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## 2012 Bedford Youth Risk Behavior Survey Results



### Special points of interest:

- *Youth Risk Behavior Survey Results*
- *Bedford In Motion*
- *JGMS After School Program - Winter 2013*
- *Youth and Family Services Committee 2012-2013*
- *Fuel Assistance Available*
- *Youth and Family Services Donors*
- *Strengthen Your Family*
- *Bedford Veterans*
- *Online Screenings*



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What issues do Bedford youth face? How have these changed over time? Are they the same as in other similar places? And what can we as a community do to support Bedford youth? In an attempt to answer such questions, Bedford Youth and Family Services and the Bedford Public Schools administered the Bedford Youth Risk Behavior Survey in April 2012 to all public school students in grades 6-12 (a total of 1,243 student responses were analyzed). Social Science Research and Evaluation, Inc., a private non-profit research firm in Burlington, consulted on survey design, implementation, analyses, and reporting. Because similar surveys were conducted in 1999, 2001, 2003, 2005, 2008, and 2010, we can examine how health and mental health issues are changing in Bedford. The results are expected to help community leaders plan and evaluate policies and programming while developing the most effective ways to support young people. The information can also help parents understand challenges their children face and encourage them to work in planning prevention and response strategies.

Largely based on the Centers for

Disease Control and Prevention's Youth Risk Behavior Survey, questions on the anonymous and confidential survey covered a variety of topics concerning behaviors and assets, ranging from demographic and background items (e.g., gender, age, grade, participation in activities), to student substance use (e.g., alcohol, tobacco, other drugs), to other health issues such as stressors, suicide, violence and safety, sexual behavior, dietary behavior, and physical activity. Survey organizers stress that the results can present a skewed picture of Bedford youth because much of the data concerns risky behaviors such as substance use and violence. It is important to emphasize the many positive aspects of adolescent life, the fact that these issues are not confined solely to youth, and that they are community issues that require the attention of all community members and organizations. It is also critical to remember that these issues are not unique to Bedford, but exist in all communities, and that Bedford is taking a positive step toward acknowledging, addressing, and working towards preventing them. Some of the main survey findings related to substance use, violence

and safety, and mental and physical health are summarized below. Additional data are available in an executive summary of findings.

Some of the major findings were:

#### Substance Use

**Tobacco:** 0.6% of middle school students and 5% of high school students reported that they smoked a cigarette in the 30 days prior to the survey (current use), peaking at 1.2% among 8th graders in middle school and 13% among 12th graders in high school. While the rate of current cigarette use among Bedford high school students remained well below prior averages and dropped from 2010 (7%) to 2012 (5%)

**Alcohol:** Alcohol is the most popular substance among our youth, with 3% of middle schoolers and almost one-fourth (22%) of high schoolers reporting drinking alcohol in the 30 days prior to the survey. One-third (33%) of 12th graders reported current alcohol use. Trends are mixed, with an increase in current alcohol use among middle

## Bedford In Motion



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What simple activity, requiring no expensive equipment, can provide the following benefits?

- Burns calories
- Boosts metabolism even when you aren't doing it
- Improves overall health
- Enhances creativity and focus
- Reduces stress
- Fights anxiety and depression
- Strengthens your heart

- Increases muscle mass and bone density

- Bolsters self esteem

- Connects to natural environment

Figure it out? It's Walking!

There's a growing body of evidence suggesting that walking is the best exercise most people can do. Researchers tell us that, ideally, each of us should be walking over 10,000 steps a day.

Surprisingly, the average American manages less than 5,000 steps a day.

The question? Why walking is so beneficial? To answer that, researchers from the University of Missouri took a unique approach. Scientists took fit, active people, and sentenced them to bed rest. The "subjects" spent three days living their normal, active lifestyle, then were forced to cut their efforts by at least half. During the

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## JGMS After School Program Winter 2013



**GIRL TALK!  
FITNESS ROOM  
AFTER SCHOOL!  
SHOOTING  
AND EDITING  
FOR TV!**

Bedford Youth and Family Services in collaboration with John Glenn Middle School is gearing up for another successful Winter After School program with a focus on the most popular activities including Girl Talk with Bedford High School student leaders and advisor Amy Barnes, Fitness Room After School with Justin Newton, and our always

popular Shooting and Editing for TV with Madeleine Altmann and Greg Dolan.

