

Using the PRISMS Profiles in Your Community



Assessing Youth Alcohol and Substance Abuse Risks and Problems



Jean Somers Miller
Commissioner
NYS Office of Alcoholism
and Substance Abuse
Services



George E. Pataki
Governor
New York State



Alana M. Sweeny
Executive Director
NYS Council on
Children and Families



Prevention Risk Indicator Services Monitoring System

Introduction

Communities confront many issues in assessing youth alcohol and substance abuse (ASA) risks and problems. Some local governments and coalitions feel they lack knowledge, technical expertise, or other resources necessary to undertake a local need assessment. Other communities recognize that youth alcohol and substance abuse and other social problems are inter-related, but feel unsure about how to incorporate risk information into their need assessment. Still, other communities have undertaken a local need assessment, but often find themselves without a benchmark for comparison. Local governments often ask, “Are our youth at greater risk for ASA compared to similar communities?”

The NYS Office of Alcoholism and Substance Abuse Services (OASAS) has developed the PRISMS Risk Profiles to assist New York counties and New York City communities in identifying youth alcohol and substance abuse risks and problems. The PRISMS (Prevention Risk Indicator Services Monitoring System) Profiles use a research-based risk framework to predict youth alcohol and substance abuse consequences. This community-level risk information can alert local governments, prevention planners, and service providers to those areas where alcohol and other substance abuse risks and problems are highest. While the OASAS framework and approach to prevention represent a foundation that can potentially impact and prevent youth alcohol and substance abuse, this framework and selected prevention strategies may also identify and reduce violence, teen pregnancy, crime, school absenteeism and other social problems.

OASAS updates and enhances the PRISMS Risk Profiles each year. In even-numbered years, the zip code-based Risk Profiles are provided to local NYC governments, and prevention program planners. In odd numbered years, the County Risk Profiles are released to New York county governments and county-level youth alcohol and substance abuse prevention planners. While the information presented and methodology of the PRISMS Risk Profiles is slightly different for the counties and NYC zip codes, both Profiles share the same theoretical framework.

Theoretical Framework

Community Indicators

The PRISMS Profiles use public indicator data (sometimes referred to as social indicator or archival indicator data) collected from NYS government agencies and other sources such as the US Bureau of the Census. The PRISMS Profiles provide community indicators that represent a variety of social problems related to youth alcohol and substance abuse. Most of these indicators measure risk for youth alcohol and substance abuse. Risk indicators can be thought of as individual measures of a risk factor, or social problem. Communities with higher rates of adult drug arrests, children living in poverty, school dropouts, and children in foster care, for example, are at higher risk for youth alcohol and substance abuse problems. Indicators measuring consequences of youth alcohol and substance abuse are also provided, such as youth drug arrests, youth admitted to OASAS-licensed treatment programs, and probation court mandates to alcohol or drug treatment.

ASA Risk Factors, or Constructs

Research has demonstrated that alcohol and substance abuse is related to risk factors such as crime, poverty, family dysfunction, school failure, violence and juvenile delinquency. The relationship between certain risk factors and increased risk for ASA holds true at both the individual and community level. Because many risk factors are inter-related, a prevention strategy that can potentially impact and prevent youth alcohol and substance abuse may also reduce delinquency, teen pregnancy, school absenteeism and other social problems. The PRISMS Profiles refer to alcohol and substance abuse-related risk factors as risk constructs. The Profiles combine individual measures of risk factors, known as risk indicators, into risk constructs. These risk constructs are further combined into risk indices.

ASA Risk and Consequences Indices

The research-based risk framework adopted by PRISMS recognizes that alcohol and substance abuse risk factors operate on different levels. Risk factors (or risk constructs) that operate at the community level and affect all members of the community are placed in the Community Risk Index. Risk constructs that affect only certain youth are placed in the Youth Risk Index. It is important to remember that all risk factors, whether affecting the entire community's population or certain youth, increase a community's risk for youth alcohol and substance abuse problems. Indicators that represent consequences for youth resulting from their use of alcohol and other drugs are placed in the Youth Consequences Indices.

