



Department of Health
Agency of Human Services



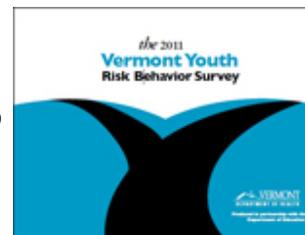
2011 Youth Risk Behavior Survey Shows Sharp Declines in Alcohol and Tobacco Use

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BURLINGTON – Alcohol and tobacco use among high school students in Vermont (grades 9-12) has declined in the past two years, according to the 2011 **Vermont Youth Risk Behavior Survey**, and declined sharply since the survey began in 1993.

Highlights from the survey will be presented at a press briefing with Health Commissioner Harry Chen and Education Commissioner Armando Vilaseca on **Wednesday, Nov. 2, 12 p.m. at the Cedar Creek Room in the Statehouse** in Montpelier. Students from Twin Valley High School in Wilmington will also discuss why perceptions about alcohol and tobacco continue to change.



A total of 36,354 students in grades 6-12 took the survey, representing 138 schools. In 2011 for the first time two separate surveys were done – one for grades 6-8 and the second for grades 9-12.

High school students (grades 9-12) were far less likely to report ever drinking in 2011 (60%) compared to 2009 (66%), and far below the rate reported in 1993 (82%). Students who smoked in the past 30 days fell from 18 percent in 2009 to 13 percent in 2011, more than three times lower than the high of 40 percent in 1995.

“This is great news for Vermont students. Cutting the smoking rate in half since 1993, and the sharp decline in alcohol use we continue to see are both major achievements,” said Health Commissioner Harry Chen, MD. “The sharp drops we have seen in the past two years are extremely encouraging.”

In Vermont, 39 percent of high school students have ever used marijuana, which may be a result of a more permissive attitude among adults compared to many other areas of the country.

“We need to address marijuana use with the same concern we have about smoking” said Dr. Chen. “Marijuana contains some of the same destructive carcinogenic ingredients as tobacco smoke – and mental functions such as problem solving, short-term memory, perception of time and academic achievement are all affected.”

The drop in alcohol and smoking can be credited in part to grass-roots efforts of students and the work of community coalitions, combined along with effective counter-marketing campaigns, policy changes and a cultural shift that has gained momentum in recent years among young Vermonters.

The Twin Valley High School student-produced campaign ‘Audacious’ promoted the message that ‘2 out of 3 students at our school DON’T drink’. Such peer-to-peer campaigns reach both older and younger kids in the school system. The Health Department’s OVX ‘Gut Feelings’ campaign, which launched earlier this year, and the long-standing 8outof10.com social norms campaign, have all contributed to cutting youth smoking rates using mass media reinforced by youth groups and community partner involvement.

“There are many areas in the state with strong local coalitions and youth anti-smoking groups – and they have become a true force in their communities,” said Education Commissioner Vilaseca.

The Youth Risk Behavior Survey measures the prevalence of behaviors that contribute to the leading causes of death, disease and injury among young people. The survey is conducted by the Vermont Departments of Health and Education and the results reported every two years.

Highlights of the report, along with the full statewide report and reports that present the same data by county and by school district, are posted on the Health Department's website: healthvermont.gov.

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