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2017 Idaho Youth Risk Behavior Survey released

(BOISE) – Idaho teens’ experience with bullying, substance abuse and suicidal thoughts are among the key statistics in the latest Idaho Youth Risk Behavior Survey, the State Department of Education reports.

The newly released data was gathered with the cooperation of Idaho school districts and students in grades 9 through 12. The 2017 Idaho Youth Risk Behavior Survey provides schools, state agencies and communities with an overview of the health status and risk behavior of adolescents in Idaho. This information is essential for informed decision-making, program design and policy creation related to student health and school safety and security.

“This data is critical as we focus on the factors that disrupt academic achievement,” Superintendent of Public Instruction Sherri Ybarra said. “Supporting the health and safety of students is a key component of our work at the SDE and in schools throughout the state. The behavior survey represents the voice of Idaho high school students and informs how we prioritize our resources and attention.”

The YRBS, developed by the national Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, measures and tracks changes in behaviors that fall into six categories: behaviors, including violence, that contribute to intentional and unintentional injury; tobacco use; alcohol and other drug use; sexual behaviors that contribute to unintended pregnancy and sexually transmitted diseases; unhealthy dietary behaviors; and inadequate physical activity.

Some findings of concern in the most recent survey include:

- One in four Idaho high school students reported they were bullied at school, and 20 percent were electronically bullied.
- The percentage of students who reported they seriously considered attempting suicide in the past 12 months rose to 22 percent, the highest in 10 years.
- 14 percent reported taking prescription drugs without a doctor’s prescription.

Some promising findings in the survey include:

- 78 percent of high school students report that they will probably or definitely complete a post-high school program (vocational training, military service, community college or 4-year college).
- The percentage of students who rode one or more times with someone who been drinking alcohol decreased significantly, from 30 percent in 2007 to 16 percent in 2017.

- 71.5 percent of students have at least one teacher or adult in the school that they can talk to if they have a problem.
- The percentage of students who reported they have tried smoking has decreased by 20 percent in the past 10 years.

The SDE's Student Engagement/Career & Technical Readiness division has been working to support Idaho schools in addressing the behaviors monitored in the report.

"I take this report very seriously – and one of my areas of focus has been on preventing bullying," Superintendent Ybarra said.

This fall, as part of a national bullying awareness effort, the department is distributing radio and video public service announcements across Idaho. The PSAs and more information on anti-bullying resources for schools, parents and students are posted here: <http://www.sde.idaho.gov/stop-bullying/>

"My vision is to grow this public service announcement into a larger, multi-year statewide effort similar to the successful campaign to reduce teen tobacco use. It was effective. Let's replicate what works and declare a 'war on bullying in Idaho'," Superintendent Ybarra said.

The State Department of Education also is partnering with community and state groups to support efforts in suicide prevention.

"Given the significant impact student suicides have on school communities, the department is making concerted efforts to partner with stakeholders to implement programs that foster resilience, hope and strength," said Matt McCarter, director of Student Engagement / Career & Technical Readiness.

"As Superintendent Ybarra often says, 'schools cannot do it alone.' Supporting struggling students requires a collective approach including families and communities," McCarter said. "This data demonstrates the need and urgency for a united effort."

For more information on suicide prevention, go to <https://www.sde.idaho.gov/student-engagement/suicide-prevention/>

The full report, which includes historical data in the appendix, is posted online at <https://www.sde.idaho.gov/student-engagement/school-health/files/youth/2017-Youth-Risk-Behavior-Survey-Results.pdf>

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