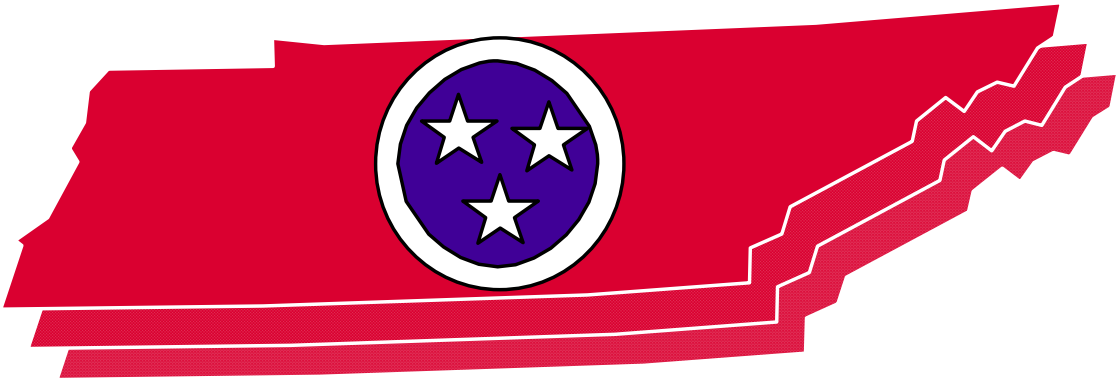
TENNESSEE MIDDLE SCHOOL HEALTH SURVEY, 2001-2002

A SUMMARY OF FINDINGS FROM THE TENNESSEE MIDDLE SCHOOL HEALTH SURVEY



TENNESSEE DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH

AND THE

COMMUNITY HEALTH RESEARCH GROUP

THE UNIVERSITY OF TENNESSEE, KNOXVILLE

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Appendix I: Tennessee Middle School Health Survey Instrument
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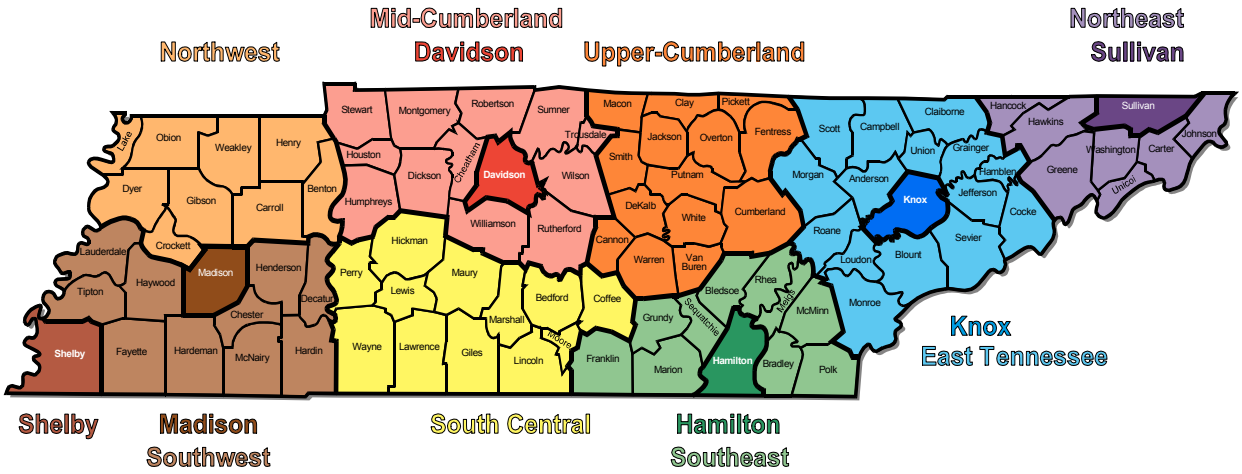
TENNESSEE'S HEALTH DEPARTMENT REGIONS



Metropolitan Regions are six counties: Sullivan, Knox, Hamilton, Davidson, Madison and Shelby.
Nonmetropolitan Regions are eight clusters of counties listed below.

Northeast
Carter
Greene
Hancock
Hawkins
Johnson
Unicoi
Washington

East
Anderson
Blount
Campbell
Claiborne
Cocke
Grainger
Hamblen
Jefferson
Loudon
Monroe
Morgan
Roane
Scott
Sevier
Union

Southeast
Bledsoe
Bradley
Franklin
Grundy
Marion
McMinn
Meigs
Polk
Rhea
Sequatchie

Upper Cumberland
Cannon
Clay
Cumberland
DeKalb
Fentress
Jackson
Macon
Overton
Pickett
Putnam
Smith
Van Buren
Warren
White

Mid-Cumberland
Cheatham
Dickson
Houston
Humphreys
Montgomery
Robertson
Rutherford
Stewart
Sumner
Trousdale
Williamson
Wilson

South Central
Bedford
Coffee
Giles
Hickman
Lawrence
Lewis
Lincoln
Marshall
Maury
Moore
Perry
Wayne

Northwest
Benton
Carroll
Crockett
Dyer
Gibson
Henry
Lake
Obion
Weakley

Southwest
Chester
Decatur
Fayette
Hardeman
Hardin
Haywood
Henderson
Lauderdale
McNairy
Tipton

Tennessee Middle School Health Survey

ALCOHOL, TOBACCO AND OTHER DRUG USE AMONG 6TH, 7TH, AND 8TH GRADE STUDENTS

A Summary of Findings from the Tennessee Middle School Health Survey Conducted by the Community Health Research Group at The University of Tennessee, Knoxville and Sponsored by the Bureau of Alcohol and Drug Abuse Services, Tennessee Department of Health[1]

PART I. INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

The Tennessee Middle School Health Survey was conducted by the Community Health Research Group (CHRG) at The University of Tennessee, Knoxville in 2002. The Tennessee Department of Health, Bureau of Alcohol and Drug Abuse Services (TDH-BADA), sponsored the survey to assess alcohol, tobacco, and other drug (ATOD) use prevalence and to evaluate risk and protective factors for alcohol and drug use, abuse, and problems among the universe of students in grades 6 through 8 in public schools in Tennessee's 14 health planning regions. These data will support the state in applying for the Substance Abuse Prevention and Treatment (SAPT) Block Grant and in identifying cross-cutting issues related to risk and protective factors for drug use, abuse, and problems among students across Tennessee Department of Health planning regions. The information gathered in this survey will assist the state in allocating resources and planning prevention initiatives, tailoring planning to the needs of the state and of the specific health department regions. When planners have identified these issues, they will be better able to set the goals and objectives for a statewide prevention plan. This study will complement the Social Indicators Study and Community Resource Assessment Study also undertaken in Tennessee in determining and designing an optimal prevention resource plan and implementing this plan for the state and each of the health department planning regions.

The results of this study are presented here with analysis by age, gender and race for all students in the statewide sample to assess relationships and correlates of alcohol and other drug use. Descriptive results of the survey are also detailed for the statewide sample as a whole as well as for each of the 13 participating health department regions with Davidson County as the only non-participating region.

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[1]This report was authored by Jean-Francois Riand, Sandra Putnam, Vickie Chiocca, and William Reseigh of the Community Health Research Group at The University of Tennessee in Knoxville. The authors wish to thank Suzanne Baktash, Elizabeth Collier, and Renee Johnson for their invaluable assistance in the data collection as well as the staff of CHRG and of the participating schools without whom the study would have been impossible.

Purpose:

The survey provides data that extend and complement current data the TDH and CHRG at UTK collected in 1995 and 1997 on health risk behaviors and alcohol and other drug use, abuse, and problems among high school students[2]. Using both the high school and middle school data will allow the Tennessee Department of Health to target the most relevant risk factors in specific age-sex-race groups with strategically focused programs to prevent first use of ATOD (primary prevention) and to reduce the adverse consequences and addiction potential among ATOD users (secondary prevention). Identification of negative and positive correlates of ATOD use and abuse (risk and protective factors) will help to accomplish this task. The data will allow TDH-BADA to place youth alcohol and other drug use, abuse, and problems within the broader context of health and lifestyle issues, including related attitudes, knowledge, and opinions, thus improving the acceptability and efficacy of funded prevention programs.

These anonymous data provide a baseline, statewide, and by region, of the levels and patterns of ATOD use, abuse, and problems. Additionally, these data portray high risk youth in terms of specific risk factors, allowing for a more focused approach to youth ATOD prevention initiatives. In addition to factors associated with ATOD use, abuse, and problems, the Tennessee Middle School Health Survey provides essential data on factors that protect students from developing these types of problems. Protective factors include whether students' leisure time is structured in positive ways through participation in extracurricular activities, including sports or religious activities, and whether parental supervision and support are present with parents and significant others consistently guiding these youth. The survey itself is seen as an important preventive intervention in its potential for focusing attention on ATOD issues in the context of a health risk appraisal, conveying school and state concerns about these issues, and allowing students an opportunity to comment and share concerns in a protected and anonymous format.

The model that CHRG used to conduct the Tennessee Middle School Health Survey was based on the Tennessee ATOD High School Survey from 1995, with a continuation in 1997, sponsored by the TDH Bureau of Alcohol and Other Drug Abuse Services. The questionnaire used in this survey as well as the data aggregated at the regional level is presented on the Health Information Tennessee Web site (hitspot.utk.edu) under "SPOT - Statistical Profiling of Tennessee" and "Surveys" as well as under "Reports." As TDH and CHRG have done with the data from the high school survey, the data collected from the middle school survey will be available in report form and in aggregate form on the Health Information Tennessee site. Department of Health and Department of Education planners, as well as interested parents and children, will have access to these aggregate data on-line

[2]The middle school data can also be compared with prevalence and use data from the Tennessee School Leavers Study in 1996, and the SANTA Juvenile Arrestee Study of 1997 (see http://hitspot.utk.edu under Reports).

for custom querying. No data are ever reported by school, and only the four large, metropolitan counties' data are reported at the county level to ensure confidentiality.

Research Methods and Sampling:

Data and Methods of Data Collection. Data were collected at the sampled middle schools through self-administered scannable questionnaires printed by NCS Pearson, Inc., of Irving, Texas. Questionnaires were administered onsite in each classroom by school administrative personnel, teachers, PTA members, or representatives of The University of Tennessee. The answer forms were checked at The University of Tennessee and then were computer-scanned by NCS Pearson, Inc. The raw data files were shipped from Texas to the Community Health Research Group, and were cleaned, documented, and analyzed at The University of Tennessee, Knoxville. The questionnaire is contained in Appendix 1.

Rationale for Data Collection Method. Data were collected on youth in grades 6, 7, and 8 to allow the Tennessee Department of Health to assess the onset of experimentation and the development of substance use, abuse, and problems in each grade cohort relative to each other cohort and to data collected on high school student cohorts (grades 9 through 12) in 1995 and 1997, and on high school dropouts in 1996. Having data on ATOD in students in grades 6 through 12 enables Tennessee to tailor prevention initiatives specifically to youth who are facing their own unique challenges at each age/grade level.

The instrument that TDH used in this study is an adapted version of CSAP's Substance Abuse and Protective Factor Student Survey and the Tennessee Alcohol, Tobacco, and Other Drugs High School Survey, and contained many of the core elements of the instrument designed by the Six-State Consortium and the Social Development Research Group at The University of Washington. This instrument taps domains across the Hawkins, Catalano, and Miller (1992) risk and protective factors model, including the family, school, environmental, and individual/peer domains. Questions from the Tennessee Alcohol, Tobacco, and Other Drugs (ATOD) High School Survey of 1995/1997 were also used, many drawn from Monitoring the Future, since replication of key questions in the 9th - 12th grade survey of 102,000 Tennessee youth in the middle school survey allows comparison of 6th - 8th graders with their peers in high school. Questions were added that CHRG and TDH have found to very reliably indicate actual drug use when self-reported drug use is present. In addition, answers to health and utilization of health care questions were asked that are not otherwise available from other surveys.

This study randomly sampled schools to be included in the survey. This research method assured that the study drew a large sample of adolescents who were representative of 6th, 7th, and 8th graders in the 13 participating Health Department Regions in a cost-effective and expeditious way. This school-based sampling methodology has been commonly used in surveys of the adolescent population.

Respondent Universe and Sampling Method. The youth population targeted was public middle school students - grades 6 through 8 - in the 14 Tennessee Department of Health Regions of Tennessee (6 metropolitan counties and 8 clusters of non-metropolitan counties). A total of 209,000 students were enrolled in public schools in grades 6 - 8 in the current school year. All students in a middle school selected to be part of the random stratified sample of schools were eligible to be surveyed, again based on the model of the Tennessee Alcohol, Tobacco, and Other Drugs High School Survey of 1995/1997**.**

Goal. The goal was to survey up to 45,000 middle school students in the state, dividing the state into 14 strata for the sample comprising the 14 health department regions. Strata included all schools with any combination of 6th, 7th, or 8th grades within them (Table 1, Column B). Because the survey sampling procedure was random, approximately equal numbers of students in 6th, 7th, or 8th grades were drawn from each of the strata. This expectation was checked for accuracy, and some minor variation in regional sample sizes were found due to the relative student populations in grades 6-8 of schools in each region. Fulfillment of this goal depended upon the extent of loss to the sample from absentees, parental lack of consent and students' lack of assent, all of which was minimal.

Regional Sample Size. Approximately equal numbers of students were sampled in each stratum. By dividing 45,000 students across the 14 strata, the approximate number of students that needed to be drawn from each stratum was 3,000.

Establishing Range of Students. The lower bound for the regional sample was 2,950 students, and the upper bound for the number of sampled students was dictated by the excess number of students in the particular school included to exceed the minimum sample size. The upper bound for the regional sample rarely exceeded 3,500 students.
School Population Statistics. School population (denominator) statistics were taken from 20-day "average daily membership" figures supplied by the Tennessee Department of Education. These figures, the only ones available by school, are required to be submitted to the state every 20 days. The state prepares 5-month and year-end statistical summaries as well. These figures therefore represent estimates of the number of students enrolled in each school, by region, taking into consideration transfers into and out of each school district for a 20-day window.

Mean Number of Students per Stratum. The mean number of students in each school in each stratum was calculated (See Table 1, Column C). From this calculation, the hypothetical number of schools needed for a representative sample from each stratum was derived**.**

Expected Number of Schools per Region. Using the mean number of students in each school and the number of students enrolled, the expected number of schools needed to complete the sample for each region was determined (Table 1, Column D). Ultimately, the sample differed slightly from these values because of the need to replace some schools whose refusals could not be converted to agreement to participate.

Table 1: Description of the Stratified Middle School Sample

	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H
	#Students Enrolled	# Schools with 6th, 7th, or 8th Grade Students	Mean Students/ School	# Sampled Schools	Sampling Fraction of Schools	# Students in Sample	Regional Sampling Fraction of Students	Weights: Students in Stratum to Population Fraction
Northeast	10,600	51	208	14	0.27	2,998	0.28	0.051
East Tenn.	26,152	104	251	13	0.13	3,056	0.12	0.125
Knox	12,299	15	820	4	0.27	3,523	0.29	0.059
Upper Cumb.	10,967	62	177	26	0.42	3,189	0.29	0.052
Southeast	10,487	61	172	15	0.25	3,516	0.34	0.050
Hamilton	9,831	23	427	8	0.35	2,978	0.30	0.047
Davidson	15,389	61	252	12	0.20	3,355	0.22	0.074
Mid-Cumb.	33,143	88	377	9	0.10	3,242	0.10	0.159
South Cent.	14,015	55	255	14	0.25	3,094	0.22	0.067
Northwest	9,991	49	204	17	0.35	3,204	0.32	0.048
Southwest	10,375	46	226	9	0.20	2,995	0.29	0.050
Shelby	37,240	125	298	11	0.09	3,338	0.09	0.178
Madison	3,261	6	543	6	1.0	3,261	1.0	0.016
Sullivan	5,314	18	295	10	0.56	3,105	0.58	0.025
TOTAL	**209,064**	**764**	**274**	**168**	**0.22**	**44,854**	**0.215**	**1.001**

A = number of students in each region; derived from county level data aggregated to 14 health department region level (See School Population Statistics, Section II. D.)

B = number of schools with any combination of grades 6-8 obtained from county level data on schools

C = mean number of students in each school aggregated to averages for each region; calculated from the case level data set in SPSS.

D = number of schools in each region that ended up being included in the sample

E = D / B Sampling fraction-schools

F = summed by region, the number of students in the sampled schools

G = F / A Regional sampling fraction-students

H = Number of students enrolled in each region (A) divided by the total number of students statewide who could potentially participate in the study (A, TOTAL); for example, for the Northwest region, 9,991 / 209,064 = 0.048. This is the proportion of total state student population in each region.

Random Sampling of Schools. To draw the random sample, a unique random number between 1 and 100,000 was assigned to each case (school) in the SPSS data set using the Statement "calculate 'uniform (100,000) = var'." These cases were sorted by region and by their random number identifier. This procedure resulted in a stratified random sample of schools by region.

Selecting Schools to Obtain 3000 Students. The list of randomly sampled schools was generated by counting down the total list of schools randomly sorted by region from the top of the list for each region. The schools were counted until the projected number of schools needed for the sample was reached based on the mean number of students per school. Consider the following for example: A total number of 51 schools were on the randomly ordered list of schools for the Northeast region. These schools had student populations ranging from 13 to 1,005. Because we wanted to include approximately 3,000 students in the regional sample, we began by including the first school on the randomly ordered list in our sample. This school, School #1, had 13 students. We then added the second school on the list, School #2 with 100 students. We continued to work down the random-ordered list in this way until we reached, or exceeded, the minimum number of students in our sample for the Northeast, 3,000. This same procedure was used for each region. These calculations allowed us to estimate the number of schools that were needed to obtain as close as possible to 3,000 students for each of the strata, the 14 regions in the sample.

Once the initial sample was selected, the actual number of students per region that was sampled was then calculated. In areas where the number of students far exceeded 3,000, schools were removed from the sample. Schools were removed from the sample by beginning at the bottom of the sampled schools list and excluding schools in reverse numerical order, working upwards from the bottom of the list. The decision on inclusion or exclusion was dictated by the size of the potentially added or subtracted school and its relative position on the random ordered list. If the number of students for a region was well under 3,000 (50 students or more below 3,000), schools were added until a total of 3,000 students was reached for that region. The additions were made by counting down the randomly ordered list for the region, using the procedure outlined in the preceding paragraph.

Final Sample. These procedures produced the sample for the Tennessee Middle School Health Survey. The list of schools generated does not account for school refusal to participate. As CHRG was very occasionally faced with school refusals, the procedure outlined above was used to substitute schools to maintain approximately 3,000 students per region as respondents in the survey. Because the schools were randomly sorted by region, this procedure ensured representativeness (see Map in Appendix 2).

Table 1 describes the final middle school sample. Weights (Column H) have been calculated to assess the relative proportions of total students in grades 6, 7, and 8 in each region. These numbers were used to weight the regional statistics when aggregating to the

state level. Regional level calculations did not need weighting because the schools were already drawn at random at the regional level.

A total of 168 schools was drawn from the universe for the sample. This sampling method ensures that each public middle school student in the state has had an equal chance of being included in the sample, as each public school has had an equal chance of inclusion.

Sample Size Justification. The size of the sample was statistically justifiable in that it will allow TDH and CHRG to study relationships of larger numbers of factors that are associated with ATOD use, abuse, and problems. Co-occurring factors that interact are important to consider in addressing ATOD prevention in middle school youth, especially when predicting the potential to prevent future health problems related to ATOD. The high level of statistical power derived from a large sample can carry over into regional analyses because of the large random sample sizes being drawn at the level of regions. The analytic resolution provided by maintaining high level of statistical power by using large sample sizes will be useful in both the statewide planning and regional planning initiatives concerning ATOD prevention that are underway in Tennessee.

Response Rates. Tennessee obtained an 85% to 90% student response rate among eligible students in participating schools. School participation rates were expected to be high, and a random sample replacement method was in place to replace schools that decided not to participate. Research staff also devoted considerable time and effort to ensuring as high a response rate for schools as possible. Methods for increasing the response rate included refusal conversion in sampled schools, such as discussing with superintendents and principals the incentives to the school for responding. Specifically, principals received a confidential report of the results for their own school and superintendents for all schools under their jurisdiction. These reports can be used, as they were used after the Tennessee ATOD High School Survey of 1995/1997, as justification of the need for program funding in the preparation of grant applications and other funding possibilities. Depending on the nature of other objections from schools, CHRG staff attempted to provide information to allay concerns including meeting with parents' organizations or directly with superintendents and principals.

Methods for improving the student response rate were the provision of teacher training in appropriate encouragement and answering of questions. Parents contacting CHRG or schools with questions were fully informed of the importance of their child's participation, and their concerns were addressed and alleviated. In particular, the complete anonymity of students' results was emphasized as was confidentiality of results at the level of schools. The methods of survey administration and collection were similar to those of the high school survey and benefitted greatly from the CHRG's first-hand experience of implementing that survey in 195 schools as well as from the successes and failures of such school-by-school administration.

Data Collection Protocol/Confidentiality. The survey was anonymous at the level of student respondent and confidential at the level of school. No individual information was

or will ever be reported; no individual student will ever be identified. Schools may access their own data only through the principals and superintendents. Schools may also access combined data for other schools in the state, but the identity of individual schools will be protected, and aggregate results were and will be reported regionally and statewide only, never by school, except for the school reports provided to principals and superintendents in return for their participation.

Passive parental consent was sought. Through the school, parents were sent a letter describing the survey and giving them an opportunity, by a certain date, to refuse to let their child participate in the survey. CHRG staff received responses back, and conveyed to the school a list of students whose parents refused the participation of their child. Schools made every effort to ensure that those children did not receive a survey, and were instead given other work during the survey period. Parents who did not respond by the appropriate date regarding their child's participation were presumed to consent to their child's participation. Parents also may have instructed their children regarding their participation. CHRG staff answered parents' questions by telephone, fax, and email. Survey materials were provided to schools, and were available for review at the school or on the Web site dedicated to the middle school survey (http://web.utk.edu/~chrg/middleschool_survey/index.htm).

Student participation was entirely voluntary with no penalty for non-participation and no foreseeable risk to participants. Surveys were self-administered using mark sensor, optical scan technology. No personal identifiers, such as name, address, telephone number, were requested. Individual schools needed to be identified for purposes of distribution and collection but were not identified in any reports in which the unit of analysis is the region or state. All federally required protection of human subjects was instituted. In the unlikely event that the survey should have caused any concerns for these youth, all respondents were informed that questions or concerns may be taken to the teacher, the school nurse or counselor, or the CHRG or his/her agent who may be present or available on the day of survey administration. This exigency was by no means expected, nor did it occur; however, provision was made for the need to address students' questions or concerns in the case of their own or familial ATOD problems or some other case.

