

Physical Activity and Nutrition, Injury & Violence, Mental Health, Substance Use, Tobacco Use, and Sexual Risk Behavior among Middle/High School Youth in the Weld Community

Executive Summary of Findings from the Healthy Kids Colorado Survey, 2009-2010.

In the 2009-2010 school year, 6,365 6th through 12th grade students in seven public school districts in the Weld Community completed the *Healthy Kids Colorado Survey*. This survey focuses on health risk behaviors, including tobacco use, physical activity, nutrition, alcohol and other drug use, risky sexual behaviors, and behaviors that contribute to unintentional injuries and violence. Results from the survey¹ provide a snapshot of issues among youth. These results, however, should be viewed with caution as they were derived from a convenience sample of students whose parents provided consent for their survey participation.

What did the survey reveal about the prevalence of risk behaviors among high school students, Grades 9-12?

Physical Activity and Nutrition

- 55% youth surveyed in 2009-10 consider themselves about the right weight.
- 22% consider themselves slightly overweight or very overweight and 41% reported they are trying to lose weight.
- 80% reported exercising for 1-7 days during the past seven days for a total of at least 60 minutes per day.
- 86% of the youth had participated in vigorous physical activity for at least 20 minutes per day that made them sweat or breathe hard, such as basketball, soccer, running, swimming laps, fast bicycling or similar aerobic activities.
- 80% had participated in moderate physical activity for at least 30 minutes during the past seven days such as fast walking, slow bicycling, skating, pushing a lawn mower or mopping floors.

Injury and Violence

- 21% of surveyed students rode in a vehicle driven by someone who had been drinking alcohol at least once in the past month, while 12% drove a vehicle after drinking alcohol at least once in the past month, an indication that more students are drinking or riding with alcohol.
- 17% of surveyed students rode in a vehicle driven by someone who had been smoking marijuana at least once in the past month, while 14% drove a vehicle after smoking marijuana at least once in the past month.

Mental Health

- 25% of students felt so sad or hopeless almost every day for two weeks or more in a row that they stopped doing some usual activities during the past 12 months.
- 15% seriously considered attempting suicide during the past 12 months, with 17% of females and 13% of males reporting they seriously considered suicide.
- 14% made a plan about how they attempt suicide during the past 12 months, with 15% of females and 13% of males indicating they had made a suicide plan.
- 10% actually attempted suicide one or more times during the past 12 months, with 11% of females and 9% of males indicating a suicide attempt.

¹Estimates were generated from unweighted Healthy Kids Colorado Survey (HKCS) 2009-10 data from a convenience sample conducted in Weld County. For state-level data, please see: http://www.cde.state.co.us/cdeprevention/CSH_surveys.htm

Substance Abuse

- 27% of students had their first drink of alcohol (other than a few sips) before age 13, but 17% tried marijuana **before age 13**.
- 71% of secondary students did not drink alcohol in the past month.
- 30 day alcohol use ranged from 9% of 6th graders to 53% of 12th graders.
- 18% consumed five or more alcoholic beverages in a row on one or more days during the past month with binge drinking rates from 4% of 6th graders to 37% of 12th graders.
- 14% used marijuana during the past month with use ranging from 2% of 6th graders to 28% of 12th graders..

Tobacco Use

- 23% of students reported ever trying cigarette smoking; 77% never used cigarettes.
- 12% reported smoking on at least one day in the previous month; 88% did not smoke in the past month.

Sexual Health – in High School Survey Only (Grades 9-12)

- 60% of high school students reported never having been sexually active.
- Among those who reported ever being sexually active, 15% of males and 10% of females reported their first having sexual intercourse at age 13 or younger.
- Among high school students who were sexually active, 73% reported that they did not drink alcohol or use drugs before they had sexual intercourse the last time.
- Among those who were sexually active, 71% of the males reported using some method of birth control the last time they had sex and 66% of the males reported using condoms.

Among those who were sexually active, 72% of the females reported using some method of birth control the last time they had sex and 60% of the females reported using condoms.

Risk Factor Scales

Research by J. David Hawkins and Richard F. Catalano of the Social Development Research Group at the University of Washington has led to what has become commonly referred to as the Risk and Protective Factor model. In the model, various survey questions, combined to form Risk Factor scales, can be used to predict adolescent delinquency. Based on a student's responses to the component questions, s/he receives a scale score, which is then compared to a cut-point derived from historical survey data. If a student's score is above the cut point then s/he is defined as "at-risk."

- 42% were considered at-risk based on low perceived risk of drug use.
- 34% were considered at-risk based on attitudes favorable toward drug use.
- 31% were considered at-risk in terms of peer use of alcohol, tobacco, and other drugs.
- 39% were considered at-risk based on low commitment to school.
- 34% were considered at-risk based on parental attitudes favorable to drug use.

Protective Factors protect at-risk students from risky behaviors.

- 85% had a parent or someone in the home that believed they will be a success and 88% want them to do their best.
- 57% stated that they have opportunities for pro-social involvement at school.

Comprehensive health education, school-based health services, counseling and mental health services and parental and community involvement all work together to address risk and prevention and improve educational outcomes for at risk students. Schools offering these services report increased school attendance, decreased drop-outs and suspensions, and higher graduation rates. Such programs have also been associated with improved test performance, attendance, and school connectedness².

²For more information on the link between health and learning see the "Summary of Selected Evidence-Based Research" from *Healthy Kids Learn Better* and *Making the Connection: Health and Student Achievement* at www.cde.state.co.us/cdeprevention/results.htm