards reducing the prevalence of vaping in this vulnerable population. This approach aims to create a more informed and health-conscious generation, ultimately leading to better long-term outcomes.

Electronic Nicotine Delivery Systems (ENDS) devices, which include e-cigarettes, vape pens, and other vaping products, have surged in popularity among adolescents over the past decade. These devices are often marketed as a safer alternative to traditional cigarettes, but growing evidence suggests they pose significant risks, especially to young users. The article by Wold et al. (2022) emphasizes that “the toxicity of e-cigarette vapor remains poorly understood, with a few small studies suggesting potential cardiopulmonary toxicity,” highlighting the need for further research and awareness.

Directly engaging with adolescents and incorporating this research, along with concerns about e-cigarette toxicity, will allow us to promote healthier lifestyles. The article also notes that “inhalants of various types have physiological inflammatory, host defense, and other pathological effects on the pulmonary system, culminating in a wide range of lung diseases” (Wold et al., 2022). This highlights the extensive damage that inhaled substances, including e-cigarettes, can inflict on lung health, which should be incorporated into our educational efforts.

Addressing the health risks associated with vaping is essential for creating a more informed and health-conscious generation, ultimately leading to better long-term health outcomes.

“Smoking is not just a bad habit; it is a significant health risk that can harm brain development and overall well-being.”

Understanding the impact of smoking and vaping on adolescents is equally critical. Smoking and vaping is not just a bad habit; it is a significant health risk that can harm brain development and overall well-being. Many teenagers turn to smoking and vaping as a coping mechanism to manage stress or emotional difficulties, but this often exacerbates the problem (Gorfinkel et al., 2022). Smoking and vaping can increase anxiety, lead to social isolation, and contribute to poor mental health. The adverse effects of smoking and vaping on the developing brain can also impair cognitive functions, making it harder for teens to retain information and perform well academically. Addressing these issues is essential to helping teens lead healthy and balanced lives.

The article “The Link Between Depressive Symptoms and Vaping Nicotine in U.S. Adolescents” highlights that vaping is particularly prevalent among younger adolescents, approximately ages 12 to 14, who exhibit elevated depressive symptoms (Gorfinkel et al., 2022). This finding underscores the harmful effects of smoking and vaping during adolescence on overall health. Consequently, it is vital that adolescents who vape or smoke be screened for depressive symptoms so they can receive the support needed to quit smoking and vaping and improve their mental health. The analysis of this data is integral to our paper and to what we are trying to inform our target audience. This information can help adolescents understand what they are getting into and may make them think twice about smoking and vaping. Effectively communicating this information to the audience and their parents can make them more aware and cautious.

Some teens are already aware of the negative effects of smoking and vaping but don't know what they specifically are. Providing this information will help them understand the specific disadvantages that smoking and vaping has on them. This is also valuable for those who are unaware. “Past-year vaping of cannabis declined from 2020 to 2021 and remained steady in 2022 following large increases in 2018 and 2019. However, many middle and high school students still reported past-year cannabis vaping in 2022—6% of eighth graders, 15% of 10th graders, and 21% of 12th graders” (CDC, 2024). This data from the CDC shows that smoking and vaping among teens is still prevalent and, in some aspects, seems to be getting worse over time (CDC, 2024). Teens have popularized smoking and vaping and have made it a norm. “Cannabis use has been linked to a range of mental health problems,

such as depression and social anxiety” (Mattingly et al., 2024). This shows smoking and vaping has many negative effects; people are generally aware of the physical consequences but not as much about the mental ones.

Given the importance of mental health, it is crucial to address the significant effects of smoking and vaping on long-term health. Understanding the mental health consequences of smoking and vaping is crucial, as it can encourage adolescents to proceed with greater caution. This information is valuable because it not only explains why teens are engaging in these behaviors but also highlights the associated risks. If teens continue to smoke and vape at increasing rates, their exposure to serious health risks will only escalate. Since their introduction in 2007, and especially since 2011, the use of ENDS devices has ballooned among young users (CDC, 2011). The number of high school students in the U.S. using ENDS products increased from approximately 660,000 to 2 million in just one year (2013–2014) (CDC, 2015). This dramatic increase in the use of ENDS devices among adolescents can be attributed to several factors, including targeted marketing, the appeal of flavored e-liquids, and the misconception that these devices are a safer alternative to traditional smoking.

