Youth Risk Behavior Surveillance Surveys 2011 & School Health Profiles Comparison 2010:

Alcohol and Drug Use Among Louisiana Public School Students

Louisiana Public Health Institute
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Introduction

The Youth Risk Behavior Surveillance Survey (YRBSS) is a national school-based survey supported by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and implemented by Louisiana state agencies to monitor priority health-risk behaviors among youth. In 2011, the YRBSS was administered to a total of 1,160 students at a random sample of 24 public high schools in Louisiana. Results from the YRBSS are used to guide programs and policies that support health as well as set and track progress towards health goals. For more information on the CDC’s YRBSS, please visit http://www.cdc.gov/HealthyYouth/yrbs/index.htm.

In 2010, the School Health Profiles Survey (Profiles) was completed by 231 principals and 225 lead health teachers (as designated by the principal) in Louisiana, representing approximately 74% and 72% of Louisiana public high school principals and lead health teachers, respectively. School Health Profiles is a system of surveys that assess school health policies and practices.

A comparison of results from the 2011 YRBSS and the 2010 School Health Profiles Survey provides useful insight into how well policies and student health practices are aligned, as well as how accurately school personnel perceive student behavior related to health-risk behaviors. Implications and recommendations are presented herein based on these perceptions and practices. For more information on the background, content, results and trends from the 2010 School Health Profiles Survey, please visit http://www.cdc.gov/healthyouth/profiles/2010/profiles_report.pdf.

Figures 1 – 8 represent findings from the 2011 YRBSS. Figures 9 and 10 display findings from the 2010 School Health Profiles, and reference relevant questions from the YRBSS in the same figure.
Alcohol and Drug Use in Louisiana: What are the Students Saying?

Figure 1. 2011: Lifetime Alcohol Use

- 76% of Louisiana students reported that they had at least one drink of alcohol in their lifetime, compared to a national rate of 71% (Lifetime Alcohol Use).
- 78% of females and 73% of males reported that they had consumed alcohol in their lifetime.
- A higher rate of Caucasian students (82%) had at least one drink of alcohol in their lifetime than African-American students (70%).
- Lifetime alcohol use increased with grade level, as 70% of 9th and 10th graders, 80% of 11th graders, and 86% of 12th graders reported that they had consumed alcohol in their lifetime.

Figure 2. 2011: Recent Alcohol Use

- 44% of Louisiana students had at least one drink of alcohol in the 30 days prior to the survey, compared to the national rate of 39% (Recent Alcohol Use).
- 46% of females and 43% of males reported that they had alcohol in the 30 days prior to the survey.
- A higher rate of Caucasian students (50%) had at least one drink of alcohol in the 30 days preceding the survey than African-American students (37%).
- 11th graders reported to have had at least one drink of alcohol in the 30 days prior to the survey at the highest rate (50%), while 9th, 10th and 12th graders reported between 42% and 44%.
Figure 3. 2011: Episodic Heavy Drinking

- 23% of Louisiana students and 22% of students nationally reported having 5 or more drinks in the span of a few hours on one or more of the 30 days prior to the survey (Episodic Heavy Drinking).

- Males reported episodic heavy drinking at a significantly higher rate (27%) than females (19%).

- A significantly higher percentage of Caucasian students (31%) reported episodic heavy drinking than African-American students (12%).

- 11th graders reported episodic heavy drinking at the highest rate (29%), while 9th, 10th and 12th graders reported between 20% and 23%.

Figure 4. 2011: Drank Alcohol on School Property

- 6% of Louisiana students and 5% of students nationally reported drinking alcohol on school property on one or more of the 30 days prior to the survey (Drank Alcohol on School Property).

- 5% of females and 7% of males reported drinking on school property.

- 4% of Caucasian students and 6% of African-American students reported drinking on school property.

- Louisiana High school students in all grade levels reported drinking alcohol on school property at similar rates, ranging from 4% to 8%.
Figure 5. 2011: Lifetime Marijuana Use

- 34% of Louisiana students reported using marijuana at least once in their lifetime, compared to the national rate of 40% (Lifetime Marijuana Use).

- A significantly higher rate of males (40%) reported having used marijuana in their lifetime than female students (29%).

- 34% of Caucasian students and 35% of African-American students reported having used marijuana in their lifetime.

- 11th graders reported the highest rate of lifetime marijuana usage (39%) while 9th and 10th graders reported the lowest rates (32%).

Figure 6. 2011: Recent Marijuana Use

- 17% of Louisiana students reported that they had used marijuana at least once in the 30 days prior to the survey, compared to the national rate of 23% (Recent Marijuana Use).

