2018 Youth Risk Behavior Survey Results

The Bedford Youth Risk Behavior Survey was administered to John Glenn Middle School and Bedford High School students in April of 2018. Well, the results are in! Keep reading to get an idea about how Bedford students’ lifestyles and behaviors affect their health.

This is a very interesting year with some challenging results and new data points. On a positive note, trend data largely reveal consistency in perceived adult support at the Middle and High School, with rates at or near their highest levels since 2010. There was a decrease in the percent of High School students who perceive themselves as overweight, and overall consistency in physical activity levels at the Middle and High School.

With a main focus on trends, we saw an increase in alcohol, cigarette, and marijuana use. The new electronic tobacco data show that 7% of Middle School students and 28% of High School students reported current use.

The challenging trends continue with violence and safety, with notable increases in concern for safety in school. Bullying continues to be an issue at the Middle and High School, with consistent increases in the percentage of students who reported being bullied at school. Sexual behavior data show an increase in sexually active High School students and a corresponding decline in the level of condom use. Our mental health data is also of concern, with consistent increases in depression, self-harm, and suicidality among Middle and High School students.

Cont’d on Page 2
**2018 Youth Risk Behavior Survey Results**

students. We want no students to see self-harm and suicide as a problem solving technique.

**RECOMMENDATIONS**

Areas of Prevention for Families:

- Parents are the most important influence on their teen when it comes to risky behaviors. It’s important to talk often, listen regularly, and communicate clearly that you do not want your teen using alcohol or drugs. Using alcohol or drugs before the brain has fully developed increases your risk for future addiction dramatically.

- Families need to continue to remind kids about NOT drinking or using any substances and driving, or riding with someone who has, and be sure they can call home for a ride no matter what. Research shows that kids who learn the risks of drugs and alcohol from their parents are up to 50% less likely to use than those who do not.

- Parents can help to keep stress levels down by being certain that kids have a balance between activities, school, and unstructured leisure time. A good rule of thumb is involvement in one sport and one kind of other activity at a time.

- Be sure to spend enjoyable time together so that interactions aren't only about school and other "chores." Eat a meal together, watch a television show, go to a movie, read a book they have to read for school, do a project. Stay connected.

- If you are worried about your child's mental health, take advantage of Bedford Youth and Family Services mental health screenings section of their webpage www.bedfordma.gov/youth. The screening is anonymous and confidential. After answering a few questions, you will receive customized feedback, educational materials, and treatment resources if necessary.

You can view the full executive summary of the 2018 Bedford Youth Risk Behavior Survey as well as some of the main survey findings related to substance use, violence and safety, and mental and physical health on Bedford Youth and Family Services website www.bedfordma.gov/youth under the Youth Risk Behavior Survey section. We will be working over the next year to share this information as broadly as possible. We will also be working with youth at both JGMS and BHS to get the results to students in a way that supports their healthy choices.

**Fuel Assistance**

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.

To be eligible, you must be a Bedford resident and have an income ranging from $35,510 for a one-person household to $90,141 for a six-person household. The income limit is higher for families with more than six members. The amount of money the program provides depends on the number of household members and the household income.

Those who enroll in the Fuel Assistance Program may also be automatically eligible for a free home weatherization program, free 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 over should call the Bedford Council on Aging (COA) at 781-275-6825. BYFS or COA will set up a time to assist you with the application in their offices. The agencies will hold appointments beginning November 1. Please be assured that all information given to the friendly agency staff who help you will be held in the strictest confidence.

Remember, your taxes paid for this program, so if you think you qualify, apply for the benefits you deserve!
Are You Ready to DASH Around Town?

Bedford’s 3-year local transportation pilot program, the DASH, is a door-to-door transit service available weekdays from 11 a.m. to 6 p.m. The DASH does not replace the Bedford Local Transit (BLT) or the current MBTA service, but rather expands transportation services for Bedford residents.

The DASH is a 14-passenger, handicapped accessible vehicle, operating between the hours of 11 a.m. and 6 p.m., Monday through Friday, excluding holidays and weather emergencies. The DASH provides service throughout Bedford as well as to the neighboring towns of Lexington, Billerica, and Burlington. Concord trips are available on Mondays and Tuesdays on a space available basis only. Those looking to schedule a ride should call 781-275-DASH (3274) or go online at www.bedforddash.com. Rides can be booked up to three weeks in advance.