The nation is currently grappling with two distinct yet related epidemics: the outbreak of e-cigarette or vaping product use-associated lung injury (EVALI) and the increased use of ENDS devices among young people (Fedt et al., 2020; King et al., 2020; National Institute on Drug Abuse [NIDA], 2020). The surge in adolescent smoking has contributed to a broader epidemic of lung

injuries associated with ENDS devices. One of the major concerns with ENDS devices is the lack of regulation and the unknown long-term effects of inhaling the chemical mixtures found in e-liquids (Bonner et al., 2021; Esteban-Lopez et al., 2022).



This rise in usage among younger populations presents a significant public health challenge, as the development of chronic respiratory conditions such as EVALI puts adolescents at risk of severe respiratory distress. Moreover, the appeal of discreet and easily accessible vaping devices makes it difficult for parents and educators to monitor adolescent use, further exacerbating the issue. In 2019, this escalating public health concern was officially declared an epidemic, as cases of compromised respiratory function soared among adolescent populations (CDC, 2019).

METHODS:

This study utilized a cross-sectional survey design to examine the effects of smoking and vaping on the mental health of BIPOC adolescents aged 10 to 19. By using this design, we aimed to capture a snapshot of the current relationship between substance use and mental health within this demographic. While going over the different impacts that smoking and vaping has on mental health. For example, smoking and vaping may provide only temporary relief from stress, failing to address long-term effects and ultimately contributing to a persistent state of depression, anxiety, and stress in teens.

We used a combination of qualitative and quantitative methods to gain a comprehensive understanding of BIPOC adolescents' perspectives and attitudes toward smoking and vaping culture. This mixed-methods approach allowed us to delve deeper into the nuances of how smoking and vaping is perceived and experienced by BIPOC adolescents. By gathering both numerical data and rich, descriptive insights, we aimed to capture a more complete picture of the beliefs and values associated with smoking and vaping among this age group.

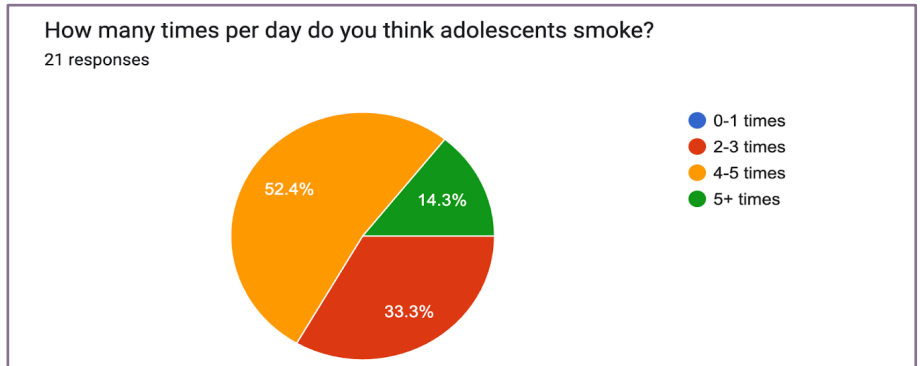
The decision to use both methods was driven by our objective to explore not only the prevalence and patterns of smoking and vaping but also the underlying attitudes and perceptions that may influence these behaviors. By understanding BIPOC adolescents' views and beliefs about smoking and vaping, we were able to better assess and compare the various ways in which smoking and vaping impacts their mental health. This approach provided us with a more nuanced analysis of the relationship between smoking and vaping behaviors and mental health outcomes, facilitating a more in-depth evaluation of how smoking and vaping culture affects BIPOC adolescents.

DATA / KEY FINDINGS:

To explore the impact of smoking and vaping on BIPOC adolescents' mental well-being, we administered a survey to teenagers, receiving 21 responses.

