

# Key findings from the 2018 Youth Risk Behavior Survey



With support from the Center for Disease Control and Prevention, Seattle Public Schools administers the Youth Risk Behavior Survey (YRBS) every other year to a random sampling of high school students at the 10 comprehensive high schools. This anonymous survey is used to identify and monitor factors that affect the health and safety of our students. The survey focuses on major risk behaviors such as: personal safety and violence, mental health, tobacco, alcohol and other drug use, sexual behavior, and physical activity and nutrition. There is mounting evidence supporting the concept that reducing students' health-risk behaviors can have a positive impact on their academic performance. Seattle Public Schools uses this data to develop, assess, and improve programs that advance the health of our students.

This fact sheet highlights key findings from the survey, and comments on the data and changes in risk behaviors.

## **DRUG USE**

**Key Findings:** Alcohol and other drug use among adolescents has been linked to unintentional injuries, physical fights, academic and occupational problems, and illegal behavior. Among Seattle students, 1% of our students reported that they smoke cigarettes daily, 21% have used marijuana in the past month, 28% of our students drank alcohol in the past month and 28% were offered/sold/given an illegal drug on school property in the past 12 months.

**Action:** SPS addresses student substance use through a strong policy and procedures intended to help students access treatment services, elementary and secondary classroom education, evidence-based prevention and intervention programs, drug/alcohol specialists in several schools, and community coalitions aimed at creating systems and environment change.

## **SEXUAL BEHAVIOR**

**Key Findings:** Early sexual activity is linked to a wide variety of negative life outcomes including unwanted pregnancy, increased rate of sexually transmitted diseases and HIV infections, increased single parenthood, and increased maternal/child poverty. 23% of our students reported ever having sexual intercourse. 10% reported being physically forced to have sexual intercourse.

**Action:** SPS is addressing student sexuality by teaching comprehensive sexuality education to students starting in 5<sup>th</sup> grade and providing district wide professional development to staff. Data is used to identify health disparities and create targeted interventions. SPS coordinates with community agencies to provide guest speakers and special programs, and School Based Health Centers provide reproductive information and health care at our high schools and several alternative and middle schools.

## **PHYSICAL HEALTH**

**Key Findings:** National guidelines recommend that youth engage 60+ minutes of physical activity on most days of the week. 2018 YRBS data shows that 49% of students were physically active 60+ minutes per day five+ days in the past week. American Academy of Pediatrics recommends that children watch no more than 2 hours of TV per day, 36% of our students currently report spending 3+ hours a day.

**Action:** SPS is committed to providing an effective Physical Education program that builds the knowledge, fitness, movement skills, social well-being and confidence so all students can enjoy a healthy active lifestyle. Nutrition Services adheres to the highest level of national nutrition standards and provides many locally sourced fruits, vegetables and beans daily.

## **MENTAL HEALTH**

**Key Findings:** Mental health affects almost every decision an adolescent makes about behavior and is a basic element in the life of every successful teen. 21% of our students' report feeling sad or hopeless for two or more weeks in a row and 15% of our students reporting they contemplated suicide in the past year.

**Action:** SPS works to address the mental health needs of our students by incorporating lessons on stress management, mental health, and suicide prevention into our Health Education curriculum. SPS is working to systematize mental health access from school to community for all students through collaborating with School Based Health Centers and community agencies. SPS works to promote protective factors and belonging for students via increased staff education, trauma-informed practices, connectedness, and build warm and welcoming spaces.

**Please visit [SPS Healthy Youth Survey website](#) to view HYS data reports for Seattle Public Schools.**