RESULTS OF THE MIDDLE SCHOOL SURVEY, STATEWIDE DATA, TENNESSEE, 2001-2002

PART II. STATEWIDE PREVALENCE AND RISK FACTORS AND CORRELATES OF ATOD USE IN MIDDLE SCHOOL STUDENTS

This section of the statewide report provides an overview of the statewide results from the Tennessee Middle School Survey, featuring summaries of initial findings and breakdowns of key variables by gender, age, grade and racial group. As noted above, this is a cross-sectional survey of approximately 44,000 middle school students (grades 6 through 8) in 165 randomly selected Tennessee public schools in 13 Tennessee health department regions in 2002 (Davidson County did not participate). Subsequent sections of the report will describe the overall findings from the survey for nearly all variables studied for all Tennessee students surveyed and then for students from each of the 13 participating Tennessee Department of Health regions. Gender and racial breakdowns of core data from the survey will lead into the results of a bivariate analysis undertaken to answer the question of what sets of factors are most closely correlated with middle school students' alcohol and other drug use.

Students' Health Status

- Overall, 13% of students described their general health status as fair or poor. 51% were female, 49% male. In terms of race[3], African-American and white had the same proportion of students who rated their health as fair or poor (13%).

- Twelve percent of students reported having physical health problems or disabling conditions that kept them from doing normal activities[4]. Whites were significantly less likely than African-Americans to report these problems (10% vs. 16%, respectively).

- In the 12 months preceding the survey, 16% of students had been taken to an emergency room for an illness. African-American students (23%) were significantly more likely than white students (14%) to have been taken to an emergency room for an illness in the last 12 months. Similarly, females (18%) were more likely than males (15%) to have visited an emergency room in the last year for an illness.

- Visiting an emergency room for an injury in the 12 months preceding the survey was reported by 23% of the middle school students surveyed. White students (24%)

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[3]Race has three modalities: "African-American", "white" and "other". The modality "other" will not be analyzed in this chapter given its heterogeneity and the interpretation difficulties resulting from it.

[4]Survey question: "Do you now have any physical health problems or disabling conditions that keep you from doing normal activities?"

were more likely than African-American students (21%) to have been taken to an emergency room for an injury. Males (27%) were more likely than females (20%) to have been taken to an emergency room for an injury.

- Six percent of students had been hospitalized at least one night for an illness in the 12 months prior to the survey. African-American students (9%) were almost twice as likely as white students (5%) to have spent at least one night in a hospital for an illness. There were no significant gender differences.

- Six percent of students had been hospitalized for an injury at least one night in the 12 months preceding the survey. African-American students (7%) were more likely than white students (5%) to have been hospitalized for an injury. Similarly, males (7%) were more likely than females (4%) to have been hospitalized for an injury.

- In 2002, 8% of students used a prescription drug or "pill" for hyperactivity (ADD or ADHD). Males were close to twice as likely as females to use these drugs (10% vs. 5%, respectively). Hispanics were also more likely to have been using drugs prescribed to treat hyperactivity (11% vs. 8% of non-Hispanics).

- In terms of psychological well-being, 11% of students said they often felt very depressed. Females (14%) were significantly more likely than males (9%) to have often felt very depressed. The tendency to feel depressed increased with grade level, from 9% among 6th graders to 11% among 7th graders and 13% among 8th graders.

- Among Tennessee middle school students, 7% reported that they had attempted suicide at least once in their lifetimes[5]. The prevalence of suicide attempts increased by grade level, from 5% of 6th graders to 7% of 7th graders to 10% of 8th graders.

Alcohol, Tobacco and Other Drug Use Prevalence

Cigarettes

- The lifetime prevalence ("ever smoked") of cigarette smoking among Tennessee middle school students is 28%, while 19% of students reported smoking cigarettes in the 12 months preceding the survey. Smoking cigarettes in the past 30 days was reported by 13% of the students. Females were as likely to smoke as males, and whites (14%) more likely to smoke than African-Americans (10%).

- Three percent of middle school students surveyed were current smokers (defined as having smoked cigarettes on 20 or more days of the last 30 days).

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[5]Survey question: "Have you ever attempted suicide?"

- The percentage of current smokers increased by grade level from 1% of 6th graders to 3% of 7th graders to 6% of 8th graders.

- White students (4%) were significantly more likely to be current cigarette smokers than African-American students (1%). Similarly, Hispanics had a higher tendency to be current smokers than non-Hispanics (5% vs. 3%, respectively).

- There was no significant gender difference in the percentage of current cigarette smokers.

Alcoholic Beverages

- Among Tennessee middle school students, 38% reported lifetime alcohol use[6]. While 26% of students stated that they had drunk alcohol in the 12 months preceding the survey, 18% had drunk alcohol in the past 30 days. Daily drinking of alcoholic beverages in the last 30 days was reported by less than 1% (0.4%) of the students.

  - The percentage of 30-day alcohol drinkers was strongly associated with grade level. Students in higher grades were more likely to have drunk alcohol in the last 30 days. Thus, 11% of 6th graders compared to 17% of 7th graders and 25% of 8th graders were current alcohol users.

  - Hispanic students had a higher 30-day drinking prevalence than non-Hispanic students (23% vs. 17%, respectively). African-American students had a slightly higher prevalence of 30-day alcohol use than white students (19% vs. 17%, respectively).

  - There was no significant gender difference in the current alcohol use status of these students. Males were no more likely to report current alcohol use than females, regardless of grade level.

- Approximately 15% of students said that they had gotten drunk or intoxicated from drinking alcohol at least once in their lifetimes[7]. Ever being drunk or intoxicated was strongly associated with grade level, with prevalence increasing from 8% in the 6th grade to 14% in the 7th grade and 22% in the 8th grade.

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[6]Survey question: "Have you had any alcoholic beverages (beer, wine, wine coolers or liquor) to drink - more than a few sips… ever? / in the last 12 months? / in the last 30 days?"

[7]Survey question: "Have you ever gotten drunk or felt very high or intoxicated from drinking alcohol?"

- Hispanic students (18%) had a higher tendency than non-Hispanic students (14%) to have been drunk or intoxicated at least once. White students (15%) were more likely to have ever been drunk or intoxicated than African-American students (12%).

- Again, males and females did not significantly differ in their propensity to have been drunk or intoxicated at least once from drinking alcohol.

Marijuana

- Fifteen percent of Tennessee middle school students reported using marijuana at least once in their lifetimes, while 11% had used marijuana in the 12 months preceding the survey. Eight percent of students had used marijuana in the past 30 days. Daily marijuana use in the last 30 days was reported by less than 1% (0.8%) of the students.

- In contrast to cigarette and alcohol use for which there were no significant gender differences, males were more likely than females to have used marijuana in the last 30 days (9% vs. 6%, respectively).

  - A higher percentage of students in higher grades had used marijuana in the past 30 days than students in lower grades. Thus, only 4% of 6th graders compared to 7% of 7th graders and 12% of 8th graders reported current marijuana use.

  - Hispanic students (12%) had higher 30-day marijuana use prevalence than non-Hispanic students (7%). No significant differences were observed between African-American and white students.

Cocaine

- Four percent of Tennessee middle school students reported having ever used cocaine or crack[8]. In the 12 months preceding the survey, 3% of students used cocaine or crack, while 2% of students had used cocaine or crack in the past 30 days.

- Males were about twice as likely as females to have used cocaine or crack in the past 30 days (2% vs. 1%, respectively).

- African-American and white students were equally likely to have used cocaine or crack in the previous 30 days (2%). Hispanic students were twice as likely to have used cocaine or crack as non-Hispanic students (4% vs. 2%, respectively).

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[8]Survey question: "Have you ever used cocaine or crack?"

- Using cocaine or crack was also associated with grade level, increasing from a 30-day use prevalence of 2% among 6th graders and 3% among 7th graders to 5% among 8th graders.

Inhalants and Other Drugs

- Among Tennessee middle school students, 9% reported using inhalants at least once in their lifetimes[9]. Seven percent reported inhalant use in the 12 months prior to the survey, and 6% reported use in the past 30 days.

- Six percent of students surveyed reported having ever used hallucinogens, such as LSD and PCP[10]. The 12-month and 30-day prevalence of hallucinogen use among these middle school students was 5% and 4%, respectively.

- Relative to their use of other drugs[11] than those mentioned above including ecstasy, ice (crystal methamphetamine) and heroin, 4% of students reported ever having used such drugs; 3% reported using other drugs in the past 12 months; and only slightly less than 3% reported doing so in the past 30 days.

Prescription Drug Abuse (Use for Non-Medical Purposes)

- Seven percent of Tennessee middle school students surveyed reported having used prescription drugs for non-medical purposes (defined here as "prescription drug abuse") at least once in their lifetimes[12], while 5% had abused prescription drugs in the past 12 months, compared to 3% in the past 30 days.

  - Students in higher grades were more likely to report prescription drug abuse in the past 30 days than students in lower grades. The prevalence of prescription drug abuse among 6th graders was 1%, among 7th graders, 3%, and among 8th graders, 5%.

  - Males and females did not differ in their propensity to have abused prescription drugs in the last 30 days.

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[9]Survey question: "Have you ever used substances you "sniff": paint thinners, glue, gasoline, white-out, butane, aerosol sprays, etc.?"

[10]Survey question: "Have you ever used LSD (acid) or other hallucinogens such as peyote, jimson weed, mushrooms, PCP (angel dust), etc.?"

[11]Survey question: "Have you ever used other illegal drugs such as ecstasy, ice (crystal meth), heroin (smack, horse, skag), etc.?"

[12]Survey question: "Have you taken any prescription drugs or "pills" just to get high or for non-medical purposes, on your own, without a doctor's prescription…… ever? / in the last 12 months? / in the last 30 days?"

- Hispanic students (5%) were more likely to have abused prescription drugs than non-Hispanic students (3%) in the last 30 days. White students (3%) were more likely to have abused prescription drugs than African-American students (2%).

Risk Factors in Alcohol and Other Drug Use among Tennessee Middle School Students

This section looks at bivariate relationships between selected indicators and alcohol and other drug use in the last 30 days among middle school students in Tennessee.

Poverty

- Poverty (defined as receiving some form of public assistance or living in public housing) significantly increased the likelihood of alcohol and other drug (AOD) use in the last 30 days among these middle school students (see Table 1).

Table 1. Percentage of 30-Day AOD Use Among Middle School Students by Substance and Poverty Status.

Substance	Not Poor	Poor	Increased Likelihood of Being a 30-Day User
Marijuana	6.8	11.0	1.6 times more likely
Cocaine/Crack	1.8	2.4	1.3 times more likely
Hallucinogens	3.4	4.8	1.4 times more likely
Other Illegal Drugs	2.7	3.7	1.4 times more likely
Alcohol	16.8	21.4	1.3 times more likely
Inhalants	5.4	7.0	1.3 times more likely

Family Environment

- Students living in a family setting different from a two-parent family were more likely to have used AOD in the last 30 days. There was a higher probability of use of every substance among the students not living in a two-parent family (see Table 2).

Table 2. Percentage of 30-Day AOD Users Among Middle School Students by Substance and Family Setting.

Substance	Two-Parent Family	Other Family Setting	Increased Likelihood of Being a 30-Day User
Marijuana	5.9	11.7	2.0 times more likely
Hallucinogens	3.0	5.0	1.7 times more likely
Alcohol	15.4	22.4	1.5 times more likely
Cocaine/Crack	1.6	2.5	1.6 times more likely
Other Illegal Drugs	2.5	3.5	1.4 times more likely
Inhalants	5.5	6.7	1.2 times more likely

- Having a family member who was reported to have a severe problem with drugs or alcohol[13] was very strongly associated with the propensity to use AOD in the last 30 days for every substance (see Table 3).

Table 3. Percentage of 30-day AOD Users Among Middle School Students by Substance and Family AOD Problem.

Substance	No Family Members with Past Severe AOD Problems	One or More Family Member(s) had a Severe AOD Problem	Increased Likelihood of Being a 30-Day User
Other Illegal Drugs	1.6	5.7	3.5 times more likely
Hallucinogens	2.1	7.1	3.4 times more likely
Marijuana	4.6	14.7	3.2 times more likely
Inhalants	4.0	11.0	2.8 times more likely
Cocaine/Crack	1.2	3.2	2.6 times more likely
Alcohol	12.5	29.6	2.4 times more likely

[13]Survey question: “Has anyone in your family had a severe alcohol or drug problem?”

Neighborhood and Friends

- Living in a neighborhood or area the students considered to be characterized "very well" or "somewhat well" by crime and/or drug selling[14] was associated with higher probability of AOD use in the last 30 days. Again, this result was found for every substance (see Table 4).

Table 4. Percentage of 30-Day AOD Users Among Middle School Students by Substance and Characterization of Neighborhood by Crime/Drug Selling.

Substance	Neighborhood Not at All or Not Well Characterized by Crime and/or Drug Selling	Neighborhood Somewhat or Very Well Characterized by Crime and/or Drug Selling	Increased Likelihood of Being a 30-Day User
Other Illegal Drugs	1.6	8.0	5.0 times more likely
Marijuana	4.6	21.1	4.6 times more likely
Hallucinogens	2.1	9.9	4.6 times more likely
Cocaine/Crack	1.1	4.8	4.3 times more likely
Inhalants	4.4	12.4	2.8 times more likely
Alcohol	13.8	33.6	2.4 times more likely

- Among middle school students, those who reported having one or more close friends with an AOD problem[15] were more likely themselves to have used AOD in the 30 days preceding the survey than those whose friends did not have these problems (see Table 5).

[14]Survey question: "How well do crime and/or drug selling describe your neighborhood, or the area where you live? very well / somewhat well / not well / not at all"

[15]Survey question: "Do you think one or more of your close friends is drinking too much or has a problem with alcohol? / is using or abusing drugs other than alcohol?"

Table 5. Percentage of 30-Day AOD Users Among Middle School Students by Substance and Close Friend(s) Having an AOD Problem.

Substance	No Close Friends with AOD Problem	Close Friend/s with an AOD Problem	Increased Likelihood of Being a 30-Day User
Other Illegal Drugs	1.5	11.9	7.9 times more likely
Cocaine/Crack	1.0	7.6	7.3 times more likely
Hallucinogens	2.1	14.6	7.1 times more likely
Marijuana	4.6	29.3	6.4 times more likely
Inhalants	4.2	17.9	4.2 times more likely
Alcohol	13.5	45.7	3.4 times more likely

Extracurricular Activities

- Overall, middle school students who did not participate in any extracurricular supervised activities[16] were more likely to have used AOD in the last 30 days than those who participated in at least one extracurricular, supervised activity. This result was true for every substance (see Table 6).

Table 6. Percentage of 30-Day AOD Users Among Middle School Students by Substance and Participation in Extracurricular Activities.

Substance	Participation in Extracurricular Activities	No Participation in Extracurricular Activities	Increased Likelihood of Being a 30-Day User
Cocaine/Crack	1.5	3.0	2.0 times more likely
Hallucinogens	3.0	6.0	2.0 times more likely
Other Illegal Drugs	2.3	4.7	2.0 times more likely
Marijuana	6.5	12.5	1.9 times more likely
Alcohol	16.0	23.3	1.5 times more likely
Inhalants	5.6	7.3	1.3 times more likely

[16]Activities including sports teams, scouting, boys and girls clubs, 4-H clubs, service clubs or music/art/drama clubs.

School Performance

- Students with low GPA's (D or F) were more likely to have used AOD in the last 30 days than students with higher GPA's (A, B and C's). This result was true for every substance (see Table 7).

Table 7. Percentage of 30-Day AOD Users among Middle School Students by Substance and GPA.

Substance	GPA=A's,B's,C's	GPA=D or F	Increased Likelihood of Being a 30-Day User
Marijuana	6.2	23.4	3.8 times more likely
Hallucinogens	2.9	10.9	3.8 times more likely
Cocaine/Crack	1.5	5.5	3.6 times more likely
Other Illegal Drugs	2.3	7.9	3.4 times more likely
Alcohol	15.9	34.8	2.2 times more likely
Inhalants	5.4	11.3	2.1 times more likely

Exposure to Alcohol, Tobacco and Other Drug Treatment

- Two percent of Tennessee middle school students surveyed reported having received treatment or counseling outside school for an alcohol problem at least once. Close to 3% of the students reported having received treatment or counseling outside school for a drug problem at least once.

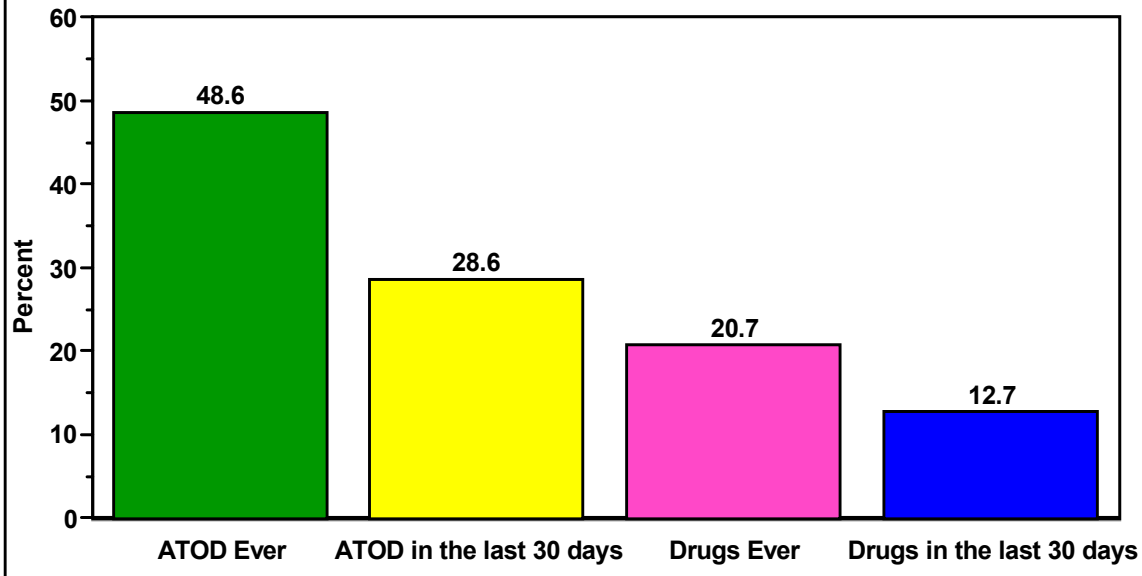
  - Males (3%) were significantly more likely than females (1%) to have been involved in treatment or counseling for alcohol problems. The corresponding proportions of students treated for drug problems were 4% males and 2% females.

  - Hispanic students (5%) were more likely than non-Hispanic students (2%) to have been involved in treatment or counseling for alcohol problems. The same was found for treatment for drug problems, which was reported by 7% of the Hispanic students and 3% of non-Hispanic students.

  - White and African-American students did not differ significantly in terms of percentage who did receive treatment or counseling for a drug or alcohol problem.

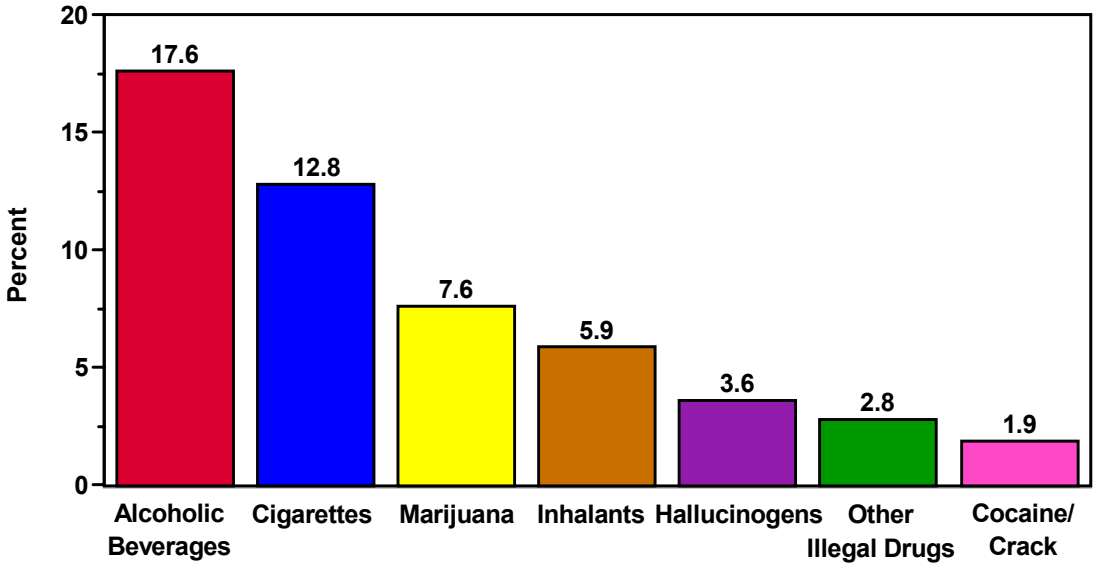
Source: Middle School Health Survey 2001-2002, Weighted, CHRG and Tennessee Department of Health.

Substance Use Summary, Tennessee, 2001-2002



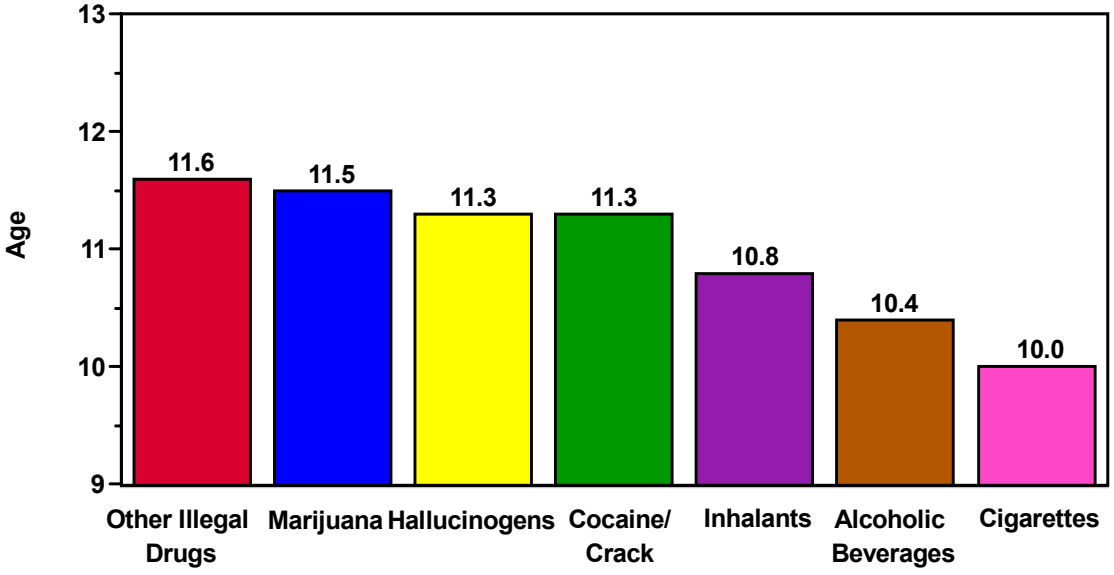
Source: Middle School Health Survey 2001-2002 - Weighted, CHRG and Tennessee Department of Health.