The culture surrounding smoking and vaping has evolved significantly over the years. While most people today are aware of the health risks, many teenagers continue to smoke, often because they believe it makes them look "cool" or helps them cope with stress. Despite this awareness, smoking and vaping remains prevalent among teens during critical developmental years, which can severely impact their health. Our survey uncovered diverse perspectives on smoking and vaping culture among BIPOC adolescents.

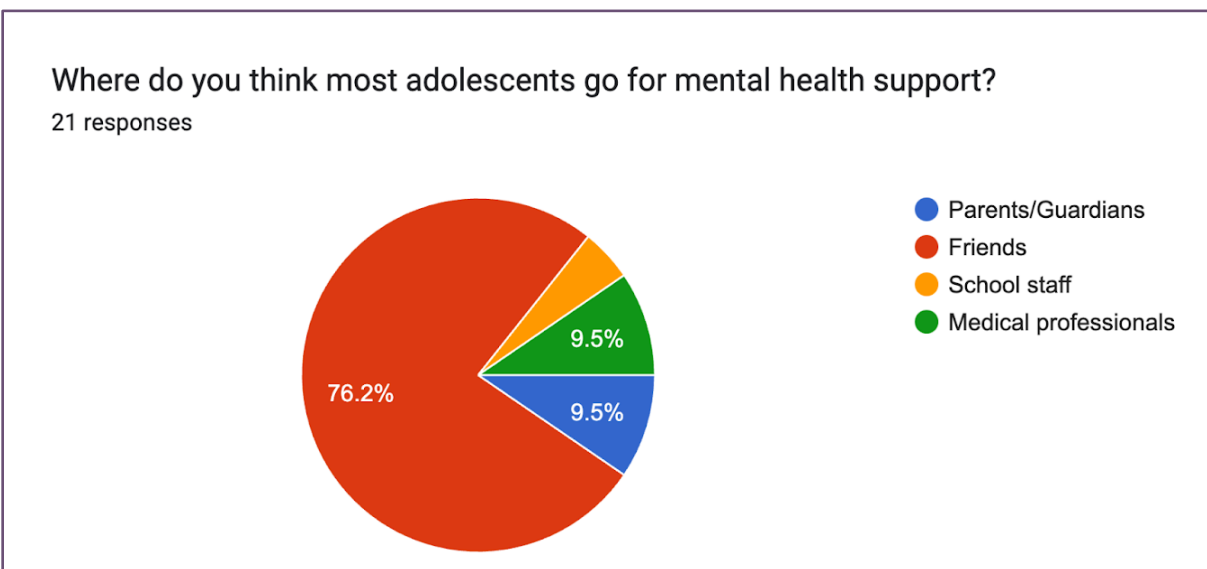
When we asked how often teenagers smoke, a majority of participants (52.4%) believed that BIPOC adolescents smoke regularly, at least 4 times a day, with 33.3% estimating that teens smoke more than 5 times daily. This suggests that smoking and vaping is a common activity among teens, reinforcing its normalization in certain communities.



Teens are generally aware that smoking and vaping is detrimental to their health, leading to issues such as anxiety, depression, and lung cancer. However, despite knowing these risks, many still choose to smoke, driven by peer pressure or the belief that smoking and vaping can help them cope with stress. This survey revealed mixed views on the impact of smoking and vaping; while some recognize its harm, others perceive benefits like stress relief, creating a broader tension between understanding the dangers of smoking and vaping and why teens continue to engage in the habit.

Frequently, smoking and vaping is admired as "cool" in communities where it's normalized, which makes it even more difficult to quit, even when people know it's harmful. This survey also shows mixed views on the impact of smoking and vaping. Despite its harm, some people perceive benefits such as stress relief. This creates a broader tension between recognizing the dangers of smoking and vaping and understanding why teens continue to smoke.

