



Integrating trauma-informed practices into the community is crucial for addressing the underlying issues highlighted in the [Florida Youth Substance Abuse Survey](#). Creating a trauma-informed community in St. Lucie County will be particularly beneficial in several ways.

The most recent [Florida Youth Substance Abuse Survey \(FYSAS\)](#) results for St. Lucie County highlight several key trends in youth behavior:

1. **Substance Use:** The survey indicates that 28.2% of students have tried alcohol, and 11% reported drinking alcohol in the past 30 days. Marijuana use is also notable, with 14.9% of high school students having ridden in a car driven by someone who had been using marijuana, and 4.7% admitting to driving after using marijuana.
2. **Perception of Harm:** A large majority of students understand the risks associated with substance use. For example, 94.7% believe it is wrong to misuse prescription drugs, and 83% think it is wrong to vape marijuana.
3. **Mental Health:** Mental health remains a significant concern, with 43.7% of students reporting feeling depressed or sad on most days. Additionally, 14.4% of students seriously considered attempting suicide.
4. **Bullying:** Bullying is a prevalent issue, with 34.7% of students reporting physical harm due to bullying, and 29.8% experiencing cyberbullying.

These findings emphasize the importance of continued efforts to address substance abuse, mental health, and bullying among youth in St. Lucie County (MyFLFamilies) (FLHealthCharts) .

Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs) have a profound impact on the development of risky behaviors, including substance abuse, mental health issues, and violent behavior. Research shows that children who experience ACEs, such as abuse, neglect, or household dysfunction, are more likely to engage in these behaviors as they seek ways to cope with the stress and trauma they've endured.

Impact of ACEs on Risky Behaviors:

1. **Substance Abuse:** ACEs increase the likelihood of early initiation of substance use and higher levels of substance dependency. The stress and emotional pain associated with trauma can lead individuals to use substances as a form of self-medication (MyFLFamilies).
2. **Mental Health Issues:** ACEs are strongly linked to mental health challenges such as depression, anxiety, and suicidal ideation. The emotional turmoil caused by these experiences often manifests as chronic mental health conditions, which, in turn, can lead to risky behaviors like substance use and self-harm (FLHealthCharts).
3. **Violence and Bullying:** Children who experience ACEs are more likely to engage in aggressive behaviors, including bullying and violence. They might replicate the abusive patterns they've experienced or act out their trauma through aggressive interactions with others (FLHealthCharts).

How a Trauma-Informed Community Can Help:

1. **Healing:** Trauma-informed communities are designed to recognize the signs of trauma and provide supportive environments that promote healing. By understanding the impact of trauma, these communities can offer targeted interventions that help individuals process and recover from their experiences.
2. **Reducing Risky Behaviors:** Through education and awareness, a trauma-informed community can reduce the incidence of risky behaviors by addressing their root causes. For example, schools and community organizations can implement programs that teach coping skills, emotional regulation, and healthy ways to deal with stress.
3. **Preventing Trauma:** A trauma-informed approach emphasizes prevention by creating safe, supportive environments that reduce the risk of trauma occurring in the first place. This includes fostering strong, supportive relationships, providing resources for parents and caregivers, and promoting community engagement that helps to build resilience.