

The Delaware General Health District

Essential public health services keeping us safe and well.



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DELAWARE COUNTY YOUTH HEALTH ASSESSMENT 2005

Survey Highlights



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Introduction

This survey of youth attitudes, behavior, and understanding of tobacco issues was commissioned by the Delaware General Health District as a way to evaluate the impact of the youth prevention activities of our local tobacco program grant from the Ohio Tobacco Use Prevention and Control Foundation. The youth tobacco prevention activities include Botvin's Life Skills training, Tobacco Education Group and Tobacco Awareness Program (education and cessation programs), the NIC-o-teen program and the Delaware County Stand team.

Summary

This summary report provides an overview of health-related data for Delaware County school students, grades six through nine, who participated in a county-wide health assessment survey during the winter of 2004-5. The findings are based on self-administered survey data using a structured questionnaire. The questions were modeled after the survey instruments used by the Centers for Disease Control for their national and state Youth Risk Behavior Surveillance Survey ; however, the survey questionnaire was developed as a joint effort between Great Lakes Marketing, Inc., and the Delaware General Health District to include areas specifically relevant to Delaware County youth. Great Lakes Marketing, Inc. collected the data and analyzed the findings for this study.

Primary Data Collection Methodology

A total of 1,754 county students, grades six through nine, were asked to complete the Delaware County Health Assessment questionnaire. The margin of error for the total sample is plus or minus two percentage points at the 95 percent level of confidence.

Youth Sample Methodology

Schools for this study were selected by the Delaware General Health District (DGHD) to give the broadest mix of sixth through ninth grade students in the county. Nineteen public and private schools in the health district participated in the study. Classes of students were randomly selected from each school building based on school and grade enrollment as a percentage of the total enrollment figure of 6,722 6th-9th grade students from the nineteen participating schools. The 2005 health assessment sample of 1,754 students represents 26 percent of the total enrollment, a sampling increase from 23 percent in the 2004 survey.

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- Big Walnut Local School District
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- Delaware City Schools
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- Village Academy
- Westerville Central High School
- Christ The King School
- Delaware Christian School
- St. Mary School
- St. Paul's School
- Genoa Christian Academy
- Delaware General Health District - Board of Health
- Ohio Tobacco Use Prevention and Control Foundation
- Delaware County Tobacco Free Tomorrow Coalition
- Franklin County Educational Council: Safe and Drug-Free Schools Consortium

Depression, Safety, and Drug Use

Depression

- Almost one-quarter (23%) of the Delaware County 6th-9th grade students have felt so sad or hopeless almost every day for two weeks or more in a row during the past 12 months that they stopped doing some usual activities. These feelings increase with age, (19% of the 6 graders, increasing to 26% of the 9th graders).
- Almost two-thirds (64%) of the students with a low self-image reported feeling this type of depression in the past year. Current smokers (44%), alcohol users (34%) and drug users (51%) have higher rates of these feelings than those who do not use those substances.

Safety

- Over half (56%) of the Delaware 6th-9th graders reported always wearing a seatbelt when riding in a car and another 27% wear one most of the time. Seatbelt use decreases with age with 71% of 6th graders always wearing a seatbelt, decreasing to 47% of 9th graders buckling up every time they ride in a car.
- Approximately 15% of the students reported that in the past 30 days they had ridden in a car driven by someone who had been drinking alcohol, increasing slightly with each grade.
- Helmet use by Delaware County middle school students is much lower than seatbelt use. Of those students who had biked or roller bladed in the past year, 13% always wore a helmet, with another 11% wearing one most of the time. Almost half (45%) reported never wearing a helmet during those sporting activities, increasing to 71% of all 9th graders.

Tobacco Opinions and Use

Societal Issues

- Few students (6%) believe that smoking makes young people look cool.
- Even though most students say their parents would disapprove of their smoking, only 18% of the students said that in the past year their parents had often or very often discussed the dangers of smoking with them. These discussions were happening even less with 9th graders (13%).
- More students reported a low self-image (27%) than 2004 survey (14%). The rate for those with the lowest grades, mostly D/F's, was also higher (29%) than 2004 survey (19%). This most likely predicts that they will smoke a cigarette in the next three months.
- Whereas nearly all (98%) 6th grade students would probably or definitely say "no" if their best friends offered them a cigarette, minority students (87%) and 9th graders (84%) were slightly less likely to refuse.
- Most (96%) Delaware County 6th-9th graders believe that tobacco is addictive. This belief did not vary significantly by race/ethnicity or age. Just over one-third (35%) believed that adults exaggerate the health risks of smoking. Males (38%) were more likely than females (32%) to believe adults exaggerate.