To further assess BIPOC adolescents' perceptions of the smoking and vaping culture, we asked, **"Do you think BIPOC adolescents are aware of the mental health impact associated with smoking?"** Approximately 52.6% of respondents indicated awareness, while 47.4% suggested a lack of awareness. Additionally, we asked, **"How do you think smoking can impact BIPOC adolescents' mental health?"** The majority agreed that smoking negatively affects mental health. Respondents shared that smoking is often used as a way to "cope" with emotional distress, particularly when adolescents lack close friends or relatives to confide in. One respondent noted, **"People/teens would use smoking as a way to cope. They wouldn't have a close friend or relatives to speak to or even the fear of expressing their emotions and getting made fun of would cause one to start smoking."** Another added, **"Adolescents use smoking and bodily harming substances to escape their problems, which leads to bottled emotions and mental illnesses being worsened."** Other responses echoed similar concerns, with one participant observing, **"I've noticed that when kids start smoking, they tend to start shutting people out and they get lost in their thoughts,"** while another believed, **"It can cause their mental health to decline, leading to depression and/or suicide."**



The survey also addressed where BIPOC adolescents typically seek mental health support. A significant majority (76.2%) believe that most BIPOC adolescents turn to their friends for support, while only 9.5% think they turn to parents, guardians, or school staff, and just 4.8% believe they seek help from medical professionals. This reliance on peers over more formal support channels suggests a gap in available resources, indicating a need for more accessible, open, and adolescent-friendly mental health resources that can effectively address both the psychological and social challenges teens face.

DISCUSSION:

The findings from our survey align closely with the trends identified in our literature review, where we observed that smoking and vaping has become more common and accessible over time, particularly among BIPOC adolescents in Boston. Smoking and vaping is often perceived as trendy and cool, which mirrors the perceptions uncovered in our survey, where many teens continue to smoke despite being aware of the health risks. This behavior is driven by factors such as media representation, peer pressure, and social norms, leading many young individuals to smoke as a way to fit in with their peers or project a mature image.

Our research findings indicate that smoking and vaping is perceived as socially acceptable among BIPOC adolescents aged 10-19. This perception, reinforced by the normalization of smoking and vaping in certain communities, highlights the need for targeted educational initiatives that challenge these perceptions and present healthier alternatives for social interaction. These initiatives should focus on educating teens about the long-term mental health impacts of smoking and vaping, which survey respondents demonstrated some awareness of, yet often still downplayed in favor of perceived short-term benefits like stress relief or to “relax”.



Smoking and vaping can have many negative effects, particularly mental health. Smokers are at a higher risk for developing conditions such as depression and anxiety. Nicotine and other chemicals in cigarettes can disrupt and alter brain function, potentially leading mood disorders. Our survey revealed that BIPOC adolescents often use smoking and vaping as a coping mechanism for emotional distress, especially when close friends or family to confide in. This reliance on smoking and vaping to manage stress can intensify existing mental health issues, making conditions worse.

The stress of dealing with smoking and vaping related health problems, coupled with the impact of nicotine withdrawal can further exacerbate conditions like depression and anxiety. Additionally, smoking and vaping can negatively affect sleep patterns, leading to difficulties falling asleep or staying asleep, which further impacts overall mental well-being. Over time, chronic smoking and vaping can lead to long-term mental health challenges, with the cumulative effects of nicotine addiction, health problems, and the stress of managing these issues contributing to ongoing mental health issues.

IMPLICATIONS / CONCLUSIONS / FURTHER RESEARCH

This study examined how smoking and vaping impacts BIPOC adolescents' mental health in the inner-city Boston area. Based on our research, several key traits and patterns have emerged. It is evident that BIPOC adolescent smoking and vaping is becoming more prevalent among Generation Z, particularly in Boston. We collected significant insights from adolescent residents of Boston, Massachusetts, and identified that this trend is notably prominent among Boston residents. Our survey revealed that most Boston teens believe that adolescents smoke 4-5 times per day, as indicated by 52.4% of our respondents. When asked about awareness of the mental health impacts, the responses were nearly evenly divided, with 52.6% aware and 47.4% unaware. These findings shed light on the perceptions of BIPOC adolescent students in Boston, reflecting broader societal beliefs about smoking and vaping culture.

Social Determinants of Health (SDOHs) and Community Assets are critical to understanding and addressing smoking and vaping behavior among BIPOC adolescents, as explored in this paper. SDOHs such as socioeconomic status, education, neighborhood environment, and access to healthcare significantly influence the likelihood of adolescents engaging in smoking and vaping. BIPOC adolescents are often disproportionately affected by these negative determinants, leading to higher rates of smoking and poorer mental health outcomes. By recognizing the role that SDOHs play, this paper highlights the importance of developing targeted interventions that go beyond individual behavior change to address the environmental and social factors that contribute to smoking and vaping among this population.



