



Checklist for Vermont School Substance Use Policies and Procedures

This comprehensive checklist is intended for use by schools and communities in partnership with their local prevention coalitions.

In addition to Vermont state statutes and the Vermont State Board of Education Manual of Rules and Practices, content in this checklist is adapted from the following sources:

- Vermont Agency of Education and Department of Health joint statement: [Comprehensive School-Based Alcohol, Tobacco and Other Drug Prevention](#), Nov. 2015
- [Tobacco-free Schools Policy: Checklist Toolkit](#), developed by the Rocky Mountain Center for Health Promotion and Education, 2010
- [Maine School Substance Use Policy Guide](#), 2014
- [Guidance on School Policies Regarding Substance Use Prevention](#), Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education, Sept. 2016

This tool includes numerous best practices that can strengthen a school’s policies and procedures for addressing and preventing substance use. Not all best practices may be applicable or appropriate for a particular school, but by including them, we hope schools will choose to incorporate those elements that will help them achieve their health and wellness goals related to substance use.

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Checklist Completed by: _____

Date: _____

Section 1: Substance-Free Schools Written Policy and Procedure Content

Meets Standards of Vermont Statutes					
This section assesses whether written policies and procedures are consistent with Vermont statutes regulating substances, including tobacco, alcohol, and marijuana.					
The written policy:	Yes	No	Partial	Notes	Recommendations on Next Steps
1. Prohibits use of tobacco products or tobacco substitutes on public school grounds or at public school-sponsored functions. (16 VSA §140)					
2. Defines tobacco to mean all forms of tobacco and tobacco use. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “Tobacco products” means cigarettes, little cigars, roll-your-own tobacco, snuff, cigars, new smokeless tobacco, and other tobacco products as defined in 32 VSA § 7702. (7 VSA §1001(3)) • “Tobacco substitute” means products, including electronic cigarettes or other electronic or battery-powered devices, that contain and are designed to deliver nicotine or other substances into the body through inhaling vapor and that have not been approved by the U.S. Food and Drug Administration for tobacco cessation or other medical purposes. Products that have been approved by the U.S. Food and Drug Administration for tobacco cessation or other medical purposes shall not be considered to be tobacco substitutes. (7 VSA §1001(8)) • “Tobacco paraphernalia” means any device used, intended for use, or designed for use in smoking, inhaling, ingesting, or otherwise introducing tobacco products into the human body, or for preparing tobacco for smoking, inhaling, ingesting, or otherwise introducing into the human body, including devices for holding tobacco, rolling paper, wraps, cigarette rolling machines, pipes, water pipes, carburetion devices, bongs, and hookahs. (7 VSA §1001(7)) 					

Meets Standards of Vermont Statutes

This section assesses whether written policies and procedures are consistent with Vermont statutes regulating substances, including tobacco, alcohol, and marijuana.

The written policy:	Yes	No	Partial	Notes	Recommendations on Next Steps
3. States that possession of tobacco products, tobacco substitutes, or tobacco paraphernalia by a person under 21 years of age is against the law. (7 VSA §1005(a)(1))					
4. States that possession of marijuana or hashish by persons under 21 years of age is against the law. (18 VSA §4230b)					
5. States that possession and consumption of malt or vinous beverages, spirits, or fortified wines by persons under 21 years of age is against the law. (7 VSA §656(a)(1))					
6. States that dispensing marijuana to persons under 21 years of age is against the law. (18 VSA §4230f(a)(1))					
7. States that furnishing alcoholic beverages to persons under 21 years of age is against the law. (7 VSA §658(a)(1))					
8. States that a person under 21 who possesses or consumes alcoholic beverages shall be referred to the Court Diversion Program for enrollment in the Youth Substance Abuse Safety Program. (7 VSA §656(a)(2))					
9. States that a person under 21 years of age who knowingly and unlawfully possesses one ounce or less of marijuana or five grams or less of hashish shall be referred to the Court Diversion Program for enrollment in the Youth Substance Abuse Safety Program. (18 VSA §4230b(a))					

Complies with Vermont State Board of Education Rules

This section assesses whether the written policies contain provisions consistent with Vermont State Board of Education Rules, [Series 4200](#), Alcohol and Drugs (based on statutory authority in [16 VSA §1165](#)) and 4300, Disciplinary Action (based on [16 VSA §1162](#)).

