



DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH

News Release

NEIL ABERCROMBIE
GOVERNOR

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HAWAI‘I HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS ARE MAKING BETTER HEALTH CHOICES ACCORDING TO SURVEY RESULTS

HONOLULU - The Hawai‘i State Departments of Health (DOH) and Education (DOE) today jointly released findings from the 2011 Youth Risk Behavior Survey (YRBS). The study is part of a national initiative conducted every two years, and is the only survey that monitors youth risk behaviors on a broad scale. Results specific to Hawai‘i show that, since 2009, there have been many positive changes in high school students’ health behaviors; however, there is still much room for improvement.

Superintendent Kathryn Matayoshi explained: “These data demonstrate the important role of DOE wellness policy in reinforcing classroom instruction and supporting positive health behaviors. The results are encouraging and show that we are on the right track, but there is much left to be done.”

Health Director Loretta Fuddy added: “The data indicate that our youth are responding positively to interventions aimed at developing healthy behaviors. The optimistic survey results are an example of the success of the long standing partnership between the DOH and DOE to monitor and track student health and behavior.”

Important findings from the YRBS include:

- The percentage of high school students who report attempting suicide in the past 12 months decreased significantly from 13 percent in 2009 to 9 percent in 2011.
- Fewer high school students are drinking alcohol or binge drinking, but 29 percent still report drinking some alcohol in the past 30 days.

(more)

- Marijuana use remains steady with 22 percent of high school students reporting use in the past 30 days.
- Hawai'i high school students are less likely to have ever had sex than students nationally (37 percent versus 47 percent).
- There has been a slight decrease in the percentage of high school students who are obese (13 percent down from 15 percent in 2007).
- More high school students are meeting the national recommendation of at least 60 minutes of physical activity each day (38 percent in 2011 compared to 30 percent in 2005).
- Soda consumption continues to decline, with 23 percent of students reporting that they drank no sugar-sweetened soda in the past 7 days. This figure is lower than the national average and has shown steady decline since the implementation of the DOE Wellness Guidelines in 2007.

Survey Description

The YRBS is administered jointly by the DOH and DOE to public school students in grades 6-12 every two years as part of the Hawai'i School Health Survey. Detailed data reports by student, gender, grade and race/ethnicity are available from the DOH website, www.hawaii.gov/health, and at the Hawai'i Health Data Warehouse website, www.hhdw.org. The YRBS is part of the Youth Risk Behavior Surveillance System developed by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). For a comparison of Hawai'i data to national figures, visit www.cdc.gov/healthyyouth. County-level data reports will be released later this summer.

The YRBS is an important tool to identify focus areas for prevention and treatment efforts; no other tool monitors the multitude of health risk behaviors of Hawai'i youth on a regular basis. The next YRBS will be conducted in spring 2013.

Survey procedures were designed to protect student privacy by allowing for anonymous and voluntary participation. Before survey administration, active parental permission was obtained. Students completed the self-administered questionnaire during one class period.

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