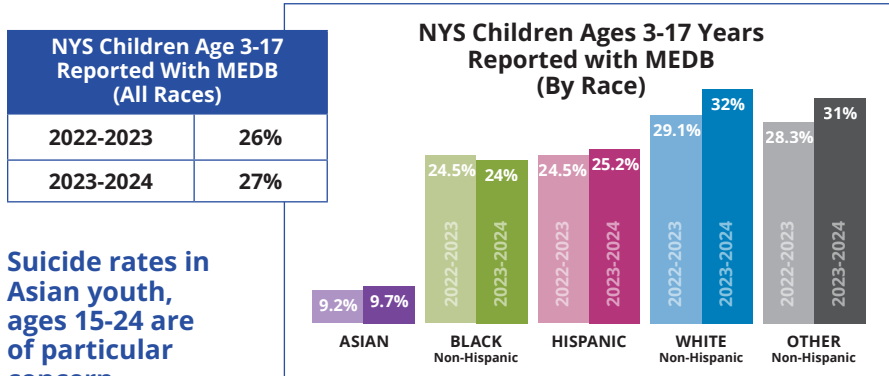




## Highlights:

- One in Four Children in NY State are impacted with mental health issues-this number shows no signs of decreasing.
- New York State passed landmark legislation to reduce cell phone use in 2025.
- We are seeing a decline in drug and alcohol use.

## Mental, emotional, developmental, and/or behavioral (MEDB) problems are on the rise in New York State



**Suicide rates in Asian youth, ages 15-24 are of particular concern.**

While Asian children in NY State ages 3-17 report having fewer MEDB problems than their peers, Asian youth ages 15-24 have the highest suicide rate when compared to other racial groups in NY. This discrepancy may reflect a trend in underdiagnosis and underreporting.

**SOURCES:**  
 • 2022-2023 (25.7%) National Survey of Children's Health (Two Year Averages), <https://www.childhealthdata.org/>  
 • Suicide Rate (Two Year Average 2023-2024). Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, National Center for Injury Prevention and Control. (n.d.). Web-based Injury Statistics Query and Reporting System (WISQARS) [Data set]. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Retrieved 03/23/2026, from <https://wisqars.cdc.gov/lcd/?o=LC-D&y1=2023&y2=2024&ct=5&cc=ALL&g=36&s=0&r=0&ry=3&e=0&ar=1&age=groups&ag=1&age&a1=0&a2=199>  
 • Artiga, Samantha, and Nirmita Panchal. "Gaps in mental health care for Asian and Pacific Islander people and other people of color." Kaiser family foundation. Available from: Gaps in Mental Health Care for Asian and Pacific Islander People and Other People of Color | KFF (2023).

## 'Distraction-Free' Policy Put into Law

In 2025 New York State implemented a statewide ban on smart phones in schools. The so-called 'bell to bell' restricted students cell phone usage during the school day. School leadership reported:



- 92% reported a **smooth transition.**
- 83% reported more **positive classrooms and better student engagement.**
- 75% reported an **improved ability to teach effectively.**

**SOURCE:** Survey results can be found at <https://www.governor.ny.gov/news/new-survey-shows-governor-hochulus-distraction-free-schools-law-delivering-outstanding-results>

## How do Mental Health Services for Westchester Children & Youth add up?

<b>Total Number of Westchester Public Schools</b>	<b>234</b>
<b>Number of Department of Community Mental Health (DCMH) Mental Health Clinics</b>	<b>72</b>
<b>Number of DCMH Early Step Forward (ESF) Locations</b> <i>These locations provided mental health services for 1,536 children (0-5) with behavioral challenges affecting their school readiness; 93% were children of color.</i>	<b>30</b>
<b>Number of Community Schools</b> <i>These schools partner with local organizations to provide academic and family support beyond the classroom.</i>	<b>23</b>

## Student to Support Ratios

<b>Guidance Counselors per 311 Students</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>Social Workers per 814 students</b>	<b>1</b>

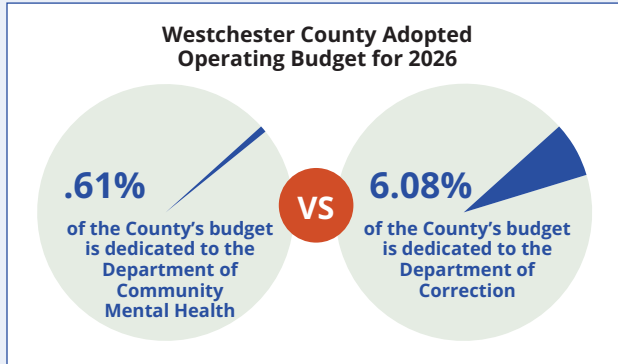
**SOURCES:**  
 • DCMH Clinics: Shaw, Victoria. "Updating WCA's Mental Health Fact Sheet" Email to Limarie Cabrera, 12/16/2025  
 • DCMH Early Step Forward: Bell, Andrew. "Early Step Forward Fact Sheet, 2024-2025" Attachment to Email to Limarie Cabrera, 11/24/25  
 • Community Schools: New York State Education Department, <https://www.nysed.gov/sites/default/files/programs/student-support-services/community-schools-list-24-25.pdf>.  
 • Support Staff Data: 2023-24 NYSED Student and Educator Database, <https://data.nysed.gov/downloads.php>.

