



## THE FOUR CORE MEASURES USED IN THE DRUG FREE COMMUNITIES NATIONAL EVALUATION

The Drug Free Communities Support Program tracks its performance using four core measures: (1) past 30-day use, (2) perception of risk, (3) perception of parental disapproval, and (4) age of onset. These core measures are collected on three substances (alcohol, tobacco, and marijuana) across at least three grades every two years. The core measures are entered into the COMET system and analyzed by the National Evaluation Team at ICF International.

The table below presents details on the four core measures, including the definition of each and the ideal survey question to use.

### SUMMARY OF THE FOUR CORE MEASURES

Core Measure	Definition	Ideal Question
Past 30-Day Use	The percentage of respondents who report using alcohol, tobacco, and marijuana at least once in the past 30 days	During the past 30 days, on how many days did you: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• drink one or more drinks of an alcoholic beverage?</li> <li>• smoke part or all of a cigarette?</li> <li>• use marijuana or hashish?</li> </ul>
Age of Onset	The average age that respondents report first trying alcohol, tobacco, and marijuana	How old were you when you: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• first had a drink of beer, wine, or hard liquor (for example, vodka, whiskey, or gin)?</li> <li>• first smoked part or all of a cigarette?</li> <li>• first used marijuana or hashish?</li> </ul>
Perception of Risk	The percentage of respondents who report that <b>regular use</b> of alcohol, tobacco, and marijuana has <b>moderate risk</b> or <b>great risk</b>	How much do you think people risk harming themselves (physically or in other ways) if they: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• take one or two drinks of an alcoholic beverage (beer, wine, liquor) nearly every day?</li> <li>• smoke one or more packs of cigarettes per day?</li> <li>• smoke marijuana regularly?</li> </ul>
Perception of Parental Disapproval	The percentage of respondents who report their parents feel <b>regular</b> use of alcohol – and any use of tobacco, and marijuana – is <b>wrong</b> or very <b>wrong</b>	How wrong do your parents feel it would be for you to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• drink beer, wine, or hard liquor (for example, vodka, whiskey, or gin) regularly?</li> <li>• smoke cigarettes?</li> <li>• smoke marijuana?</li> </ul>

### Conducting a Survey Using the Four Core Measures

In order for the core measures to be combined across DFC grantees, the data collection needs to be standardized. The National Evaluation Team and SAMHSA project officers will help DFC grantees determine whether their survey questions meet the national evaluation requirements. In order for a survey to be listed in the COMET system, DFC grantees should request a Survey Review from their SAMHSA project officer. The National Evaluation Team will then produce a survey guide which will aid in the data collection and reporting process. The survey guide includes:

- an assessment of whether the grantee’s proposed survey meets evaluation requirements
- a side-by-side comparison of the recommended “best question” and the corresponding item from the grantee’s survey, and
- instructions for entering data into the COMET system.

Based on the survey review, you may need to add new questions to your survey or modify existing questions to ensure your data meet requirements.

When collecting data for the core measures, please keep in mind that the data need to represent your coalition’s performance. It is important to survey a group of youth that are as representative of your target community as possible (this is best achieved by drawing a random sample of youth). If you have any questions about the four core measures, please contact your SAMHSA project officer, or contact the DFC National Evaluation Team at 1-877-854-0731 or by e-mail at [DFC\\_Evaluators@icfi.com](mailto:DFC_Evaluators@icfi.com).

### ONDCP | DFC National Evaluation Core Measures

*ONDCP seeks to foster healthy individuals and safe communities  
by effectively leading the Nation's effort to reduce drug use and its consequences*