



2016 Washington State Healthy Youth Survey

Guide to Information and Resources: Mental Health

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

Suicide is the 2nd leading cause of death for 15-19 year olds in Washington State. According to vital statistics data from the Department of Health, 64 teens age 15-19 died from suicide in 2015.

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:**
 - <https://suicidepreventionlifeline.org> – Suicide Prevention Lifeline (1-800-273-TALK)
 - <http://www.thetrevorproject.org> – Trevor Project Lifeline (GLBTQ) (1-866-4-U-Trevor)
 - www.WaRecoveryHelpLine.org – The Washington Recovery Help Line (1-866-789-1511)
 - <https://866teenlink.org> – TeenLink (1-866-833-6546)
- **For further information on mental health and suicide:**
 - <https://www.yspp.org/index.htm> – Washington’s Youth Suicide Prevention Program
 - What a Difference a Friend Makes (targeted to young adults):
http://162.99.3.207/psa/NASC_English_web_508.pdf
 - <https://www.nimh.nih.gov/health/topics/suicide-prevention/index.shtml>
 - <https://www.mentalhealthfirstaid.org/cs/> – training in how to help those in crisis
 - <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.**