The written policy:	Yes	No	Partial	Notes	Recommendations on Next Steps
10. Defines alcohol and drug abuse (substance abuse) as: “the ingestion of a substance in such a way that it interferes with a person's ability to perform physically, intellectually, emotionally or socially.” (Rule 4211)					
11. Contains a statement of philosophy that outlines concern with the health and well-being of all students and takes into consideration the individual needs of students with problems as well as the right of the majority of students to an education. (Rule 4212.1)					
12. Defines an educational program consistent with the Vermont Alcohol and Drug Education Curriculum Plan. (Rule 4212.2) ¹					
13. Provides for a support and referral system for students in distress due to their own or another's use of alcohol or other drugs. Such a system shall include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • a clearly defined in-school process for initial assessment, support, and if necessary, referral to community resources • a written referral agreement with at least one community substance abuse treatment provider approved by the Office of Alcohol and Drug Abuse Programs. Such an agreement should define the process for making an effective referral and the nature and extent of information to be provided during and after such a referral to all parties involved. (Rule 4212.3)					
14. Provides for the handling of any alcohol/drug-related incident until the student has been discharged to the parent, guardian, social service, medical or law enforcement agency. (Rule 4212.3A)					

¹ Although the state rules reference this plan, it is not referenced in the joint statement issued by the VT Agency of Education and Department of Health, *Comprehensive School-Based Alcohol, Tobacco, and Other Drug Prevention* in its section on Classroom-based Health Education.

Complies with Vermont State Board of Education Rules

This section assesses whether the written policies contain provisions consistent with Vermont State Board of Education Rules, [Series 4200](#), Alcohol and Drugs (based on statutory authority in [16 VSA §1165](#)) and 4300, Disciplinary Action (based on [16 VSA §1162](#)).

The written policy:	Yes	No	Partial	Notes	Recommendations on Next Steps
15. Establishes procedures for administering emergency first-aid related to alcohol and drug abuse. The procedures will define the roles of the personnel involved. (Rule 4212.3B)					
16. Affords students subject to disciplinary action due process as follows, per Rule 4311.1 and 4311.2: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In all cases of short-term suspension (usually 10 days or less), the student and their parent/guardian shall be given an opportunity for an informal hearing before an appropriately designated school official. The hearing must precede the suspension, except in cases where the student is a threat to themselves or others (see Rule 4311.3). The school district shall provide: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Notice of charges – Explanation of evidence against the student – Opportunity for student to tell their side of the story – Decision in writing to the parent/guardian • In all cases of long-term suspension (generally 10+ days unless the school district establishes a shorter period) the student and their parent/guardian shall be given an opportunity for a formal hearing before the school board and the district shall provide: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – written notice of the following: (a) nature of charges against the student; (b) date, time and place of hearing; (c) right to legal representation; (d) possible penalties involved – opportunity to present evidence – opportunity to cross-examine witnesses – decision in writing to parent/guardian • When a student, because of their conduct or condition, is an immediate threat to themselves, others, property or educational environment, the 					

Complies with Vermont State Board of Education Rules

This section assesses whether the written policies contain provisions consistent with Vermont State Board of Education Rules, [Series 4200](#), Alcohol and Drugs (based on statutory authority in [16 VSA §1165](#)) and 4300, Disciplinary Action (based on [16 VSA §1162](#)).

The written policy:	Yes	No	Partial	Notes	Recommendations on Next Steps
<p>school district may take whatever action is appropriate under the circumstances, including, but not limited to, immediate suspension pending a hearing as soon as possible thereafter.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> See also Rule 4311.3 for provisions covering qualified individuals with disabilities as defined by Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973. 					