Percent Users in the Last 30 Days, by Substance, Tennessee, 2001-2002



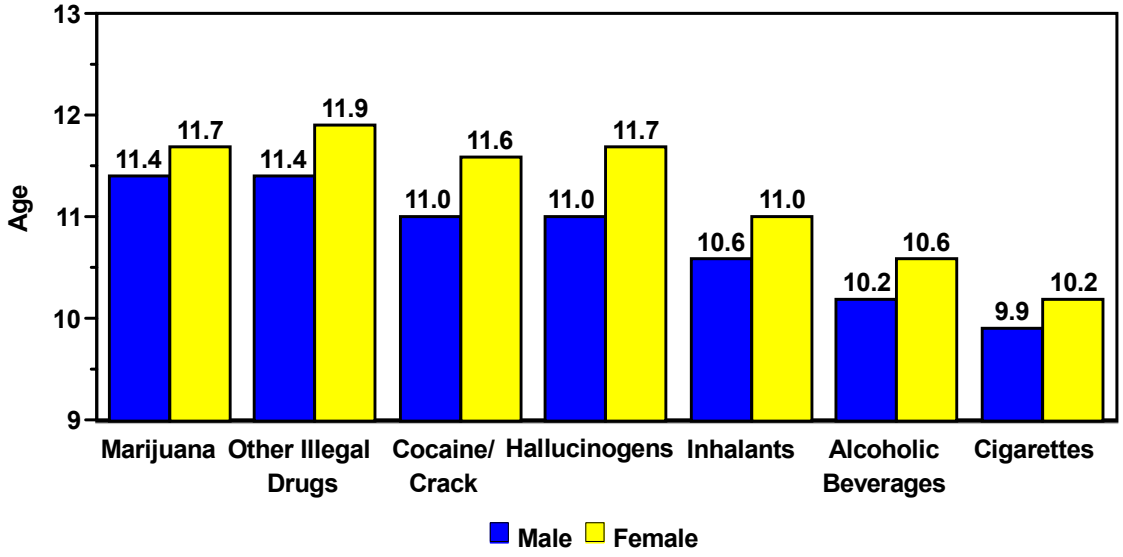
Source: Middle School Health Survey 2001-2002 - Weighted, CHRG and Tennessee Department of Health.

Mean Age at First Use, by Substance, Tennessee, 2001-2002

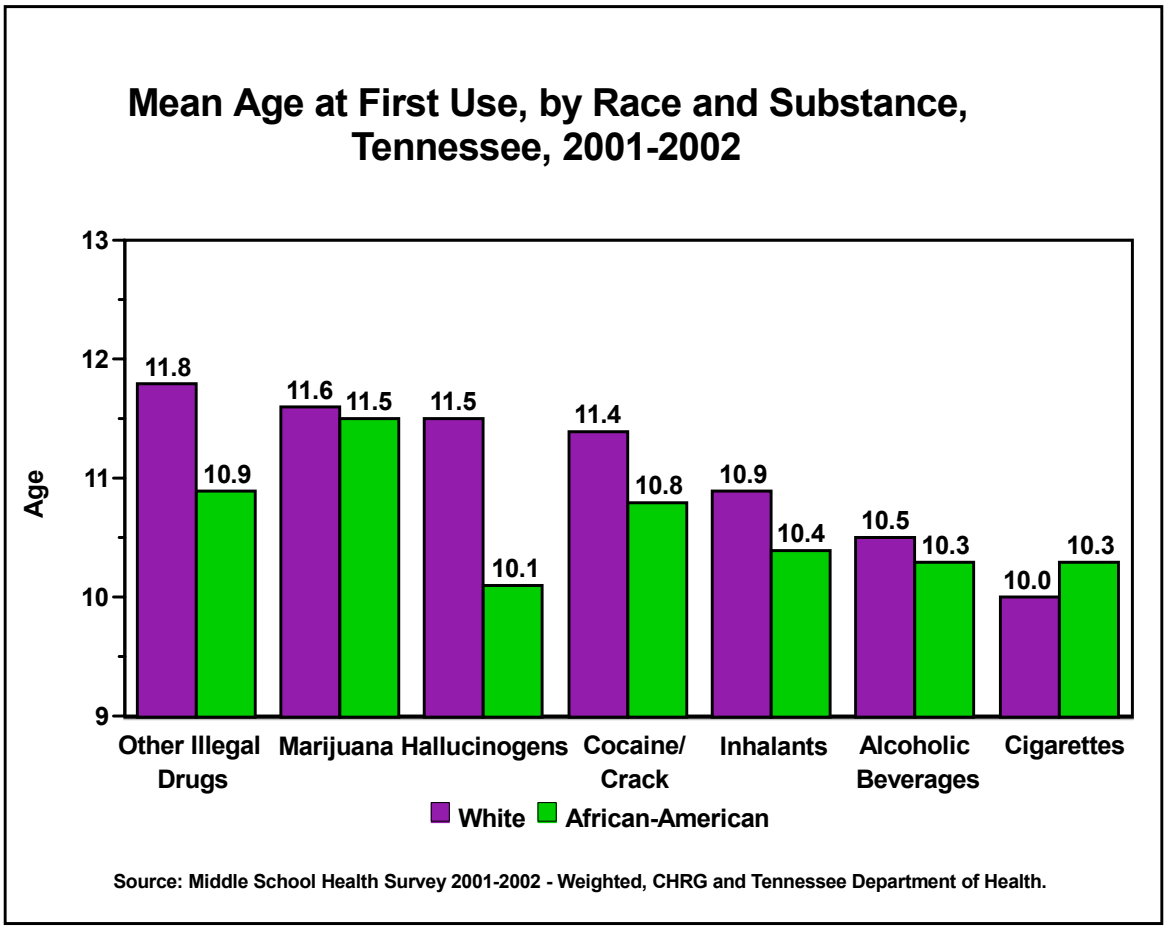


Source: Middle School Health Survey 2001-2002 - Weighted, CHRG and Tennessee Department of Health.

Mean Age at First Use, by Gender and Substance, Tennessee, 2001-2002



Source: Middle School Health Survey 2001-2002 - Weighted, CHRG and Tennessee Department of Health.


Mean Age at First Use, by Race and Substance, Tennessee, 2001-2002
Age
13
12
11
10
9
11.8
10.9
11.6
11.5
11.5
10.1
11.4
10.8
10.9
10.4
10.5
10.3
10.0
10.3
Other Illegal Drugs
Marijuana
Hallucinogens
Cocaine/ Crack
Inhalants
Alcoholic Beverages
Cigarettes
White
African-American
Source: Middle School Health Survey 2001-2002 - Weighted, CHRG and Tennessee Department of Health.

TENNESSEE MIDDLE SCHOOL HEALTH SURVEY, 2001-2002
OVERALL DESCRIPTIVE STUDY RESULTS, STATEWIDE AND BY REGION

PART III. PROFILING MIDDLE SCHOOL STUDENTS IN TENNESSEE: HEALTH STATUS AND UTILIZATION, ATOD USE, ABUSE AND PROBLEMS, AND RISK AND PROTECTIVE FACTORS

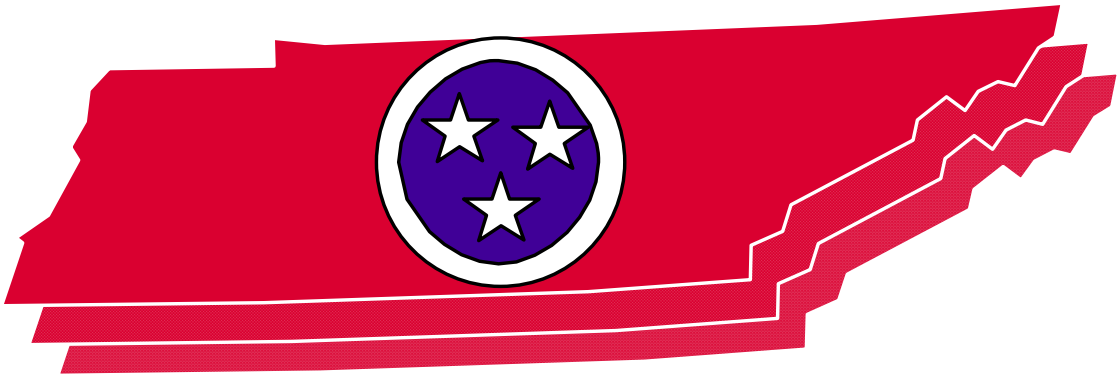
This section of the report presents a descriptive analysis of the results of the middle school survey for the State and for each of the 13 participating regions. Eight of these Health Department Regions, which were used to stratify the scientific random sample of schools, are clusters of nonmetropolitan counties that are geographically contiguous, while the remaining 5 are single metropolitan counties. The non-participating county was Davidson County. Separate reports, following the same model as the statewide report, have been provided for each of the 13 regions. It is intended that the data from these reports may be used for needs assessment and problem identification by comparison of data from regional reports with each other and with the statewide report. NOTE: Some percentages may not equal 100% due to rounding errors.

The HITSPOT website created and maintained for the Tennessee Department of Health by the Community Health Research Group at The University of Tennessee in Knoxville in the past has a queryable form for the middle school survey results under SPOT at http://hitspot.utk.edu/msform.htm. Copies of all reports from the survey, with the exception of school-specific reports which are confidential to the schools and school systems, are also available under “Reports” on the HITSPOT website at http://hitspot.utk.edu/hit/main/reports/atod.htm.

TENNESSEE MIDDLE SCHOOL HEALTH SURVEY, 2001-2002

A SUMMARY OF FINDINGS FROM THE TENNESSEE MIDDLE SCHOOL HEALTH SURVEY

TENNESSEE STATEWIDE



TENNESSEE DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH

AND THE

COMMUNITY HEALTH RESEARCH GROUP

THE UNIVERSITY OF TENNESSEE, KNOXVILLE

June 2003

TENNESSEE MIDDLE SCHOOL SURVEY RESULTS FOR TENNESSEE OVERALL

SOCIODEMOGRAPHIC CHARACTERISTICS:

Gender: A total of 44,200 students in randomly sampled middle schools grades 6-8 in Tennessee completed surveys. They were split evenly by gender, with 49.5% being female and 50.5% male.

Grade: The split was approximately even by grade, with 32.2% of the students sampled in 6th grade, 34.5% in 7th grade and 33.3% in 8th grade.

Age: In terms of age, 12.4% of students were 11 years of age or younger, while 29.5% were age 12; 33.9% were age13; 20.4% were age 14; and 3.8% were 15 years of age or older.

Race/Ethnicity: While 72.7% of students were white, 23.1% were black and 4.3% were of other racial/ethnic groups.

Hispanic Origin: A total of 5.3% of students were of Hispanic origin.

OTHER BACKGROUND CHARACTERISTICS:

Two-Parent Family: Sixty-eight percent of students in the study lived in two-parent families, while 32% lived in families of other compositions.

Non-English Spoken At Home: While fully 97.2% of students reported that English was the language used most often in the home, 1.3% reported that language to be Spanish and another 1.6% reported another language as the language most often spoken at home.

Rural/Urban Residence: More than two-thirds (67.5%) of middle school students lived in a city, town or suburb, i.e., an urban area, while the remaining 32.5% lived in rural areas. Of all students, 26.7% lived in the country, although not on a farm, and 5.8% lived on farms.

Proxy Measures of Poverty: In answer to the question, “Do you live in public housing?”, more than one-quarter (26.1%) of students did not know the answer, while 11.2% reported that they did live in public housing, and another 62.7% that they did not live in public housing. This measure was to be used as one indicator of poverty along with whether the family was on any form of public assistance. That question was phrased: “Does your family receive any form of public assistance, such as food stamps or other forms of welfare (such as Families First, WIC, TennCare/Medicaid, etc.)?” Almost one-quarter (23.9%) of the students did not know. Still 19.2% reported that their families did receive public assistance, while 56.9% did not. Combining these two measures produces a prevalence estimate of middle school students in poverty of 26.1% in the state as a whole.

Mobility/Migration: Only 29.1% of students had not changed homes since kindergarten, while 32.6% had changed homes 1-2 times; 21% had changed homes 3-4 times; and 17.3% had changed homes 5 times or more since kindergarten (9.3% had done so 5-6 times, and 8%, 7 times or more).

The Importance of Religion or Spirituality in Students' Families: Only 14.4% of Tennessee middle school students reported that religion or spirituality was either not very important (10.6%) or not at all important (3.8%) in their families. For more than half (51.5%) of these students, religion or spirituality was very important, while for 34.1%, it was somewhat important.

The Importance of Religion or Spirituality in Students' Own Lives: For 13.1% of Tennessee middle school students, religion or spirituality was either not very important (8.6%) or not at all important (4.5%) in their own lives, while for 32.2%, it was somewhat important, and for more than half (54.7%), it was very important.

Attendance at Religious Services: Asked how often they attend religious services or activities, 13.6% of students said they never did, while less than once a month was the response chosen by another 11.9%. Attendance at religious services or activities occupied 20% of students 1-2 times a month, although not every week, while another 54.6% of students attended religious services once a week or more.

SCHOOL EXPERIENCE:

Grades Last Year: Getting mostly A's as grades in the last school year was reported by about one-third (31%) of students, while mostly B's were reported by 36.7%, and mostly C's by 23.3%. Only 8.9% of students reported either mostly D's (5.9%) or mostly F's (3%).

A series of questions were asked concerning how often youth had certain experiences in school - whether rarely or never, sometimes or often or almost always. Categories are collapsed here into "often/almost always", and the residual which is "rarely, never or sometimes" in relation to students reporting those problems or experiences.

Percentage of Students Reporting that in the Past School Year They:	% Never/Rarely/ Sometimes	% Often/ Almost Always
a. feel physically safe or safe from violence at school	**48.9%**	51.1%
b. try to do your best work in school	**28.7%**	71.3%
c. find most of your courses interesting to you	**83.2%**	16.8%
d. find the school work too hard to understand	91.4%	**8.6%**
e. fool around in class	88.3%	**11.7%**

Percentage of Students Reporting that in the Past School Year They:	% Never/Rarely/ Sometimes	% Often/ Almost Always
f. fail to complete or turn in your assignments	93.8%	**6.2%**
g. get sent to the office or have to stay after school because you misbehaved	96.2%	**3.8%**
h. skip a day of school or part of a day (without permission)	98.0%	**2.0%**
i. get better grades than most of the students in your class	**78.8%**	21.2%
j. feel bullied by other kids at school	91.7%	**8.3%**
k. feel bored in school	70.3%	**29.7%**
l. hate being in school	77.7%	**22.3%**
m. think the things you are learning in school are going to be important for your later life	**51.7%**	48.3%

These attitudes among others studied in this survey are seen as protective or detrimental to efforts to prevent or reduce alcohol and other drug (AOD) use, abuse, problems or dependence among these youth. Results suggest that negative attitudes to school such as feeling bored in school and hating being in school were reported often or almost always by the most students at about 30% and 22%, respectively, while fooling around in class often or almost always was reported by 12%. Finding school work too hard to understand, failing to complete or turn in assignments, getting punished for misbehaving, or skipping school were reported often or almost always by close to 9%, more than 6%, nearly 4% and 2% of students, respectively.

Only a little more than half of students felt often or almost always safe at school, with over 8% reporting being often or almost always bullied at school. Other common negative orientations to school were never, rarely or sometimes finding courses interesting, reported by 83% of students, yet with about 80% of students reporting never, rarely, or sometimes getting better grades than most other students. Twenty-nine percent of students reported never, rarely or sometimes trying to do their best work in school, and a little more than half reported not often thinking that what was learned in school was going to be important later in life.

Missing School: A fairly high percentage of youth (47.7%) missed school at least one time in the past 30 days because of illness or injury, while 9.2% missed school because of skipping or cutting classes, and 36.6% missed school for other reasons.

Opportunities for Participation:

The following results were obtained when students were asked, whether, in their middle school, they had certain opportunities for participation in activities. The purpose was to tap students' attitudes to the school experience in general.

Percentage of Students Reporting Certain Attitudes to School	% NO	% YES
a. In your middle school, do you have chances to be part of class discussions and activities?	**9.1**	90.9
b. do your teachers notice when you are doing a good job and let you know about it?	**25.8**	74.2
c. do you have lots of chances to get involved in school activities outside of class?	**33.3**	66.7
d. do students in your school have chances to talk to teachers one-on-one?	**18.6**	81.4
e. does your school let your parents know when you have done something well?	**57.3**	42.7

Here, only about 1 in 10 students reported feeling as though they did not have chances to participate in class, and a little less than 1 in 5 reported no chances to talk to teachers one-on-one. More than 1 in 4 students reported teachers not noticing and informing them when they were doing good work, and 1 in 3 reported that they do not have lots of chances to get involved in extra-classroom activities at school. Finally, close to 3 in 5 students said that their schools did not let their parents know when they had performed well.

HEALTH AND WELL-BEING OF MIDDLE SCHOOL STUDENTS IN TENNESSEE:

Health Status: Overall, 13.2% of students reported that in general their health was either fair (12.1%) or poor (1.1%), while 23.7% reported good health, 30.9% very good health, and 32.2%, excellent health.

Disability Status: In answer to the question, "Do you now have any physical health problems or disabling conditions that keep you from doing normal activities?", 88.5% of students said "no", while 11.5% reported some disability.

Hyperactivity: In answer to the question, "Are you currently taking prescription drugs or "pills" for hyperactivity (ADD or ADHD) such as Ritalin?", 7.8% of middle school students said "yes", and 92.2% said "no".

Receipt of any Treatment or Counseling Outside School: Lifetime prevalence of receipt of treatment for an emotional or mental health problem outside school was 11.9%. The prevalence of treatment for an alcohol problem was 2%; and for a drug problem, it was 2.7%. Receipt of treatment for either an alcohol or another drug problem was reported by 3.3% of middle school students in Tennessee in 2001.

Attendance at Self-Help or 12-Step Support Group Meetings: Attendance at such self-help or 12-step meetings as Alateen, Al-Anon, Children of Alcoholics (COA), Alcoholics Anonymous (AA), Narcotics Anonymous (NA), Cocaine Anonymous (CA) was reported by 3.1% of students, while the remaining students or 96.9% had not done so.

Utilization of Emergency and Hospital Services:

Emergency Department Services: In the 12 months prior to the survey, 16% of students reported having been taken to an emergency room for an illness, and 23.1%, for an injury. An overall total of about one-third (33.1%) of students had been taken to an ED for either an illness or an injury in the past 12 months.

Hospital Admissions: In the last 12 months, 5.8% of middle school students had stayed at least one night in a hospital for an illness while 5.5% had stayed at least one night for an injury. Either illness- or injury-related hospital admissions were reported by nearly 1 in 10 (9.9%) students.

Depression and Suicide Attempts:

Indicators of potential depression and low self-esteem such as thinking that life is not worth it sometimes or that one is no good at all are relatively common among these Tennessee middle school students. These two feelings were reported by 29.2% and 21.7% of students, respectively.

More specific questions about depression were asked, such as “How often do you feel very depressed, that is, very “blue” or unhappy?” While 38.6% of students reported never or rarely feeling very depressed, 50.1% reported that they sometimes felt this way, and 11.3% reported often or almost always feeling very depressed.

Eighteen percent of middle school students reported ever feeling so desperate that they considered suicide, and 7.2% reported ever attempting suicide. Those young suicide attempters represent 38.2% of students considering suicide.

Finally, 2.6% of students said they had ever gone to a hospital or gotten medical treatment because of a suicide attempt. This represents around 35.6% of those students attempting suicide.

Life Stressors: These students have already experienced a variety of life stresses such as relocations and related changes. Questions about their lifetime experience of selected stressors elicited interesting responses, reported below.

First, in answer to questions concerning whether these youth had experienced a move in the last 12 months, 24.5% of youth reported moving to a different home in the last 12 months, while 26.4% reported starting at a new school in the same period.

In answer to the question of lifetime stressors experienced, the percentages of students reporting each type of life change is presented below:

Percentage of Students Reporting Life Stressors by Type of Stressor in Their Lifetimes	**% Yes**	**% No**
a. had a death in the family	**87.6**	12.4
b. parents (guardians) divorced	**36.4**	63.6
c. family had financial problems	**34.4**	65.6
d. anyone in the family been arrested	**40.6**	59.4
e. new sister or brother born	**33.5**	66.5
f. had a serious illness or injury in your immediate family	**54.4**	45.6
g. had your own serious illness or injury	**34.4**	65.6
h. experienced another very stressful event	**49.4**	50.6

To the extent that these students between the ages of 11 and 15 for the most part have already experienced some major life crises, their coping skills and responses to stressors are of major interest and concern especially as they may protect against or increase the risk of alcohol and other drug use and associated problems.

Particularly prevalent was death in the family experienced by close to 90% of children, followed by serious illness or injury of a family member, and other stressful events, reported by around half. For around 40% of students, family arrests were reported, and by more than one-third, divorce, family financial problems, own serious illness or injury and the birth of a sibling were reported in decreasing order of frequency.

FRIENDS/PEER INFLUENCES ON YOUTH BEHAVIOR:

Best Friends' Practices:

When asked about their four best friends (the friends they feel closest to) and whether in the past 12 months any of those best friends had engaged in alcohol or other drug use, a range of from a low of 5% to a high of about 14% of students reported that they did not know.

