



Healthy Youth Survey results show a rise in Washington teens who consider suicide

Healthy Youth Survey explores attitudes and behaviors of middle and high school students

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OLYMPIA – Results from latest Healthy Youth Survey (HYS), taken in the fall of 2016 by tweens and teens in Washington, shows that one in five high school students seriously considered suicide in the past 12 months.

During the past decade, there has been a 6 percentage point rise in 8th and 10th graders in our state who have contemplated suicide and an 8 percentage point increase in 12th graders.

“This is an alarming trend,” said Gov. Jay Inslee. “Suicide can be prevented if we know what signs to look for. We must educate ourselves as parents, grandparents and neighbors on ways to let our kids know that they have support and encouragement they need and that we believe, care and support them in every way.”

Inslee signed an executive order last year [that promotes suicide prevention training](#) and education efforts.

The survey results show a higher percentage of girls (26 percent) think about suicide, with 13 percent attempting it, compared to 14 percent of boys who contemplate suicide and 7 percent who attempt it.

The Department of Social and Health Services (DSHS) supports mental health treatment for youth and adults. As part of this effort, the agency funds the 24-hour Washington Recovery Help Line for emotional support and referrals. Nearly 60,000 Washington youth received state-funded mental health care from July 2015 to June 2016.

“Having been through adolescence, as adults, we know growing up is hard,” said acting secretary, Patricia Lashway, “We can help teens during challenging times by listening and talking to them about their feelings and providing advice on how to cope with stress, relationship problems and challenging life events. We can let them know they are not alone and they have support.”

A promising part of the survey showed that most high schoolers report that they had support and education related to mental health and suicide available to them. In fact, among 10th graders who said they had ever felt sad or hopeless, 63 percent said there were adults whom they could turn to. However, 11 percent of youth who have felt sad or hopeless for at least two weeks in a row said they don't have anyone they would talk to.

Parents and other adults can help by understanding the risks for teen depression and suicide and recognizing the factors that could put a young person at risk, such as a history of suicide attempts, family history of suicide, history of depression or other mental illness or alcohol or drug abuse.

Know how to recognize suicide warning signs in tweens and teens such as:

- Talk of suicide, being a burden to others, or saying they have no reason to live or feel trapped;
- Showing symptoms of depression and/or anxiety. Being irritable, showing signs of rage, humiliation or a sudden loss of interest in activities they used to enjoy;
- Exhibiting behaviors such as increased use of alcohol or drugs, acting recklessly, sleeping too much or too little, giving away prized possessions, visiting or calling people to say goodbye.

If your teen is in crisis, you don't have to handle the situation alone. In an emergency, dial 911. You can get information, emotional support and referrals by calling the [Washington Recovery Help Line](#) at 866-789-1511, the [Suicide Prevention Lifeline](#) at 800-273-TALK or get information from [TeenLink](#) at 866-833-6546.

Washington State is recognized nationally as a leader in supporting evidence-based prevention practices and collaborating with community-based prevention organizations. More survey results on nutrition, physical activity and school engagement will be analyzed and released over the next few months. Survey results about substance use and other topics are available at www.AskHYS.net.

The HYS is taken every two years by students in grades 6, 8, 10 and 12, who voluntarily answer a wide variety of questions about their health behaviors. In the fall of 2016, over 230,000 students in over 1,000 schools from 236 school districts in all 39 counties took part. The survey provides state and community organizations with needed information about which teen health issues to focus on.

The survey is a collaborative effort between DSHS and the [Department of Health](#) (DOH), the [Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction](#) (OSPI) and the [Liquor and Cannabis Board](#) (LCB). The results provide state and local organizations with needed information to plan, implement and evaluate publicly funded programs.

For further information about mental health, suicide or the Healthy Youth Survey, please visit AskHYS.net.



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