Risk Indices

Community-level or environmental risk factors that potentially impact all individuals within the community are placed in the Community Risk Index. Risk constructs measuring community disorganization (urbanicity, poverty, violence and crime) and alcohol and drug exposure form an index of risk affecting the entire community's population. Communities with more or larger distressed neighborhoods are at greater risk for youth alcohol and substance abuse. The Community Risk Index estimates risk that can be addressed through universal, community-wide environmental prevention strategies such as media campaigns, public educational programs, multi-agency coordination and collaboration, and modifying alcohol and tobacco advertising practices.

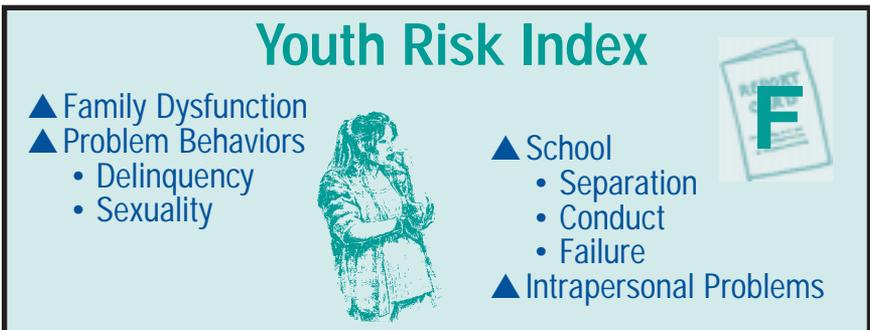


The graphic features a central title "Community Risk Index" in blue. Below the title is a silhouette of a city skyline. To the left is a photograph of a street scene with buildings. To the right is a photograph of a church with a steeple. Below the skyline, six risk factors are listed, each preceded by a blue triangle icon: Alcohol Exposure, Drug Exposure, Violence, Poverty, Crime, and Urbanicity.

Community Risk Index

- ▲ Alcohol Exposure
- ▲ Drug Exposure
- ▲ Violence
- ▲ Poverty
- ▲ Crime
- ▲ Urbanicity

The Youth Risk Index is computed from risk constructs reflecting youth whose family environments, behavior, or psychosocial development place them at greater risk for alcohol and substance abuse. Communities whose youth are experiencing school failure, intrapersonal problems, family dysfunction, and delinquent behaviors are at greater risk for alcohol and substance abuse. Selected and indicated prevention strategies such as prevention counseling, resistance skills training, parent skills education, and self-help groups for children of substance abusers targeted to schools, peer groups, families, and individual youth can reduce youth ASA risk.



The graphic features a central title "Youth Risk Index" in teal. To the left is a photograph of a young woman with long hair, wearing a jacket, looking thoughtful. To the right is a photograph of a document with a large teal letter "F" on it. Below the title, six risk factors are listed, each preceded by a teal triangle icon: Family Dysfunction, Problem Behaviors (with sub-points: Delinquency, Sexuality), School (with sub-points: Separation, Conduct, Failure), and Intrapersonal Problems.

Youth Risk Index

- ▲ Family Dysfunction
- ▲ Problem Behaviors
 - Delinquency
 - Sexuality
- ▲ School
 - Separation
 - Conduct
 - Failure
- ▲ Intrapersonal Problems

Youth ASA Consequences Indices

The Youth Alcohol and Drug Consequences Indices provide communities with a measure of the alcohol and substance abuse problems youth are currently experiencing in their communities. The ASA consequences indices were computed from ten indicators that represent direct consequences for youth (e.g., drug arrests, treatment admissions) resulting from their use or abuse of alcohol or other drugs. The Youth ASA Consequences Indices may help estimate need for indicated prevention strategies, early intervention, and adolescent treatment.

