What is the Washington State Healthy Youth Survey?
The Washington State Healthy Youth Survey (HYS) is a crucial source of information on adolescent health, behaviors, and perceptions. In fall 2016, over 230,000 students participated in this biennial statewide school-based survey. Over 1,000 schools administered the survey, representing all 39 Washington counties and 236 school districts.

Because students anonymously complete the survey, with this information we can:
- Gain an understanding of the health risks students are experiencing
- Identify trends and patterns in order to plan and evaluate initiatives to address the risks
- Develop policies and improve programs to better serve youth


What are the risks for teen depression and suicide?
Several factors can put a young person at risk for suicide:
- History of previous suicide attempts
- Family history of suicide
- History of depression or other mental illness
- Alcohol or drug abuse
- Stressful life event or loss
- Easy access to lethal methods
- Exposure to the suicidal behavior of others
- Incarceration

What factors help youth to be resilient to mental health challenges?
- Support and encouragement from parents and other family members, friends, school professionals, and other caring adults in the community.
- Feeling that there are people who believe in them, care about them, and whom they can talk to about important matters.
- Safe communities and learning environments.
- Self-esteem, a sense of control and responsibility, and problem-solving and coping skills.
- Having an outlet for self-expression and participation in after-school activities.

What can we do to help teens with anxiety and depression and prevent suicide?
Parents and other adults:
- Bond with them: Love them unconditionally, value them, and stay involved in their lives.
- Talk with teens about their feelings and show that you care. Listen to their feelings; suicidal thinking often comes from a wish to end psychological pain.
- Help teens to learn effective coping strategies to deal with stress, expectations of others, relationship problems, and challenging life events.
- Educate yourself about warning signs and where to get help; you don’t need to handle this alone.
• Ask: “Are you thinking about suicide?” Don’t be afraid that talking about it will give them the idea. If you’ve observed any warning signs, chances are they’re already thinking about it.
• If you own a firearm, keep it secured where a teen having suicidal thoughts could not access it.

Communities and schools:
All sectors of our communities, including schools, faith-based organizations, health care providers, businesses, and law enforcement can play a role in building an environment that supports youth. Some ways to do that are:
• Start or join a coalition that works to keep youth healthy and safe.
• Educate community members and parents about the facts around youth anxiety, depression, and suicide. See below for links to resources.
• Teach youth how to respond and where they can find help if a friend is struggling with stress, anxiety, and depression and/or having suicidal thoughts; friends are often the first to know.
• Enforce policies aimed to reduce bullying and support students experiencing bullying.
• Enforce policies and laws around substance use. Youth substance use is associated with mental health challenges and suicide.
• Provide opportunities for youth to participate in safe and fun activities, learn new skills, and be rewarded for their achievements.

Where can I find more information and resources?
Several websites provide both information and materials that can be downloaded or ordered.

• For help during a crisis, information, emotional support, and referrals:
  o https://suicidepreventionlifeline.org – Suicide Prevention Lifeline (1-800-273-TALK)
  o http://www.thetrevorproject.org – Trevor Project Lifeline (GLBTQ) (1-866-4-U-Trevor)
  o https://866teenlink.org – TeenLink (1-866-833-6546)

• For further information on mental health and suicide:
  o https://www.yspp.org/index.htm – Washington’s Youth Suicide Prevention Program
  o What a Difference a Friend Makes (targeted to young adults): http://162.99.3.207/psa/NASC_English_web_508.pdf
  o https://www.mentalhealthfirstaid.org/cs/ – training in how to help those in crisis
  o http://www.intheforefront.org/ – FOREFRONT innovations in suicide prevention

• Visit state agency webpages for information on suicide prevention and mental health promotion programs and strategies at DOH, DSHS, and OPSI.
• Visit www.AskHYS.net for current and past WA Healthy Youth Survey data, including fact sheets and frequency reports, on this and other topics.