

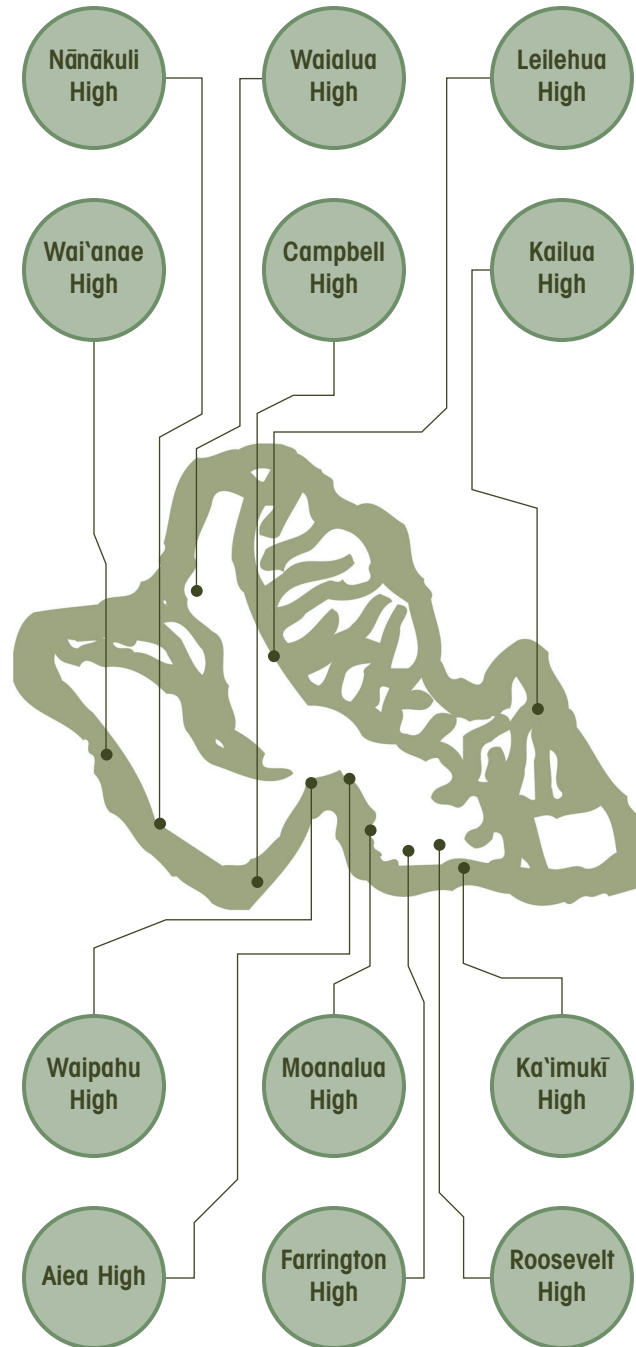
## Teen Substance Abuse

In collaboration with the Department of Health's Alcohol and Drug Abuse Division, the Kalihi YMCA provides accessible, on-campus substance abuse counseling for O'ahu students who are having problems with abuse of substances like marijuana, methamphetamine (Ice) and alcohol. Teen loss of control to drugs or alcohol is also associated with increasing violence, early pregnancy, law violations, run-away behavior and victimization. Teens who use drugs or alcohol tend to select peers who are also users. This increases the strength of negative peer influence and selects out family or friends who might have been a positive influence. Teen substance abuse problems almost always exist in tandem with school failure and alienation from family. Substance abusing teens are often left with no healthy adult relationships.



## Community Focus

"Community-based" is the important phrase in the Kalihi Y's strategy for helping O'ahu teens. The Y has developed a comprehensive, year-round program to provide services to middle and high school students at twelve O'ahu campuses—whether school is in session or not. Teens who are in trouble with drugs or alcohol are often more at risk during vacations and school breaks. This year-round availability helps to provide consistency and longevity for school and community-based activities. The program also provides teens with the opportunity to form healthy relationships with drug-free peers.



## Treatment Strategies

Traditional adult, Twelve-Step programs are often not effective with teens. What has been found effective is that teens are encouraged to face the consequences of their behaviors through their relationship with a mentoring adult. The idea of school and community based programs is to bring treatment to where the problems are, not to wait for teens to seek help outside their own communities. Students who are in trouble with drugs or alcohol can be referred to the program by anyone, including school counselors, teachers and administrators. In fact, Kalihi Y has found that the longer their program has been on a campus, the more the referrals come from other students. Each teen is given an assessment interview and rated for degree of symptom severity. Group and individual counseling then focuses on helping teens to begin dealing with the consequences of negative behavior. Group work helps give teens the experience of relating to each other in a clean and sober environment. Teens in the program receive a basic drug education curriculum combined with a focus on social and personal skill building. Teens also take part in the "Ropes" challenge course at the YMCA's Camp Erdman on O'ahu's North Shore. The program seeks to provide venues and activities that encourage positive, drug-free socialization. This combination of "psycho-educational" intervention and experience in the community has proven to be a powerful strategy for helping teens find their way out of negative behaviors.



**We build strong kids, strong families,  
strong communities.**