Community Assets, such as local organizations, schools, and peer networks, are equally important in this context. These assets can be leveraged to promote anti-smoking campaigns, provide education, and offer mental health support, making the community an active participant in addressing smoking and vaping behaviors. Moreover, involving community assets in intervention strategies increases the likelihood of community engagement and ensures that programs are culturally relevant and sustainable. By focusing on both SDOHs and Community Assets, this paper emphasizes the need for a holistic approach to reducing smoking and vaping rates among BIPOC adolescents, one that addresses the broader context in which these behaviors occur and utilizes the strengths within the community to create lasting change.

Additionally, our research suggests that smoking and vaping is often associated with being perceived as "cool" or more socially accepted by adolescent peers. This perception contributes to the normalization of smoking and vaping among youth, despite the known health risks. Furthermore, the research indicates that smoking and vaping may be linked to a desire to engage in unlawful behavior, further complicating the social implications of smoking and vaping among adolescents.

Future researchers should focus on improving the social determinants of health to reduce the number of adolescent smokers. By addressing the underlying social and environmental factors that contribute to smoking and vaping, such as peer pressure, media influence, and access to mental health resources, future studies can help develop more effective interventions to curb smoking and vaping among adolescents.

COMMUNITY ASSETS IN THE BOSTON AREA

Community Health Centers in the Boston area is super important for BIPOC teens! They make sure healthcare feels right for everyone, no matter where they're from. These places don't just fix us up when we're sick, they're all about keeping us healthy from the start. They offer mental health support, teach us how to stay healthy, and give us the facts on stuff that affects our lives and well-being. Plus, they're great community resources where we can meet people who understand the struggles we face and find adults who genuinely want to help us succeed. So, these centers aren't just about healthcare; they can also be a safe space to grow, learn, and be heard by professionals.

Here is a list of some Community Health Centers in the Boston area:

Bowdoin Street Health Center: 230 Bowdoin Street Dorchester, MA 02122 617-754-0100 www.bowdoinstreethealth.org
Codman Square Health Center: 637 Washington Street Dorchester, MA 02124 617-825-9660 www.codman.org
DotHouse Health: 1353 Dorchester Avenue Dorchester, MA 02122 617-288-3230 www.dorchesterhouse.org
Geiger Gibson Community Health Center: 250 MountVernon Street Dorchester, MA 02125 617-288-1140 www.hhsi.us
Harvard Street Neighborhood Health Center: 632 Blue Hill Avenue Dorchester, MA 02121 617-822-3400 (call for locations) www.harvardstreet.org
Neponset Health Center: 398 Neponset Avenue Dorchester, MA 02122 617-282-3200 www.hhsi.us
Upham's Corner Health: Center 500 Columbia Road Dorchester, MA 02125 617-287-8000 (call for locations) www.uphamscornerhealthcenter.org
Mattapan Community Health Center: 1575 Blue Hill Avenue Mattapan, MA 02126 617-296-0061 www.mattapanchc.org
Greater Roslindale Medical & Dental: Center 4199 Washington Street Roslindale, MA 02131 617-323-4440 www.roslindale.org
Dimock Community Health Center: 55 Dimock Street Roxbury, MA 02119 617-442-8800 www.dimock.org
Whittier Street Health Center: 1290 Tremont Street Roxbury, MA 02120 617-427-1000 www.wshc.org
Southern Jamaica Plain Health Center: 640 Centre Street Jamaica Plain, MA 02130 617-983-4100 www.brighamandwomens.org/sjphc

Community Centers provide a range of activities and programs that promote well-being, from art workshops to physical fitness classes and sports activities, all of which can help with stress and improve mood. By fostering a sense of belonging and providing a platform for peer support, community centers empower teens to thrive emotionally and socially, making them indispensable in the pursuit of a healthier, more resilient future for our youth.