Fares for the DASH are the same as the current fares for the Bedford Local Transit (BLT). Adults ages 18-65 pay $2.00 in-town services and $4.00 out-of-town; Medicare Card Holders, Veterans, disabled persons, and seniors age 65+ pay $1.00 in-town and $2.00 out-of-town. Youth under 18 pay $1.00 in-town and $2.00 out-of-town. Discounted prepaid ticket books are available from the driver.

Since the DASH is a pilot project, service is subject to change over time. Any questions about the DASH please call the dispatcher at 781-275-DASH (3274), visit the FAQ’s page at www.bedforddash.com or call Bedford’s Healthy Communities Coordinator Carla Olson at 781-275-7727 x4330.

The Importance of Children Doing Chores

Four reasons parents wish children to do them:

1. **First, to share the work load.** Housework is never-ending. If everyone pitches in, no one person is overly burdened. This is a matter of simple fairness. Some parents believe that if children are more involved in running a household, they will make fewer messes.

2. **To learn housekeeping skills.** The easiest time to learn household skills is as a child. Kids can learn to make beds, do dishes and vacuum the same way they learn to read, ride bikes and swim. Further, when children acquire the habit of doing such chores and making beds or doing dishes, those habits and skills will accompany them into adulthood.

3. **To contribute to the family.** Many parents believe that all family members ought to contribute to the family as well as receive from it. How each person contributes varies with age and ability. The most common way children can contribute is by doing household chores.

4. **To learn responsibility.** Requiring children to contribute to the family by doing chores is an excellent way to begin to learn and practice responsibility.

Adopted from “Pick Up Your Socks... and Other Skills Growing Children Need!” by Elizabeth Crary
Music for Mental Health

When you need to focus on a project, must tackle a long to-do list of boring tasks, or just have had a hard day, you might crank up the sounds of whatever music inspires you.

Music is a natural mood booster, and research now confirms that music not only influences our moods, but can reduce the negative effects of stress, while helping us focus and manage our emotions.

Listening to music actually changes the way your brain functions. If you've ever felt chills while listening to music (and research shows that about 90 percent of us have) then you have experienced this. Music stimulates an ancient reward pathway in the brain, encouraging dopamine to flood part of the forebrain associated with motivation.

Music can help you regulate your mood and improve your mental wellness by:

- Reducing the body’s response to stress;
- Relieving symptoms of depression;
- Relieving anxiety;
- Improving cognition;
- Improving sleep;
- Increasing intensity and endurance of workouts.

It's important to pick out the right music for the right purpose. If you're feeling down, try to think about what music inspires you. If your thoughts are racing, calming music may help.

Likewise, classical music or instrumentals have been show to increase people's ability to focus while working on a difficult task; conversely, putting on exciting music might make cleaning the kitchen more enjoyable and the last few minutes on the treadmill more bearable.

But beware: since music can bring up strong emotions and remind you of certain people or memories, try to avoid music that evokes sad feelings or makes you think of upsetting things. Making playlists ahead of time for different moods is a great way to make sure you always have the right mood-fixer at the tip of your fingers.

If you feel like you might need more support, try taking a free online screening at www.bedfordma.gov/youth under the “screenings” section to see if you have symptoms of a common and treatable mental health disorder. After the screening, you’ll be connected to local resources.

Save the Date!

On Wednesday, February 6th, Massachusetts will celebrate the fourth annual Safe Routes to School Winter Walk and Roll to School Day. This event encourages seeking out active transit options during the colder months with the goal of walking or biking as often as possible throughout the year. Research consistently demonstrates that morning activity helps your kids focus better, which can improve their learning. Also walking and biking to school teaches valuable skills and encourages independence as your kids start planning how to be independent pedestrians and bicyclists in the future. It’s also a fun time to really talk to connect with your kids in a meaningful way.

We know some of you are not able to walk or bike to school, so instead try injecting walking or biking into your lives in other ways. Walk or bike part of the way. Walk to the next bus stop. Walk to a park. Just throw on that warm winter gear, keep moving, and have fun!

