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**TO:** Members of the Maryland State Board of Education  
**FROM:** Nancy S. Grasmick *Nancy*  
**DATE:** February 24, 2009  
**SUBJECT:** *2007 Maryland Youth Risk Behavior Survey*

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**PURPOSE:**

To review the results of the *2007 Maryland Youth Risk Behavior Survey (ATTACHMENT I)*.

**BACKGROUND/HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE:**

The Maryland Youth Risk Behavior Survey (YRBS) is a part of the Youth Risk Behavior Surveillance System (YRBSS) developed in 1990 by the U.S. Centers for Disease Control (CDC) and Prevention. The YRBSS monitors six categories of priority health-risk behaviors among youth and young adults, including: behaviors that contribute to unintentional injuries and violence; tobacco use; alcohol and other drug use; sexual behaviors that contribute to unintended pregnancies and sexually transmitted diseases, including HIV infection; unhealthy dietary behaviors; and physical inactivity. In 2004, the Maryland General Assembly passed legislation requiring the Maryland State Department of Education (MSDE) to conduct the YRBS every two years. The 2007 Maryland YRBS marks the second administration of the YRBS in Maryland. MSDE administered the state's first YRBS in 2005.

**EXECUTIVE SUMMARY:**

The *2007 Maryland Youth Risk Behavior Survey* presents the latest findings on priority health-risk behaviors reported by Maryland adolescents. The survey compares state findings with national data and trends and includes responses to questions on: traffic safety; weapons; personal safety and harassment; tobacco, alcohol and other drug use; suicide; diet, nutrition, and physical activity; and protective factors such as HIV prevention education, extracurricular activities, and support from parents, teachers, and other adults.

The 2007 Maryland YRBS was administered between late March and mid-May 2007. The findings are based on responses from students surveyed in grades 9-12. Schools were randomly drawn from 24 districts to provide a representative sample for the entire State. Schools in 13 districts participated. Classes were randomly selected in accordance with CDC guidelines. The classes chosen had a total of about 2,400 students registered. Explicit, active parental consent was required for students to participate. Approximately 1,680 students returned their parent's consent to participate and useable surveys were obtained from 1,528 students, about 63 percent of the enrollment in the sampled classes. The number of useable surveys was large enough that the survey data could be weighted to represent the entire population of Maryland high school-aged youth.

The CDC compared 2005 and 2007 results using a logistic-regression analysis to discern whether the linear change between the two surveys is statistically significant. MSDE's contractor, KRA Corporation of Silver Spring, Maryland, compared 2007 results among gender, among black and white youth, and among grade levels by comparing the 95-percent confidence intervals for each respondent group provided by the CDC. This analysis permits a determination of whether these groups are truly different in their responses. The analysis does not include any other race or ethnic groups because the subgroup sample for all other race/ethnic groups was too small to provide estimates in both the 2005 and 2007 YRBS.

In general, Maryland youth rate their health positively. During 2007, 90.4% of youth rate their health as good, very good, or excellent. As noted in 2005, health-risk behaviors are less frequent on school property than in other settings.

Maryland high school youth continue to engage in behaviors that place them at health risk. Black and white Maryland youth share similar patterns of participation in risk behaviors. Results of the YRBS suggest a heightened need for attention to motor-vehicle safety. During 2007, youth in Maryland reported engaging more frequently in behaviors that increase their likelihood of death from motor-vehicle crashes than in 2005. In 2007, 9.5% of Maryland youth report never or rarely wearing a seatbelt. This is a significant increase from 2005 (6.1%). Between 2005 and 2007, the percent of Maryland youth who rode in a car or other vehicle driven by someone who had been drinking alcohol increased from 25.0% to 28.9%. While the increase among Maryland youth was not statistically significant, the increase among female youth who rode in a vehicle driven by someone who had been drinking was statistically significant (24.7% in 2005 vs. 31.0% in 2007).

Between 2005 and 2007, there has been little change in responses about obesity, exercise, and dieting. Approximately 28% of youth are overweight or obese (i.e., at or above the 85<sup>th</sup> percentile for body mass index, by age and sex). About the same percentage of youth (27.5%) describe themselves as slightly or very overweight and approximately 63% of youth report trying to lose or control their weight. Overall, the percentage of youth reporting consumption of healthy foods on a daily basis in 2007 is lower compared to 2005.

Use of tobacco, alcohol, marijuana, and other illicit drugs is approximately the same as in 2005. There has been a significant increase in the percent of Maryland youth reporting having at least one drink of alcohol on school property during the past 30 days—up to 6.2% from 3.2% in 2005.

The 2007 survey results highlight a reduction in suicidal behavior at both the national and state levels. Maryland youth—including male, female, white and black subgroups—were significantly less likely to report extended periods of sadness and hopelessness in 2007 versus 2005. The percentage of Maryland youth who report seriously considering suicide decreased from 17.4% in 2005 to 13.2% in 2007. During 2007, one in 13 Maryland youth (7.5%) report attempting suicide within the past 12 months, a rate that is lower than in 2005 (9.3%).

During 2007, Maryland youth report participating in physical fights, carrying guns or weapons, and bullying and harassment at rates comparable to 2005. Male respondents are significantly less likely to report being threatened with a weapon on school property in 2007 (10.3%) than in 2005 (13.5%).

Between 2005 and 2007, there was a decline in the percent of Maryland youth that report being taught about AIDS or HIV infection, from 89.5% in 2005 to 85.3% in 2007. While the decline among Maryland youth was not statistically significant, declines among male and white students were significant.

**ACTION:**

For information only.

NSG:BB:kw

Attachment-[http://marylandpublicschools.org/NR/rdonlyres/707B5FB5-9A0C-4A06-A741-92D16DC7B2E7/18502/2007\\_MD\\_YRBS\\_Report\\_Oct\\_1.pdf](http://marylandpublicschools.org/NR/rdonlyres/707B5FB5-9A0C-4A06-A741-92D16DC7B2E7/18502/2007_MD_YRBS_Report_Oct_1.pdf)