

*YEPP Findings and Recommendations  
Maine School Substance Abuse Policy*

This document contains the findings and recommendations of the Youth Empowerment and Policy Project (YEPP) a diverse group of youth from across the state of Maine. The document is intended to provide a series of youth-driven ideas, suggestions, and statements that assist schools and communities in enhancing, incorporating, and strengthening school substance abuse policy.

The group participated in a lengthy process of identifying their own youth-based findings and recommendations specific to school substance abuse policy. An important resource and model document used by the group was the Maine Department of Education's publication entitled *Taking Responsibility: Standards for Ethical and Responsible Behavior in Maine Schools*.<sup>1</sup> Based on the philosophy established by the YEPP group around school substance abuse policy a youth code of ethics was identified and compiled into the following Findings and Recommendations document. The YEPP document is formatted to include:

- A **Hallmark** is an ideal. It is our goal, what we strive for.
- **Findings** describe what the reality is. This is what really happens in the practice from a youth perspective.
- **Recommendations** are what you think needs to be done to achieve the hallmarks. They should be remedies to the findings.
- **Suggested actions** represent examples of how to implement the recommendations.

The Findings and Recommendations document was mailed to state school superintendent offices, selected community members and groups throughout the state of Maine. The project evaluator conducted a random sampling of telephone interviews with community partners and school superintendents to assess level of exposure, obtain general feedback about the document, identify any activities undertaken, and identify key individuals in the community interested in the document. Feedback indicated that a more targeted approach of involving communities is necessary. Community partners and school superintendents expressed barriers including school agendas being set in advance, limited ability to respond, and explained many directives are handed down through federal, state, and local authorities that they are required to prioritize. Recommendations include researching ways to connect with individuals at a community level, advertise the project at regional superintendent meetings, and identify schools and communities to work with earlier in the project year. The YEPP group continues to market and work with schools and communities as requested on this effort.

<sup>1</sup> The Maine Department of Education created the publication *Taking Responsibility: Standards for Ethical and Responsible Behavior in Maine Schools* in response to Public Law 1999, Chapter 351, which required "In consultation with organization representing school boards, school administrators, teachers, parents, and other interested local officials and community members, the commissioner shall develop statewide standards for responsible and ethical student behavior." Local communities are now responsible for identifying "district-wide codes of conduct consistent with the statewide standards" to include acceptable student behavior, student responsibility and consequences for violating established codes of conduct.