For more info, visit: https://www.mass.gov/safe-routes-to-school
RAY Of Hope

Initiated in 2011 by Bedford Youth & Family Services (BYFS) and the Bedford Chamber of Commerce (BCOC) and modeled after a similar program in Needham, the RAY of Hope Program (Recognize A Youth) is designed to identify high school age young people who have performed outstanding service to the Bedford community and/or who by their actions are excellent role models for their peers. The RAY of Hope Program is a recognition that young people and their development are of critical importance to the functioning of the Bedford community and our collective futures.

Annually the BCOC will recognize one outstanding young person or group, coordinate a gift from the BCOC, and will work with the local press to inform the larger community of the achievements. BCOC and BYFS will accept nominations at any time from local businesses, schools, religious or civic groups, or individuals, for high school age youth who are deserving of recognition.

To nominate a young person please fill out the application form attached or download it from the BCOC website www.bedfordchamber.org and mail to Bedford Chamber of Commerce, ATTN: RAY of Hope, 12 Mudge Way, Bedford, MA 01730. The form can also be faxed to 781-275-7767 or emailed to YouthandFamily@bedfordma.gov

Nominations will be reviewed by representatives from BCOC and BYFS, and the youth with the most compelling service accomplishments will be selected and honored at the BCOC Annual Dinner in February.

Deadline for submission is January 7, 2019.

For questions about the award or the process please contact BCOC Executive Director Maureen Sullivan at 781-275-8503 or BYFS Director Sue Baldauf at 781-275-7727 ext. 4328.

Bill Of Rights
For The Holidays

- **You have the right to take care of yourself:** to eat right, exercise regularly, and get enough rest.
- **You have the right to have mixed emotions:** happy, sad, frustrated, guilty, afraid, thankful.
- **You have the right to have solitude** - for planning, thinking, reflection, introspection, prayer, and relaxation.
- **You have the right not to accept** some or all of your party/activity invitations.
- **You have the right to ask for help and support** from friends; family; your church, synagogue, or mosque; and/or community service agencies.
- **You have the right to give gifts** that are within your holiday budget.
- **You have the right to say no** to alcohol, drugs, cigarettes, and a second piece of pie.
- **You have the right not to ride with a drunk driver.**
- **You have the right (and a duty) to take away the keys** of a drunk friend or relative who wants to drive, and to call a taxi.
- **You have the right to smile** at harried salesclerks and angry drivers, and to give them a peace of your mind.

“How to De-Stress this Holiday,” Hope Publications
Veterans’ Services District

Bedford/Lexington Veterans Services

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

- Sue Baldauf, Director, x4328 - 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, x4329 - General questions ~ General community & Resources ~ Job Match ~ Events & Press Releases ~ New Resident Packets ~ Volunteer Opportunities
- Jessica Wildfong, Youth Development/Prevention, x4331 - 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, Healthy Bedford Coordinator, x4330 ~ Safe Routes to School & Healthy Bedford initiatives
- Bill Linnehan, Veterans Agent, x4334 or 781/275-1328 - Any veterans related question
- Eliot Counselors: 781-275-7727 Lynne Chapas x4332, Laura Smith x4335; Andrea Vana x4333 or 978-369-1113

2018-2019 Youth and Family Services Committee:

- Peter Ricci, Chair ♦ Marcia Morgan, at Large ♦ Dori Pulizzi, at Large ♦ Marge Heckman, at Large
- Caroline Fedele, Selectman & Recreation Liaison ♦ Jeff Wardwell, Police ♦ Mary Seymour, Board of Health
- Ann Guay, School Committee

Job Match

Teens looking for part-time employment?
Residents looking for help with child care, yard work, snow shoveling, odd jobs?

Applications Online or at BYFS Office

Youths may register and enjoy the flexibility of not being locked into a job giving them the freedom to be involved in other activities.

After completing an application the teen is matched to a resident’s request depending on their capability.

Applications can be downloaded at [www.bedfordma.gov/youth](http://www.bedfordma.gov/youth) under Job Match or in hardcopy at our office.

Residents with a job can call Fran Stander at 781/275-7727 or frans@bedfordma.gov