Percentage of Students with Any Best Friends, who, in the Past 12 Months, Did the Following:	**% Yes**	**% No**	**% Don't Know**
a. smoked cigarettes	**24.2**	62.3	13.4
b. drunk alcoholic beverages -- beer, wine, or hard liquor (for example, vodka, whiskey, or gin)	**24.2**	62.1	13.8
c. used marijuana/pot	**14.9**	73.8	11.4
d. taken "pills" to get high or for non-medical reasons	**9.3**	78.9	11.8
e. used LSD, cocaine, amphetamines/speed, or another illegal drug	**5.4**	83.2	11.4
f. been suspended from school	**32.0**	61.6	6.4
g. carried a handgun or other weapon like a knife (other than for hunting or sport)	**11.4**	80.5	8.1
h. taken a handgun to school	**1.7**	93.0	5.3
i. sold "pills" or illegal drugs	**6.8**	85.1	8.1
j. stolen or tried to steal a motor vehicle such as a car or a motorcycle	**4.6**	88.3	7.1
k. been arrested	**10.3**	82.7	6.9
l. dropped out of school	**4.6**	90.6	4.8
m. been members of a gang	**10.1**	80.8	9.1

Most frequently reported behaviors among best friends were being suspended from school (32%), and smoking cigarettes or drinking alcohol at about one quarter of students each. These were followed by using marijuana (15%), carrying a weapon (11%), being arrested and being gang members at about 10% each, and taking pills to get high at more than 9%. Selling pills or illegal drugs was reported by about 7% of students in relation to their best

friends. On the other hand, taking a handgun to school was the least common practice reported for best friends at only around 2%, followed by dropping out of school, stealing or trying to steal a motor vehicle, and using illegal drugs, which were reported for their best friends by about 5% of these youth.

Perceptions of Being Cool:

To elicit attitudes to the acceptability with peers of alcohol and other drug use, a series of questions was asked about how "cool" certain practices are perceived to be by middle school students, with the following results:

Percentage of Students Reporting the Chances They Would be Seen as Cool if They:	**% No or Very Little Chance**	**% Some Chance**	**% Pretty Good or Very Good Chance**
a. smoked cigarettes	80.1	14.3	**5.6**
b. began drinking alcoholic beverages regularly, that is, at least once or twice a month	79.8	14.3	**5.9**
c. smoked marijuana	80.3	11.8	**7.9**
d. carried a handgun	87.8	7.6	**4.6**

Clearly, behavior associated with the most "cool" perception is smoking marijuana, while the least "cool" is carrying a handgun. Regular alcohol use and smoking cigarettes were perceived as about equally "cool".

PERCEIVED RISK AND AVAILABILITY OF AOD:

The University of Michigan Monitoring the Future surveys of high school and middle school youth have found that the combination of perceived risk of harm and availability of substances together account for higher consumption of substances among the youth studied. The Tennessee students' responses to these questions are provided below:

Perceived Risk of Substance Use:

How much students think people risk harming themselves (physically or in other ways) if they engage in each of the following practices involving AOD use gives a clear indication of students' assessment of relative risk of harm.

Percentage of Students Perceiving People's Risk of Harm from AOD Use:	% No Risk	% Slight Risk	% Moderate Risk	% Great Risk
a. smoke one or more packs of cigarettes per day	9.8	10.5	25.2	**54.6**
b. use smokeless tobacco	12.4	22.7	33.8	**31.1**
c. try marijuana once or twice	15.2	23.9	22.8	**38.2**
d. smoke marijuana regularly (at least once or twice a month)	12.1	12.3	20.9	**54.7**
e. drink any alcoholic beverages (beer, wine, liquor)	12.4	25.3	31.2	**31.2**
f. take one or two drinks of an alcoholic beverage nearly every day	13.4	17.2	25.2	**44.1**

Clearly, the most risk of physical or other harm is perceived by these middle school students from smoking marijuana regularly or smoking one or more packs of cigarettes a day (about 55% reporting great risk) each , while the lowest perceived risk is assessed for drinking any alcohol or using smokeless tobacco (about 31% great risk each), followed by trying marijuana once or twice (38% great risk). Intermediate risks of harm are attributed to taking one or two drinks of alcoholic beverages nearly every day, at 44% of students assessing great risk of harm to this practice.

Looking at the converse case - practices that elicited the lowest assessed risk of harm, trying marijuana once or twice was seen as least risky at 39.1% of students reporting no or low risk, followed by drinking any alcoholic beverages (37.7%) and using smokeless tobacco (35.1%). About 30.6% of students reported taking one or two drinks of an alcoholic beverage nearly every day as low risk behavior, followed by smoking marijuana regularly, at 24.4%. Smoking one or more packs of cigarettes a day was assessed as low risk behavior by 20.3% of the youth.

Perceived Ease of Access to AOD:

Like perceived harmfulness or risk of harm from drugs, including alcohol, perceived ease of access to or availability of drugs serves as an important predictor of risk of AOD use and problems related to it.

Percentage of Students Reporting Relative Ease of Access to Drugs by Type - Q: How easy do you think it would be for you to get each of the following types of drugs if you wanted some?	% Very or Somewhat Easy	% Very or Somewhat Hard
a. Cigarettes	**53.8**	46.2
b. Smokeless tobacco	**39.7**	60.3
c. Alcohol (beer, wine or hard liquor)	**47.7**	52.3
d. Marijuana/pot	**30.4**	69.6
e. Drugs like cocaine/crack, LSD (acid), heroin, etc.	**20.2**	79.8
f. "Pills" like uppers/speed, downers, painkillers, tranquilizers	**31.0**	69.0
g. Something to sniff like glue or gasoline	**59.5**	40.5

The easiest substances for middle school students to access appear to be inhalants and cigarettes, followed by alcohol and smokeless tobacco. Marijuana and pills like uppers, downers, etc. were seen as moderately easy to obtain, with illicit drugs like cocaine, hallucinogens, and heroin, for example, as the hardest to access in these students' opinions.

Ease of Access to a Gun:

In answer to the question, "If you wanted to get a gun, how easy would it be for you to get one?", 20.7% of middle school students said it would be very easy, and another 14.4% said somewhat easy, for a total of 35.1% reporting easy access to guns. The remaining 64.9% of students reported access to guns to be hard - either somewhat hard, at 16.3%, or very hard, at 48.6%.

Perceived Wrongness of Certain Personal Choices and Practices:

In answer to the question concerning how wrong one thinks it is for someone the student's age to use certain substances and engage in certain risky practices, the following were the results:

Percentage of Students Perceiving it Wrong to:	% Very Wrong	% Somewhat Wrong	% Not Very Wrong	% Not Wrong at All
a. drink beer, wine, or hard liquor (for example, vodka, whiskey, or gin) regularly (at least once or twice a month)	**71.7**	18.1	6.6	3.6
b. smoke cigarettes	**72.5**	17.4	6.4	3.7
c. smoke marijuana/pot	**83.8**	8.4	4.0	3.8
d. use LSD, cocaine, amphetamines/ speed or another illegal drug	**91.7**	4.8	1.6	1.9
e. steal anything worth more than $5	**71.7**	21.0	4.7	2.6
f. take a handgun or other weapon to school	**93.5**	3.7	1.2	1.6
g. pick a fight with someone	**46.8**	35.2	12.4	5.6
h. stay away from school all day when your parents think you are at school (skip school)	**71.2**	20.6	5.1	3.0
i. attack someone with the idea of seriously hurting them	**84.6**	10.3	2.7	2.5
j. beat up people if they start a fight	**47.9**	24.8	11.6	15.7

The practices perceived as most wrong, with the highest percentage of students reporting them as very wrong, were taking a handgun or weapon to school (93.5% reported this as very wrong) or using illegal drugs like LSD, cocaine or speed (92% very wrong). Attacking someone with the idea of hurting them or smoking pot/marijuana (at about 84% each) were less likely to be judged as very wrong. Even less likely to be seen as very wrong were smoking cigarettes, drinking alcohol regularly, stealing anything worth more than $5, or skipping school, each of which was reported by about 71-73% of students as being very wrong. Picking a fight with someone or beating up people if they start a fight were seen as very wrong by a little less than half (about 47-48%) of students. This suggests that picking fights or beating people up in fights, which are types of violent behavior, are less likely to be judged as very wrong by students themselves than is drug use - whether using alcohol, smoking cigarettes or using illegal drugs.

Students' Perceptions of How Wrong Parents Would Think Certain Behaviors:

Similar questions to those above were asked of students concerning parental views of how wrong certain practices are; the results follow:

Percentage of Students Reporting the Degree to which Their Parents Would Think it Wrong for Them to:	% Very Wrong	% Somewhat Wrong	% Not Very Wrong	% Not Wrong at All
a. drink beer, wine, or hard liquor (for example, vodka, whiskey, or gin) regularly (at least once or twice a month)	**86.9**	7.6	2.9	2.6
b. smoke cigarettes	**87.6**	7.2	2.4	2.8
c. smoke marijuana/pot	**93.7**	2.8	1.3	2.2
d. steal anything worth more than $5.00	**91.3**	5.4	1.3	2.1
e. draw graffiti, write things, or draw pictures on buildings or other property (without the owner's permission)	**90.4**	5.6	1.8	2.2
f. pick a fight with someone	**75.5**	16.6	4.6	3.3

Smoking marijuana ranks first in the percentage of students who think their parents would assess the practice as very wrong, at about 94%, followed by stealing anything worth more than $5 (91%), and drawing graffiti and related activities (90%). Slightly less wrong in student-assessed parental judgment are smoking cigarettes and drinking alcohol regularly, which each drew responses of "very wrong" from about 87% of students. Consistent with earlier results, picking a fight with someone was seen as least likely to be seen as wrong for students to do by their parents, with about 76% of students assessing that behavior as very wrong from a parental viewpoint.

Students' Perceptions of How Wrong Adults in Their Neighborhood Think Certain Behaviors Are:

In parallel with the questions asked of the students themselves and their parents reported above, students were asked to assess how wrong most adults in their neighborhood, or the area around where they live, would think it is for kids their age to use alcohol and other drugs and engage in risky or illegal behaviors. The results are striking in comparison with those for the students and their parents.

Percentage of Students Reporting How Wrong Adults in their Neighborhood Think it is for Middle School Age Kids:	% Very Wrong	% Somewhat Wrong	% Not Very Wrong	% Not Wrong At All
a. to use marijuana	88.6	5.5	**2.5**	**3.4**
b. to drink alcohol	79.9	11.5	**4.6**	**4.1**
c. to smoke cigarettes	76.2	12.8	**5.7**	**5.3**

These students perceive that adults in their neighborhood, like their parents, think that use of marijuana is very wrong, followed by drinking alcohol and smoking cigarettes, with 89%, 80% and 76% of students reporting these behaviors as very wrong for kids their age to indulge in, according to adults in their neighborhood. On the other hand, about 5%, 4% and 3% of students, respectively, think adults in their neighborhood see nothing wrong in kids their age smoking cigarettes, drinking alcohol or using marijuana, in that order.

STUDENTS' LIFE PROBLEMS AND HIGH RISK PRACTICES:

Asked whether they had ever participated in several problematic behaviors, such as gang membership, suspension from school or violence-related behavior, the following results were observed for all middle school students surveyed in Tennessee. Nearly 7% (6.6%) reported that they had belonged to a gang, while 6.1% reported having been arrested at least once in their lifetimes. Suspension from school was reported by nearly 1 in 4 (22.8%) students. Certain practices related to violence or risk of violence were reported as follows: 5.1% of students had carried a handgun other than for hunting or sport, while 13.9% had attacked someone with the idea of seriously hurting them.

The results for students' exposure to and participation in risky and violent behaviors in the past 12 months, overall and in school, are reported below.

Percentage of Students who Reported in the Past 12 Months that They Had....	**%Yes, Overall**	**% Yes, at School**
a. gotten into a physical fight	34.5	13.5
b. taken part in a gang fight where a group of your friends was against another group	7.7	2.6
c. been injured in a fight	9.7	2.9
d. been physically abused or assaulted	8.6	3.3
e. stolen "pills" or prescription drugs including from home	3.3	0.8
f. stolen illegal drugs	2.9	0.7
g. bought "pills" or an illegal drug	4.6	1.5
h. been offered or given "pills" or an illegal drug	16.6	5.1

These results suggest that getting into physical fights is very frequent behavior in these middle school students, with more than 1 in 3 reporting fighting in the past 12 months and with about 40% of those fights occurring at school. Being offered or given pills or illicit drugs is next most frequent among these students, at close to 17% reporting this experience, with about 31% of such contacts occurring at school. Less frequently reported

were being injured in a fight, at about 1 in 10 students - with about 30% of those injuries occurring at school. Being physically abused or assaulted was reported by about 9% of students, with close to 40% occurring at school. Participation in gang fights was reported by nearly 8% of youth. About 34% of these gang fights reportedly occurred at school. Buying pills or an illegal drug, stealing pills or prescription drugs including from home, and stealing illegal drugs were reported by nearly 5%, 3.3% and 2.9% of students, respectively. In about one-third of cases of buying pills or illegal drugs, this occurred at school, while in 24% of cases where drugs were stolen - whether pills/prescription drugs or illegal drugs - the stealing was reported to have occurred at school.

Other High Risk Behaviors in the Past 12 Months:

Overall, 15.1% of students reported that they had been suspended from school one or more times in the last 12 months. Substantially lower percentages of students reported serious criminal behavior - thus, 2.4% reported that they had stolen or tried to steal a motor vehicle, such as a car or a motorcycle, while 4.7% reported that they had been arrested at least once in the last 12 months.

Violent behavior was reported by 10.3% of students who said that they had attacked someone (physically) with the idea of seriously hurting them in the last 12 months. Overall, 8.1% of students had carried a weapon (such as a handgun, knife or club) other than for hunting or sport, and 1.5% had taken a weapon such as a gun to school at least once in the period in question.

In terms of alcohol and other drug use, 6.6% of these Tennessee middle school students had been drunk or high at school, and 1% reported this had occurred 20 times or more in the last 12 months. More than 3 percent (3.2%) of these youth reported that they had sold “pills” or illegal drugs in the past 12 months, and 2% of students overall reported that they had sold “pills” or illegal drugs at school.

Attitudes to Risky and Illegal Practices:

Tapping dimensions of impulsivity and rebelliousness, as well as other negative attitudes, these students’ responses indicate that impulsivity is very characteristic of these young people. Nearly half report that they often do things without thinking of consequences. Overall, 23.5% think it is not important to think before they act, and 20% have to have everything right away. Measures of rebelliousness and testing limits - liking to see how much they can get away with, reported by about 24% of students, ignoring rules that get in the way (about 23%), and doing the opposite of what people tell them just to provoke a reaction (19%) - are also relatively commonly reported by these students. The two depression-related questions above are discussed in an earlier section. Thinking it is OK to cheat at school was reported by around 15% of students.

Percentage of Students Whose Attitudes Put Them at High Risk and Therefore Who.....	% Yes	% No
a. think it is okay to cheat at school	**15.4**	84.6
b. like to see how much you can get away with	**23.9**	76.1
c. sometimes think that life is not worth it	**29.2**	70.8
d. think you are no good at all	**21.7**	78.3
e. ignore rules that get in your way	**22.6**	77.4
f. often do things without thinking what will happen	**48.8**	51.2
g. have to have everything right away	**20.4**	79.6
h. think it is important to think before you act	76.5	**23.5**
i. do the opposite of what people tell you, just to get them mad	**19.1**	80.9

Other Risk Taking:

Students who say that they often or almost always have done what feels good no matter what or have done something dangerous because someone dared them to do it represent 14.1% and 6.1% of students, respectively. Those students who conversely report that they never or rarely have done what feels good no matter what or done something dangerous on a dare comprise 44.2% and 72.1% of students, overall.

FAMILIAL AND PEER ALCOHOL OR DRUG PROBLEMS:

Familial Alcohol or Drug Abuse:

Fully 28% percent of students reported that someone in their family has had a severe alcohol or drug problem.

Parental AOD Use: Answering the question, "Do you think one or both of your parents (stepparents or guardians) is drinking too much or has a problem with alcohol?", 10.9% of students said "Yes". Close to 7% (6.8%) of students said that they think one or both of their parents is using or abusing drugs other than alcohol. A total of nearly 14% (13.9%) of students think that one or both of their parents is using or abusing alcohol or has a problem with it.

Siblings' AOD Use: Asked about alcohol and other drug use and high risk practices in their siblings, 9% of students had no brothers or sisters. However, for continuity and consistency of denominators, the following percentages are reported for all students.

Percentage of Students Reporting that One or More of Their Brothers or Sisters....	% of All Students
a. drinks beer, wine, or hard liquor (for example, vodka, whiskey or gin)	16.9
b. smokes marijuana	9.7
c. smokes cigarettes	20.5
d. has taken a handgun to school	1.6
e. has been suspended or expelled from school	18.2

Cigarette smoking is most frequently reported for sibling drug use by these students at about 20%, followed by suspension from school and alcohol use at around 18% and 17% respectively. Marijuana use was reported for nearly 10% of students' siblings. Handguns at school was least common at less than 2%.

Close Friends' Alcohol or Drug Problems:

About 6.5% of students reported that they think that one or more of their close friends is drinking too much or has a problem with alcohol, and 9.8% said that they think that one or more of the close friends is using or abusing drugs other than alcohol.

STUDENT'S OWN ALCOHOL/DRUG USE:

While this was mainly a prevention survey, it is clear that many of these middle school students have already begun their alcohol and other drug use careers so that primary prevention, delaying onset of the initiation of first use of alcohol or other drugs, is for many an inappropriate strategy. Secondary prevention, reducing the use of alcohol or other drugs, mitigating the occurrence of negative and dangerous consequences, and breaking the dependence cycle early is more relevant. In some cases tertiary prevention or actual treatment is indicated, particularly in students who self-report addiction or dependence.

Cigarette Smoking:

More than 1 in 4 (27.8%) students have ever smoked cigarettes. Fully 18.7% of students had smoked cigarettes in the last 12 months, and 12.8% of students had smoked in the past 30 days. Thus, about two-thirds of lifetime smokers had smoked in the last 12 months, and close to half (45%) of lifetime smokers had smoked in the past 30 days.

Students who had smoked cigarettes on 20 or more of the last 30 days comprised 3.3% of all students. Those who smoked 11 or more cigarettes in the past 30 days represented 1.7% of students. Also, 26.3% of current or 30-day smokers smoked cigarettes on 20+ of the past 30 days, and 13.4% of current smokers smoked 11 or more cigarettes in the past 30 days.

Smokeless Tobacco (Chewing Tobacco, Snuff, Plug, Dipping Tobacco):

More than 1 in 10 (11.6%) students have ever used smokeless tobacco. Fully 7.3% of students had used smokeless tobacco in the last 12 months, and 4.9% of students had used it in the past 30 days. Thus, 61.2% of lifetime users had used smokeless tobacco in the last 12 months, while 40.8% of lifetime users had used smokeless tobacco in the past 30 days.

Students who had used smokeless tobacco on 20 or more of the last 30 days comprised 1.2% of all students. Around 25% of current or 30-day smokeless tobacco users used it on 20+ of the past 30 days.

Alcoholic Beverages (Beer, Wine, Wine Coolers or Liquor):

More than one-third (37.5%) of these middle school students, ranging in age from 11 to 15 years, had drunk alcoholic beverages more than a few sips at least once in their lifetimes. Fully 26.2% had drunk alcohol in the past 12 months, and 17.6% had done so in the past 30 days. Thus, given that students had ever used alcohol, 67.8% of them had drunk alcohol in the past 12 months, and 45.2% had drunk alcohol in the past 30 days.

Students who had used alcohol on 20 or more of the last 30 days comprised 0.9% of all students, and 5.3% of current drinkers. Students who reported daily alcohol consumption over the past 30 days represented 0.4% of all students. Daily drinkers made up 2.5% of current (30-day) drinkers among these students, and nearly half (47.6%) of students who reported drinking on 20 or more of the last 30 days drank alcohol daily.

Among these middle school students, 2.9% drank 5 or more drinks of alcohol per day on their drinking days. These “binge drinkers” are 17.3% of current drinkers (last 30 days). Less than 1% (0.7%) of students reported drinking 5 or more drinks on 20 or more of the past 30 days. Again, as a percentage of students drinking on 20 or more days in the last 30, those who drank 5 or more drinks represent 77.2%. These “binge” drinkers comprise 4.1% of students who drank any alcohol in the past 30 days. Finally 0.4% of students overall reported drinking 5 or more drinks of alcohol daily in the past 30 days. They comprise 89.7% of daily drinkers, and 2.3% of current or 30-day drinkers.

In answer to the question, “Have you **ever** gotten drunk or felt very high or intoxicated from drinking alcohol?”, 14.5% of all students said that they had gotten drunk. This number represents 38.4% of lifetime drinkers.

Marijuana (Pot, Grass, Hash, etc.) Use:

About 15% (14.9%) of middle school students in Tennessee had ever used marijuana, while 10.8% had used marijuana in the past 12 months, and 7.6% in the past 30 days. While 69.9% of lifetime marijuana users used marijuana in the past 12 months, nearly half (49.4%) of lifetime users had used marijuana in the past 30 days.

Students who had used marijuana on 20 or more of the last 30 days comprised 1.4% of all students, and students who reported daily marijuana use over the past 30 days represented 0.8% of all students. However, among current marijuana users (30-day users), 18.5% used on 20 or more of the past 30 days and 10% of current users reported daily marijuana use.

Percentage of Students Reporting Illegal Drug Use by Type of Drug and Lifetime, Recent or Current Use	**% Yes, Ever**	**% Yes, in the Last 12 Months**	**% Yes, in the Last 30 Days**
a. Cocaine or crack	3.5	2.6	1.9
b. Substances you "sniff": paint thinners, glue, gasoline, white-out, butane, aerosol sprays, etc.	9.0	7.2	5.9
c. LSD (acid) or other hallucinogens such as peyote, jimson weed, mushrooms, PCP (angel dust), etc.	5.8	4.5	3.6
d. Other illegal drugs such as ecstasy, ice (crystal meth), heroin (smack, horse, skag), etc.	4.2	3.4	2.8

It is very clear that inhalants are one drug of choice for these youth, since of the 9% of students who report lifetime use of inhalants to get high, 79.9% had used inhalants in the last 12 months, and 65.1% had used them in the last 30 days. Cocaine, on the other hand, was less likely to involve sustained use, since of the lifetime users of cocaine or crack among these middle school students, 72.4% had used cocaine in the last 12 months, and 52.7% in the last 30 days. For other illegal drugs and for hallucinogens such as LSD, the percentages of ever users who used in the last 12 months are 81.5% and 76.4%, respectively, while the proportions of ever users who used in the last 30 days are 61.7% for LSD and other hallucinogens, and 65.7% for other illegal drugs. About 0.7% to 0.8% of Tennessee students reported use of one or more of these illegal drugs daily in the last 30 days.

OVERALL ATOD, AOD AND DRUG USE PREVALENCE:

ATOD: Overall, nearly half or 48.6% of middle schools students in Tennessee reported using alcohol, tobacco or other drugs (ATOD) in their lifetimes, while 37.5% reported 12-month use, and 28.6%, 30-day use of one or more substances (excluding caffeine and prescription drugs).

Given lifetime use, 73.7% had used ATOD in 12 months, and 54.9% in 30 days. Of 12-month users, 74% were 30-day users, suggesting that when youth begin their drug use careers, relatively few stop soon.

