

## Our History

Drug Free Charlotte County was formed in 2003 after data from the 2000 Florida Youth Substance Abuse Survey noted Charlotte County had one of the highest rates of underage alcohol use in the state. Dubbed “Scarlett Charlotte”, the community realized action was needed. A group of local stakeholders, including the schools, law enforcement, providers and businesses, formed a coalition incorporated as Charlotte Alliance for a Safe and Drug Free Communities, which came to be known as Drug Free Charlotte County. Strong partnerships and community support fueled the coalition’s action, providing a solid, effective, and research-based prevention framework. The coalition’s success earned it the distinction of the 2011 National Coalition of the Year by the Community Alcohol and Drug Abuse Coalitions of America (CADCA).

Through its dedication to build strong partnerships, DFCC helped form two “sister coalitions” in the County – in the Punta Gorda and Englewood communities. Both coalitions have gone on to become federally recognized and funded Drug Free Community Coalitions. This helps build capacity for the work of prevention with more community members focusing on issues in their neighborhoods and local community.

Drug Free Charlotte County addresses substance abuse as both a community coalition and a prevention program provider. The coalition has spent over a decade successfully developing and implementing social norms marketing campaigns. These campaigns promote positive community norms related to substance use. Messages included the fact most teens do not use alcohol, tobacco or drugs and that parents are key to prevention. These successful marketing strategies have led to the development of a social enterprise strategy to sell the social marketing campaigns to other prevention organizations. This provides added resources for the work of the organization to promote wellness through substance abuse prevention.

As a prevention service provider, Drug Free Charlotte County provides evidence-based programs for children and youth in the county. In 2016, the nonprofit expanded its services to include special programs for elementary, at-risk teens and parents.