

## The Delaware General Health District

*Essential public health services keeping us safe and well.*



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# DELAWARE COUNTY YOUTH HEALTH ASSESSMENT 2004

## 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 prevention 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), and the NIC-oteen program

## **Summary**

This summary report provides an overview of health-related data for Delaware County middle school students, grades six through eight, who participated in a county-wide health assessment survey during the winter of 2004. The findings are based on self-administered survey data using a structured questionnaire. The questions were modeled after the survey instruments used by the Center for Disease Control for their national and state Youth Risk Behavior Surveillance Survey (YRBSS); 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 912 middle school students, grades six through eight, were asked to complete the Delaware County Health Assessment questionnaire. The margin of error for this study is plus or minus two percentage points at the ninety-five 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 eighth grade students in the county. All seven public schools in the health district's jurisdiction were selected and one private school was subsequently added to 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 3982 middle school students from the seven participating schools. The health assessment sample of 912 students represents 23% of the total enrollment.

## **Acknowledgements**

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- Great Lakes Marketing, Inc.
- Big Walnut Local School District
- Buckeye Valley Local School District
- Delaware City Schools
- Olentangy Local School District
- Village Academy
- Delaware General Health District - Board of Health
- Ohio Tobacco Use Prevention and Control Foundation
- Tobacco Free Tomorrow Coalition

## **Depression, Safety, and Drug Use**

### **Depression**

- Over one in five (21%) Delaware County middle school 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. Females reported feeling depressed more than males (23% compared to 19%).
- Almost three-fourths (71%) of the students with a low self-image and almost one-third (30%) of the students who perceive that they are overweight reported feeling this type of depression in the past year.

### **Safety**

- Over half (54%) of the Delaware 6th-8th graders reported always wearing a seatbelt when riding in a car and another 28% wear one most of the time. Seatbelt use decreases with age with 60% of 6th graders always wearing a seatbelt, decreasing to 45% of 8th 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 to 20% of 8th graders and 22% of minority students. Of those minority students, over one-quarter (26%) had ridden in a car with someone drinking alcohol six or more times in the past month.
- 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, 17% 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 60% of all 8th graders. The use of helmets by males and females in Delaware County is approximately the same.

### **Drug Use**

- Less than one in ten (6%) Delaware 6th-8th graders surveyed have used drugs in their lifetime. Drug use increased with age from 2% of 6 graders to 10% of 8 graders. Delaware County males were more likely to use drugs than females (8% compared to 4%).
- Approximately 4% of the Delaware 6<sup>th</sup> – 8<sup>th</sup> graders surveyed have tried marijuana, increasing to 7% of 8<sup>th</sup> graders. Over two times the number of males have used marijuana (5%) compared to females (2%).

## **Tobacco Opinions and Use**

### **Societal Issues**

- Few students (5%) believe that smoking makes young people look cool.
- Even though most students say their parents would disapprove of their smoking, only 17% of the students said that in the past year their parents had often or very often discussed the dangers of smoking with them.
- Students who report a low self-image (14%) and those with the lowest grades, mostly D/F's, (19%) were most likely to predict 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 (94%) and 8th graders (92%) were slightly less likely to refuse.
- Most Delaware County 6th-8th graders (96%) believed that tobacco is addictive. This belief did not vary by race/ethnicity or age. Almost two fifths (39%) believed that adults exaggerate the health risks of smoking. The youngest students, 6th graders, were more likely to feel adults exaggerate the health risks compared to the 7th and 8th graders (46% compared to 35% for the two older grades). Males (41%) were more likely than females (36%) to believe adults exaggerate.

### **Secondhand Smoke**

- Nearly all students (96%) believed that secondhand smoke was harmful.
- Over one-third (35%) of all students reported living with someone who smoked cigarettes.
- Approximately 43% of all students had been in a room with someone who was smoking cigarettes at least one or two days out of the past seven days. The incidence of being exposed was highest among 8th graders (51%) and decreased with the grade level (7th grade-40% and 6th grade-39%).

### **Cigarette Smoking and Use**

- 85% of Delaware County middle school students have never tried a cigarette, thus 15% have tried cigarette smoking (taken at least a few puffs).
- 97% are not current smokers. 3% are current smokers (defined as having at least one cigarette in the past 30 days).

- Almost half (47%) of those students who had smoked a whole cigarette did so for the first time at the age of 10 or younger. Both male and female smokers started smoking whole cigarettes at approximately the same ages.
- 2% 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 3% of 8th grade students.

### **Smoking Cessation**

- Almost two-thirds (63%) of the students who had smoked cigarettes claimed they wanted to stop smoking. Female smokers (76%) wanted to quit more than males (52%). Almost two in ten (18%) students thought they would definitely or probably not be able to quit smoking now if they wanted to.

## **Diet, Nutrition and Exercise**

### **Food Choices**

- 13% of Delaware 6<sup>th</sup>-8<sup>th</sup> grade students reported eating fruit or drinking 100% fruit juice 3 times or more per day.
- 11% of the students reported eating vegetables 3 times or more per day.
- 29% of the students reported drinking 3 or more servings of milk per day.
- 64% 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.
- 71% 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**

- 10% of Delaware 6th-8th 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 10% 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 48% when considering just the female students.
- One in ten (10%) 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, 19% fasted for 24 hours or more.

### **Physical Activity**

- Almost half (47%) of all Delaware 6<sup>th</sup> - 8<sup>th</sup> graders reported having physical education classes all five days in an average week during the school year.
- 44% of the students reported participating for at least 30 minutes, 5 or more days per week in additional vigorous physical activity beyond PE classes.
- Almost two-fifths (39%) of the students watch three or more hours of television on an average school day.