What is the Youth Risk Behavior Survey (YRBS)?

- The YRBS is a school self-administered survey tracking the health risk behaviors among youth and young adults.
- Sponsored by the CDC, and administered on a biennial basis (in odd years).
- Rhode Island YRBS initiated in 1995; Middle School survey launched in 2007.
- Joint collaboration between RI Department of Health (RIDOH) and RI Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (RIDE).
- Random sample of 25 high schools and 6-8 classrooms in each; Data are weighted and used for monitoring and decision-making.

Contents of the 2019 RI YRBS

- Demographics
- Safety, Violence, Bullying, Mental Health, and Suicide
- Tobacco/E-cigarettes
- Alcohol, Marijuana, and Other Drugs
- Sexual Activity
- Nutrition and Physical Activity
- Oral Health
- Other indicators

How are RI YRBS data used?

- Describe the prevalence of health-risk behaviors among youth.
- Identify demographic differences in health behaviors.
- Support modification of school health curricula or inform professional development.
- Facilitate school and public health program planning or decision-making.
- Inform stakeholders on health promotion campaigns targeting adolescents.
- Measure progress on achieving youth health objectives.
- Data dissemination to educate the public and policy makers.
- Aid different programs in their grant applications.

Strengths of the YRBS

- Only comprehensive source of adolescent health risk data
- Questions are cognitively tested and validated
- Allows for trending of data
- Allows for state-to-state and state-to-national comparisons
- Flexibility to add questions to address emerging health issues

Limitations of the YRBS

- No capacity for local level analyses (statewide only)
- Barriers to asking sensitive questions (e.g., sex, drugs, mental health, etc.)
- Low samples (i.e., <100 respondents) will result in unreliable results
- Data are self-reported therefore allowing for a potential for bias

How to Access YRBS Data

- 2001-2017 RI, other states’ and national data are available at: http://www.cdc.gov/HealthyYouth/yrbss/index.htm
- RI high school and middle school health risk data (2007-2019) and related publications are available at: http://www.health.ri.gov/data/adolescenthealth/
- Custom RI data queries may be requested through Tara Cooper (401-222-7628).

Recent YRBS publications

- Data posters shared with high school students http://www.health.ri.gov/data/adolescenthealth
  - "What students said about making smart choices"
  - "What students said about managing emotions "
  - "What students said about relationships"