

LATEST NEWS

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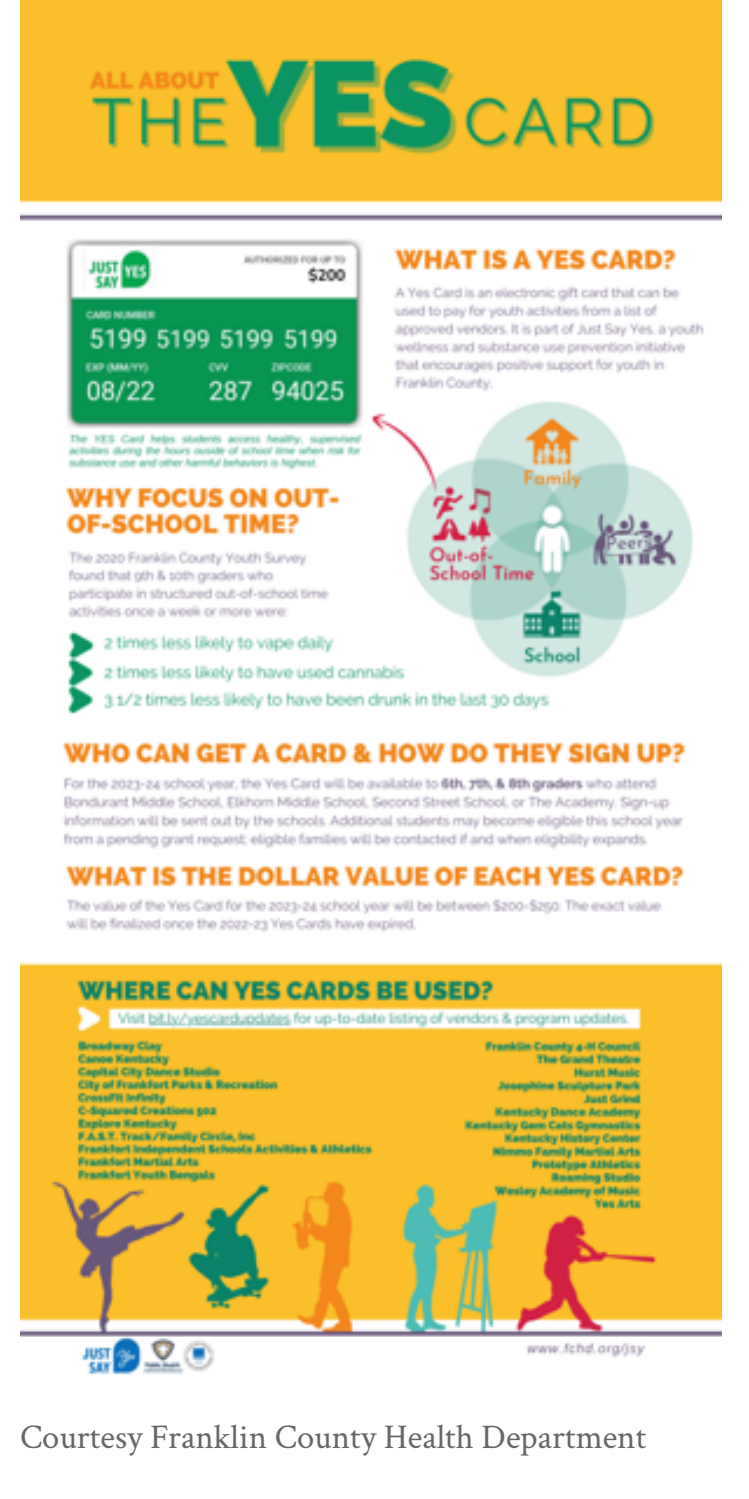
Yes Card access expands, Just Say Yes wins national award

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With the new school year underway, middle school students in the Frankfort Independent and Franklin County School systems will now have access to the Yes Card program offered by the Franklin County Health Department's Just Say Yes program.

This means that more than 1,700 students will be able to access free or low-cost programs throughout the community, including dance, sports, art and music. A complete list of all available programs can be found at www.bit.ly/yescardupdates.

"We know how important it is for kids to engage in positive activities that support their physical and mental health, foster healthy connections with peers and adult mentors, and reduce idle, unsupervised time during the out-of-school hours when kids are most likely to start using alcohol, tobacco and drugs," Amelia Berry, director of Just Say Yes, stated in a press release.



Courtesy Franklin County Health Department

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Yes Card's expansion comes after a three-year pilot program conducted in the Frankfort Independent School district, funded by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. The program's continual funding comes from not only the CDC, but also the Kentucky Injury Prevention and Research Center, the Kentucky Association of Health Plans, Kentucky Department of Public Health and National Association of County and City Health Officials (NACCHO).

NACCHO also recently recognized the Just Say Yes program with an award as a "model practice," as well as naming it to its "Best of the Best" national list of programs that "demonstrate exemplary and replicable initiative in response to local public health needs."

The physical, emotional and mental health needs of Frankfort and Franklin County's youth has been an ever-growing concern for the staff of the Franklin County Health Department. Part of its continuing efforts to address these issues with youth in the community is the annual Franklin County Youth Survey.

The survey is conducted each year and is an anonymous questionnaire given to seventh, eighth, ninth and 10th graders across the community. The most recent survey, conducted in February of this year, received information from 85% of students in the community.

- Among the findings from this year's survey were:
- 79% of students reported never having used e-cigarettes or "vapes," but use is increasing in both ninth and 10th graders.
- 91% have never been drunk, but one out of every five students had tried alcohol by age 13.
- 23% reported students are "usually" nice to each other at school.
- 94% said their parents were aware of where they are in the evenings, but 18% stayed out past midnight within the week prior to the survey.
- 23% of students participate in art, music, dance or drama once a week or more, while 34% play sports three times a week or more.
- 74% of students say they have friends at school who care about them, while 87% reported they "easily get warmth and care from parents."
- 48% said their mental health is "good."
- 43% spend three or more hours per day on social media.
- 19% reported cutting or harming themselves intentionally.

It was also discovered through this survey that the majority of students said that their parents do not approve of substance use, and that students with active parental involvement in their lives are three times less likely to use marijuana, while those who stayed out late were four times more likely to vape and six times more likely to get drunk regularly.

According to the health department, nationwide research has shown that delaying a child's first use of tobacco, alcohol or drugs will significantly decrease their lifetime risk of developing a substance abuse problem, as well as the onset of mental, physical and behavioral health challenges.

"Ensuring that parents are informed, engaged and most importantly working together to look out for kids' safety and well-being is one of the most important ingredients for effective prevention," Berry said.

Information on the Yes Card program will be sent out to eligible students in the Frankfort Independent and Franklin County school districts within the next few weeks, and parents, guardians or caregivers will be instructed on how to register their students for the card.

Once student eligibility is confirmed, invitations to a special meeting at each child's school will be issued. For more information about the program, visit the Yes Card website at www.fchd.org/jysy.

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