Includes Best Practices for Written Policy and Procedure Content

These practices are drawn from guides and checklists developed by other states

The written policy:	Yes	No	Partial	Notes	Recommendations on Next Steps
<p>17. Includes a rationale for being substance-free. <i>Example: "The School Board and staff of the school unit support a safe and healthy learning environment for students which is free of the detrimental effects of drugs and alcohol. Accomplishing this goal requires a cooperative effort among school staff, students, parents, law enforcement and organizations concerned with the use of drugs and alcohol by school-aged youth."</i></p>					
<p>18. Establishes a protocol for communicating the policy, procedures, and rationale to all students, staff, parents, and visitors.</p>					
<p>19. Establishes a procedure for communicating student substance-free school violations to parents/guardians.</p>					
<p>20. Clearly lays out prohibitions, enforcement, and consequences so that students and their families, staff, and visitors can understand what is not allowed, how the policy will be enforced, and the consequences for breaking the rules.</p>					
<p>21. Includes language restricting items from school property that might contribute to substance use and acceptability (such as lighters, clothing, hats, stickers, or buttons with logos).</p>					

Includes Best Practices for Written Policy and Procedure Content

These practices are drawn from guides and checklists developed by other states

The written policy:	Yes	No	Partial	Notes	Recommendations on Next Steps
22. Includes a requirement for prevention education for all students.					
23. Includes provisions against accepting funds or in-kind donations from tobacco, alcohol, marijuana, and other drug industries.					
24. Includes language prohibiting advertising of products that cannot be sold to minors in school buildings and at school functions.					
25. Includes procedures for periodic review and revision, including timetable, procedures for convening a policy committee, and the process for evaluating, reviewing, and revising the policy.					
26. Sets out standards for involving both the school and the community in developing and revising policies and procedures, including stakeholders such as school administrators; school board or school policy committee; teachers and staff; students; parents and guardians; community members; law enforcement; and prevention, intervention, and treatment professionals.					

Section 2: Communicating Policy and Procedures

Incorporates Applicable Best Practices for Communicating Policies and Procedures					
These practices are drawn from guides and checklists developed by other states					
The school:	Yes	No	Partial	Notes	Recommendations on Next Steps
27. Posts substance-free signage at all main entrances or sections of the building, event locations (sports fields, auditoriums etc.) and on district buses/vehicles. (See <i>Signage Activity at the end of this section for a more comprehensive list of locations.</i>) The signage should include language covering, at a minimum, all legal age-restricted substances, e.g., "This School (or School Property) is Substance-Free. Thank you for not using alcohol, tobacco, vapor or marijuana products."					
28. Includes statements in the student handbook regarding no-substance use, and requires both a student signature and a parent/guardian signature acknowledging that they understand the policy and what will happen if the student violates the policy. Statements should be easily understandable and culturally appropriate.					
29. Includes no-substance use requirements in athletic contracts and requires both a student and a parent/guardian signature.					
30. Includes no-substance use language in the employee handbook, including legal substances that may not be used during work, including alcohol, tobacco and tobacco substitutes, and marijuana, including marijuana-infused edibles.					
31. Includes no-substance use agreements in contracts with outside vendors or groups using school facilities (e.g., landscaping companies, construction companies, youth groups, recreation departments and others), if applicable.					

Incorporates Applicable Best Practices for Communicating Policies and Procedures

These practices are drawn from guides and checklists developed by other states

The school:	Yes	No	Partial	Notes	Recommendations on Next Steps
32. Explains Vermont laws and district/school policy/procedures applicable to substance use and possession on school property, the rationale for being substance-free, consequences for violations, and available resources via a variety of channels, including: newsletter articles, town bulletin boards, listservs or other electronic messaging channels, and other communications to parents/guardians and the broader community.					
33. Provides a process to address community questions and concerns while promoting the value of the policy/procedures.					
34. Makes announcements at school events (e.g., sporting events, school plays, talent shows etc.) to remind students, staff, and visitors of the policy.					

