

November 1, 2007

Montpelier 2007 Youth Risk Behavior Survey Results

From Central Vermont New Directions Coalition

Every two years since 1985, the Department of Health Division of Alcohol and Drug Abuse Programs and the Department of Education Comprehensive School Health Programs have sponsored a survey of Vermont students. The Youth Risk Behavior Survey (YRBS) measures the prevalence of behaviors that contribute to the leading causes of death, disease, and injury among youth. In 2007, school staff administered the YRBS to 28,918 eight to twelfth grade Vermont students in 144 schools representing 60 supervisory unions. This October each district was given the state results as well as the results of their particular district.

Brief highlights from the Montpelier Supervisory School District results (8th -12th graders at Main Street Middle school and Montpelier High School) are presented here. Although we have plenty of work ahead of us, as a district we can be proud of the many good decisions students are making in the areas of tobacco, alcohol and other drug use.

Tobacco:

The number of students who smoked cigarettes one or more days during the past 30 days dropped in almost all grades over the last 12 years, except for the 2006-2007 12th grade (33% in 1995 to 35% in 2007). The 10th grade (38% in 1995 to 21% in 2007) and 8th grade (26% in 1995 to 0% in 2007) decreased significantly. This indicates that local youth are smoking less.

Alcohol:

The percentage of Montpelier 12th graders reporting to have used alcohol within the last 30 days has fluctuated between 61% in 1997 to 43% in 2001, and 59 % in 2007. We see the same fluctuation with the 10th graders reporting using alcohol within the last 30 days from 52% in 1995 to 45% in 2005 to 53% in 2007. But the percentage of 8th graders reporting using alcohol within the last 30 days has decreased from an alarming high of 42% in 1997 to 11% in 2005 and 8% in 2007. This indicates that the trend in alcohol use among younger students has decreased over the last twelve years but older student use has stayed relatively the same.

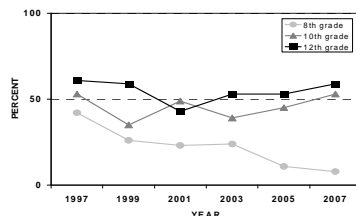
Alcohol Use 1997 to 2007

**Percent of students who
past 30 days**

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40% of 12th graders
more drinks of alcohol
hours) during the past

years ago. Among students who drank alcohol during the past 30 days, 22% of females and 14% of males report getting their alcohol from home. Alcohol remains easily accessible and a relatively acceptable form of substance abuse among our youth.



drank alcohol during the

reported binge drinking (5 or
in a row within a couple of
30 days up from 27% six

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Marijuana:

Although the percentage of 12th graders reporting to have used marijuana within the last 30 days has increased from 33% in 2005 to 38% in 2007, the percentage of 10th graders reporting using marijuana within the last 30 days has decreased from 35% in 2005 to 31% in 2007. Unfortunately, our statistics remain slightly higher than the statewide average. Nationwide more teens enter treatment with a primary diagnosis for marijuana dependence than for all other illicit drugs combined.

Other drugs:

We see decreases in Methamphetamine and heroin use since the 2005 survey was conducted. Hallucinogens, inhalants and non-prescription steroid use, have remained the same. And 14% of students report using prescription drugs not prescribed (new data in the 2007 survey). Slightly more youth reported that they were offered, sold, or given an illegal drug on school property during the past 12 months.

Healthy development depends not only on avoiding harmful behavior, but also on strengthening positive influence in our lives. Research shows that involvement in constructive, supervised extracurricular activities is associated with reduced likelihood of involvement in risky behaviors such as school failure, drug use, and crime. In addition, evidence is emerging that students who participate in such activities are also more likely to engage in other “thriving” behaviors. 29 % of Montpelier students spend one or more hours per week in clubs or organizations outside of school (not including sports), down from 43% in 2003 and 34% in 2005.

Additionally, about 40% of Montpelier high school students spend 1 or more hours per week volunteering their time to make their community a better place to live, (same percentage as 2005 data). Also, in Montpelier, 52% of students agreed that students help decide what goes on in their school (up from 47% in 2005) and 53% of 8th-12th graders felt that they matter to people in their community. This is a big increase from the 2005 data at 40%.

It stands to reason that young people respond positively when they perceive that others value them in their community.

One of the strongest predictors of students’ success in school is the extent to which parents stay involved with their schoolwork- asking about academic progress, attending teacher conferences, and so on. In addition a national study of adolescent health found that youth who reported a “connectedness” to their parents/family and school were the least likely to engage in risky behaviors. As always, we cannot underestimate the importance of parents and school during these critical years!

For more information or to become involved with substance prevention at U32 and in Montpelier, call Central Vermont New Directions Coalition at 223-4949.