Youth Alcohol Consequences



- ▲ DWI Arrests
- ▲ Intoxicated Youth in Auto Accidents



- ▲ OASAS Alcohol Treatment
- ▲ Alcohol Probation Cases:
 - Use at Offense
 - Court Mandates

Youth Drug Consequences



- ▲ OASAS Drug Treatment
- ▲ Drug-Related Hospital Diagnoses

- ▲ Drug Arrests
- ▲ Drug Probation Cases:
 - Use at Offense
 - Court Mandates



PRISMS County Risk Profiles

Indicator Rates

Information on 64 risk indicators and ten consequences indicators is provided in tables for each county. Risk indicators are individual measures of a risk factor that are combined into risk constructs. Consequences indicators are measures of problems youth are experiencing as a result of ASA use. Rates, unlike raw numbers, take the population of the county into account, so counties may easily compare their rates with other counties' rates. In addition, the PRISMS Profiles contain information on "similar county"* rates and the NYS (excluding NYC) average rate.

Youth ASA Consequences Indicator Rates**

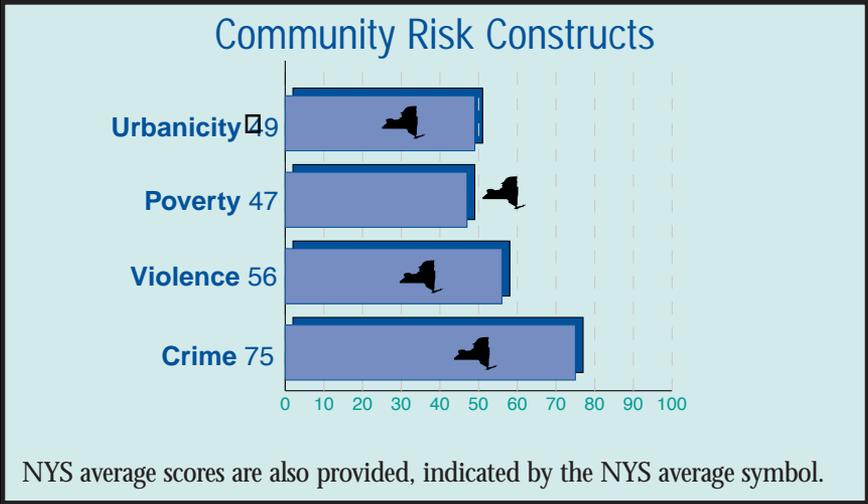
	Sample County	Similar* Counties	New York State
Alcohol Consequences			
DWI Arrests	30.0	39.0	45.4
Intoxicated Youth in Auto Accidents	2.3	1.8	2.0
Probation Cases: Use at Offense	23.9	21.6	17.2
Probation Cases: Court Mandates	142.7	59.1	55.5
OASAS Alcohol Treatment	19.2	13.9	12.5
Drug Consequences			
Drug Arrests (including DUI)	165.9	142.5	110.1
Drug-Related Hospital Diagnoses	14.1	21.0	17.6
Probation Cases: Use at Offense	19.2	19.8	11.9
Probation Cases: Court Mandates	149.3	58.5	53.5
OASAS Drug Treatment	33.0	34.1	29.5

* The Similar Counties groupings are constructed according to each county's risk construct and Consequences Indices scores. Counties that share similar levels of Youth ASA risk and consequences are grouped together.

** NYS rates exclude New York City. Indicator rates are rated per 10,000 of the relevant population.

Construct Scores

The County Risk Profiles group the 64 risk indicators into risk factors, or risk constructs, through a statistical technique known as factor analysis. For example, those indicators that measure violence (homicides, hospital diagnoses for intentional injuries, and violent crime arrests) are combined into the Violence Risk Construct. The County Risk Profiles provide counties with information on fifteen risk constructs. Each county receives a standardized score ranging from 0 (lowest risk) to 100 (highest risk) for each risk construct. The construct scores are displayed in bar charts, indicating the relative level of risk for each construct.



Risk and Consequences Indices Rankings

The PRISMS Profiles provide each county with its ranks relative to other counties for the Community, Youth, and Consequences Indices for both alcohol and other drugs. The counties also receive an overall risk ranking for both alcohol and drug risks.

