



NORTH DAKOTA
DEPARTMENT *of* HEALTH

NEWS RELEASE

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North Dakota Students Show Overall Improvements in Health-Related Behaviors *National Youth Risk Behavior Survey Results Released*

BISMARCK, N.D. – Today's high school students in North Dakota are less likely to engage in many health risk behaviors than high school students in the early 1990s, according to the 2007 National Youth Risk Behavior Survey released today by the North Dakota Department of Public Instruction and the North Dakota Department of Health.

More than 9,750 North Dakota students in grades nine through 12 participated in the 2007 survey. Local data is given to all participating schools. These weighted data results can be used to make important inferences about all North Dakota students due to the random, research-based selection process that is used.

“We know that negative health patterns established in youth carry on into adulthood,” said State Health Officer Terry Dwelle, M.D. “It’s important that we know the prevalence of those negative health patterns so we can guide our youth into making positive choices.”

The six priority health risk behaviors often established during childhood and early adolescence include tobacco use, unhealthy dietary behaviors, physical inactivity, alcohol and other drug use, sexual behavior/STDs/HIV/AIDS/unintended pregnancies and violence/injury.

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The following behavior trends were identified for North Dakota students in grades nine through 12:

- Students who currently smoke cigarettes decreased from 40 percent in 1995 to 21 percent in 2007.
- The percentage of students who drank five or more drinks (binge drinking) in one hour decreased from 42 percent in 1995 to 33 percent in 2007.
- Students who currently drink alcohol decreased from 61 percent in 1995 to 46 percent in 2007.
- Students who drove a car or other vehicle when or after they had been drinking alcohol decreased from 33 percent in 1995 to 19 percent in 2007.
- The percentage of high school students who rarely or never wore a seat belt decreased from 32 percent in 1995 to 15 percent in 2007.
- The percentage of high school students who seriously considered attempting suicide decreased from 25 percent in 1995 to 10 percent in 2007.

“I’m pleased that our children are beginning to make better choices with the use of both alcohol and tobacco,” said First Lady Mikey Hoeven, *Healthy North Dakota* spokesperson. “However, the numbers show us that too many of our youth are still choosing to drink alcohol and use tobacco. We’ve made considerable progress, but we need to be persistent in our efforts so that none of our youth are harmed by making unhealthy choices.”

“The overall survey results are encouraging because they show us that persistent efforts to get young people to adopt healthier behaviors can achieve positive results,” said Dr. Wayne G. Sanstead, North Dakota Superintendent of Public Instruction. “I would like to thank the superintendents, principals, teachers, counselors, school health professionals, communities and students for their participation in this survey to allow us to obtain this important data.”

North Dakota youth began participating in the YRBS survey in 1995. The survey monitors priority health risk behaviors that contribute markedly to the leading causes of death, disability and social problems among youth and adults in the United States. The YRBS was designed to monitor trends and compare state health risk behaviors to national health risk behaviors. In addition, the YRBS is intended for use in planning, evaluating and improving school and community programs. North Dakota students are surveyed in the spring of odd years. The survey is voluntary and surveys are completely anonymous.

More information about the YRBS results can be accessed at www.cdc.gov/yrbss or <http://dpi.state.nd.us/health/YRBS/index.shtm> or by calling Andrea Peña, North Dakota Department of Public Instruction, at 701.328.2098.

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