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## Disparities in Substance Use among Broward County Students by Sexual Behavior

Data from the CDC’s biennial Youth Risk Behavior Surveillance System (YRBSS) survey indicate that Broward County high school students reporting sex with a person of the same sex or with both sexes report greater lifetime use of drugs, compared to their peers. These differences are statistically significant and reveal that behaviorally sexual minority youth are using prescription opioids at more than twice the rates of other students. The disparity is even greater for substances, including heroin, cocaine, and methamphetamine. In addition, results from the survey also show that behaviorally sexually minority youth are also significantly more likely to use alcohol, marijuana, and nicotine before the age of 13.

Data from Broward County suggest that specific prevention, intervention, and treatment efforts must be targeted toward students who may not be behaviorally heterosexual. According to the National Institutes of Health, sexual minority youth often face stigma, harassment, and violence that are not encountered by their peers and there is a direct link between such adversity and behavioral health issues, like substance use. Thus, addressing substance use among this population may require efforts to combat social adversity faced by sexual minority students, in addition to traditional prevention efforts.

Source: Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). 1991-2021 High School Youth Risk Behavior Survey Data. Available at <http://nccd.cdc.gov/youthonline/>.

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