AOD: Excluding tobacco and looking only at the prevalence of use of alcohol and other drugs (save caffeine and prescription drugs), the lifetime prevalence of alcohol and other drug (AOD) use among these middle school students is 42.9%, the 12-month prevalence, 32%, and the 30-day prevalence, 23.7%. Here again, given lifetime use, 71.8% had used AOD in 12 months, and 52.2% in 30 days. Of 12-month users, 72.7% were 30-day users.

Drugs: Considering drugs only, 20.7% of middle school students had ever used one or more illegal drugs (excluding alcohol, tobacco or prescription drugs as well as caffeine). This compares to a 12-month drug use prevalence rate of 16.1%, and a 30-day prevalence rate of 12.7%. About 75.9% of lifetime drug users used drugs in the past 12 months. Fifty-nine percent of lifetime drug users used drugs in the last 30 days. Among 12-month drug users, 77.8% were current or 30-day users.

AVERAGE AGE AT FIRST USE OF AOD:

Average Age at First Use by Type of Drug:	**Average Age of First Use (in Years)**
a. smoked cigarettes	10.0
b. used smokeless tobacco	10.3
c. drank alcoholic beverages	10.4
d. began drinking alcoholic beverages regularly, that is at least once or twice a month	11.4
e. got drunk or felt very high or intoxicated from drinking alcohol	11.7
f. used marijuana/pot	11.5
g. used cocaine or crack	11.3
h. used substances you “sniff”	10.8
i. used LSD (acid) or other hallucinogens	11.3
j. used other illegal drugs such as ecstasy, Ice (crystal meth), heroin, etc.	11.6

Cigarette smoking is the earliest onset substance use, beginning, on average, in these middle school students at age 10, followed by using smokeless tobacco at age 10.3 years and drinking alcohol at age 10.4 years. Inhalant use was reported as initiated at the

average age of 10.8 years among these students. The onset of cocaine use was reported at age 11.3, as was the use of LSD and other hallucinogens, followed by regular alcohol consumption (at least once or twice a month), starting at 11.4 years, and marijuana use, at 11.5 years. The use of other illegal drugs such as ecstasy, crystal meth and heroin, began at age 11.6, on average, with getting drunk or intoxicated reported at first onset at age 11.7 years, the latest of all AOD use practices identified.

Prescription Drug Abuse:

Prescription drug abuse is defined as having taken any prescription drugs or "pills" just to get high or for non-medical purposes, on one's own, without a doctor's prescription. More than 7% (7.1%) of students reported prescription drug abuse in their lifetimes; 5.2% reported it in the past 12 months, and 2.9% in the past 30 days. Among lifetime prescription drug abusers, 71.2% had abused such drugs in the past 12 months, and 39.4% did so in the past 30 days.

SELF-REPORTED SUBSTANCE ABUSE/ADDICTION:

Answering "yes" to the question of lifetime or current addiction to or dependence on one or more drugs serves as a proxy measure of these youth's need for alcohol and other drug treatment[1]. The following table shows the extent of self-reported addiction among these students by type of drug and by lifetime or current prevalence.

Percentage of Students Ever or Now Addicted to Alcohol or Other Drugs by Type of Drug	% Ever Addicted	% Now Addicted
a. Tobacco/nicotine	7.2	5.2
b. Alcohol (beer, wine or liquor)	4.5	3.3
c. Marijuana/pot	3.9	3.1
d. Cocaine or crack	0.9	0.6
e. Hallucinogens like LSD or PCP or ecstasy	1.1	0.8
f. Coffee/cola/caffeine	24.3	18.9
g. A prescription drug or "pill"	3.2	1.8
h. Other drugs or substances	2.4	1.6

[1]The question contained in its wording a brief definition of addiction: "Do you think you have **EVER** been hooked on or addicted to any of the following substances (for example, did you try to quit or use less and had trouble doing so)? "

Based on lifetime prevalence of self-reported addiction to a drug or substance, caffeine/cola/coffee is the most prevalent drug, addicting about 1 in 4 students, followed, at a much lower level, at about 7%, by tobacco/nicotine, and about 4-4.5%, by alcohol and marijuana. Addiction to a prescription drug or "pill" was reported by around 3% of students, and addiction to other drugs or substances by around 2%. About 1% of students reported addiction either to hallucinogens like LSD or to cocaine or crack.

Current addiction as self-reported by these students again showed caffeine as the number one drug of addiction, by far, at 19%, followed by tobacco/nicotine, at over 5%, and marijuana at close to 3%. Alcohol addiction was reported by more than 3% of students, while prescription drugs or pills, other drugs or substances, hallucinogens and cocaine or crack were reported as current sources of addiction by decreasing percentages of youth, ranging from close to 2% (1.8%) down to 0.6%.

The percentage of lifetime addicted users who are currently addicted suggests some of the power of these drugs over these very young users. The highest percentage of ever addicted students are currently addicted to marijuana (78%), followed closely by caffeine/cola/coffee (76.5%). Slightly lower rates of ever to current addicted students are observed for alcohol (71.4%), and tobacco/nicotine (71.1%). Hallucinogens such as LSD, other drugs or substances, and cocaine or crack had ever-to-current addiction ratios of 67.7%, 64.2% and 61%, respectively. The drug types least likely to be still addicting youth who reported ever being addicted to them are prescription drugs or "pills," at 56.4% of students ever addicted to them now addicted to them.

COMMUNITY INFLUENCES ON STUDENTS' AOD RISK:

Questions about students' communities and the areas around where they lived were expected to shed some light on risk and protective factors for alcohol and other drug use among middle school students.

Attitudes to Neighborhood:

Only 14.2% of students said they did not feel safe in their neighborhood, or the area around where they live, while the remainder or 85.8% did feel safe. Twenty percent of students said they did not like their neighborhood, with fully 80% feeling the opposite. Twenty-seven percent of these youth would like to get out of their neighborhood, compared to the 73% who would not. About 35% of students report that their neighbors notice when they are doing a good job and let them know about it, while for 64.3% and 62.3% of students respectively, there are lots of adults in their neighborhood they could talk to about something important or there are people in their neighborhood who encourage them to do their best.

Neighborhood Description:

When asked how well each of the following characteristics describe their neighborhood, or the area around where they live, students were most likely to report fights and crime and/or drug selling as characterizing their neighborhoods very well or somewhat well, with less emphasis on empty or abandoned buildings or lots of graffiti.

Percentage of Students Describing Their Neighborhood in Terms of the Following:	% Very Well	% Somewhat Well	% Not Well	% Not at All
a. Crime and/or drug selling	**8.4**	9.1	10.8	**71.7**
b. Fights	**10.1**	12.2	13.9	**63.8**
c. Lots of empty or abandoned buildings	**5.3**	4.9	10.8	**78.9**
d. Lots of graffiti	**5.5**	4.0	8.4	**82.1**

Only about 64% of students reported that their neighborhoods were not at all characterized by fights, and around 72% not at all characterized by crime and/or drug selling. On the other hand, close to 79% of students reported no empty or abandoned buildings, and 82% reported no profuse graffiti at all in their neighborhoods.

Adults Using Alcohol and Drugs in the Neighborhood:

In the last 12 months, 25.2% of these middle school students from Tennessee reported that they personally knew one or more adults who had used marijuana/pot, cocaine/crack or other illegal drugs. About 18.4% reported knowing at least one adult who had sold or dealt drugs in the last 12 months. Around 20.3% of students had known adults who carried handguns or other weapons not for hunting or sport, and about the same percentage (19.8%) had known adults who had done other things that could get them in trouble with the police - stealing, selling stolen goods, mugging, or assaulting others. Finally, about 2 out of 5 (38.9%) of youth had known at least one adult who had gotten drunk or high in the last 12 months. Thus, drunkenness was by far the most commonly reported practice observed by these students among the adults in their neighborhoods.

When asked how many adults they knew personally who had engaged in these practices in the past 12 months, 12.7% of students cited 5 or more adults who had gotten drunk or high, while 7.4% knew 5 or more adults who had used marijuana/pot, cocaine/crack or other illegal drugs. About 5% knew five or more adults who had carried handguns or weapons (4.5%), sold or dealt drugs (4.9%), or done other things that could have gotten them in trouble with the police (4.8%).

Participation in Leisure Time Activities as Protective of AOD Use and Abuse:

The availability and participation in activities that are seen as protective of alcohol and other drug use and abuse in youth is reported on here.

Percentage of Students Participating in the Following Activities:	% Yes	% No	% Not Available in Their Community
a. Sports teams	**72.4**	23.7	3.9
b. Scouting	**25.3**	67.0	7.7
c. Boys and girls clubs	**26.7**	63.1	10.2
d. 4-H clubs	**32.2**	58.1	9.7
e. Service clubs (such as Junior Sertoma, Rainbow, etc.)	**17.4**	64.3	18.3
f. Church youth groups	**67.2**	29.8	3.0
g. Music/art/drama clubs	**41.9**	49.9	8.2
h. Other after school clubs	**44.7**	49.6	5.7

The leisure-time activity reported by most students was participation in sports teams at about 72%, followed by church youth groups at 67%. Moderately popular are music/art/drama clubs and other after school clubs, at about 42% and 45% respectively. Also moderately popular where available are 4-H clubs (around 32%). Least popular were service clubs (at about 17%), followed by scouting and boys and girls clubs (at 25% and 27%, respectively). Least available activities in these communities were service clubs, boys and girls clubs and 4-H clubs.

Parental Guidance and Support:

Finally, parental guidance and support were assessed by a series of questions, such as "Do your parents want you to call if you are going to be late getting home?" To this question, 81.4% of students responded positively, and 18.6%, negatively. The question, "Does your family have clear rules about alcohol and drug use?" brought responses of 75%, "yes", and 25%, "no". The extent to which families fight is measured by answers to whether people in students' family often insult or yell at each other, reported by 33.7% of students, compared to 66.3% who say "no". About 27% (26.6%) of students reported that people in their family have serious arguments, while 73.4% do not report this.

Answers to two hypothetical questions are also revealing of the extent of parental guidance and concern as perceived by these youth. First, 59.8% of students said that if

they drank some beer, wine, or hard liquor (for example, vodka, whiskey, or gin) without their parents' permission, they would be caught by their parents, while 72.8% said that if they carried a handgun without their parents' permission, they would be caught by their parents.

POSITIVE PARENTAL ATTITUDES AND PRACTICES:

The frequency with which parents include youth in family decisions and praise and reward them is thought to be associated with protection against alcohol and other drug abuse. For these youth, parental guidance and support appears relatively high.

Percentage of Students Reporting Frequency of Parents:	**% Never/ Rarely**	**% Sometimes**	**% Often/Almost Always**
a. giving them lots of chances to do fun things with them	12.3	38.4	**49.3**
b. asking them what they think before most family decisions affecting the students are made	22.7	40.8	**36.5**
c. noticing when they are doing a good job and letting them know about it	14.0	31.3	**54.7**
d. telling the students they are proud of them for something they have done	11.3	26.7	**62.0**

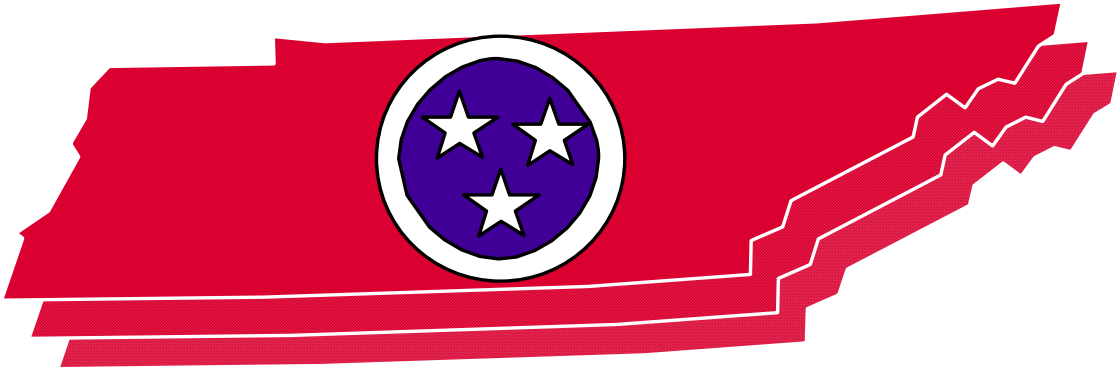
The most commonly reported supportive practice of parents toward these middle school students among the items measured is telling the students they are proud of their accomplishments, at 62% of students reporting parents as often or almost always doing so. This is followed by parents' noticing a good job and letting students know it (around 55%), and giving students lots of chances to do fun things with parents (about 49%). Least likely to occur often or almost always is parents' asking students what they think before family decisions affecting them are made, at 36.5% often or almost always doing so.

Finally, 88.7% of students say that their parents ask if they have gotten their homework done, while 11.3% do not. In 87.4% of cases, when students are not at home, one of their parents knows where they are and who they are with, while 12.6% do not. The great majority of students reported that their parents would know if they did not come home on time, at 86.9%, compared to 13.1% whose parents would not know. Eighty percent of students could ask their parents for help if they had a personal problem, compared to 20% who could not do so. Students were more likely to report that they often share their thoughts and feelings with their mothers (66.8%), compared to their fathers (47.4%).

TENNESSEE MIDDLE SCHOOL HEALTH SURVEY, 2001-2002

A SUMMARY OF FINDINGS FROM THE TENNESSEE MIDDLE SCHOOL HEALTH SURVEY

NORTHEAST REGION



TENNESSEE DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH

AND THE

COMMUNITY HEALTH RESEARCH GROUP

THE UNIVERSITY OF TENNESSEE, KNOXVILLE

June 2003

TENNESSEE MIDDLE SCHOOL SURVEY RESULTS: NORTHEAST REGION

SOCIODEMOGRAPHIC CHARACTERISTICS:

Gender: A total of 2,655 students in randomly sampled middle schools grades 6-8 in Northeast Tennessee completed surveys. They were split about evenly by gender, with 47.8% being female and 52.2% male.

Grade: By grade, 22.2% of the students sampled were in 6th grade, 30.9% in 7th grade and 46.9% in 8th grade.

Age: In terms of age, 6.0% of students were 11 years of age or younger, while 23.7% were age 12; 37.5% were age13; 29.8% were age 14; and 3% were 15 years of age or older.

Race/Ethnicity: While 94.7% of students were white, 2.9% were black and 2.4% were of other racial/ethnic groups.

Hispanic Origin: A total of 2.9% of students were of Hispanic origin.

OTHER BACKGROUND CHARACTERISTICS:

Two-Parent Family: While 73.5% of students in the study lived in two-parent families, 26.5% lived in families of other compositions.

Non-English Spoken At Home: While fully 99% of students reported that English was the language used most often in the home, 0.6% reported that language to be Spanish and another 0.4% reported another language as the language most often spoken at home.

Rural/Urban Residence: About half (50.1%) of middle school students in Northeast Tennessee lived in a city, town or suburb, i.e., an urban area, while the remaining 49.9% lived in rural areas. Of all students, 39.1% lived in the country, although not on a farm, and 10.8% lived on farms.

Proxy Measures of Poverty: In answer to the question, “Do you live in public housing?”, 19.5% of students did not know the answer, while 5.8% reported that they did live in public housing, and another 74.7% that they did not live in public housing. This measure was to be used as one indicator of poverty along with whether the family was on any form of public assistance. That question was phrased: “Does your family receive any form of public assistance, such as food stamps or other forms of welfare (such as Families First, WIC, TennCare/Medicaid, etc.)?” Again, 18.5% of the students did not know. Still 23.4% reported that their families did receive public assistance, while 58.1% did not. Combining these two measures produces a prevalence estimate of middle school students in poverty of 23.1% in the region as a whole.

Mobility/Migration: Only 31.3% of students had not changed homes since kindergarten, while 32.7% had changed homes 1-2 times; 18.4% had changed homes 3-4 times; and 17.7% had changed homes 5 times or more since kindergarten (9.3% had done so 5-6 times, and 8.4%, 7 times or more).

The Importance of Religion or Spirituality in Students' Families: Only 12.9% of Northeast Tennessee middle school students reported that religion or spirituality was either not very important (10.2%) or not at all important (2.7%) in their families. For more than half (50.2%) of these students, religion or spirituality was very important, while for 36.9%, it was somewhat important.

The Importance of Religion or Spirituality in Students' Own Lives: For 10.9% of Northeast Tennessee middle school students, religion or spirituality was either not very important (7.3%) or not at all important (3.6%) in their own lives, while for 34.3%, it was somewhat important, and for more than half (54.8%), it was very important.

Attendance at Religious Services: Asked how often they attend religious services or activities, 10.9% of students said they never did, while less than once a month was the response chosen by another 12.5%. Attendance at religious services or activities occupied 19.6% of students 1-2 times a month, although not every week, while another 57.1% of students attended religious services once a week or more.

SCHOOL EXPERIENCE:

Grades Last Year: Getting mostly A's as grades in the last school year was reported by about one-quarter (24.4%) of students, while mostly B's were reported by 40.1%, and mostly C's by 26.8%. Only 8.7% of students reported either mostly D's (5.8%) or mostly F's (2.9%).

A series of questions were asked concerning how often youth had certain experiences in school - whether rarely or never, sometimes or often or almost always. Categories are collapsed here into "often/almost always", and the residual which is "rarely, never or sometimes" in relation to students reporting those problems or experiences.

Percentage of Students Reporting that in the Past School Year They:	% Never/Rarely/ Sometimes	% Often/Almost Always
a. feel physically safe or safe from violence at school	**43.2%**	56.8%
b. try to do your best work in school	**31.0%**	69.0%
c. find most of your courses interesting to you	**85.2%**	14.8%
d. find the school work too hard to understand	92.2%	**7.8%**

Percentage of Students Reporting that in the Past School Year They:	% Never/Rarely/ Sometimes	% Often/Almost Always
e. fool around in class	85.8%	**14.2%**
f. fail to complete or turn in your assignments	94.3%	**5.7%**
g. get sent to the office or have to stay after school because you misbehaved	95.9%	**4.1%**
h. skip a day of school or part of a day (without permission)	97.9%	**2.1%**
i. get better grades than most of the students in your class	**81.1%**	18.9%
j. feel bullied by other kids at school	91.4%	**8.6%**
k. feel bored in school	67.1%	**32.9%**
l. hate being in school	74.3%	**25.7%**
m. think the things you are learning in school are going to be important for your later life	**56.6%**	43.4%

These attitudes among others studied in this survey are seen as protective or detrimental to efforts to prevent or reduce alcohol and other drug (AOD) use, abuse, problems or dependence among these youth. Results suggest that negative attitudes to school such as feeling bored in school and hating being in school were reported often or almost always by the most students at about 33% and 26%, respectively, while fooling around in class often or almost always was reported by 14%. Finding school work too hard to understand, failing to complete or turn in assignments, getting punished for misbehaving, or skipping school were reported often or almost always by about 8%, around 6%, 4% and 2% of students, respectively.

Only a little more than half of students felt often or almost always safe at school (57%), with over 8% reporting being often or almost always bullied at school. Other common negative orientations to school were never, rarely or sometimes finding courses interesting, reported by 85% of students, yet with about 81% of students reporting never, rarely, or sometimes getting better grades than most other students. Thirty-one percent of students reported never, rarely or sometimes trying to do their best work in school, and more than half (56.6%) reported not often thinking that what was learned in school was going to be important later in life.

Missing School: A fairly high percentage of youth (52.7%) missed school at least one time in the past 30 days because of illness or injury, while 12.3% missed school because of skipping or cutting classes, and 36.7% missed school for other reasons.

Opportunities for Participation:

The following results were obtained when students were asked whether, in their middle school, they had certain opportunities for participation in activities. The purpose was to tap students' attitudes to the school experience in general.

Percentage of Students Reporting Certain Attitudes to School	% NO	% YES
a. In your middle school, do you have chances to be part of class discussions and activities?	**10.3**	89.7
b. do your teachers notice when you are doing a good job and let you know about it?	**24.2**	75.8
c. do you have lots of chances to get involved in school activities outside of class?	**36.5**	63.5
d. do students in your school have chances to talk to teachers one-on-one?	**16.4**	83.6
e. does your school let your parents know when you have done something well?	**63.2**	36.8

Here, only about 1 in 10 students reported feeling as though they did not have chances to participate in class, and about 16% reported no chances to talk to teachers one-on-one. About 1 in 4 students reported teachers not noticing and informing them when they were doing good work, and about 36% reported that they do not have lots of chances to get involved in extra-classroom activities at school. Finally, more than 63% of students said that their schools did not let their parents know when they had performed well.

HEALTH AND WELL-BEING OF MIDDLE SCHOOL STUDENTS IN THE NORTHEAST TENNESSEE:

Health Status: Overall, 14.2% of students reported that in general their health was either fair (13.1%) or poor (1.1%), while 25.6% reported good health, 30.3% very good health, and 30%, excellent health.

Disability Status: In answer to the question, "Do you now have any physical health problems or disabling conditions that keep you from doing normal activities?", 90.6% of students said "no", while 9.4% reported some disability.

Hyperactivity: In answer to the question, "Are you currently taking prescription drugs or "pills" for hyperactivity (ADD or ADHD) such as Ritalin?", 4.3% of middle school students said "yes", and 95.7% said "no".

Receipt of any Treatment or Counseling Outside School: Lifetime prevalence of receipt of treatment for an emotional or mental health problem outside school was 11.3%. The prevalence of treatment for an alcohol problem was 2.5%; and for a drug problem, it was 4.2%. Receipt of treatment for either an alcohol or another drug problem was reported by 4.7% of middle school students in Northeast Tennessee in 2001.

Attendance at Self-Help or 12-Step Support Group Meetings: Attendance at such self-help or 12-step meetings as Alateen, Al-Anon, Children of Alcoholics (COA), Alcoholics Anonymous (AA), Narcotics Anonymous (NA), Cocaine Anonymous (CA) was reported by 2.2% of students, while the remaining students or 97.8% had not done so.

Utilization of Emergency and Hospital Services:

Emergency Department Services: In the 12 months prior to the survey, 19% of students reported having been taken to an emergency room for an illness, and 25.7%, for an injury. An overall total of about one-third (36.8%) of students had been taken to an ED for either an illness or an injury in the past 12 months.

Hospital Admissions: In the last 12 months, 4.7% of middle school students had stayed at least one night in a hospital for an illness while 5.1% had stayed at least one night for an injury. Either illness- or injury-related hospital admissions were reported by 8.3% of students.

Depression and Suicide Attempts:

Indicators of potential depression and low self-esteem such as thinking that life is not worth it sometimes or that one is no good at all are relatively common among these Northeast Tennessee middle school students. These two feelings were reported by 33% and 25.2% of students, respectively.