1998 Relative Ranking of ASA Risk	
Total Youth Alcohol Risk:	28
Total Youth Illicit Drug Risk:	51
Community Risk Index Rank	Alcohol: 36 Drug: 54
Youth Risk Index Rank	Alcohol: 42 Drug: 52
Youth ASA Consequences	Alcohol: 28 Drug: 51

PRISMS NYC Risk Profiles

Indicator Rates

Information on 46 youth alcohol and substance abuse risk and consequences indicators is provided for each zip code area in indicator rate tables arranged by risk construct. Rates, unlike raw numbers, take the population of the zip code into account, so one zip code area may be compared with other zip codes, as well as to the borough, and the NYC average rates.

Percentile Scores

Percentile scores, ranging from 0% to 100%, provide each zip code area in New York City with a unique ranking for the eight risk constructs and the three indices. The percentile scores indicate each zip code's relative risk for youth alcohol and substance abuse, compared to all other zip code areas.

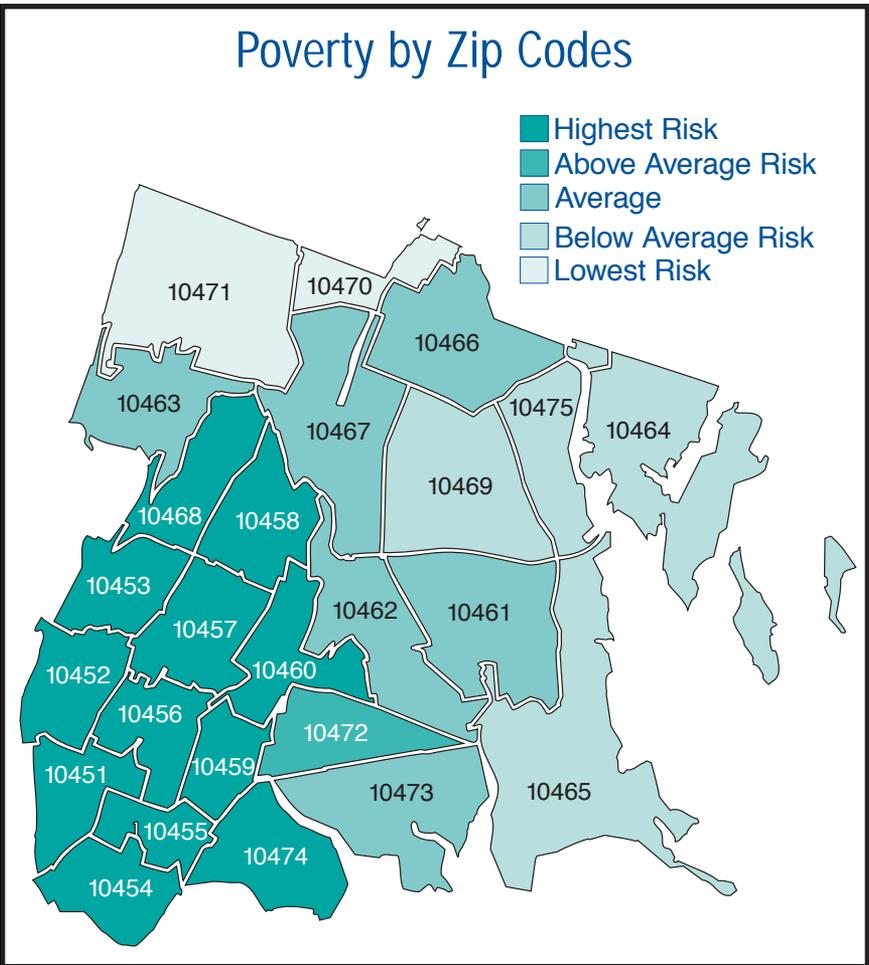
Youth ASA Consequences Indicator Rates** & Construct Percentile Scores				
Zip Code	Drug Crimes	Drug Discharge Diagnoses	Drug or Alcohol Treatment	Construct Score %
10301	119.8	40.6	59.9	89.4
10302	95.9	41.5	151.2	95.0
10303	116.9	34.6	106.8	91.9
10304	194.1	47.7	71.3	95.7
10305	30.7	28.6	46.6	65.8
10306	16.3	30.6	70.6	72.7
10307 [†]	4.2	26.9	65.4	62.7
10308	5.3	20.7	35.0	39.8
10309 [†]	4.2	26.9	65.4	62.7
10310	82.2	27.2	65.2	82.0
10312	1.9	21.8	25.3	31.1
10314	8.3	14.0	58.9	47.2
Avg.	61.4	30.4	68.7	
NYC Avg.	49.4	25.2	36.7	