Secondhand Smoke

- Nearly all students (96%) believe that secondhand smoke is harmful. Even 80% of the current smokers believe secondhand smoke is harmful.
- One-third (33%) of all students reported living with someone who smoked cigarettes.
- Approximately 40% of all students had been in a room with someone who was smoking cigarettes at least one out of the past seven days. Fewer students had ridden in a car with someone who was smoking cigarettes. Of all students, 26% were exposed to secondhand smoke in a car in the past seven days.

Cigarette Smoking and Use

- 80% of Delaware County school students have never tried a cigarette.

- Of sixth through ninth graders, 93% are not current smokers. 7% are current smokers (defined as having at least one cigarette in the past 30 days). Smoking increased with each grade level, from less than 1 % in the 6th grade, to 3% in the 7th grade, to 8 % in 8th grade , to 14 % in 9th grade.
- Almost one-third (32%) of those students who had smoked a whole cigarette did so for the first time at the age of 10 or younger. More than one fourth (26%) of the 9th graders smoked their first whole cigarette within approximately the past year (ages 13-15).
- Two percent of all students used tobacco products on school property in the past 30 days. Use of tobacco on school property increased with age from 1% of 6th grade students to 6% of 9th grade students.

Smoking Cessation

- Over half (52%) of the students who had smoked cigarettes claimed they wanted to stop smoking. Almost one quarter (22%) of the smokers thought they would definitely or probably not be able to quit smoking now if they wanted to.
- In the past 12 months, 65% of students who smoked had tried to quit smoking.

Alcohol & Other Drug Use

- Less than one in ten (9%) Delaware 6th-9th graders surveyed have used drugs in their lifetime. Drug use increased with age from 1% of 6th graders to 22% of 9th graders. Drug use increases from the 8th grade to the 9th grade (8% to 22%). Delaware County males were more likely to use drugs than females (11% compared to 8%).
- Approximately 8% of the Delaware 6th – 9th graders surveyed have tried marijuana, increasing to 19% of 9th graders. In 2004 survey of 6th-8th graders 4% of students surveyed had tried marijuana, increasing to 7 % of 8th graders. Almost one-quarter (23%) of the alcohol drinkers and over half (54%) of current cigarette smokers have tried marijuana.
- Just under one-third (31%) of the Delaware 6th-9th grade students surveyed have had a drink of alcohol, other than a few sips. Alcohol trial increases with each grade, from 15% of 6th graders to just under half (49%) of the 9th graders.
- Alcohol use, smoking and drug use among Delaware 6th-9th grade students are related. Alcohol use is higher among those students who are current smokers (88%) compared to non-smokers (27%), and among students who have used drugs (90%) compared to non-drug users (25%).

Diet, Nutrition and Exercise

Food Choices

- 15% of Delaware 6th-9th grade students reported eating fruit or drinking 100% fruit juice three times or more per day.
- Only 13% of the students reported eating vegetables 3 times or more per day.
- 27% of the students reported drinking 3 or more servings of milk per day.
- 66% of the students said they would definitely or probably purchase lower fat school cafeteria options like salads, baked potato chips, and pretzels, if their school offered these choices on the cafeteria line.
- 68% of the students said they would definitely or probably purchase low-fat milk, 100% fruit juice, and bottled water in vending machines, if their school offered these items during the school day.

Weight, Weight Perceptions and Weight Control

- Ten percent of Delaware 6th-9th grade students are overweight, according to Body Mass Index (BMI) calculations and CDC guidelines using self-reported student heights and weights.
- Nearly a quarter (24%) of the students believed that they are overweight, even though only 9% were identified as overweight based on BMI overweight criteria.
- Two-fifths (41%) of all students surveyed reported they are trying to lose weight, with that number increasing to 53% when considering just the female students.
- A little over one in ten (12%) students reported fasting for 24 hours or more to lose weight or keep from gaining weight in the 30 days prior to the survey; however, of the students who believed they are overweight, 18% fasted for 24 hours or more.

Physical Activity

- Almost half (47%) of all Delaware 6th -9th graders reported having physical education classes all five days in an average week during the school year.
- 73% of the students reported participating for at least 30 minutes, three or more days per week in additional vigorous physical activity beyond PE classes.
- Just over one-third (35%) of the students watch three or more hours of television on an average school day, down from the reported 39% last year (6th-8th graders).