



HILLTOWN COOPERATIVE CHARTER PUBLIC SCHOOL

HCCPS Substance Use Prevention and Education Policy

05/2025

I. Purpose and Philosophy

Hilltown Cooperative Charter Public School (HCCPS) is dedicated to creating a safe, inclusive, and healthy environment for all students. We recognize that substance use, even in the broader world, can impact children and families in many ways. Our goal is to educate, prevent, and support, without fear or stigma. Through developmentally appropriate instruction, community partnerships, and supportive responses, we aim to help students build lifelong skills for making healthy decisions.

II. Scope

This policy applies to all HCCPS students during school hours, on school grounds, during school-sponsored activities, and while using school transportation. It addresses the use, possession, sale, or distribution of substances including (but not limited to):

- Alcohol
- Tobacco or nicotine products (e.g., cigarettes, e-cigarettes/vapes)
- Marijuana and other controlled substances
- Inhalants
- Prescription or over-the-counter medications used improperly
- Steroids, Misuse of Herbal or dietary supplements for non-medical purposes

III. Education and Prevention

Our approach emphasizes education and prevention first, using age-appropriate materials and methods with the goal of helping students make informed and safe choices.

- **Elementary Students (K–5):** Students do not address substance use explicitly, but explore related broad wellness themes like making good choices, understanding feelings, peer influence, and caring for their bodies through Social Emotional Learning (SEL) and classroom discussions.
- **Middle School Students (6–8):** Health and Wellness classes directly address substance use, the effects on the brain and body, and strategies for saying no.
- **Family Engagement:** HCCPS provides resources to help adults talk with children about substance use, understand laws, and access support services.
- **SBIRT Screening:** HCCPS implements the Massachusetts-mandated SBIRT screening (Screening, Brief Intervention, and Referral to Treatment) annually for all 7th grade students.
- **Faculty:** The school offers professional development for faculty and staff to enhance understanding of substance use risks, Massachusetts law, and available support.

IV. Community Resources and Support

HCCPS maintains relationships with local agencies and service providers, including:

- ServiceNet, Northampton
- Clinical and Support Options
- Children's Clinic, Northampton

V. School Policy and Procedures

A. General Prohibition

The possession, use, sale, or distribution of alcohol, tobacco/nicotine products, marijuana, controlled substances, inhalants, or the misuse of prescription or over-the-counter medications is strictly prohibited on school grounds, during school hours, at school-sponsored activities, and while using school transportation. This includes imitation substances such as non-alcoholic beer or wine.

This policy applies to all students, regardless of age, and includes both legal and illegal substances when used inappropriately or against school rules.

B. Response Protocols

Hilltown Cooperative Charter Public School prioritizes early intervention, support, and education when responding to concerns about student substance use. The following procedures aim to ensure student safety while maintaining a fair, compassionate approach:

1. Voluntary Self-Disclosure by Student

If a student voluntarily confides a substance use issue to a staff member, the staff member will notify the school counselor. The counselor will support the student using the school's self-harm/safety protocol and involve the family in planning next steps. If a student voluntarily discloses substance use to a staff member:

- The staff member will immediately notify the school counselor.
- The counselor will assess needs and plan next steps with the family.
- No legal action will be taken solely based on voluntary disclosure. The focus will be on educational support, appropriate school discipline and provision of resources to the student and family.

2. Suspected Use During School

If a student appears to be under the influence during the school day:

- The student may be removed from class and may be assessed by trained staff.
- The student's parent/guardian will be contacted immediately.
- The student will be subject to disciplinary action in accordance with the code of conduct.
- A re-entry meeting with the family may be required before the student returns to class.

3. Confirmed Use or Possession of Substances

If a student is confirmed to have used or is found in possession of a substance on school grounds or at a school event:

- Substances will be safely confiscated, documented, and either returned to the parent/guardian (if legal), disposed of, or turned over to law enforcement (if illegal).
- The family will be notified and a conference scheduled.
- The student may be referred to counseling or an external treatment provider.
- A suspension may be imposed.
- Expulsion will only be considered in accordance with Massachusetts law (MGL Ch. 71, Sec. 37H or 37H½), and depending on the nature and severity of the offense.

4. Distribution or Intent to Distribute

If a student is found distributing or in possession of a quantity suggesting intent to distribute:

- Parents/guardians and local law enforcement will be notified immediately.
- The student will be removed from school property.
- A suspension will be issued.
- A parent/guardian conference will be required prior to reentry.
- In accordance with Massachusetts law, expulsion will be considered based on the severity of the incident.

5. Reentry and Support

Following any substance-related disciplinary action:

- A reentry meeting will be held with the student, family, counselor, and relevant staff.
- The school may require participation in counseling, educational sessions, or other support services as a condition of return.
- The goal of all interventions is to help the student re-engage with school and access appropriate resources.

Seeking Help for your Child

If you are concerned about your child's use of alcohol, other drugs or misuse of prescriptions, the Department's Bureau of Substance Abuse Services can help.

For free and confidential information and referral services for youth and young adults (up to age 24) who are experiencing a problem with alcohol, or other drugs, contact BSAS' Youth Central Intake & Care Coordination service:

Toll Free: 866-705-2807 / 617-661-3991

TTY: 617-661-9051