[†] Combined zip codes due to small population size.

** Indicator rates are rated per 10,000 of the relevant population.

Risk Construct and Indices Data Maps

Data maps visually illustrating risk for youth alcohol and substance abuse by zip code area are provided for each of the eight risk constructs and the three indices. Risk categories for these data maps are constructed by assigning each zip code area in New York City one of five risk categories based on their risk construct or index scores. Geographic overlay maps (transparencies) enhance the construct and index data maps with additional information including geographic locations of community boundaries, ASA prevention and treatment resources, and community landmarks.



Limitations of the PRISMS Profiles

While the PRISMS Profiles provide upstate counties and NYC communities with important ASA risk information, indicator-based need assessment has limitations that need to be recognized and addressed.

- The PRISMS Risk Profiles only assess risk factors for youth alcohol and substance abuse. Indicators that measure protective factors are, for the most part, unavailable. Communities with high levels of risk may not experience greater youth consequences due to the mediating effect of protective factors. Local need assessment should take into account protective factors, including OASAS-funded prevention resources.
- The PRISMS Risk Profiles do not identify high-risk areas or neighborhoods within counties or zip codes. PRISMS can be used in conjunction with other local needs assessment approaches (ethnographic studies, student, household, and special population surveys) to identify high-risk neighborhoods within counties or zip codes.
- Most indicator data is produced by social service and social control agencies and reflect societal responses to youth behavior, not the behavior itself. Resource fluctuations, data reporting practices and service delivery policies can all affect indicator rates. For example, increased DWI rates could be due to a larger police force assigned to highways, to periodic “roadblock sweeps,” or to a truly higher rate. Computing the indicators as the average of two or three years controls short-term fluctuations in indicator rates. Geographical variation in societal response to problem behaviors cannot be controlled by the PRISMS Risk Profiles or other indicator-based need assessments.
- Cultural and institutional forces such as the density of the tourism industry, prisons, colleges, or ASA treatment within a community may affect results and should be taken into consideration.

The PRISMS Profiles are one of many tools to assist local governments and community prevention planners in targeting youth prevention strategies. Local surveys, sub-county indicators and other community-level data are also needed to fully assess a community’s substance abuse risks and problems.

The OASAS Prevention Framework

The OASAS framework for alcohol and substance abuse prevention is based on the concept of risk and protection; certain risk factors increase the likelihood of alcohol and substance abuse problems, while protective factors safeguard against or reduce the effects of alcohol and other substance abuse risk.

One risk and protection model adopted by OASAS and many other states is the Social Development model, developed by Hawkins, Catalano, and Miller at the University of Washington. The Social Development model hypothesizes that the formation of positive social bonds during childhood and adolescence protect against alcohol and substance abuse, and that risk factors operate by inhibiting the bonding processes. Alcohol and substance abuse risk and protective factors operate in many domains or areas, including the individual, family, peer group, school, and community. Since the Social Development model identifies causative risk factors that are amenable to change and prescribes prevention strategies based on domain-specific risk factors, this risk and protection model has been embraced by many in the prevention field.

OASAS requires that all OASAS-funded prevention providers utilize the risk and protection framework in their annual prevention work plan. This results-focused work plan requires that all prevention providers identify their target populations, population characteristics (including risk and protective factors), results to be achieved, research-based strategies and activities to be utilized, and clear methods of verification to demonstrate the level of achievement for each performance target.