More specific questions about depression were asked, such as “How often do you feel very depressed, that is, very “blue” or unhappy?” While 38.6% of students reported never or rarely feeling very depressed, 48.2% reported that they sometimes felt this way, and 13.2% reported often or almost always feeling very depressed.

While 20.5% of middle school students reported ever feeling so desperate that they considered suicide, 8% reported ever attempting suicide. Those young suicide attempters represent 37.4% of students considering suicide.

Finally, 2.6% of students said they had ever gone to a hospital or get medical treatment because of a suicide attempt. This represents around 32.3% of those students attempting suicide.

Life Stressors: These students have already experienced a variety of life stresses such as relocations and related changes. Questions about their lifetime experience of selected stressors elicited interesting responses, reported below.

First, in answer to questions concerning whether these youth had experienced a move in the last 12 months, 21.1% of youth reported moving to a different home in the last 12 months, while 20.0% reported starting at a new school in the same period.

In answer to the question of lifetime stressors experienced, the percentages of students reporting each type of life change is presented below:

Percentage of Students Reporting Life Stressors by Type of Stressor in Their Lifetimes	% Yes	% No
a. had a death in the family	**89.1**	10.9
b. parents (guardians) divorced	**39.2**	60.8
c. family had financial problems	**39.0**	61.0
d. anyone in the family been arrested	**39.3**	60.7
e. new sister or brother born	**31.2**	68.8
f. had a serious illness or injury in your immediate family	**58.9**	41.1
g. had your own serious illness or injury	**35.6**	64.4
h. experienced another very stressful event	**52.5**	47.5

To the extent that these students between the ages of 11 and 15 for the most part have already experienced some major life crises, their coping skills and responses to stressors are of major interest and concern especially as they may protect against or increase the risk of alcohol and other drug use and associated problems.

Particularly prevalent was death in the family experienced by close to 90% of children, followed by serious illness or injury of a family member, and other stressful events, reported by 59% and 52.5%, respectively. For around 39% of students, family arrests were reported, as were parental divorce, and family financial problems. The students' own serious illness or injury and the birth of a sibling were reported in decreasing order of frequency at 36% and 31%.

FRIENDS/PEER INFLUENCES ON YOUTH BEHAVIOR:

Best Friends' Practices:

When asked about their four best friends (the friends they feel closest to) and whether in the past 12 months any of those best friends had engaged in alcohol or other drug use, a range of from a low of 5% to a high of about 15% of students reported that they did not know.

Percentage of Students with Any Best Friends, who, in the Past 12 Months, Did the Following:	**% Yes**	**% No**	**% Don't Know**
a. smoked cigarettes	**36.4**	50.6	13.1
b. drunk alcoholic beverages -- beer, wine, or hard liquor (for example, vodka, whiskey, or gin)	**34.1**	51.2	14.7
c. used marijuana/pot	**22.0**	65.7	12.3
d. taken "pills" to get high or for non-medical reasons	**15.1**	72.0	12.9
e. used LSD, cocaine, amphetamines/speed, or another illegal drug	**9.3**	78.3	12.4
f. been suspended from school	**27.2**	67.0	5.8
g. carried a handgun or other weapon like a knife (other than for hunting or sport)	**15.2**	76.6	8.2
h. taken a handgun to school	**1.3**	93.5	5.2
i. sold "pills" or illegal drugs	**9.8**	81.3	8.9
j. stolen or tried to steal a motor vehicle such as a car or a motorcycle	**6.3**	86.5	7.2
k. been arrested	**9.5**	84.4	6.0
l. dropped out of school	**6.1**	89.7	4.2
m. been members of a gang	**13.5**	78.3	8.2

Most frequently reported behaviors among best friends were smoking cigarettes or drinking alcohol 36% and 34% of students, respectively. These were followed by best friends' being suspended from school at 27%, using marijuana (22%), carrying a weapon (15%), and taking "pills" to get high (15%). Having best friends who were gang members was reported by 13.5% of students, while selling pills or illegal drugs was reported by about 10% in

relation to their best friends. On the other hand, taking a handgun to school was the least common practice reported for best friends at only 1.3%, followed by dropping out of school and stealing or trying to steal a motor vehicle, at 6%. Using illegal drugs, was reported for their best friends by about 9% of these youth, as was being arrested (9.5%).

Perceptions of Being Cool:

To elicit attitudes to the acceptability with peers of alcohol and other drug use, a series of questions was asked about how "cool" certain practices are perceived to be by middle school students, with the following results:

Percentage of Students Reporting the Chances They Would be Seen as Cool if They:	**% No or Very Little Chance**	**% Some Chance**	**% Pretty Good or Very Good Chance**
a. smoked cigarettes	74.6	17.7	**7.8**
b. began drinking alcoholic beverages regularly, that is, at least once or twice a month	75.3	16.9	**7.8**
c. smoked marijuana	76.9	14.0	**9.1**
d. carried a handgun	90.0	6.3	**3.7**

Clearly, behavior associated with the most "cool" perception is smoking marijuana, while the least "cool" is carrying a handgun. Regular alcohol use and smoking cigarettes were perceived as equally "cool".

PERCEIVED RISK AND AVAILABILITY OF AOD:

The University of Michigan Monitoring the Future surveys of high school and middle school youth have found that the combination of perceived risk of harm and availability of substances together account for higher consumption of substances among the youth studied. The Northeast Tennessee students' responses to these questions are provided below:

Perceived Risk of Substance Use:

How much students think people risk harming themselves (physically or in other ways) if they engage in each of the following practices involving AOD use gives a clear indication of students' assessment of relative risk of harm.

Percentage of Students Perceiving People's Risk of Harm from AOD Use:	% No Risk	% Slight Risk	% Moderate Risk	% Great Risk
a. smoke one or more packs of cigarettes per day	5.5	12.9	30.2	**51.5**
b. use smokeless tobacco	9.2	28.5	36.9	**25.4**
c. try marijuana once or twice	12.9	26.6	23.8	**36.7**
d. smoke marijuana regularly (at least once or twice a month)	8.2	12.7	23.2	**55.9**
e. drink any alcoholic beverages (beer, wine, liquor)	9.5	27.5	32.1	**30.9**
f. take one or two drinks of an alcoholic beverage nearly every day	11.6	20.0	28.0	**40.4**

Clearly, the most risk of physical or other harm is perceived by these middle school students from smoking marijuana regularly (56%) or smoking one or more packs of cigarettes a day (about 52% reporting great risk), while the lowest perceived risk is assessed for using smokeless tobacco or drinking any alcohol (at 25% and 31% great risk respectively), followed by trying marijuana once or twice (37% great risk). Intermediate risks of harm are attributed to taking one or two drinks of alcoholic beverages nearly every day, at 40% of students assessing great risk of harm to this practice.

Perceived Ease of Access to AOD:

Like perceived harmfulness or risk of harm from drugs, including alcohol, perceived ease of access to or availability of drugs serves as an important predictor of risk of AOD use and problems related to it.

Percentage of Students Reporting Relative Ease of Access to Drugs by Type - Q: How easy do you think it would be for you to get each of the following types of drugs if you wanted some?	% Very or Somewhat Easy	% Very or Somewhat Hard
a. Cigarettes	**62.5**	37.5
b. Smokeless tobacco	**51.1**	48.9
c. Alcohol (beer, wine or hard liquor)	**51.7**	48.3
d. Marijuana/pot	**34.9**	65.1

Percentage of Students Reporting Relative Ease of Access to Drugs by Type - Q: How easy do you think it would be for you to get each of the following types of drugs if you wanted some?	% Very or Somewhat Easy	% Very or Somewhat Hard
e. Drugs like cocaine/crack, LSD (acid), heroin, etc.	**21.6**	78.4
f. "Pills" like uppers/speed, downers, painkillers, tranquilizers	**35.9**	64.1
g. Something to sniff like glue or gasoline	**66.8**	33.2

The easiest substances for middle school students to access appear to be inhalants and cigarettes, followed by alcohol and smokeless tobacco. Pills like uppers, downers, etc. and marijuana were seen as moderately easy to obtain, with illicit drugs like cocaine, hallucinogens, and heroin, for example, as the hardest to access in these students' opinions.

Ease of Access to a Gun:

In answer to the question, "If you wanted to get a gun, how easy would it be for you to get one?", 26.1% of middle school students said it would be very easy, and another 15% said somewhat easy, for a total of 41.1% reporting easy access to guns. The remaining 58.9% of students reported access to guns to be hard - either somewhat hard, at 17.7%, or very hard, at 41.2%.

Perceived Wrongness of Certain Personal Choices and Practices:

In answer to the question concerning how wrong one thinks it is for someone the student's age to use certain substances and engage in certain risky practices, the following were the results:

Percentage of Students Perceiving it Wrong to:	% Very Wrong	% Somewhat Wrong	% Not Very Wrong	% Not Wrong at All
a. drink beer, wine, or hard liquor (for example, vodka, whiskey, or gin) regularly (at least once or twice a month)	**63.5**	22.8	9.2	4.6
b. smoke cigarettes	**61.9**	22.7	10.2	5.3
c. smoke marijuana/pot	**78.9**	11.4	5.1	4.6
d. use LSD, cocaine, amphetamines/ speed or another illegal drug	**89.1**	7.0	1.7	2.2

Percentage of Students Perceiving it Wrong to:	% Very Wrong	% Somewhat Wrong	% Not Very Wrong	% Not Wrong at All
e. steal anything worth more than $5	**69.1**	22.8	5.3	2.7
f. take a handgun or other weapon to school	**93.0**	4.3	1.2	1.4
g. pick a fight with someone	**41.1**	37.8	14.4	6.6
h. stay away from school all day when your parents think you are at school (skip school)	**65.1**	24.7	6.3	4.0
i. attack someone with the idea of seriously hurting them	**83.5**	10.7	2.8	3.0
j. beat up people if they start a fight	**41.8**	26.7	13.0	18.5

The practices perceived as most wrong, with the highest percentage of students reporting them as very wrong, were taking a handgun or weapon to school (93% reported this as very wrong) or using illegal drugs like LSD, cocaine or speed (89% very wrong). Attacking someone with the idea of hurting them at 85.5% and smoking marijuana at 79% were less likely to be judged as very wrong. Even less likely to be seen as very wrong were skipping school or stealing anything worth more than $5, which were reported by 65-69% of students as being very wrong. These were followed by drinking alcohol regularly (63.5%) and smoking cigarettes (about 62%). Picking a fight with someone or beating up people if they start a fight were seen as very wrong by about 2 in 5 (41-42%) students. This suggests that picking fights or beating people up in fights, which are types of violent behavior, are less likely to be judged as very wrong by students themselves than is drug use - whether using alcohol, smoking cigarettes or using illegal drugs.

Students' Perceptions of How Wrong Parents Would Think Certain Behaviors:

Similar questions to those above were asked of students concerning parental views of how wrong certain practices are; the results follow:

Percentage of Students Reporting the Degree to which Their Parents Would Think it Wrong for Them to:	% Very Wrong	% Somewhat Wrong	% Not Very Wrong	% Not Wrong at All
a. drink beer, wine, or hard liquor (for example, vodka, whiskey, or gin) regularly (at least once or twice a month)	**85.1**	9.0	3.3	2.6
b. smoke cigarettes	**82.9**	10.7	3.3	3.1
c. smoke marijuana/pot	**92.0**	4.2	1.7	2.1
d. steal anything worth more than $5.00	**90.6**	6.2	1.3	1.8
e. draw graffiti, write things, or draw pictures on buildings or other property (without the owner's permission)	**88.9**	6.6	2.0	2.4
f. pick a fight with someone	**72.2**	17.7	6.0	4.0

Smoking marijuana ranks first in the percentage of students who think their parents would assess the practice as very wrong, at about 92%, followed by stealing anything worth more than $5 (91%), and drawing graffiti and related activities (89%). Slightly less wrong in student-assessed parental judgment are drinking alcohol regularly, and smoking cigarettes, which each drew responses of "very wrong" from about 85% and 83% of students, respectively. Consistent with earlier results, picking a fight with someone was seen as least likely to be seen as wrong for students to do by their parents, with about 72% of students assessing that behavior as very wrong from a parental viewpoint.

Students' Perceptions of How Wrong Adults in Their Neighborhood Think Certain Behaviors Are:

In parallel with the questions asked of the students themselves and their parents reported above, students were asked to assess how wrong most adults in their neighborhood, or the area around where they live, would think it is for kids their age to use alcohol and other drugs and engage in risky or illegal behaviors. The results are striking in comparison with those for the students and their parents.

Percentage of Students Reporting How Wrong Adults in their Neighborhood Think it is for Middle School Age Kids:	% Very Wrong	% Somewhat Wrong	% Not Very Wrong	% Not Wrong At All
a. to use marijuana	87.1	6.2	**3.4**	**3.4**
b. to drink alcohol	77.9	12.4	**5.6**	**4.1**
c. to smoke cigarettes	69.1	16.4	**7.8**	**6.7**

These students perceive that adults in their neighborhood, like their parents, think that use of marijuana is very wrong, followed by drinking alcohol and smoking cigarettes, with 87%, 78% and 69% of students reporting these behaviors as very wrong for kids their age to indulge in, according to adults in their neighborhood. On the other hand, about 7%, 4% and 3% of students, respectively, think adults in their neighborhood see nothing wrong in kids their age smoking cigarettes, drinking alcohol or using marijuana, in that order.

STUDENTS' LIFE PROBLEMS AND HIGH RISK PRACTICES:

Asked whether they had ever participated in several problematic behaviors, such as gang membership, suspension from school or violence-related behavior, the following results were observed for middle school students surveyed in Northeast Tennessee. Nearly 9% (8.6%) reported that they had belonged to a gang, while 4.8% reported having been arrested at least once in their lifetimes. Suspension from school was reported by15.9% students. Certain practices related to violence or risk of violence were reported as follows: 5.5% of students had carried a handgun other than for hunting or sport, while 14.5% had attacked someone with the idea of seriously hurting them.

The results for students' exposure to and participation in risky and violent behaviors in the past 12 months, overall and in school, are reported below.

Percentage of Students who Reported in the Past 12 Months that They Had....	**%Yes, Overall**	**% Yes, at School**
a. gotten into a physical fight	35.7	13.6
b. taken part in a gang fight where a group of your friends was against another group	8.3	2.1
c. been injured in a fight	10.4	2.5
d. been physically abused or assaulted	7.5	3.5
e. stolen "pills" or prescription drugs including from home	4.8	0.5
f. stolen illegal drugs	4.0	0.6
g. bought "pills" or an illegal drug	6.7	1.8
h. been offered or given "pills" or an illegal drug	24.2	7.4

These results suggest that getting into physical fights is very frequent behavior in these middle school students, with more than 1 in 3 reporting fighting in the past 12 months and with over 38% of those fights occurring at school. Being offered or given pills or illicit drugs is next most frequent among these students, at 24% reporting this experience, with about 31% of such contacts occurring at school. Less frequently reported were being injured in

a fight, at about 1 in 10 students - with about 24% of those injuries occurring at school. Participation in gang fights was reported by 8.3% of youth. About 26% of these gang fights reportedly occurred at school. Being physically abused or assaulted was reported by about 7.5% of students, with close to 47% occurring at school. Buying pills or an illegal drug, stealing pills or prescription drugs including from home, and stealing illegal drugs were reported by nearly 7%, 5% and 4% of students, respectively. In about 26.5% of cases of buying pills or illegal drugs, this occurred at school, while in 11% and 14%, respectively, of cases where drugs were stolen - whether pills/prescription drugs or illegal drugs - the stealing was reported to have occurred at school.

Other High Risk Behaviors in the Past 12 Months:

In Northeast Tennessee, 10% of students reported that they had been suspended from school one or more times in the last 12 months. Substantially lower percentages of students reported serious criminal behavior - thus, 2.7% reported that they had stolen or tried to steal a motor vehicle, such as a car or a motorcycle, while 3.5% reported that they had been arrested at least once in the last 12 months.

Violent behavior was reported by 11.3% of students who said that they had attacked someone (physically) with the idea of seriously hurting them in the last 12 months. Overall, 10.8% of students had carried a weapon (such as a handgun, knife or club) other than for hunting or sport, and 1.6% had taken a weapon such as a gun to school at least once in the period in question.

In terms of alcohol and other drug use, 9.9% of these Northeast Tennessee middle school students had been drunk or high at school, and 1.2% reported this had occurred 20 times or more in the last 12 months. More than 4 percent (4.5%) of these youth reported that they had sold “pills” or illegal drugs in the past 12 months, and 2.7% of students reported that they had sold “pills” or illegal drugs at school.

Attitudes to Risky and Illegal Practices:

Tapping dimensions of impulsivity and rebelliousness, as well as other negative attitudes, these students’ responses indicate that impulsivity is very characteristic of these young people. More than half (54.5%) report that they often do things without thinking of consequences. Overall, 23.6% think it is not important to think before they act, and 21.6% have to have everything right away. Measures of rebelliousness and testing limits - liking to see how much they can get away with, reported by about 27% of students, ignoring rules that get in the way (about 25%), and doing the opposite of what people tell them just to provoke a reaction (20%) - are also relatively commonly reported by these students. The two depression-related questions above are discussed in an earlier section. Thinking it is OK to cheat at school was reported by around 19% of students.

Percentage of Students Whose Attitudes Put Them at High Risk and Therefore Who	% Yes	% No
a. think it is okay to cheat at school	**19.0**	81.0
b. like to see how much you can get away with	**27.0**	73.0
c. sometimes think that life is not worth it	**33.0**	67.0
d. think you are no good at all	**25.2**	74.8
e. ignore rules that get in your way	**25.0**	75.0
f. often do things without thinking what will happen	**54.5**	45.5
g. have to have everything right away	**21.6**	78.4
h. think it is important to think before you act	76.4	**23.6**
i. do the opposite of what people tell you, just to get them mad	**20.1**	79.9

Other Risk Taking:

Students who say that they often or almost always have done what feels good no matter what or have done something dangerous because someone dared them to do it represent 14.9% and 8.3% of students, respectively. Those students who conversely report that they never or rarely have done what feels good no matter what or done something dangerous on a dare comprise 43% and 65.1% of students in Northeast Tennessee.

FAMILIAL AND PEER ALCOHOL OR DRUG PROBLEMS:

Familial Alcohol or Drug Abuse:

Fully 32% percent of students reported that someone in their family has had a severe alcohol or drug problem.

Parental AOD Use: Answering the question, “Do you think one or both of your parents (stepparents or guardians) is drinking too much or has a problem with alcohol?”, 10.7% of students said “Yes”. More than 7% (7.4%) of students said that they think one or both of their parents is using or abusing drugs other than alcohol. A total of 14.2% of students think that one or both of their parents is using or abusing alcohol or has a problem with it.

Siblings’ AOD Use: Asked about alcohol and other drug use and high risk practices in their siblings, 11% of students had no brothers or sisters. However, for continuity and consistency of denominators, the following percentages are reported for all students.

Percentage of Students Reporting that One or More of Their Brothers or Sisters	% of All Students
a. drinks beer, wine, or hard liquor (for example, vodka, whiskey or gin)	19.8
b. smokes marijuana	12.5
c. smokes cigarettes	26.6
d. has taken a handgun to school	1.8
e. has been suspended or expelled from school	17.1

Cigarette smoking is most frequently reported for sibling drug use by these students at about 27%, followed by alcohol use and suspension from school at around 20% and 17% respectively. Marijuana use was reported for 12.5% of students' siblings. Handguns at school was least common at 1.8%.

Close Friends' Alcohol or Drug Problems: About 8.4% of students reported that they think that one or more of their close friends is drinking too much or has a problem with alcohol, and 14.4% said that they think that one or more of the close friends is using or abusing drugs other than alcohol.

STUDENT'S OWN ALCOHOL/DRUG USE:

While this was mainly a prevention survey, it is clear that many of these middle school students have already begun their alcohol and other drug use careers so that primary prevention, delaying onset of the initiation of first use of alcohol or other drugs, is for many an inappropriate strategy. Secondary prevention, reducing the use of alcohol or other drugs, mitigating the occurrence of negative and dangerous consequences, and breaking the dependence cycle early is more relevant. In some cases tertiary prevention or actual treatment is indicated, particularly in students who self-report addiction or dependence.

Cigarette Smoking:

While 38.3% of Northeast Tennessee students had ever smoked cigarettes; 27.8% of students had smoked cigarettes in the last 12 months, and 19.2% of students had smoked in the past 30 days. Thus, 71.5% of lifetime smokers had smoked in the last 12 months, and close to half (49.1%) of lifetime smokers had smoked in the past 30 days.

Students who had smoked cigarettes on 20 or more of the last 30 days comprised 6.1% of all students. Those who smoked 11 or more cigarettes in the past 30 days represented 3.2% of students. Also, 32.2% of current or 30-day smokers smoked cigarettes on 20+ of the past 30 days, and 17.2% of current smokers smoked 11 or more cigarettes in the past 30 days.

Smokeless Tobacco (Chewing Tobacco, Snuff, Plug, Dipping Tobacco):

More than 1 in 5 (20.2%) students have ever used smokeless tobacco. Fully 13% of students had used smokeless tobacco in the last 12 months, and 8.5% of students had used it in the past 30 days. Thus, 62.8% of lifetime users had used smokeless tobacco in the last 12 months, while 40.7% of lifetime users had used smokeless tobacco in the past 30 days.

Students who had used smokeless tobacco on 20 or more of the last 30 days comprised 2.1% of all students. Around 26.1% of current or 30-day smokeless tobacco users used it on 20+ of the past 30 days.

Alcoholic Beverages (Beer, Wine, Wine Coolers or Liquor):

Of these middle school students, ranging in age from 11 to 15 years, 44.8% had drunk alcoholic beverages more than a few sips at least once in their lifetimes. Fully 32% had drunk alcohol in the past 12 months, and 21.9% had done so in the past 30 days. Thus, given that students had ever used alcohol, 69.6% of them had drunk alcohol in the past 12 months, and 47.5% had drunk alcohol in the past 30 days.

Students who had used alcohol on 20 or more of the last 30 days comprised 1.2% of all students, and 5.5% of current drinkers. Students who reported daily alcohol consumption over the past 30 days represented 0.4% of all students. Daily drinkers made up 1.9% of current (30-day) drinkers among these students, and 35% of students who reported drinking on 20 or more of the last 30 days drank alcohol daily.

Among these middle school students, 5.9% drank 5 or more drinks of alcohol per day on their drinking days. These “binge drinkers” are 27.6% of current drinkers (last 30 days). Less than 1% (0.7%) of students reported drinking 5 or more drinks on 20 or more of the past 30 days. Finally 0.3% of students overall reported drinking 5 or more drinks of alcohol daily in the past 30 days.