Here is a list of some Boston Community Center in the Boston area:

Reggie Lewis Center: 1350 Tremont St, Boston, MA 02120 | (857) 701-1700 |

<https://www.rcc.mass.edu/reggie-lewis/>

Programs offered at the Reggie Lewis Center are designed to provide fitness opportunities to community members of any age, at any fitness level.

YMCA: Multiple Boston locations including Dorchester YMCA, Roxbury YMCA, Huntington Ave YMCA |

Teen Programs at the YMCA range from free summer memberships, to academic and mentorship opportunities, to providing safe spaces for teens to do their work and explore their interests.

Find more info on teen programs here: <https://ymcaboston.org/youth-and-family/teen-programs/>

Boys & Girls Club: Multiple Boston locations including in Dorchester, Roxbury and Mattapan |

Find a club and more info here: <https://www.bgcb.org/>

The BGC provides innovative programs designed to empower youth to excel in school, become good citizens and lead healthy, productive lives helping young people build strong character and realize their full potential as leaders in the community.

Shelburne Community Center: 2730 Washington St, Roxbury, Mass 02119 | (617) 635-5213

<https://www.boston.gov/departments/boston-centers-youth-families/bcyf-shelburne>

The Shelburne is open to anyone and has a community room, computer lab, gymnasium, fitness center, and rock wall. The Shelburne is a great place where people can meet up and have fun.

Boston Center for Youth Tobin: 1481 Tremont St, Roxbury, MA 02120 | (617) 635-5216 | TOBINCC@BOSTON.GOV

Tobin Community Center, this is where events are held as well mostly for basketball. What Tobin has to offer is a community room, computer lab, gymnasium, batting cage, outdoor garden, and stage. Tobin is a great spot where teens can come together and is an important asset to Boston.

Parks & Recreation: Parks and recreation areas are essential to our communities, offering much more than just open space. They provide a natural escape where people of all ages can relax, play, and exercise, contributing significantly to our physical and mental health. These green spaces also foster social connections by bringing together neighbors and friends, promoting community engagement through organized sports, events, and activities.

Boston Parks and Recreation is responsible for 217 city parks, playgrounds and athletic fields, two golf courses, 65 squares, 17 fountains, 75 game courts, 16 historic and three active cemeteries, urban wilds, four High School Athletic Fields, and approximately 125,000 trees, all covering 2,346 acres, 1,000 of which comprise the historic Emerald Necklace.

Find Boston parks and playgrounds here: <https://www.boston.gov/departments/parks-and-recreation/popular-playgrounds-and-parks-boston>

Boston Public Schools: Teens in the Boston Public School system can tap into a variety of mental health resources that are integrated right into their school environment. Schools often have guidance counselors, psychologists, social workers, family liaisons, and much more support staff who are available to help students navigate social, emotional or psychological challenges. These professionals provide confidential support and can also refer students to external resources for further support. Additionally, many schools offer peer support groups where students can talk about their experiences and feelings in a safe, supportive setting. These groups are facilitated by trained adults and help teens feel less alone in their struggles.

Boston Public School Programs/Resources:

Succeed Boston @ The Counseling and Intervention Center |

515 Hyde Park Avenue, Roslindale, MA 02131 | 617-635-8123

Succeed Boston has provided social, emotional, educational, and decision-making skills to students in need of counseling and support services. In addition to these programs, their restorative practices / safe and welcoming school support is helps to address and reduce academic and systemic barriers that place students at risk.



The main administrative offices of the Boston Public Schools, including the Superintendent's and School Committee's departments, are situated in the Bruce C. Bolling Municipal Building (image to the left). Located at 2300 Washington Street in Roxbury, 02119, this building stands in the central area of Nubian Square. It is named after Bruce C. Bolling, who was the first African American to serve as President of the Boston City Council.

Boston Public Libraries stand as crucial community assets for teens. These libraries offer a peaceful retreat for study and relaxation, along with access to an extensive collection of books, including materials on mental health and wellness. Beyond just books, the libraries provide programs and workshops that support emotional health, like mindfulness sessions and stress management seminars. The inclusive environment encourages teens to explore their interests, connect with peers through book clubs and events, and find guidance from supportive staff. By offering these resources and a safe space, Boston Public Libraries play an essential role in promoting the mental and emotional well-being of adolescents in the community.