New York State's alcohol and substance abuse prevention service delivery system consists of over 400 schools and community-based prevention and early intervention programs operating at over 2,700 sites. These programs provide a comprehensive range of research-based services, including classroom education, social skills development training, peer-led programs, training sessions for parents and teachers, positive alternative activities, and individual, group and family counseling.

The OASAS Prevention framework for alcohol and substance abuse continues to evolve over time based on research findings and New York's experience in program development, implementation, and evaluation.

Risk Indicator Rate Tables

The PRISMS Risk Profiles provide New York Counties (excluding New York City) with rate information for the following 74 risk and consequences indicators. The indicator rates are arranged according to Risk Construct and Risk or Consequences Index. The New York City Profiles provide New York City communities with similar rate information.

1998 Youth Risk Indicators County, Similar Counties*, State Rates**			
	Sample County	Similar Counties	NY State
School Conduct			
% Average Daily Absenteeism	5.7	5.8	5.3
% Students Suspended	6.5	6.8	4.9
School Separation			
% H.S. Dropout	2.2	2.5	2.5
% H.S. Grads Not Attending College	16.0	17.9	23.4
% Non-Regents Diplomas	42.0	46.9	49.4
Problem Behavior - Delinquency			
Violent Crime Arrests	55.2	49.6	39.6
Property Crime Arrests	230.7	214.6	171.4
Other Arrests (non AOD)	682.0	541.1	436.6
PINS Cases Opened	207.0	151.1	122.7
PINS Total Served	227.3	179.0	149.0
DFY-Total In Care	14.6	10.6	6.4
Problem Behavior - Sexuality			
Teenage Pregnancy	320.5	356.3	265.3
Teenage Abortions	157.0	147.6	104.3
Hospital Diagnoses of STDs	1.4	0.8	0.3

Risk Indicator Rate Tables

1998 Youth Risk Indicators County, Similar Counties*, State Rates**

	Sample County	Similar Counties	NY State
Intrapersonal Problems			
Emotionally Disturbed Students	88.4	83.8	81.7
AOD-Related Mental Health Diagnoses	30.7	46.1	45.1
Family Dysfunction			
Foster Care Admissions	58.4	37.7	28.1
Children in Foster Care	100.8	76.2	49.6
Preventive Services Openings	138.7	92.8	74.1
CPS Indicated Cases	175.8	106.8	101.3
CPS Reports - Mandated	316.6	204.7	182.1
CPS Reports - Total Received	505.3	382.4	331.0
Divorces	130.5	126.3	116.1
Academic Failure			
3rd Grade Reading - % Below SRP	8.0	7.0	6.5
3rd Grade Math - % Below SRP	1.0	0.7	0.4
4th Grade Science - Content	23.4	23.4	23.4
4th Grade Science - Skills	13.0	12.8	12.7
4th Grade Science - Manipulative Skills	35.0	34.5	34.1
5th Grade Writing - % Below SRP	3.0	2.6	3.1
6th Grade Reading - % Below SRP	7.0	8.3	6.8
6th Grade Math - % Below SRP	1.0	1.2	1.0

* The Similar Counties groupings are constructed according to each county's risk construct and Consequences Indices scores. Counties that share similar levels of Youth ASA risk and consequences are grouped together.

** NYS rates exclude New York City. Indicator rates are rated per 10,000 of the relevant population.

Risk Indicator Rate Tables

1998 Community Risk Indicators County, Similar Counties*, State Rates**

Community Disorganization	Sample County	Similar Counties	NY State
Urbanicity			
Population Density	559.4	549.5	344.1
Percent Urban	85.5	78.2	44.4
Violence			
Violent Crime Arrests	23.3	19.6	15.6
Hospital Diagnosis of Intentional Injury	3.4	4.2	3.4
Homicides	0.3	0.5	0.3
Crime			
Property Crime Arrests	91.0	76.1	57.6
Other Arrests	342.4	269.9	211.5
Poverty			
Unemployment	3.0	4.2	5.2
Median Family Income	\$50,600	\$45,600	\$43,646
Couple-Headed Families in Poverty	145.4	201.7	190.4
Male-Headed Families in Poverty	671.5	727.3	683.6
Female-Headed Families in Poverty	1992.4	2541.0	2,129.7
Children Under 18 Living in Poverty	1254.6	1449.5	1,134.3
AFDC Applications	163.7	141.3	103.6
Food Stamp Applications	228.8	208.0	150.7
Medicaid Applications	351.5	353.4	302.7