In answer to the question, “Have you **ever** gotten drunk or felt very high or intoxicated from drinking alcohol?”, 21.4% of all students said that they had gotten drunk. This number represents 47.7% of lifetime drinkers.

Marijuana (Pot, Grass, Hash, etc.) Use:

About 20.9% of middle school students in Northeast Tennessee had ever used marijuana, while 14.7% had used marijuana in the past 12 months, and 11.2% in the past 30 days. While 67.6% of lifetime marijuana users used marijuana in the past 12 months, more than half (51.3%) of lifetime users had used marijuana in the past 30 days.

Students who had used marijuana on 20 or more of the last 30 days comprised 2% of all students, and students who reported daily marijuana use over the past 30 days represented 1% of all students. However, among current marijuana users (30-day users), 18.2% used on 20 or more of the past 30 days and 8.5% of current users reported daily marijuana use.

Percentage of Students Reporting Illegal Drug Use by Type of Drug and Lifetime, Recent or Current Use	**% Yes, Ever**	**% Yes, in the Last 12 Months**	**% Yes, in the Last 30 Days**
a. Cocaine or crack	5.1	3.5	2.9
b. Substances you "sniff": paint thinners, glue, gasoline, white-out, butane, aerosol sprays, etc.	14.2	11.1	9.3
c. LSD (acid) or other hallucinogens such as peyote, jimson weed, mushrooms, PCP (angel dust), etc.	8.6	6.3	5.6
d. Other illegal drugs such as ecstasy, ice (crystal meth), heroin (smack, horse, skag), etc.	6.3	4.9	4.4

It is very clear that inhalants are one drug of choice for these youth, since of the 14% of students who report lifetime use of inhalants to get high, 78.1% had used inhalants in the last 12 months, and 65.3% had used them in the last 30 days. Cocaine, on the other hand, was less likely to involve sustained use, since of the lifetime users of cocaine or crack (5% of students) among these middle school students, 69% had used cocaine in the last 12 months, and 56.3% in the last 30 days. For other illegal drugs and for hallucinogens such as LSD, the percentages of ever users who used in the last 12 months are 78.5% and 73.6%, respectively, while the proportions of ever users who used in the last 30 days are 64.9% for LSD and other hallucinogens, and 71% for other illegal drugs. About 0.8% to 1% of Northeast Tennessee students reported use of one or more of these illegal drugs daily in the last 30 days.

OVERALL ATOD, AOD AND DRUG USE PREVALENCE:

ATOD: Overall, more than half or 57.5% of middle schools students in Northeast Tennessee reported using alcohol, tobacco or other drugs (ATOD) in their lifetimes, while 46.6% reported 12-month use, and 36%, 30-day use of one or more substances (excluding caffeine and prescription drugs).

Given lifetime use, 78.1% had used ATOD in 12 months, and 59% in 30 days. Of 12-month users, 75.5% were 30-day users, suggesting that when youth begin their drug use careers, relatively few stop soon.

AOD: Excluding tobacco and looking only at the prevalence of use of alcohol and other drugs (save caffeine and prescription drugs), the lifetime prevalence of alcohol and other drug (AOD) use among these middle school students is 49.7%, the 12-month prevalence, 38.3%, and the 30-day prevalence, 29.2%. Here again, given lifetime use, 74.2% had used AOD in 12 months, and 55.6% in 30 days. Of 12-month users, 75% were 30-day users.

Drugs: Considering drugs only, 27.7% of middle school students had ever used one or more illegal drugs (excluding alcohol, tobacco or prescription drugs as well as caffeine). This compares to a 12-month drug use prevalence rate of 21.6%, and a 30-day prevalence rate of 17.9%. About 75.6% of lifetime drug users used drugs in the past 12 months. Sixty-two percent of lifetime drug users used drugs in the last 30 days. Among 12-month drug users, 82.2% were current or 30-day users.

AVERAGE AGE AT FIRST USE OF AOD:

Average Age at First Use by Type of Drug:	**Average Age of First Use (in Years)**
a. smoked cigarettes	10.0
b. used smokeless tobacco	10.1
c. drank alcoholic beverages	10.6
d. began drinking alcoholic beverages regularly, that is at least once or twice a month	11.5
e. got drunk or felt very high or intoxicated from drinking alcohol	11.6
f. used marijuana/pot	11.3
g. used cocaine or crack	11.0
h. used substances you “sniff”	10.8
i. used LSD (acid) or other hallucinogens	11.6
j. used other illegal drugs such as ecstasy, Ice (crystal meth), heroin, etc.	11.6

Cigarette smoking is the earliest onset substance use, beginning, on average, in these middle school students at age 10, followed by using smokeless tobacco at age 10.1 years and drinking alcohol at age 10.6 years. Inhalant use was reported as initiated at the average age of 10.8 years among these students. The onset of cocaine use was reported at age 11.0, while the use of marijuana started at age 11.3. This was followed by regular alcohol consumption (at least once or twice a month), starting at 11.5 years and the use

of LSD and other hallucinogens at age 11.6. The use of other illegal drugs such as ecstasy, crystal meth and heroin also began at age 11.6, on average, as did getting drunk or intoxicated.

Prescription Drug Abuse:

Prescription drug abuse is defined as having taken any prescription drugs or "pills" just to get high or for non-medical purposes, on one's own, without a doctor's prescription. More than 1 in 10 (11.4%) students reported prescription drug abuse in their lifetimes; 8.5% reported it in the past 12 months, and 5.2% in the past 30 days. Among lifetime prescription drug abusers, 72.7% had abused such drugs in the past 12 months, and 44.3% did so in the past 30 days.

SELF-REPORTED SUBSTANCE ABUSE/ADDICTION:

Answering "yes" to the question of lifetime or current addiction to or dependence on one or more drugs serves as a proxy measure of these youth's need for alcohol and other drug treatment[1]. The following table shows the extent of self-reported addiction among these students by type of drug and by lifetime or current prevalence.

Percentage of Students Ever or Now Addicted to Alcohol or Other Drugs by Type of Drug	% Ever Addicted	% Now Addicted
a. Tobacco/nicotine	14.0	10.5
b. Alcohol (beer, wine or liquor)	6.8	4.5
c. Marijuana/pot	6.7	5.3
d. Cocaine or crack	1.7	1.1
e. Hallucinogens like LSD or PCP or ecstasy	2.1	1.5
f. Coffee/cola/caffeine	32.0	25.7
g. A prescription drug or "pill"	5.1	3.1
h. Other drugs or substances	4.3	2.8

Based on lifetime prevalence of self-reported addiction to a drug or substance, caffeine/cola/coffee is the most prevalent drug, addicting about 1 in 3 students, followed, at a much lower level, at about 14%, by tobacco/nicotine, and about 6.7-6.8%, by alcohol

[1]The question contained in its wording a brief definition of addiction: "Do you think you have **EVER** been hooked on or addicted to any of the following substances (for example, did you try to quit or use less and had trouble doing so)? "

and marijuana. Addiction to a prescription drug or "pill" was reported by around 5% of students, and addiction to other drugs or substances by around 4%. About 2% of students reported addiction either to hallucinogens like LSD or to cocaine or crack.

Current addiction as self-reported by these students again showed caffeine as the number one drug of addiction, by far, at 26%, followed by tobacco/nicotine, at over 10%, and marijuana at over 5%. Alcohol addiction and "pills" were reported by 4.5% and 3.1%, respectively, of students. Other drugs or substances, hallucinogens and cocaine or crack were reported as current sources of addiction by decreasing percentages of youth, ranging from 2.8% down to 1.1%.

The percentage of lifetime addicted users who are currently addicted suggests some of the power of these drugs over these very young users. The highest percentage of ever addicted students are currently addicted to caffeine/cola/coffee (79.5%), followed closely by marijuana (78%). Slightly lower rates of ever to current addicted students are observed for tobacco/nicotine (74.4%) and hallucinogens such as LSD (73.5%), cocaine or crack, other drugs or substances, and alcohol had ever-to-current addiction ratios of 67.9%, 66.2% and 64.9%, respectively. The drug types least likely to be still addicting youth who reported ever being addicted to them are prescription drugs or "pills," at 60% of students ever addicted to them now addicted to them.

COMMUNITY INFLUENCES ON STUDENTS' AOD RISK:

Questions about students' communities and the areas around where they lived were expected to shed some light on risk and protective factors for alcohol and other drug use among middle school students.

Attitudes to Neighborhood:

While 11.3% of students said they did not feel safe in their neighborhood, or the area around where they live, the remainder or 88.7% did feel safe. Twenty-one percent of students said they did not like their neighborhood, with fully 79% feeling the opposite. While 25.9% of these youth would like to get out of their neighborhood, 74.1% would not. About 33.6% of students report that their neighbors notice when they are doing a good job and let them know about it, while for 65% and 62.7% of students respectively, there are lots of adults in their neighborhood they could talk to about something important or there are people in their neighborhood who encourage them to do their best.

Neighborhood Description:

When asked how well each of the following characteristics describe their neighborhood, or the area around where they live, students were most likely to report fights and crime and/or drug selling as characterizing their neighborhoods very well or somewhat well, with less emphasis on empty or abandoned buildings or lots of graffiti.

Percentage of Students Describing Their Neighborhood in Terms of the Following:	% Very Well	% Somewhat Well	% Not Well	% Not at All
a. Crime and/or drug selling	**7.2**	8.9	12.5	**71.3**
b. Fights	**8.2**	12.1	14.8	**64.9**
c. Lots of empty or abandoned buildings	**3.7**	6.1	13.5	**76.7**
d. Lots of graffiti	**4.0**	3.2	10.3	**82.4**

Only about 65% of students reported that their neighborhoods were not at all characterized by fights, and around 71% not at all characterized by crime and/or drug selling. On the other hand, close to 77% of students reported no empty or abandoned buildings, and 82% reported no profuse graffiti at all in their neighborhoods.

Adults Using Alcohol and Drugs in the Neighborhood:

In the last 12 months, 31.3% of these middle school students from Northeast Tennessee reported that they personally knew one or more adults who had used marijuana/pot, cocaine/crack or other illegal drugs. About 22.6% reported knowing at least one adult who had sold or dealt drugs in the last 12 months. Around 23.2% of students had known adults who carried handguns or other weapons not for hunting or sport, and about the same percentage (22.3%) had known adults who had done other things that could get them in trouble with the police - stealing, selling stolen goods, mugging, or assaulting others. Finally, nearly half (45.8%) of youth had known at least one adult who had gotten drunk or high in the last 12 months. Thus, drunkenness was by far the most commonly reported practice observed by these students among the adults in their neighborhoods.

When asked how many adults they knew personally who had engaged in these practices in the past 12 months, 14.4% of students cited 5 or more adults who had gotten drunk or high, while 8.2% knew 5 or more adults who had used marijuana/pot, cocaine/crack or other illegal drugs. About 5% knew five or more adults who had carried handguns or weapons (4.5%), sold or dealt drugs (5.2%), or done other things that could have gotten them in trouble with the police (4.5%).

Participation in Leisure Time Activities as Protective of AOD Use and Abuse:

The availability and participation in activities that are seen as protective of alcohol and other drug use and abuse in youth is reported on here.

Percentage of Students Participating in the Following Activities:	% Yes	% No	% Not Available in Their Community
a. Sports teams	**72.0**	25.6	2.5
b. Scouting	**21.3**	72.7	6.0
c. Boys and girls clubs	**22.6**	69.1	8.4
d. 4-H clubs	**35.1**	59.2	5.7
e. Service clubs (such as Junior Sertoma, Rainbow, etc.)	**11.8**	69.3	18.9
f. Church youth groups	**67.6**	30.2	2.2
g. Music/art/drama clubs	**35.7**	56.2	8.2
h. Other after school clubs	**36.7**	56.9	6.4

The leisure-time activity reported by most students was participation in sports teams at about 72%, followed by church youth groups at 68%. Moderately popular are music/art/drama clubs and other after school clubs, at about 36% and 37%, respectively. Also moderately popular where available are 4-H clubs (around 35%). Least popular were service clubs (at about 12%), followed by scouting and boys and girls clubs (at 21% and 23%, respectively). Least available activities in these communities were service clubs, boys and girls clubs and music/art/drama clubs.

Parental Guidance and Support:

Finally, parental guidance and support were assessed by a series of questions, such as "Do your parents want you to call if you are going to be late getting home?" To this question, 83.1% of students responded positively, and 16.9%, negatively. The question, "Does your family have clear rules about alcohol and drug use?" brought responses of 76.5%, "yes", and 23.5%, "no". The extent to which families fight is measured by answers to whether people in students' family often insult or yell at each other, reported by 36.6% of students, compared to 63.4% who say "no". While 28.4% of students reported that people in their family have serious arguments, 71.6% do not report this.

Answers to two hypothetical questions are also revealing of the extent of parental guidance and concern as perceived by these youth. First, 59.4% of students said that if they drank some beer, wine, or hard liquor (for example, vodka, whiskey, or gin) without their parents' permission, they would be caught by their parents, while 73.9% said that if they carried a handgun without their parents' permission, they would be caught by their parents.

POSITIVE PARENTAL ATTITUDES AND PRACTICES:

The frequency with which parents include youth in family decisions and praise and reward them is thought to be associated with protection against alcohol and other drug abuse. For these youth, parental guidance and support appears relatively high.

Percentage of Students Reporting Frequency of Parents:	**% Never/ Rarely**	**% Sometimes**	**% Often/Almost Always**
a. giving them lots of chances to do fun things with them	12.8	38.7	**48.5**
b. asking them what they think before most family decisions affecting the students are made	23.2	40.6	**36.3**
c. noticing when they are doing a good job and letting them know about it	15.2	30.4	**54.4**
d. telling the students they are proud of them for something they have done	12.1	26.6	**61.3**

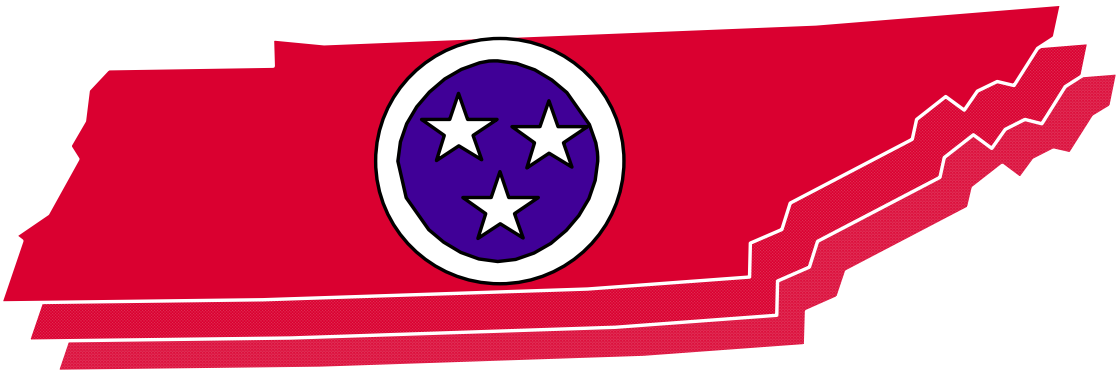
The most commonly reported supportive practice of parents toward these middle school students among the items measured is telling the students they are proud of their accomplishments, at 61% of students reporting parents as often or almost always doing so. This is followed by parents' noticing a good job and letting students know it (around 54%), and giving students lots of chances to do fun things with parents (about 49%). Least likely to occur often or almost always is parents' asking students what they think before family decisions affecting them are made, at 36.3% often or almost always doing so.

Finally, 86.9% of students say that their parents ask if they have gotten their homework done, while 13.1% do not. In 87.4% of cases, when students are not at home, one of their parents knows where they are and who they are with, while 12.6% do not. The great majority of students reported that their parents would know if they did not come home on time, at 87.1%, compared to 12.9% whose parents would not know. While 79.5% of students could ask their parents for help if they had a personal problem, 20.5% could not do so. Students were more likely to report that they often share their thoughts and feelings with their mothers (64.8%), compared to their fathers (47.5%).

TENNESSEE MIDDLE SCHOOL HEALTH SURVEY, 2001-2002

A SUMMARY OF FINDINGS FROM THE TENNESSEE MIDDLE SCHOOL HEALTH SURVEY

EAST TENNESSEE REGION



TENNESSEE DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH

AND THE

COMMUNITY HEALTH RESEARCH GROUP

THE UNIVERSITY OF TENNESSEE, KNOXVILLE

June 2003

TENNESSEE MIDDLE SCHOOL SURVEY RESULTS:
EAST TENNESSEE REGION

SOCIODEMOGRAPHIC CHARACTERISTICS:

Gender: A total of 3,485 students in randomly sampled middle schools grades 6-8 in East Tennessee completed surveys. They were split evenly by gender, with 50.2% being female and 49.8% male.

Grade: The split was approximately even by grade, 32.7% of the students sampled were in 6th grade, 34.4% in 7th grade and 32.9% in 8th grade.

Age: In terms of age, 9.0% of students were 11 years of age or younger, while 29.6% were age 12; 33.6% were age13; 23.8% were age 14; and 3.8% were 15 years of age or older.

Race/Ethnicity: While 91.3% of students were white, 4.7% were black and 4.0% were of other racial/ethnic groups.

Hispanic Origin: A total of 5.3% of students were of Hispanic origin.

OTHER BACKGROUND CHARACTERISTICS:

Two-Parent Family: While 73.2% of students in the study lived in two-parent families, 26.8% lived in families of other compositions.

Non-English Spoken At Home: While fully 96.6% of students reported that English was the language used most often in the home, 2.3% reported that language to be Spanish and another 1.2% reported another language as the language most often spoken at home.

Rural/Urban Residence: Almost two-thirds (64.5%) of middle school students lived in a city, town or suburb, i.e., an urban area, while the remaining 35.5% lived in rural areas. Of all students, 28.7% lived in the country, although not on a farm, and 6.8% lived on farms.

Proxy Measures of Poverty: In answer to the question, “Do you live in public housing?”, almost one-quarter (22.2%) of students did not know the answer, while 8.3% reported that they did live in public housing, and another 69.5% that they did not live in public housing. This measure was to be used as one indicator of poverty along with whether the family was on any form of public assistance. That question was phrased: “Does your family receive any form of public assistance, such as food stamps or other forms of welfare (such as Families First, WIC, TennCare/Medicaid, etc.)?” Again, almost one-quarter (22.9%) of the students did not know. Still 20% reported that their families did receive public assistance, while 57.1% did not. Combining these two measures produces a prevalence estimate of middle school students in poverty of 23.4% in the region as a whole.

Mobility/Migration: Only 30.7% of students had not changed homes since kindergarten, while 32% had changed homes 1-2 times; 19.8% had changed homes 3-4 times; and 17.6% had changed homes 5 times or more since kindergarten (9.3% had done so 5-6 times, and 8.5%, 7 times or more).

The Importance of Religion or Spirituality in Students' Families: Only 13.1% of East Tennessee middle school students reported that religion or spirituality was either not very important (10.1%) or not at all important (3%) in their families, For around half (50.8%) of these students, religion or spirituality was very important, while for 36.2%, it was somewhat important.

The Importance of Religion or Spirituality in Students' Own Lives: For 11.2% of East Tennessee middle school students, religion or spirituality was either not very important (7.4%) or not at all important (3.8%) in their own lives, while for 31.4%, it was somewhat important, and for more than half (57.4%), it was very important.

Attendance at Religious Services: Asked how often they attend religious services or activities, 11.6% of students said they never did, while less than once a month was the response chosen by another 11.1%. Attendance at religious services or activities occupied 19.1% of students 1-2 times a month, although not every week, while another 58.1% of students attended religious services once a week or more.

SCHOOL EXPERIENCE:

Grades Last Year: Getting mostly A's as grades in the last school year was reported by more than one-third (36%) of students, while mostly B's were reported by 36.4%, and mostly C's by 19.3%. Only 8.4% of students reported either mostly D's (4.8%) or mostly F's (3.6%).

A series of questions were asked concerning how often youth had certain experiences in school - whether rarely or never, sometimes or often or almost always. Categories are collapsed here into "often/almost always", and the residual which is "rarely, never or sometimes" in relation to students reporting those problems or experiences.

Percentage of Students Reporting that in the Past School Year They:	% Never/Rarely/ Sometimes	% Often/Almost Always
a. feel physically safe or safe from violence at school	**43.2%**	56.8%
b. try to do your best work in school	**28.2%**	71.8%
c. find most of your courses interesting to you	**82.4%**	17.6%
d. find the school work too hard to understand	90.2%	**9.8%**
e. fool around in class	87.4%	**12.6%**
f. fail to complete or turn in your assignments	93.3%	**6.7%**
g. get sent to the office or have to stay after school because you misbehaved	96.1%	**3.9%**
h. skip a day of school or part of a day (without permission)	98.2%	**1.8%**
i. get better grades than most of the students in your class	**78.1%**	21.9%
j. feel bullied by other kids at school	91.1%	**8.9%**
k. feel bored in school	68.5%	**31.5%**
l. hate being in school	74.5%	**25.5%**
m. think the things you are learning in school are going to be important for your later life	**55.2%**	44.8%

These attitudes among others studied in this survey are seen as protective or detrimental to efforts to prevent or reduce alcohol and other drug (AOD) use, abuse, problems or dependence among these youth. Results suggest that negative attitudes to school such as feeling bored in school and hating being in school were reported often or almost always by the most students at about 32% and 26%, respectively, while fooling around in class often or almost always was reported by 13%. Finding school work too hard to understand, failing to complete or turn in assignments, getting punished for misbehaving, or skipping school were reported often or almost always by close to 10%, more than 7%, nearly 4% and 1.8% of students, respectively.

A little more than half of students felt often or almost always safe at school (56.8%), with about 9% reporting being often or almost always bullied at school. Other common negative orientations to school were never, rarely or sometimes finding courses interesting, reported by 82% of students, with about 78% of students reporting never, rarely, or sometimes getting better grades than most other students. About 28% of students reported never,

rarely or sometimes trying to do their best work in school, and a little more than half (55%) reported not often thinking that what was learned in school was going to be important later in life.

Missing School: A fairly high percentage of youth (49.2%) missed school at least one time in the past 30 days because of illness or injury, while 12% missed school because of skipping or cutting classes, and 38.3% missed school for other reasons.

Opportunities for Participation:

The following results were obtained when students were asked, whether, in their middle school, they had certain opportunities for participation in activities. The purpose was to tap students' attitudes to the school experience in general.