- A higher rate of males (20%) reported having used marijuana in the prior 30 days than females (14%).

- 18% of Caucasian students and 16% of African-American students reported having used marijuana in the 30 days prior to the survey.

- 12th graders reported the lowest rate of recent marijuana usage (12%) while 9th, 10th and 11th graders used marijuana recently at similar rates between 17% and 19%.
Figure 7. 2011: Used Marijuana on School Property

- 4% of Louisiana students and 6% of students nationally reported having used marijuana on school property in the 30 days prior to the survey (Used Marijuana on School Property).
- A higher rate of males (7%) reported having used marijuana on school property than females (2%).
- 4% of both Caucasian students and African-American students reported having used marijuana on school property.
- High school students of all grades reported using marijuana on school property at similar rates ranging from 3% to 5%.

Figure 8. 2011: Offered/Sold Drugs at School

- 25% of Louisiana students and 26% of students nationally were offered, sold or given an illegal drug on school property in the 12 months prior to the survey (Offered/Sold Drugs at School).
- A higher rate of males (30%) reported having been offered, sold or given an illegal drug on school property than females (21%).
- 26% of Caucasian students and 25% of African-American students reported having been offered, sold or given an illegal drug on school property.
- Rates of being offered, sold, or given an illegal drug on school property decreased with grade level, as 26% of 9th and 10th graders, 24% of 11th graders, and 22% of 12th graders reported this type of occurrence in the 30 days prior to the survey.
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Figure 9. Alcohol and Marijuana: Prevention Efforts vs. Student Experience

Figure 9. This figure suggests that educational prevention efforts should continue to focus on preventing alcohol and marijuana usage. While 98% of lead health teachers reported that teachers tried to increase student knowledge about alcohol use or drug use prevention in a required course in high school, a majority (76%) of students reported consumption of alcohol, and 34% of students reported lifetime marijuana usage.

Figure 10. Professional Development Experience vs. Needs: Alcohol Use Prevention

Figure 10. While 64% of lead health teachers said they received professional development on alcohol and drug prevention, 91% of teachers reported that they wish to receive more. Given the high rate (76%) of lifetime alcohol usage among Louisiana public school students, teacher training should be a priority.
Limitations

• YRBSS and Profiles are both based on self-reported responses, potentially leading to some response bias by students and school administrators while completing their surveys. For students, this could be due to both the inability to recall all risk behaviors and the conscious decision to not report all risk behaviors accurately due to fear or discomfort. For school health leaders, this could be due to both the inability to recall policies and practices and the conscious decision not to report on said policies and practices accurately.

• The School Health Profiles were conducted one year prior to the 2011 YRBSS surveys, and differ in the methodology, and sampling. Therefore, the relationship between the results of the two reports should be interpreted with caution.

• The current findings do not capture risk behaviors of Louisiana youth that are not enrolled in the public school system. Approximately 14% of Louisiana students (k-12) are enrolled in private schools.

• The sample size for 12th grade students was less than 100, which may affect generalizability.

• The School Health Profiles Principal survey did not address policies, plans or programming that deal with alcohol and drug use prevention.

Conclusions & Recommendations

Results from the 2011 YRBSS indicate that alcohol use prevention programming is important given high consumption levels. Particular attention should be given to Caucasian students, who reported higher rates of lifetime and recent alcohol usage, as well as episodic heavy drinking (see figures 1-3), when compared with African-American students. These findings also indicate that drug use prevention programming may be particularly useful if targeted towards males, as male students reported significantly higher rates of marijuana usage as well as receiving drugs at school (see figures 5-8). Additionally, drug and alcohol use prevention programming may be particularly useful amongst 11th graders, given the elevated rates of consumption that they reported on many survey questions (see figures 2, 3, 5, 6 and 7).

The data suggests that more Louisiana public schools could benefit from having School Improvement Plans that emphasize alcohol use prevention. Louisiana public school students reported higher rates of alcohol usage than the national average for all alcohol related questions (see figures 1-4). Interestingly, Louisiana students reported lower rates of marijuana use and receiving drugs at school than the national average. However, these rates are still significant. Future work in alcohol and drug use prevention should focus on expanding education regarding dangers and potential consequences of substance abuse. Educational programs are also important outside of the school system, as not all of Louisiana’s youth are enrolled in public school. Moreover, an expansion of these services outside of the school system as well as efforts towards more parental and community education will also lead to enhanced exposure and reinforced messaging of alcohol and drug use prevention efforts for students who are enrolled in school.