Incorporates Best Practice Resources and Programs for Prevention and Cessation/Recovery

Except where noted, these practices are drawn from guides and checklists developed by other states

The school:	Yes	No	Partial	Notes	Recommendations on Next Steps
<p>35. Implements a comprehensive health education curriculum, including substance use prevention concepts and student skill development. Health education must be based on the National Health Education Standards adopted by the VT State Board of Education and curricula should be aligned with the CDC’s Characteristics of Effective Health Education Curriculum. (VT AOE and VDH Statement: <i>Comprehensive School-Based Alcohol, Tobacco, and other Drug Prevention</i>)</p> <p>If yes, in the “Notes” indicate what education is being done and at what grade levels.</p>					

Incorporates Best Practice Resources and Programs for Prevention and Cessation/Recovery

Except where noted, these practices are drawn from guides and checklists developed by other states

The school:	Yes	No	Partial	Notes	Recommendations on Next Steps
36. Includes an evidence-based education component in the prevention curriculum designed for parents/guardians to help keep students safe from substance use by modeling skills and attitudes at home.					
37. Has a plan in place to promote and maintain a healthy, positive school climate, including a process for routine evaluation of health, safety, and school climate.					
38. Applies a Multi-Tiered System of Supports (MTSS) framework to promote healthy behaviors for all students. (recommendation from VT AOE and VDH Statement: <i>Comprehensive School-Based Alcohol, Tobacco, and other Drug Prevention</i>)					
39. Provides annual training for faculty and staff on early warning signs and behaviors that indicate a student may be experiencing substance use problems and protocols to be followed. Training should include orientation to new and trending substances and paraphernalia to assist with identifying students who are using substances.					
40. Has resources visibly available to encourage tobacco/nicotine cessation for students, staff, visitors, and parents/guardians (e.g., posters, tip cards, brochures for telephone-based counseling, web-based programs, local resources or state resources).					
41. Provides assistance to students who want to quit using tobacco, tobacco substitutes, or nicotine products, for example partnering with a medical provider to prescribe nicotine replacements at in-school clinics with parental permission. <i>If yes, in the "Notes" indicate what cessation assistance is offered.</i>					
42. Has resources visibly available to support students, staff, visitors, and parents/guardians struggling with alcohol or drug use (e.g., posters, tip cards, brochures for telephone-based counseling, web-based programs, local resources or state resources).					

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Incorporates Best Practice Resources and Programs for Prevention and Cessation/Recovery

Except where noted, these practices are drawn from guides and checklists developed by other states

The school:	Yes	No	Partial	Notes	Recommendations on Next Steps
43. Has procedures for reintegrating students who have been absent while in recovery from drug or alcohol use.					
44. Partners with the local prevention coalition on parent outreach and community engagement around mutually supportive strategies to promote youth involvement in the community and discourage substance use (e.g., joins community coalitions, sponsors student advocacy groups (e.g., VKAT, OVX), or runs state-wide media campaigns on the school website or social media channels)					
45. Provides information to students, staff, visitors and parents/guardians regarding substance use prevention efforts and the health risks of substance use for youth.					
46. Provides information to students, staff, visitors and parents/guardians regarding the dangers of secondhand tobacco and marijuana smoke.					
47. Maintains a resource list of the currently available network of services available to students and their families.					

