

News Release

Transforming Lives

June 23, 2015



The Behavioral Health & Service Integration Administration provides inpatient and outpatient psychiatric treatment, recovery support along with prevention and intervention programs for people with mental health needs and substance abuse concerns. It operates three state psychiatric hospitals that deliver high-quality services to adults and children with complex needs. BHSIA's team of 2,804 ensures that nearly 150,000 people receive needed services each year on a \$910 million annual budget.

Student depression, suicide attempts increase

Healthy Youth Survey shows need for support from adults

For immediate release: June 23, 2015

OLYMPIA -- An increasing number of Washington teens say they feel sad or hopeless, have thoughts of suicide, and have attempted suicide, according to the state Healthy Youth Survey.

Students were asked if they ever felt so sad or hopeless every day for two weeks in a row that they stopped doing some usual activities. Twenty-seven percent of eighth graders, 35 percent of 10th graders, and 34 percent of 12th graders reported having these depressive feelings in the past year. This is a significant increase from 2012 for both 10th and 12th graders. In 2012, 31 percent of sophomores and 30 percent of seniors reported having depressive feelings.

"While state and local agencies are working together to fund effective programs to prevent youth suicide, there is clearly a need to do more for teens who are struggling," said Kevin W. Quigley, Secretary of the state Department of Social and Health Services. "It's especially important while kids are on summer break that



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they be engaged in meaningful activities with positive, caring adult role models they can turn to for support.”

Other survey findings include:

- **Considered suicide:** In 2014, 16 percent of eighth graders, 20 percent of 10th graders and 18 percent of 12th graders seriously considered suicide in the past year. These results were similar to percentages in 2012.
- **Attempted suicide:** Among 10th graders, 10 percent reported they had attempted suicide in the past year, a significant increase from 2012, when 8 percent said they had attempted suicide. In 2014, 9 percent of eighth graders and 8 percent of 12th graders reported they had attempted suicide in the past year.
- **Lack of adult support:** About one in six 10th graders (15 percent) said they have no adults to turn to if they feel sad or hopeless. This was also reported by 13 percent of eighth and 12th graders.
- **Higher incidence among certain groups:** Compared to males, a higher percentage of female students reported feeling sad, and considering or attempting suicide. Compared to Non-Hispanic white students, a higher percentage of Hispanic students reported feeling sad and attempting suicide, and a higher percentage of American Indian and Alaska Native students reported feeling sad, not having an adult to turn to when feeling sad or hopeless, and considering or making a suicide plan.

“When a teen struggles with feelings of depression, having a trusted adult who will listen to their feelings and not judge them is vital,” said Vicki Wagner, Executive Director of the Youth Suicide Prevention Program. “Learn the warning signs, show you care, ask if they are thinking about suicide, and if so, suggest that they seek professional help or call the suicide prevention hotline. Because media coverage of suicide can contribute to other incidents, we also encourage media to follow [reporting guidelines](#).”



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Suicide can be prevented. Look for warning signs, which include a previous suicide attempt, making a plan, a strong wish to die or a preoccupation with death, giving away prized possessions, and increased alcohol or drug use. Signs of depression include moodiness, hopelessness and withdrawal. More signs and resources for help are available from the [Youth Suicide Prevention Program's website](#).

The Healthy Youth Survey is taken every two years by students in sixth, eighth, 10th and 12th grades in almost 1,000 public schools in Washington state. More than 200,000 youth took part in the survey in October 2014 by answering a wide variety of questions about their health and health behaviors.

Together, state agencies, local partners and schools will continue to use the Healthy Youth Survey results to inform prevention initiatives for improving teen health and learning. The survey is a collaborative effort of the Department of Health, Department of Social and Health Services, Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction and the Liquor and Cannabis Board. Survey results are posted on the [Healthy Youth Survey home page, AskHYS](#).

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Contacts:	Kathy Spears, Department of Social and Health Services	360-902-7893
	Donn Moyer, Department of Health	360-236-4076
	Nathan Olson, Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction	360-725-6015
	Victoria Wagner, Youth Suicide Prevention Project	206-297-5922