Activities begin the week of January 8th. The registration deadline for all programs is December 21st. *Space is limited; be sure to sign up as soon as possible to secure your spot.*

You can find our flyer and registration form at:

[www.bedfordma.gov/youth](http://www.bedfordma.gov/youth)

Flyers are also available in our office at Town Center. Feel free to call Jessica Wildfong at 781-275-7727 ext. 262 or email at [jessicaw@bedfordma.gov](mailto:jessicaw@bedfordma.gov) with any questions or concerns.

### 2012-2013 Youth and Family Services Committee:

Kristina Philipson, Chair ♦ Tom Pinney, at Large ♦ Alison Malkin, at Large ♦ Sheryl Barkan, at Large  
Cathy Cordes, Selectman Liaison ♦ Jeff Wardwell, Police  
Noreen O’Gara, School Committee ♦ Kevin Wormstead, Board of Health Liaison

### Newsletter Credits:

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## Fuel Assistance Available



If you could use some help paying your home heating bills, the Commonwealth’s Fuel Assistance Program may be for you!

Bedford residents of all ages are invited to apply for the program which provides a benefit to those who meet certain income guidelines to pay fuel bills.

Those who enroll in the Fuel Assistance Program may also be automatically eligible for a free home weatherization program, heating system repair or replacement, free

energy-saving devices, and discounts for many utilities.

To apply, Bedford residents under age 60 should call Bedford Youth and Family Services (BYFS) at 781-275-7727 and those age 60 or older should call the Bedford Council on Aging (COA) at 781-275-6825.

An appointment will be set up to assist you with the application. Please be assured that all information given to the friendly agency staff who help you will be held in the

strictest confidence.

### Income Guideline:

Household Size	Yearly Gross Income
1	\$31,271
2	40,893
3	50,515
4	60,137
5	69,759
6	79,381

## Bedford In Motion

## cont’d. from page 1



period, they had their blood sugar levels continuously monitored. Between the two periods, activity dropped from an average of over 13,000 steps a day to less than 4,300. Meanwhile, the participants ate exactly the same meals and snacks throughout.

The result? Blood sugar levels spiked more easily during the inactive days, and the spikes got more pronounced as the sedentary period went on. That’s not related to changes in fitness, or getting fat, but is the body’s natural reaction to doing less - even low impact - exercise. The conclusion? Research findings suggest that even someone with a normal body weight who eats a healthy diet could see

dramatic spikes in blood sugar over time if they live a sedentary lifestyle - a problem that can in turn lead to early onset of type 2 diabetes and heart disease. These are problems that are plaguing Americans, including our youth, at increasingly alarming rates.

So, how far is 10,000 steps, anyway? The average person’s stride length is approximately 2.5 feet long. That means it takes just over 2,000 steps to walk one mile, and 10,000 steps is about 5 miles.

The plan? Start with the obvious. Check with your physician if you have health issues. Then, add steps to your current walking routine: instead of competing for

the nearest parking spot, park further away. Take an extra turn around the block if you are making a short trip. Walk with your child to school or to an errand. Too far? Park closer and walk the final leg of the trip. Walk to the next bus stop. Take the stairs when possible. Explore one of Bedford’s many trails. Small steps will have big impact!

For information on walking, quizzes and recommendations on getting started.

[www.pbs.org/americaswalking/health/index.html](http://www.pbs.org/americaswalking/health/index.html)

For information on activities in Bedford:

[www.bedfordma.gov/BedfordInMotion](http://www.bedfordma.gov/BedfordInMotion)

# Youth Risk Behavior Survey

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schoolers (2% to 3%) and a decrease among high schoolers (33% to 22%).

**Other Drugs:** Marijuana use is much more common than any other illegal drug use, with 11% of high schoolers reporting current use of marijuana. In fact, current marijuana use was more common among 12<sup>th</sup> graders than cigarette use (16% marijuana, 13% cigarettes). Rates of use of illegal drugs other than marijuana remained generally stable and comparatively lower than use of other substances.

### Impaired Driving

**Riding:** Just under one-tenth of all Bedford high school students reported riding with a driver who had been drinking alcohol (9%) and with a driver who had been using marijuana (9%) in the 30 days prior to the survey. Both of these rates decreased since 2010, while remaining well below state averages.