**Learn more at [wca4kids.org](http://wca4kids.org)**

Support for this fact sheet comes from the Westchester County Board of Legislators.

## Funding for Mental Health in Westchester County Continues to Lag Behind Other Departments

A closer look at the county's annual budget reveals a stark contrast between funding for the Department of Corrections and the Department of Community Mental Health.

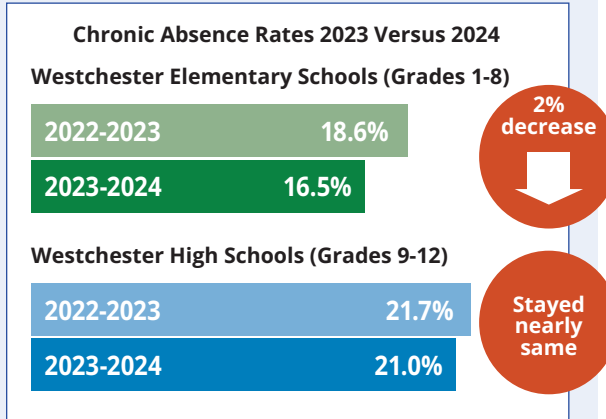


SOURCE: 2026 Westchester County Adopted Operating Budget, pg. B-8. [https://www.westchestercountyny.gov/images/stories/budget/2026/2026\\_Adopted\\_Operating\\_Budget.pdf](https://www.westchestercountyny.gov/images/stories/budget/2026/2026_Adopted_Operating_Budget.pdf)

## Chronic Absenteeism is Down or Steady

20% of Westchester County High School Students were chronically absent during the 2023-2024 school year.

Chronic absenteeism — defined as missing more than 10% of school days (~18 days) — saw an initial surge with COVID-19, with more students regularly missing school.

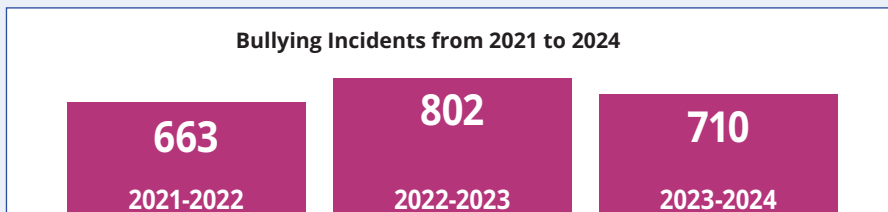


The latest data shows a slight decline. However, these numbers are still concerning.

SOURCE: New York State Education Department. (2022-2023 and 2023-2024). New York State School Report Card database. <https://data.nysed.gov/downloads.php>

## Bullying Incidents are Down Slightly

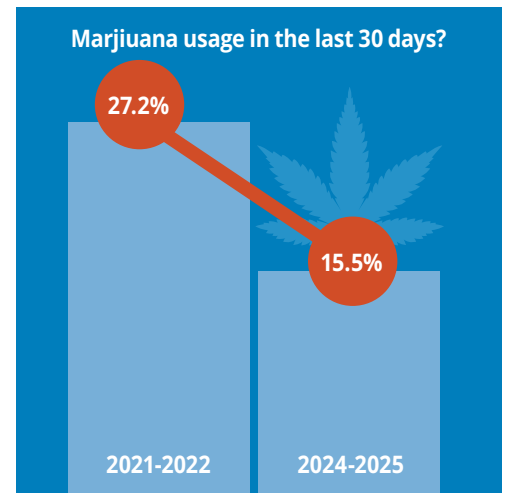
In Westchester, public school bullying incidents declined by 11% between 2022-23 and 2023-24 but have not returned to 2021-22 levels.



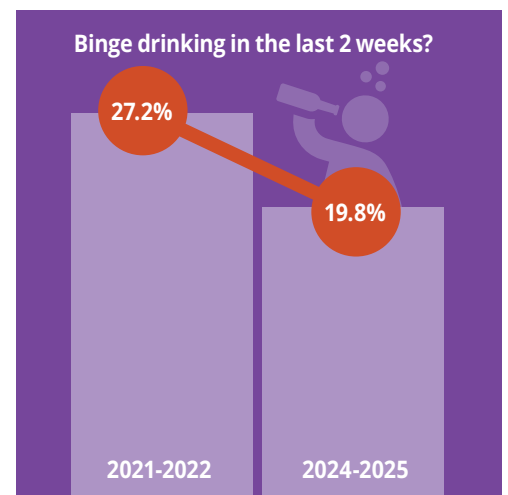
SOURCE: New York State Education Department. (Multiple Years). Information and Reporting Services. "School Safety and the Educational Climate." [https://www.p12.nysed.gov/irs/school\\_safety/school\\_safety\\_data\\_reporting.html](https://www.p12.nysed.gov/irs/school_safety/school_safety_data_reporting.html)

## GOOD NEWS: HS Seniors Self-Reported a Decline in Drug & Alcohol Use

During the 2021-2022 school year and again in 2024-2025, 12th grade students were asked about their **marijuana use in the last 30 days**. Responses indicated a decline.



When 12th grade students were asked about their **binge drinking in the prior 2 weeks**, recorded responses showed a similar decline.



SOURCE: Student Assistance Services Corporation, "Summary of Westchester County Drug Free Communities Support Program Core Measures," 2021-2022 & 2024-2025

