

February 25, 2010

Dear School Committee Members,

Uxbridge High School, in conjunction with The Blackstone Valley Youth Coalition and the Massachusetts Partnership for Healthy Communities, was provided the opportunity by the MA Department of Health and LUK, Inc to conduct a Youth Risk Behavior Survey (YRBS) last spring. Attached you will find the Executive Summary from the results, and a full power point presentation will be available for the community shortly.

The YRBS is the largest and most respected source of data on youth risk behaviors. It was created by the Division of Adolescent School Health, National Centers for Disease Control (CDC) and representatives from more than 800 local, state, and federal health agencies in 1990. The YRBS measures behaviors that fall into the following 6 categories: (1) behaviors that result in unintentional injuries and violence, (2) tobacco use, (3) alcohol and other drug use, (4) sexual behaviors that result in HIV infection, other STDs, and unintended pregnancies, (5) dietary behaviors, and (6) physical activity.

The YRBS is administered in a collection of randomly drawn sample schools from nearly every state every other year. The survey is administered to high school aged students in a single class period and is completely anonymous. Strict precautions are in place to absolutely insure student confidentiality and participation in the survey is completely voluntary. Students and families have the ability to “opt out” of the survey all together. Students answer the multiple choice questions about their current and past risk behaviors, and can skip any questions at any time. Results are collected and sent to the state for processing. State results are then shared federally with the Center for Disease Control.

The YRBS results have tremendous value at the national, state, and local level. Results allow health and educational professionals to track the prevalence of youth risk behaviors over time, compare their state to other states or to the nation, and to empower local communities to measure themselves compared to the rest of the state. It will allow Uxbridge to assess and develop programs through the schools and community entities, like the Blackstone Valley Youth Coalition. Together we can address these high risk behaviors through school health education teacher training, instructional programs, supporting health-related legislation, and seeking funding for school and community health programs. Most grant funders are looking for clear measureable data that supports the need for programming, and the YRBS will provide that.

The YRBS supports the Uxbridge Public Schools commitment to the social and emotional well being of our students. Our ultimate goal is to gather as much information as we can through the YRBS so we can most effectively address the needs of the youth through education, health programming, and supportive services.

Please don't hesitate to contact me with further questions or concerns about the YRBS or the Blackstone Valley Youth Coalition.

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Executive Summary

Uxbridge high school youth reflect their strengths and challenges and the strengths, resources, and challenges of their community in the Uxbridge Youth Risk Behavior Survey.

Unintentional Injury and Violence

In almost all respects, Uxbridge high school youth are as likely as their peers in the United States and central Massachusetts to engage in/not engage in risk behaviors that are related to unintentional injury and violence. Uxbridge youth are more likely than their peers in the United States to wear bicycle helmets, more likely than their peers in central Massachusetts in the past 30 days to have ridden in a car with a driver who had been drinking alcohol, less likely than their peers in the United States in the past 12 months to have engaged in a physical fight, and more likely than their peers in central Massachusetts to have purposely hurt or injured themselves without wanting to die.

Tobacco Use

In many respects, Uxbridge high school youth are as likely as their peers in the United States and central Massachusetts to engage in/not engage in risk behaviors that are related to tobacco use. However, Uxbridge high school youth are more likely than their peers in the United States to have smoked cigarettes on 20 or more of the past 30 days, smoked cigarettes daily for a period of 30 days during their life, used a smokeless tobacco product during the past 30 days, and smoked cigars during the past 30 days.

Alcohol and Other Drug Use

Although the large majority of Uxbridge high school youth does not and has not ever used drugs, there is a small number of youth that have used a variety of drugs, and the percent of these youth within the population of Uxbridge youth is higher than their peers in the United States. Uxbridge high school youth are less likely than their peers in the United States to have had one or more drinks of alcohol in their life, and less likely to have had their first drink of alcohol before age 13. Uxbridge youth, however, are more likely than their peers in the United States and central Massachusetts to engage in episodic heavy drinking, and more likely than their peers in the United States to have smoked marijuana one or more times during the past 30 days.

Sexual Behavior

In almost all respects, Uxbridge high school youth are as likely as their peers in the United States and central Massachusetts to engage in/not engage in risk behaviors that are related to sexual intercourse. Uxbridge high school youth are less likely than their peers in the United States to have engaged in sexual intercourse one or more times during the past 90 days and more likely to have used birth control pills as a means to protect against pregnancy.

Dietary Behavior and Physical Activity

With respect to dietary behavior, Uxbridge high school youth are as likely as their peers in the United States and central Massachusetts to engage in more healthy weight control behaviors and in unhealthy weight control behaviors. With respect to physical activity, on each measure of physical activity Uxbridge high school youth are more likely than their peers in the United States to engage in healthy activities.

Community Resources

Uxbridge high school youth are as likely as their peers in central Massachusetts to have engaged in monthly volunteer work, to have participated in supervised activities during the past 7 days, to have a parent or adult family member with whom they can talk about important things, to have a teacher or other adult at school with whom they can talk about important things, and to have lots of adults in their neighborhood with whom they can talk about important things.