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Annual Indiana youth survey: Upward trend of marijuana use stalls, OTC drug use a concern



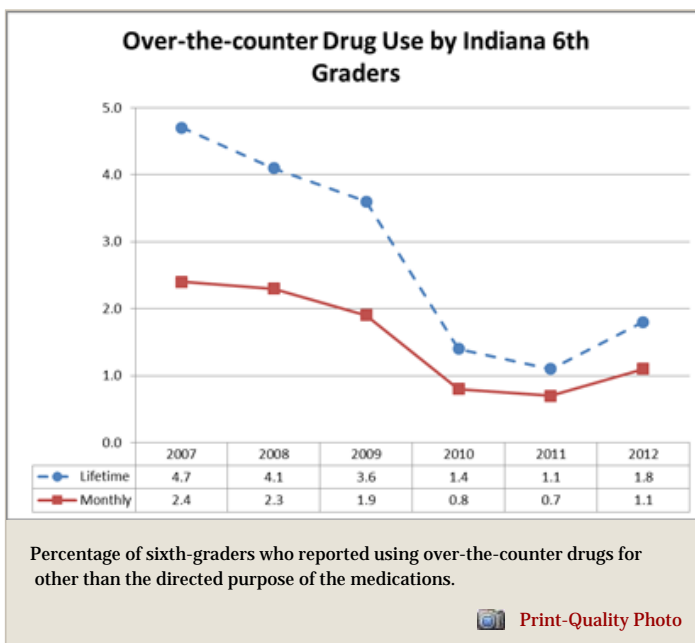
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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Sept. 5, 2012

BLOOMINGTON, Ind. -- Alcohol, cigarette and marijuana use by Indiana sixth- through 12-graders has declined or held steady since 2011. This trend signals an end to the rise in marijuana use among Indiana youth seen since 2008. However, findings from the 22nd Annual Survey of Alcohol, Tobacco and Other Drug Use revealed an increase in over-the-counter drug abuse among sixth-graders.

"In the U.S. it has been shown that the leading over-the-counter drug abused in the U.S. is



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dextromethorphan, which is found in more than 120 cough and cold medications," said Ruth Gassman, director of the Indiana Prevention

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Resource Center at Indiana University's School of Public Health-Bloomington; the center conducted the survey. "Using medications with this ingredient as directed is safe; however, youth who consume large quantities do so to achieve dissociative effects, such as hallucinations, euphoria and dream-like states.

"In Indiana," she said, "children of any age may purchase these cough and cold medications, and certainly they are accessible from the family medicine cabinet. Some vendors have chosen voluntarily to restrict the sale of these substances to minors."


New mental health questions on this year's survey revealed that 27.4 percent of Indiana 10th-graders reported feeling sad or hopeless, and 8.2 percent of eighth-graders attempted suicide

Marijuana use

The survey revealed an end to the upward trend in lifetime and past-month useage of marijuana among several grades.



Ruth Gassman

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"While this is good news, we need to be concerned that youth may instead be using other drugs that mimic marijuana," Gassman said. "Drugs such as K2 and Spice are banned in Indiana, but some businesses are selling it surreptitiously."

The 2011 lifetime rates of marijuana use in Indiana are lower than national rates for Grades 10 and 12 based on

data from the Monitoring the Future Survey, an ongoing study conducted by the University of Michigan on the behaviors, attitudes and values of American secondary school students, college students and young adults.

New survey questions: Prescription drugs, mental health

The 2012 survey included several new questions that asked students about their access to prescription drugs in addition to questions that pertain

directly to mental health. Students were asked about having suicidal thoughts and feelings, whether they had a parent who served in the military, and also whether they had a parent who was incarcerated during the past year.

- Indiana has the second highest rate of high school students who report having taken prescription drugs without a doctor's prescription, 21.4 percent versus the national rate of 20.7 percent, according to the 2011 Youth Risk Behavioral Surveillance System, a national school-based survey conducted by the national Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Because of these findings, it was even more important to determine where Indiana youth get prescription drugs in order to prevent their misuse and abuse. In the Indiana Prevention Resource Center survey, Indiana youth who reported use of prescription drugs to get high were also asked about where they obtained prescription drugs. The most frequently identified sources were "bought from a friend," followed by "prescribed to me" and "someone gave it to me."
- 27.4 percent of Indiana 10th-graders reported feeling sad or hopeless, and 8.2 percent of eighth-graders reportedly attempted suicide. According to the CDC, suicide is a public health issue affecting individuals and communities alike in terms of loss of life, self-inflicted injuries and depression. Gassman said it is important to shed light on the issue of suicide in order to raise awareness. The survey this year asked students to respond to questions about mental health such as feelings of depression, hopelessness and sadness, and attempting suicide. Gassman said that previous studies have demonstrated a strong relationship between adolescent depression, suicidal behavior and substance abuse. An understanding of the level of occurrence of suicidal ideation/behaviors among specific demographic groups is an important first step to informing preventive interventions.
- 6.7 percent of Indiana sixth-graders report having a parent who served in the military during 2011. Research has demonstrated that parental military deployment increases youth and adolescent risk for substance abuse and mental health problems. Students with parents who serve in the military are often worried about their parent and may find it difficult to concentrate on school work.
- 24.1 percent of Indiana eighth-graders report having a parent who served time in jail during 2011. Parental incarceration is a crucial risk factor for substance abuse among youth. Problems with relationships and trouble concentrating in school settings are common among youth who have parents in jail or prison. A study published in 2009 by The Pew Research Center, a nonpartisan organization that provides information on issues, attitudes and trends, shows that from 2000 to 2008, Indiana's prison population increased by 41 percent. According to Gassman, "Parental incarceration has been shown to increase youth and adolescent risk for substance abuse and mental health problems. Knowing these prevalence rates in Indiana, which I think most people would consider high, raises

awareness for families, schools and communities about a relatively common risk factor that children may understandably try to hide. "

The survey, coordinated by the Indiana Prevention Resource Center and funded by the Indiana Family and Social Services Administration's Division of Mental Health and Addiction, was administered to 138,519 students in public and private schools.

This was the first year that schools had the option of administering the survey either online or by paper and pencil. Close to 18,000 students participated electronically, and the expectation is that this number will increase in the future.

"Given that the majority of schools in Indiana have computer labs, the online survey is an easy, economical and confidential approach for administrators and students," Gassman said.

The Indiana Prevention Resource Center provides substance abuse and gambling prevention, treatment and recovery resources and services for those working with youth in schools and communities throughout Indiana.

The [full survey](#) report is available online.

About the School of Public Health-Bloomington, formerly the School of Health, Physical Education and Recreation

With nearly 2,500 students in more than 50 undergraduate and advanced degree programs, the School of Public Health-Bloomington offers a traditional campus experience enriched by 21st-century innovation. More than 120 faculty in five academic departments -- Kinesiology; Applied Health Science; Recreation, Park and Tourism Studies; Environmental Health; and Epidemiology and Biostatistics -- conduct major research, teach and engage with communities across a broad spectrum of health, wellness and disease-prevention topics. Each department offers numerous majors, minors and opportunities for graduate and undergraduate studies. In addition to its academic departments, the school administers the Campus Division of Recreational Sports, which serves roughly 80 percent of the IU Bloomington student body through various intramural, club and individual sports opportunities.

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