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Annual youth drug use survey sees overall decline, IDs areas of concern



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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Aug. 20, 2008

BLOOMINGTON, Ind. -- Overall youth drug use by sixth through 12th graders in Indiana is down, according to the latest annual survey by the Indiana Prevention Resource Center (IPRC) at Indiana University Bloomington's School of Health, Physical Education and Recreation.

While the survey shows students' cigarette smoking has either held steady or declined, the study continues to point to an increasing use of smokeless tobacco by high school students. For example, daily use of smokeless tobacco by ninth-grade students increased from 1.5 percent in 2001 to 1.9 percent in 2008. For 11th-grade students, daily usage was reported at 2.9 percent and 3.6 percent, respectively.

"These findings point to a distinct possibility that students in the older grades are replacing cigarette use with smokeless tobacco, such as snuff and chewing tobacco," said IPRC Director Ruth Gassman, noting that students in grades 9-12 are using smokeless tobacco far less than reported rates in the 1990s. "The reasons for



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substitution may have to do with cigarette price increases and/or smoking prohibition in public places such as schools, malls and restaurants. "

Ruth Gassman

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The survey also shows an increase in injection drug use among high school students since questions addressing this were added in 2001. This year, the trend continued for grades 10 and 12, both of which reported an all-time high in use rates. Monthly use of injection drugs increased among 10th-grade students from 0.8 percent in 2000 to 1.2 percent in 2008. In grade 12, the usage in 2000 was 0.6 percent, compared with 1.2 percent in 2008. The data suggests that heroin is the drug most often injected on a lifetime basis.

The results for the 18th Annual Survey of Alcohol, Tobacco and Other Drugs Use by Indiana Children and Adolescents came from a sample of 448 schools and 152,732 students (sixth through 12th graders attending public and private schools who chose to participate in the survey). The IPRC makes this information available to local and state agencies to use in their planning with respect to the use of alcohol, tobacco and other drugs (ATOD), gambling behaviors, and risk and protective factors.

"The survey results are useful to communities for a variety of purposes, including conducting needs assessments, planning substance use prevention programs, evaluation of initiatives and for assembling grant applications to fund local efforts," Gassman said.

The full report is available online at <http://www.drugs.indiana.edu>.

Major findings of the study

- **Holding steady.** Lifetime, annual and monthly use of alcohol, as well as binge drinking, decreased or held steady for students in all grades. Compared with last year, the reported usage of methamphetamine either held steady or declined across all grade levels. These results are consistent with a trend in decreasing methamphetamine use seen since the item was introduced to the survey in 2005. With a few exceptions, the rates of Ritalin or Adderall use held steady or was lower this year compared with last year. Lifetime and annual use of these drugs increased for grade 11 and monthly use increased for grade 12.
- **Race and ethnicity.** For the first time, the IPRC reports 30-day prevalence rates according to students' race and ethnicity. In most categories, Indiana monthly use rates were lower than the national average. However, the researchers did find that black students in Indiana had higher

rates of cocaine use, binge drinking and smokeless tobacco use relative to their national counterparts. Indiana's Hispanic students had a higher rate of cigarette use.

- **Gender breakdown.** Also for the first time, the survey results were reported according to gender. Males were the majority of users of most drugs in almost every grade. However, seven drugs had a female majority of users in grades 6 through 9. These drugs were mostly prescription and over-the-counter medications.
- **Going through the gateway later?** The average age of first use of traditional "gateway" drugs (tobacco, alcohol, and marijuana) increased. This is a favorable finding, because research has shown that delaying onset of drug use prevents an array of related negative consequences. According to the survey, the average age of first use was 13 for alcohol, 12.7 for cigarettes and 13.8 for marijuana.
- **Positive peer pressure?** Researchers found that respondents with stronger perceptions of peer disapproval or parental disapproval were likely to report lower levels of drug use. In addition, the higher the frequency of carrying a weapon, the higher the reported prevalence of annual gateway drug use. Respondents who participated more frequently in after-school activities were likely to report lower frequency of gateway drug use.
- **Family matters.** Younger adolescents tend to access alcohol from their homes and families, while older adolescents tend to get alcohol from friends and commercial sources. Family members were the primary source of alcohol for grades 6-9. Respondents in higher grades were more likely to have reported either having had someone buy alcohol for them or having received it from a person 21 or older. Respondents in higher grades reported obtaining alcohol from commercial outlets at higher rates than those in lower grades. "These results suggest that youth drinking could be reduced if parents and family members better understood the risk of harm to youth that alcohol presents, as well as ways to prevent youth from accessing alcohol kept in the home," Gassman said. "The results also suggest that people 21 and older may need information on the laws and penalties that apply to purchasing and/or otherwise supplying alcohol to minors."
- **Driving under the influence.** Of survey participants ages 14-18, 28 percent indicated that they had ridden in a car driven by someone (including themselves) who was high or had been using alcohol or drugs.

For more information, contact Ruth Gassman at 812-855-1237 or rgassman@indiana.edu.

About the IPRC

The IPRC is operated by the School of HPER and its Department of Applied Health Science. It also is affiliated with the Department of Applied Health Science's Institute for Drug Abuse Prevention. The IPRC is funded, in part,

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