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Contact: DPI Communications Message Line, (608) 266-3559

Tobacco, alcohol use down among teens

2013 Youth Risk Behavior Survey results mirror societal tobacco trends

MADISON — Students' tobacco use mirrors societal trends with a phenomenal reduction over 20 years in data collected through the biennial Youth Risk Behavior Survey. Student cigarette smoking dropped from 32 percent in 1993 to 12 percent reported in the 2013 survey.

“The decline in youth cigarette use is good news for our students' health,” said State Superintendent Tony Evers. “Tobacco prevention activities in school along with smoke-free laws and cigarette tax increases have had a positive impact on use. We need to pay attention to funding for youth tobacco prevention initiatives, which has been declining, lest we see this positive trend erode.”

The 2013 Wisconsin Youth Risk Behavior Survey asked high school students questions related to traffic safety, weapons and violence, suicide, tobacco use, alcohol and other drugs, sexual behaviors, nutrition and physical exercise as well as assets, the positive influences that protect against risky behaviors. In addition to declines in tobacco use, trends over 20 years show declines in the onset and current use of alcohol and binge drinking, declines in fighting and carrying weapons, and declines in suicidal thoughts. Like society as a whole, students have increased their seatbelt use and increased their physical activity. Most students abstain from sexual activity and, over the 20 years of the survey, the percentage of students who report they have had sexual intercourse has dropped. Most students report they feel safe at school, feel as though they belong, and have a teacher or another adult at school they can talk to if they have a problem.

Troubling results include texting while driving by more than half of 11th- and 12th-grade students, drinking and driving by 15 percent of these students, and belief that bullying and harassment are problems in school by 45 percent of students. Too many students still don't get enough physical activity, eat the recommended amount of vegetables, or get enough sleep. Though youth suicide data is improving, the suicide rate for youth in Wisconsin consistently exceeds the national average.

(more)

“Our youth are so precious,” Evers said. “The data in the Youth Risk Behavior Survey shows where we’ve had some success and where there’s more work to do to help our young people reach adulthood safe, healthy, and secure.”

The Youth Risk Behavior Survey is conducted as part of a national effort by the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention to monitor health risk behaviors of the nation’s high school students. The 2013 survey was administered to 2,843 students in 53 public schools last spring. Survey results are representative of ninth-through 12th-grade public high school students. The 99-item survey is voluntary and survey procedures protect the privacy of students. Local parent permission procedures were followed before administration, including informing parents that their child’s participation was voluntary.

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NOTE: Attached is a table of highlights from the 20 years of the Youth Risk Behavior Survey. Information about the full survey can be found online at http://sspw.dpi.wi.gov/sspw_yrbsindx. This news release is available electronically at http://news.dpi.wi.gov/files/eis/pdf/dpinr2014_21.pdf.

2013 Youth Risk Behavior Survey Highlights

(Percent of 9th- through 12th-grade Students Who Report)

	1993	1997	1999	2001	2003	2005	2007	2009	2011	2013
Smoking Cigarettes	32	36	38	33	24	23	21	17	15	12
Using Alcohol	48	51	52	54	47	49	49	41	39	33
Binge Drinking	29	31	34	34	28	31	32	25	24	18
Using Marijuana	11	21	21	25	22	16	20	19	22	17
Receiving Drug Offers at School	20	28	29	27	26	22	23	21	21	18
Fighting at School	16	14	11	11	12	12	11	10	9	7
Fighting Anywhere	39	34	33	31	31	33	31	26	25	22
Carrying Weapons	19	15	18	13	13	16	13	11	10	14
Bullying Is a Problem at School	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	47	42	44	45
Considering Suicide	27	24	22	20	20	18	15	13	14	13
Feel They Belong at School	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	70	73	74	74
Supportive Adult at School	NA	73	73	74						
Never Having Sexual Intercourse	53	59	59	61	63	60	55	59	58	65

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