**Driving:** 5% of Bedford high school students reported driving after drinking alcohol in the 30 days prior to the survey. 10% reported driving after using marijuana. These rates have decreased since 2010.

### Violence and Safety

**Fighting:** Students in both middle and high school were almost twice as likely to report being in a physical fight (in the past 12 months) when they were *out* of school (15% middle, 13% high) than when they were *in* school (2% middle, 8% high). While there were decreases in the rates of physical fighting between 2010 and 2012, the rates of these issues were similar among Bedford high school students and Massachusetts' students.

**Weapons:** Students in both middle and high school were far more likely to carry a weapon such as a knife, gun, or club (in the past 30 days) when they were *out* of school (10% middle, 13% high) than when they were *in* school (0% middle, 5% high). The Bedford high school rate of in-school weapons carrying is similar to the state average.

**Bullying:** 15% of middle school students and 12% of high school students reported that they had been

bullied in school in the past 12 months prior to the survey, while 8% of middle school students and 10% of high school students reported that they had been bullied electronically (via e-mail, instant messaging, social networking sites, or texting). Thirty-three percent of middle school students and 40% of high school students reported that they saw someone else bullied in school in the 12 months prior to the survey. Rates of these issues were lower among Bedford high school students than Massachusetts' students.

### Stress and Suicide

**Stress:** Almost half (47%) of middle school students and three-quarters (74%) of high school students described their lives as either somewhat or very stressful. Students reported worrying most often about school issues, followed by social issues, appearance issues, and family issues.

**Suicide:** The percentage of students who reported considering, planning, and attempting suicide in the 12 months prior to the survey are as follows: *seriously considered* (7% middle, 9% high), *made a plan* (4% middle, 6% high), and *actually attempted* (1% middle, 3% high). These rates have remained constant over time and are lower than state averages, but are still a serious concern. We want *no* students to see suicide as a problem solving technique.

**Adult support:** Students in both middle and high school were most likely to report having a family adult to talk with if they have a problem (85% middle, 79% high), followed by a school adult (65% middle, 75% high) and a non-family/school adult (33% middle, 37% high).

### Sexual Behavior

**Sexual Intercourse:** There was a decrease from 2010 (25%) to 2012 (21%) in the percentage of Bedford high school students who reported ever having sexual intercourse. There was little difference between the percentage of high school males (20%) and females (21%) reporting history of intercourse. The percentage of students who reported ever having had sexual

intercourse increased consistently with grade level: 9th (7%); 10th (18%); 11th (22%) and 12th (40%). Middle school students were not asked questions about sexual issues.

**Condom Use:** There was decrease from 2010 (68%) to 2012 (64%) in the percentage of high school students who reported using a condom the last time they had sexual intercourse, continuing a decline observed since a peak rate of 76% in 2005.

### Dietary Behavior

Issues concerning weight are troubling, particularly among high school females. For example, 47% of Bedford high school females reported that they were actively trying to lose weight, compared to only 23% of males. There were increases in more healthy options of eating less and exercising to lose/maintain weight, and consistency in more troublesome options (5% fasting, 3% vomiting or taking laxatives, 2% taking diet pills).

In response to the survey results:

>The schools are addressing the issues of stress, drug use, and depression by making changes to their health curriculum. And they've implemented bullying prevention plans.

>The school resource officers are available as support to students

>There are several mentoring programs in place at the middle and high school levels.

>Drug & Alcohol Education and Diversion programs are made available by the Schools and the Police Department as an alternative to a lengthy suspension +/- or court appearance for first time alcohol or drug offenders, who are 18 years old or younger and who reside in Bedford.

>Families need to continue to remind kids about NOT drinking or using and substances and NOT driving, or riding with someone who has, and be sure they can call home no matter what.

>Parents can also help to keep stress levels down by being certain that kids have a balance between activities, school and down time.