Signage Review Activity

Signage explaining substance-free policy is clearly posted:	Yes	No	Partial	Notes	Recommendations on Next Steps
48. At main entrances to the building					
49. At perimeters of the school/district property					
50. In parking lots					
51. At major walkways					
52. At all major entry ways					
53. Near the main office					

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Signage Review Activity					
Signage explaining substance-free policy is clearly posted:	Yes	No	Partial	Notes	Recommendations on Next Steps
54. In the nurse's office					
55. In all auditoriums					
56. In all gymnasiums					
57. At all athletic fields, especially in the spectator area					
58. At major student gathering places					
59. In all restrooms					
60. In loading areas					
61. In major stairwells					
62. In school or district vehicles/buses					

Section 3: Substance Use Behavior and Enforcement

Assessing Substance Use Behavior

The information gathered in this section can help inform an assessment of the effectiveness of the policy and procedures. These practices are drawn from guides and checklists developed by other states

School property and events:	Yes	No	Partial	Notes	Recommendations on Next Steps
63. Students are seen consuming tobacco, tobacco substitutes, drugs, or alcohol on school property. This includes vaping, juuling, chew, or other forms of tobacco, as well as marijuana-infused edibles. <i>Note that in this section of the checklist, "seen" includes not only first-hand observation, but also viewing images posted on social media that purport to have been taken on school property.</i>					
64. Staff are seen consuming tobacco, tobacco substitutes, drugs, or alcohol on school property or in school vehicles.					
65. Students, and/or staff are seen consuming tobacco, tobacco substitutes, drugs, or alcohol in district vehicles or in private vehicles on school and/or district property.					
66. Visitors (including parents) are seen consuming tobacco, tobacco substitutes, drugs, or alcohol on school property.					
67. Students, staff, parents, and/or visitors are seen consuming tobacco, tobacco substitutes, drugs, or alcohol at school-sponsored events (on or off campus).					
68. Students are seen during school hours near school property consuming tobacco, tobacco substitutes, drugs, or alcohol.					
69. There is evidence of tobacco/nicotine use on school property (e.g., cigarette butts; packaging for cigarettes, nicotine pods, or e-juice; chew tobacco tins, tobacco spit in sinks; tobacco or nicotine paraphernalia).					
70. There is evidence or alcohol or drug use on school property (e.g., empty alcohol containers, marijuana paraphernalia, used syringes).					

Assessing Policy and Procedure Enforcement

These practices are drawn from guides and checklists developed by other states

The school:	Yes	No	Partial	Notes	Recommendations on Next Steps
71. Enforces substance-free policy with students equally and utilizes clear procedures for handling violations.					
72. Utilizes a progressive discipline plan to enforce tobacco/nicotine policy with students (e.g., the consequences are less punitive for first offenses and become more punitive with repeated offenses. Less punitive options may include tobacco education versus suspension).					
73. Where appropriate, utilizes a progressive discipline plan to enforce the substance use policy for substances other than tobacco/nicotine (e.g., the consequences are less punitive for first offenses and become more punitive with repeated offenses).					
74. Enforces the substance-free policy with staff and utilizes clear and consistent procedures for handling violations.					
75. Enforces the substance-free policy with visitors and utilizes clear procedures for handling violations (e.g., providing information about applicable Vermont law and school policy, providing cessation/recovery information).					
76. Identifies staff responsible for monitoring and enforcing the policy.					
77. Provides annual training for faculty and staff regarding substance use policy and enforcement strategies so that all staff know the district and school policies, procedures, and protocols for prevention, intervention, and follow-up in preventing and responding to substance use.					

Section 4: Action Plan for Policy/Procedure Revisions

Use this template to create your action plan for revising your policy					
Action Steps <i>Pull from Recommended Next Steps in each part of the Checklist</i>	Responsible Parties <i>Who will be accountable for seeing that this gets done? Who will support that work?</i>	Timeline	Resources	Potential Barriers	Status/Progress Notes
1.	Lead: Partners:	Start date: Projected completion:	Available: Needed:	Barriers: Plan to overcome:	
2.	Lead: Partners:	Start date: Projected completion:	Available: Needed:	Barriers: Plan to overcome:	
3.	Lead: Partners:	Start date: Projected completion:	Available: Needed:	Barriers: Plan to overcome:	
4.	Lead: Partners:	Start date: Projected completion:	Available: Needed:	Barriers: Plan to overcome:	
5.	Lead: Partners:	Start date: Projected completion:	Available: Needed:	Barriers: Plan to overcome:	