Boston Public Library resources for teens:

Teens are welcome at all Boston Public Library locations, especially at the six branches with specific focus on teen programming and offerings. Teen Central locations are at the Central Library at Copley Square, East Boston, Grove Hall, Hyde Park, Mattapan, and Roxbury.

The Central Library in Copley Square and BPL's twenty-five branches are all members of the **Safe Place program**. Safe Place quickly connects youth ages 12-17 to needed help of safety and shelter.

The library's twenty-five branches are spread across the city and can be found here: www.bpl.org/locations

The Copley branch of the Boston Public Library (pictured right) isn't just the biggest, it's a major go-to spot for students. This branch has a ton of programs that assist with academics, from tutoring to workshops on digital literacy & research skills. The library's decorative and well-designed spaces provide a cool atmosphere. This makes the Copley branch not just a place for checking out books and doing homework, but a dynamic hub for educational support, cultural engagement, and community connection, all of which are crucial for student development and well-being.



MENTAL HEALTH RESOURCES FOR ADOLESCENTS WHO RESIDE IN BOSTON

Suicide & Crisis Lifeline: 1-800-273-TALK (8255) | <https://988lifeline.org> | The Lifeline provides free and confidential emotional support to people in suicidal crisis or emotional distress 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.

Safe Place: To use TXT 4 HELP, text the word "safe" and your current location (city/state/zip) to 4HELP (44357). Within seconds, you will receive a message with the closest Safe Place site and phone number for the local youth agency. You will also have the option to text interactively with a professional for more help. It's quick, easy, safe and confidential. If you prefer to speak with someone on the phone, instead of in person or texting, you may call the National Runaway Safeline at 1-800-RUNAWAY (1-800-786-2929).

Sidney Borum Jr. Health Center | 617-457-8140 75 | Kneeland St. Boston MA 02111 Chinatown www.sidneyborum.org/

Youth on Fire | 617-661-2508 | 1 Church St. Cambridge, MA 02138 Harvard Sq.
<http://www.facebook.com/YouthOnFireMA>

Cambridge Teen Health Center | 617-665-1548 459 | Broadway Cambridge, MA 02138 Harvard Sq. www.challiance.org/

Boston GLASS | 857-399-1920 | 75 Amory St. Boston, MA 02119 | Jackson Sq. <http://www.jri.org/glass>

The Peer Leadership Institute (PLI) promotes healthy lifestyles for Boston's inner-city youth. PLI is a peer to peer experience. It focuses on health education. It also empowers youth to take ownership of their personal health and engage in their communities. <https://www.boston.gov/government/cabinets/boston-public-health-commission/teen-programs/peer-leadership-institute#about-us>

Safe and Successful Youth Initiative : RMARTIN@BPHC.ORG | The Safe and Successful Youth Initiative (SSYI) is funded by the Commonwealth of Massachusetts Executive Office of Health and Human Services. SSYI utilizes a comprehensive public health approach to outreach, engagement, case management, and service delivery to increase positive outcomes for adolescents and young adults ages 17-24.

Cope Code Club: Cope Code Club supports Boston youth in identifying healthy ways to cope with difficult feelings. These include stress, anger, and self-esteem.

Youth Prevention Program: The Youth Prevention Program was created in response to the [Boston Youth Substance Use Prevention Strategic Plan](#) released in 2018.

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Thank you!

The Community Voices - Speaking Truth program is dedicated to empowering youth through hands-on research and community engagement initiatives that address key public health issues. Summer 2024, our young researchers embarked on a meaningful project exploring the impact of smoking and vaping on adolescent mental health. They conducted surveys, analyzed data, and met with local leaders to deepen their understanding of this critical issue. Additionally, the participants canvassed Boston neighborhoods, identifying community assets and barriers, and captured these elements through photography. These images will be used for a social media campaign, aimed at using visual storytelling to highlight and advocate for community needs and strengths. Through these activities, the youth researchers not only gained valuable research skills but also actively contributed to their community's well-being.



The authors of this paper volunteering at a local health and human services non-profit, preparing harm reduction kits as part of their commitment to supporting community health and well-being.