Additional data are available in an

### Thank you to our Donors:

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Bedford Car Wash

Bedford Motel

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Bedford Schools  
Administration  
Employees

Callahan's Kenpo Karate

Cambridge Savings  
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Bedford

O'Malley and Colangeli  
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&

The Residents of Bedford  
through your Taxes

executive summary of findings on the Youth and Family Services website: [www.bedfordma.gov/youth](http://www.bedfordma.gov/youth)

For more information call Jessica Wildfong, Prevention Services Coordinator at 781-275-7727 ext. 262 or email at

## Strengthen Your Family

At the Ounce of Prevention conference October 16<sup>th</sup> the Massachusetts Department of Public Health handed out copies of the Strengthening Families Program (SFP). The creator of the program Dr. Karol Kumpfer teamed up with the Lutra Group and Mothers Against Drunk Driving (MADD) to create this new 10-session DVD series designed for families with children between the ages of 10 and 16 years old and for in-home use. This new universal prevention population version can be an adjunct to the regular SFP group curriculum or used

totally alone by families in their home. They are hoping to distribute it widely for a much reduced cost.

The DVD is a 10-part entertaining series of parenting and youth skills for families to watch together in their own homes. It has 10 thirty-minute lessons plus a short introductory lesson on the benefits of the SFP and brain development. The package contains two disks and a Parent Guidebook. Helpful, informative, and useful handouts and tracking sheets go with each lesson and can be printed off

each DVD disk when it is placed in a computer.

Based on our experience working with families in Bedford and coordinating parent education series in conjunction with the different school parent associations, Bedford Youth and Family Services (BYFS) thinks this in home model of parents and children working together may be of interest to some families. BYFS has limited copies of the DVD to distribute to Bedford families interested in and committed to doing the 10 week program.

There would be no cost though feedback would be appreciated. Families are also able to order their own copy of the SFP for \$5 plus S & H

from:

[www.strengtheningfamiliesprogram.org/madd-dvd.html](http://www.strengtheningfamiliesprogram.org/madd-dvd.html)

If you or your family would be interested in doing the program together, please contact BYFS at 781-275-7727 or email



### BYFS Staff Queries - Main Number: 781/275-7727

Sue Baldauf, Director, x263 - Counseling referrals or questions ~ General dept. questions ~ Community concern ~ Issue related to Violence Prevention Coalition, Bedford Community Partnership, Business Diversity Training, Progress Fund ~ Parenting Education Topic

Fran Stander, Administrative Assistant, x264 - General questions ~ General community & Resources ~ Job Match ~ Events & Press Releases ~ New Resident Packets ~ Volunteer Opportunities

Jessica Wildfong, Youth Development/Prevention, x262 - JGMS After School ~ Peer Mentoring ~ Youth Website ~ Other youth related issues - Alcohol, tobacco, or drug education ~ Diversion ~ Youth Risk Behavior Survey ~ Safe Homes ~ Fuel Assistance

Carla Olson, Safe Routes to School Coordinator, Thursdays and Fridays

Veterans Agent 781/275-1328 - Any veterans related question

Eliot Counselors: 781-275-7727 Kate Imhoff x261, Lynne Chapas x260, 978/369-1113 Kristen Herlihy x115, Julia Lawrence x161

## Veterans Agent Hours



Since the untimely death of Bedford's beloved Veterans Agent Fred Gordon in August 2012, Bedford has been fortunate to have interim services provided by Veterans Agents Ryan Lennon from

Lexington and Bob Hogan from Burlington. Lennon has been seeing current Bedford veterans on or eligible for state Chapter 115 services in the Bedford office on Tuesdays and is available in Lexington other

days of the week. He can be reached at 781-275-1328 in Bedford or 781-861-0194 in Lexington.

Veterans new to Bedford and needing assistance with federal benefits are encouraged to

contact Burlington Veterans Agent Bob Hogan at 781-270-1959.

Bedford and Lexington are in the process of discussing forming a district veterans services office. Stay tuned!

## BYFS Offers Online Screening

Bedford Youth and Family Services (BYFS) is making online depression screening available on its website. The free, confidential screening is completely anonymous and has been made available to the community through Screening for Mental Health in Wellesley, MA.

The screening is provided so that a resident may find out in a few minutes whether or not professional consultation would be helpful. If you or a family member have been feeling down, stressed, or out of control, this screening may help decide if it is time to talk to your doctor or to seek mental health treatment.

Screenings available include one for depression, bipolar disorder, generalized anxiety disorder, and posttraumatic stress disorder. The site includes educational resources as well as information and fact sheets that can be downloaded.

Anyone interested can access the screening through this link:

[www.mentalhealthscreening.org/screening/BYFS](http://www.mentalhealthscreening.org/screening/BYFS)

For questions contact BYFS at 781/275-7727.