Risk Indicator Rate Tables

1998 Community Risk Indicators County, Similar Counties*, State Rates**

AOD Exposure	Sample County	Similar Counties	NY State
Alcohol Accessibility			
Adult DWI Arrests	66.9	53.7	57.7
Intoxicated Adults In Auto Accidents	9.1	8.5	8.9
On-Premise Licensed Outlets, All	16.6	14.6	14.7
Off-Premise Licensed Liquor Outlets	1.5	1.3	1.6
Off-Premise Licensed Beer Outlets	9.6	8.8	9.4
Adult Alcohol Health/Treatment			
Alcohol-Related Deaths	1.0	1.5	1.2
Alcohol-Related Hospital Diagnoses	14.7	14.1	11.8
OASAS Alcohol Treatment	67.6	61.5	50.6
Adult Probation - Alcohol			
Probation Cases: Use at Offense	43.3	40.0	40.3
Probation Cases: Court Mandates	84.3	52.1	55.3
Adult Drug Indicators			
Drug Arrests	114.0	60.3	42.5
DUI Drug Arrests	1.7	1.0	2.0
Drug-Related Hospital Diagnoses	66.2	59.8	45.5
OASAS Drug Treatment	45.0	31.2	28.6
Probation Cases: Use at Offense	19.8	16.6	11.1
Probation Cases: Court Mandates	93.5	47.7	45.9
Mental Health AOD Indications	18.4	18.7	16.5

* The Similar Counties groupings are constructed according to each county's risk construct and Consequences Indices scores. Counties that share similar levels of Youth ASA risk and consequences are grouped together.

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The PRISMS Risk Profiles and related reports can be accessed from the OASAS web site at <http://www.oasas.state.ny.us/datamart/prisms.htm>. The Risk Profiles and reports are available in Adobe .PDF for easy downloading and printing. Those without internet access may request a copy of the Profiles or the following PRISMS-related publications from the OASAS Bureau of Communications and Community Relations at (518) 485-1768, fax: (518) 485-6014, e-mail: info@oasas.state.ny.us.

PRISMS RELATED REPORTS

- Alcohol and Other Drug Abuse Prevention Services Needs Assessment: County-Level Social Indicator Study. OASAS, Barry R. Donovan, Ph.D., and Cheryl A. Backus. August, 1997.

- Alcohol and Substance Abuse Prevention Needs Assessment: County-Level Social Indicator Study Literature Review, 1999 Update. OASAS, A. Kathy Dixon and Dawne E. Amsler. February, 1999.

- 1999 County-Level Social Indicators for Alcohol and Other Drug Abuse Prevention Services Needs Assessment: Replication and Validation Studies. OASAS, A. Kathy Dixon and Dawne E. Amsler (forthcoming).

For more information regarding the PRISMS Profiles methodology or technical reports, contact the OASAS Services Research Section at planning@oasas.state.ny.us or (518) 485-0262.

For more information regarding OASAS prevention efforts, contact the OASAS Bureau of Prevention, Intervention, Policy and Resource Development at prevention@oasas.state.ny.us or (518) 485-2132.

For more information regarding OASAS initiatives and services, contact:

OASAS
1450 Western Avenue
Albany, NY 12203-3526
(518) 473-3460
www.oasas.state.ny.us.

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For more information regarding New York State Touchstones, contact:

NYS Council on Children and Families

5 Empire State Plaza, Suite 2810

Albany, NY 12223

(518) 473-3652

www.capital.net/com/council

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