Percentage of Students Reporting Certain Attitudes to School	% NO	% YES
a. In your middle school, do you have chances to be part of class discussions and activities?	**8.4**	91.6
b. do your teachers notice when you are doing a good job and let you know about it?	**24.9**	75.1
c. do you have lots of chances to get involved in school activities outside of class?	**32.9**	67.1
d. do students in your school have chances to talk to teachers one-on-one?	**15.5**	84.5
e. does your school let your parents know when you have done something well?	**59.5**	40.5

Here, around 8% of students reported feeling as though they did not have chances to participate in class, and about 16% reported no chances to talk to teachers one-on-one. Close to 1 in 4 students reported teachers not noticing and informing them when they were doing good work, and 1 in 3 reported that they do not have lots of chances to get involved in extra-classroom activities at school. Finally, close to 3 in 5 students said that their schools did not let their parents know when they had performed well.

HEALTH AND WELL-BEING OF MIDDLE SCHOOL STUDENTS IN EAST TENNESSEE:

Health Status: Overall, 12.8% of students reported that in general their health was either fair (11.8%) or poor (1.0%), while 25.3% reported good health, 30.6% very good health, and 31.3%, excellent health.

Disability Status: In answer to the question, “Do you now have any physical health problems or disabling conditions that keep you from doing normal activities?”, 89.5% of students said “no”, while 10.5% reported some disability.

Hyperactivity: In answer to the question, “Are you currently taking prescription drugs or “pills” for hyperactivity (ADD or ADHD) such as Ritalin?”, 8.3% of middle school students said “yes”, and 91.7% said “no”.

Receipt of any Treatment or Counseling Outside School: Lifetime prevalence of receipt of treatment for an emotional or mental health problem outside school was 12.8%. The prevalence of treatment for an alcohol problem was 1.7%; and for a drug problem, it was 2.8%. Receipt of treatment for either an alcohol or another drug problem was reported by 3.1% of middle school students in East Tennessee in 2001.

Attendance at Self-Help or 12-Step Support Group Meetings: Attendance at such self-help or 12-step meetings as Alateen, Al-Anon, Children of Alcoholics (COA), Alcoholics Anonymous (AA), Narcotics Anonymous (NA), Cocaine Anonymous (CA) was reported by 2.7% of students, while the remaining students or 97.3% had not done so.

Utilization of Emergency and Hospital Services:

Emergency Department Services: In the 12 months prior to the survey, 16.9% of students reported having been taken to an emergency room for an illness, and 25.1%, for an injury. An overall total of about one-third (34.8%) of students had been taken to an ED for either an illness or an injury in the past 12 months.

Hospital Admissions: In the last 12 months, 5.7% of middle school students had stayed at least one night in a hospital for an illness while 5.1% had stayed at least one night for an injury. Either illness- or injury-related hospital admissions were reported by nearly 1 in 10 (9.4%) students.

Depression and Suicide Attempts:

Indicators of potential depression and low self-esteem such as thinking that life is not worth it sometimes or that one is no good at all are relatively common among these East Tennessee middle school students. These two feelings were reported by 30.6% and 23.8% of students, respectively.

More specific questions about depression were asked, such as “How often do you feel very depressed, that is, very “blue” or unhappy?” While 40% of students reported never or rarely feeling very depressed, 47.2% reported that they sometimes felt this way, and 12.7% reported often or almost always feeling very depressed.

While 18.6% of middle school students reported ever feeling so desperate that they considered suicide, 7.2% reported ever attempting suicide. Those young suicide attempters represent 37.2% of students considering suicide.

Finally, 2.1% of students said they had ever gone to a hospital or gotten medical treatment because of a suicide attempt. This represents around 28.9% of those students attempting suicide.

Life Stressors: These students have already experienced a variety of life stresses such as relocations and related changes. Questions about their lifetime experience of selected stressors elicited interesting responses, reported below.

First, in answer to questions concerning whether these youth had experienced a move in the last 12 months, 22.9% of youth reported moving to a different home in the last 12 months, while 18.2% reported starting at a new school in the same period.

In answer to the question of lifetime stressors experienced, the percentages of students reporting each type of life change is presented below:

Percentage of Students Reporting Life Stressors by Type of Stressor in Their Lifetimes	% Yes	% No
a. had a death in the family	**87.6**	12.4
b. parents (guardians) divorced	**37.8**	62.2
c. family had financial problems	**36.0**	64.0
d. anyone in the family been arrested	**35.0**	65.0
e. new sister or brother born	**33.0**	67.0
f. had a serious illness or injury in your immediate family	**53.1**	46.9
g. had your own serious illness or injury	**33.3**	66.7
h. experienced another very stressful event	**51.7**	48.3

To the extent that these students between the ages of 11 and 15 for the most part have already experienced some major life crises, their coping skills and responses to stressors are of major interest and concern especially as they may protect against or increase the risk of alcohol and other drug use and associated problems.

Particularly prevalent was death in the family experienced by close to 90% of children, followed by serious illness or injury of a family member, and other stressful events, reported by more than half. For around 38% of students, parental divorce was reported, while 36%

reported family financial problems, and 35% arrest in the family. Own serious illness or injury and the birth of a sibling were reported by one-third of students.

FRIENDS/PEER INFLUENCES ON YOUTH BEHAVIOR:

Best Friends' Practices:

When asked about their four best friends (the friends they feel closest to) and whether in the past 12 months any of those best friends had engaged in alcohol or other drug use, a range of from a low of 5% to a high of about 14% of students reported that they did not know.

Percentage of Students with Any Best Friends, who, in the Past 12 Months, Did the Following:	**% Yes**	**% No**	**% Don't Know**
a. smoked cigarettes	**26.3**	61.7	11.9
b. drunk alcoholic beverages -- beer, wine, or hard liquor (for example, vodka, whiskey, or gin)	**25.0**	62.0	13.0
c. used marijuana/pot	**16.4**	72.6	11.0
d. taken "pills" to get high or for non-medical reasons	**12.8**	75.9	11.3
e. used LSD, cocaine, amphetamines/speed, or another illegal drug	**6.2**	82.2	11.7
f. been suspended from school	**25.5**	69.0	5.5
g. carried a handgun or other weapon like a knife (other than for hunting or sport)	**11.6**	81.1	7.3
h. taken a handgun to school	**1.4**	94.0	4.6
i. sold "pills" or illegal drugs	**7.8**	84.6	7.7
j. stolen or tried to steal a motor vehicle such as a car or a motorcycle	**4.9**	88.4	6.7
k. been arrested	**10.1**	84.0	6.0
l. dropped out of school	**4.9**	90.6	4.9
m. been members of a gang	**9.4**	81.8	8.8

Most frequently reported behaviors among best friends were smoking cigarettes , being suspended from school or drinking alcohol at 26%, 25.5% and 25% of students,

respectively. These were followed by using marijuana (16%), taking pills to get high (13%), carrying a weapon about 12%, being arrested and being gang members at about 9-10%. Selling pills or illegal drugs was reported by about 8% of students in relation to their best friends. On the other hand, taking a handgun to school was the least common practice reported for best friends at only 1.4%, followed by dropping out of school, stealing or trying to steal a motor vehicle, and using illegal drugs, which were reported for their best friends by about 5-6% of these youth.

Perceptions of Being Cool:

To elicit attitudes to the acceptability with peers of alcohol and other drug use, a series of questions was asked about how "cool" certain practices are perceived to be by middle school students, with the following results:

Percentage of Students Reporting the Chances They Would be Seen as Cool if They:	**% No or Very Little Chance**	**% Some Chance**	**% Pretty Good or Very Good Chance**
a. smoked cigarettes	79.1	14.5	**6.3**
b. began drinking alcoholic beverages regularly, that is, at least once or twice a month	78.9	14.3	**6.8**
c. smoked marijuana	79.7	12.2	**8.1**
d. carried a handgun	88.7	7.4	**3.9**

Clearly, behavior associated with the most "cool" perception is smoking marijuana, while the least "cool" is carrying a handgun. Regular alcohol use and smoking cigarettes were perceived as moderately "cool".

PERCEIVED RISK AND AVAILABILITY OF AOD:

The University of Michigan Monitoring the Future surveys of high school and middle school youth have found that the combination of perceived risk of harm and availability of substances together account for higher consumption of substances among the youth studied. The East Tennessee students' responses to these questions are provided below:

Perceived Risk of Substance Use:

How much students think people risk harming themselves (physically or in other ways) if they engage in each of the following practices involving AOD use gives a clear indication of students' assessment of relative risk of harm.

Percentage of Students Perceiving People's Risk of Harm from AOD Use:	% No Risk	% Slight Risk	% Moderate Risk	% Great Risk
a. smoke one or more packs of cigarettes per day	7.3	10.3	25.6	**56.8**
b. use smokeless tobacco	10.1	23.3	35.7	**30.9**
c. try marijuana once or twice	11.8	23.9	23.5	**40.7**
d. smoke marijuana regularly (at least once or twice a month)	8.9	10.0	21.0	**60.2**
e. drink any alcoholic beverages (beer, wine, liquor)	9.9	23.0	33.3	**33.8**
f. take one or two drinks of an alcoholic beverage nearly every day	11.5	15.9	26.0	**46.6**

Clearly, the most risk of physical or other harm is perceived by these middle school students from smoking marijuana regularly or smoking one or more packs of cigarettes a day (60% and 57% reporting great risk, respectively), while the lowest perceived risk is assessed for using smokeless tobacco or drinking any alcohol (at 31% and 34% great risk). Intermediate risks of harm are attributed to trying marijuana once or twice taking one or two drinks of alcoholic beverages nearly every day, at 41 % and 47% of students assessing great risk of harm to these practices, respectively.

Perceived Ease of Access to AOD:

Like perceived harmfulness or risk of harm from drugs, including alcohol, perceived ease of access to or availability of drugs serves as an important predictor of risk of AOD use and problems related to it.

Percentage of Students Reporting Relative Ease of Access to Drugs by Type - Q: How easy do you think it would be for you to get each of the following types of drugs if you wanted some?	% Very or Somewhat Easy	% Very or Somewhat Hard
a. Cigarettes	**55.8**	44.2
b. Smokeless tobacco	**44.4**	55.6
c. Alcohol (beer, wine or hard liquor)	**47.3**	52.7
d. Marijuana/pot	**30.1**	69.9

Percentage of Students Reporting Relative Ease of Access to Drugs by Type - Q: How easy do you think it would be for you to get each of the following types of drugs if you wanted some?	% Very or Somewhat Easy	% Very or Somewhat Hard
e. Drugs like cocaine/crack, LSD (acid), heroin, etc.	**19.9**	80.1
f. "Pills" like uppers/speed, downers, painkillers, tranquilizers	**32.6**	67.4
g. Something to sniff like glue or gasoline	**61.4**	38.6

The easiest substances for middle school students to access appear to be inhalants and cigarettes and alcohol, followed by smokeless tobacco. Pills like uppers, downers, etc. , and marijuana were seen as moderately easy to obtain, with illicit drugs like cocaine, hallucinogens, and heroin, for example, as the hardest to access in these students' opinions.

Ease of Access to a Gun:

In answer to the question, "If you wanted to get a gun, how easy would it be for you to get one?", 21.1% of middle school students said it would be very easy, and another 15.2% said somewhat easy, for a total of 36.3% reporting easy access to guns. The remaining 63.7% of students reported access to guns to be hard - either somewhat hard, at 16.8%, or very hard, at 46.9%.

Perceived Wrongness of Certain Personal Choices and Practices:

In answer to the question concerning how wrong one thinks it is for someone the student's age to use certain substances and engage in certain risky practices, the following were the results:

Percentage of Students Perceiving it Wrong to:	% Very Wrong	% Somewhat Wrong	% Not Very Wrong	% Not Wrong at All
a. drink beer, wine, or hard liquor (for example, vodka, whiskey, or gin) regularly (at least once or twice a month)	**71.5**	18.4	6.4	3.8
b. smoke cigarettes	**69.9**	18.6	7.1	4.4
c. smoke marijuana/pot	**83.8**	7.9	4.2	4.1
d. use LSD, cocaine, amphetamines/ speed or another illegal drug	**91.5**	4.9	1.8	1.8
e. steal anything worth more than $5	**71.9**	21.2	4.5	2.4
f. take a handgun or other weapon to school	**94.1**	3.2	1.2	1.5
g. pick a fight with someone	**42.2**	37.3	14.4	6.1
h. stay away from school all day when your parents think you are at school (skip school)	**68.7**	22.1	5.6	3.5
i. attack someone with the idea of seriously hurting them	**84.6**	10.2	2.6	2.6
j. beat up people if they start a fight	**46.2**	25.5	12.1	16.1

The practices perceived as most wrong, with the highest percentage of students reporting them as very wrong, were taking a handgun or weapon to school (94% reported this as very wrong) or using illegal drugs like LSD, cocaine or speed (91.5% very wrong). Attacking someone with the idea of hurting them or smoking pot/marijuana (at about 85% and 84%, respectively) were less likely to be judged as very wrong. Even less likely to be seen as very wrong were drinking alcohol regularly (71.5%), smoking cigarettes (70%), stealing anything worth more than $5 (72%), or skipping school (69%), each of which was reported by about 69-72% of students as being very wrong. Picking a fight with someone or beating up people if they start a fight were seen as very wrong by less than half (about 42% and 46%, respectively) of students. This suggests that picking fights or beating people up in fights, which are types of violent behavior, are less likely to be judged as very wrong by students themselves than is drug use - whether using alcohol, smoking cigarettes or using illegal drugs.

Students' Perceptions of How Wrong Parents Would Think Certain Behaviors:

Similar questions to those above were asked of students concerning parental views of how wrong certain practices are; the results follow:

Percentage of Students Reporting the Degree to which Their Parents Would Think it Wrong for Them to:	% Very Wrong	% Somewhat Wrong	% Not Very Wrong	% Not Wrong at All
a. drink beer, wine, or hard liquor (for example, vodka, whiskey, or gin) regularly (at least once or twice a month)	**87.7**	7.5	2.9	1.9
b. smoke cigarettes	**86.8**	7.7	3.0	2.5
c. smoke marijuana/pot	**93.7**	2.9	1.8	1.6
d. steal anything worth more than $5.00	**92.0**	5.2	1.3	1.4
e. draw graffiti, write things, or draw pictures on buildings or other property (without the owner's permission)	**90.3**	5.5	2.4	1.8
f. pick a fight with someone	**73.7**	18.1	5.1	3.1

Smoking marijuana ranks first in the percentage of students who think their parents would assess the practice as very wrong, at about 94%, followed by stealing anything worth more than $5 (92%), and drawing graffiti and related activities (90%). Slightly less wrong in student-assessed parental judgment are drinking alcohol regularly, and smoking cigarettes , which each drew responses of "very wrong" from about 87-88% of students. Consistent with earlier results, picking a fight with someone was seen as least likely to be seen as wrong for students to do by their parents, with about 74% of students assessing that behavior as very wrong from a parental viewpoint.

Students' Perceptions of How Wrong Adults in Their Neighborhood Think Certain Behaviors Are:

In parallel with the questions asked of the students themselves and their parents reported above, students were asked to assess how wrong most adults in their neighborhood, or the area around where they live, would think it is for kids their age to use alcohol and other drugs and engage in risky or illegal behaviors. The results are striking in comparison with those for the students and their parents.

Percentage of Students Reporting How Wrong Adults in their Neighborhood Think it is for Middle School Age Kids:	% Very Wrong	% Somewhat Wrong	% Not Very Wrong	% Not Wrong At All
a. to use marijuana	89.3	5.1	**2.6**	**3.1**
b. to drink alcohol	80.8	10.9	**4.5**	**3.9**
c. to smoke cigarettes	74.9	13.5	**6.1**	**5.6**

These students perceive that adults in their neighborhood, like their parents, think that use of marijuana is very wrong, followed by drinking alcohol and smoking cigarettes, with 89%, 81% and 74% of students reporting these behaviors as very wrong for kids their age to indulge in, according to adults in their neighborhood. On the other hand, about 5.6%, 4% and 3% of students, respectively, think adults in their neighborhood see nothing wrong in kids their age smoking cigarettes, drinking alcohol or using marijuana, in that order.

STUDENTS' LIFE PROBLEMS AND HIGH RISK PRACTICES:

Asked whether they had ever participated in several problematic behaviors, such as gang membership, suspension from school or violence-related behavior, the following results were observed for all middle school students surveyed in East Tennessee. Nearly 7% (6.7%) reported that they had belonged to a gang, while 5.3% reported having been arrested at least once in their lifetimes. Suspension from school was reported by 15.4% of students. Certain practices related to violence or risk of violence were reported as follows: 5.3% of students had carried a handgun other than for hunting or sport, while 12.7% had attacked someone with the idea of seriously hurting them.

The results for students' exposure to and participation in risky and violent behaviors in the past 12 months, overall and in school, are reported below.

Percentage of Students who Reported in the Past 12 Months that They Had....	%Yes, Overall	% Yes, at School
a. gotten into a physical fight	31.7	11.7
b. taken part in a gang fight where a group of your friends was against another group	7.1	2.7
c. been injured in a fight	9.5	2.7
d. been physically abused or assaulted	8.9	3.4
e. stolen "pills" or prescription drugs including from home	3.9	0.6
f. stolen illegal drugs	2.8	0.6

Percentage of Students who Reported in the Past 12 Months that They Had....	%Yes, Overall	% Yes, at School
g. bought “pills” or an illegal drug	4.9	1.6
h. been offered or given “pills” or an illegal drug	19.3	6.1

These results suggest that getting into physical fights is very frequent behavior in these middle school students, with around 1 in 3 reporting fighting in the past 12 months and with about 37% of those fights occurring at school. Being offered or given pills or illicit drugs is next most frequent among these students, at about 19% reporting this experience, with about 31.5% of such contacts occurring at school. Less frequently reported were being injured in a fight, at about 1 in 10 students - with about 28% of those injuries occurring at school. Being physically abused or assaulted was reported by about 9% of students, with 38% occurring at school. Participation in gang fights was reported by around 7% of youth. About 37.5% of these gang fights reportedly occurred at school. Buying pills or an illegal drug, stealing pills or prescription drugs including from home, and stealing illegal drugs were reported by 5%, 3.9% and 2.8% of students, respectively. In about one-third of cases of buying pills or illegal drugs, this occurred at school, while in cases where drugs were stolen – whether pills/prescription drugs or illegal drugs – the stealing was reported to have occurred at school, at about 17% and 20%, respectively.

Other High Risk Behaviors in the Past 12 Months:

Overall, 10.2% of students reported that they had been suspended from school one or more times in the last 12 months. Substantially lower percentages of students reported serious criminal behavior - thus, 2.7% reported that they had stolen or tried to steal a motor vehicle, such as a car or a motorcycle, while 3.9% reported that they had been arrested at least once in the last 12 months.

Violent behavior was reported by 9.5% of students who said that they had attacked someone (physically) with the idea of seriously hurting them in the last 12 months. Overall, 8.4% of students had carried a weapon (such as a handgun, knife or club) other than for hunting or sport, and 1.1% had taken a weapon such as a gun to school at least once in the period in question.

In terms of alcohol and other drug use, 6.5% of these East Tennessee middle school students had been drunk or high at school, and 1.1% reported this had occurred 20 times or more in the last 12 months. More than 3 percent (3.2%) of these youth reported that they had sold “pills” or illegal drugs in the past 12 months, and 2.1% of students overall reported that they had sold “pills” or illegal drugs at school.

Attitudes to Risky and Illegal Practices:

Tapping dimensions of impulsivity and rebelliousness, as well as other negative attitudes, these students' responses indicate that impulsivity is very characteristic of these young people. Nearly half report that they often do things without thinking of consequences. Overall, 23% think it is not important to think before they act, and 21% have to have everything right away. Measures of rebelliousness and testing limits - liking to see how much they can get away with, reported by about 25% of students, ignoring rules that get in the way (about 24%), and doing the opposite of what people tell them just to provoke a reaction (20%) - are also relatively commonly reported by these students. The two depression-related questions above are discussed in an earlier section. Thinking it is OK to cheat at school was reported by around 17% of students.

Percentage of Students Whose Attitudes Put Them at High Risk and Therefore Who.....	**% Yes**	**% No**
a. think it is okay to cheat at school	**17.0**	83.0
b. like to see how much you can get away with	**25.4**	74.6
c. sometimes think that life is not worth it	**30.6**	69.4
d. think you are no good at all	**23.8**	76.2
e. ignore rules that get in your way	**23.8**	76.2
f. often do things without thinking what will happen	**49.9**	50.1
g. have to have everything right away	**20.7**	79.3
h. think it is important to think before you act	77.0	**23.0**
i. do the opposite of what people tell you, just to get them mad	**19.8**	80.2

Other Risk Taking:

Students who say that they often or almost always have done what feels good no matter what or have done something dangerous because someone dared them to do it represent 13.4% and 7% of students, respectively. Those students who conversely report that they never or rarely have done what feels good no matter what or done something dangerous on a dare comprise 44.2% and 69.6% of students, overall.

FAMILIAL AND PEER ALCOHOL OR DRUG PROBLEMS:

Familial Alcohol or Drug Abuse:

Fully 28% percent of students reported that someone in their family has had a severe alcohol or drug problem.

Parental AOD Use: Answering the question, "Do you think one or both of your parents (stepparents or guardians) is drinking too much or has a problem with alcohol?", 9.6% of students said "Yes". Seven percent of students said that they think one or both of their parents is using or abusing drugs other than alcohol. A total of 13.1% of students think that one or both of their parents is using or abusing alcohol or has a problem with it.

Siblings' AOD Use: Asked about alcohol and other drug use and high risk practices in their siblings, 10% of students had no brothers or sisters. However, for continuity and consistency of denominators, the following percentages are reported for all students.

Percentage of Students Reporting that One or More of Their Brothers or Sisters....	% of All Students
a. drinks beer, wine, or hard liquor (for example, vodka, whiskey or gin)	15.9
b. smokes marijuana	9.8
c. smokes cigarettes	21.2
d. has taken a handgun to school	1.3
e. has been suspended or expelled from school	15.5

Cigarette smoking is most frequently reported for sibling drug use by these students at about 21%, followed by alcohol use and suspension from school at around 16% and 15.5% respectively. Marijuana use was reported for nearly 10% of students' siblings. Handguns at school was least common at 1.3%.

Close Friends' Alcohol or Drug Problems: About 6.2% of students reported that they think that one or more of their close friends is drinking too much or has a problem with alcohol, and 10.8% said that they think that one or more of the close friends is using or abusing drugs other than alcohol.

STUDENT'S OWN ALCOHOL/DRUG USE:

While this was mainly a prevention survey, it is clear that many of these middle school students have already begun their alcohol and other drug use careers so that primary prevention, delaying onset of the initiation of first use of alcohol or other drugs, is for many an inappropriate strategy. Secondary prevention, reducing the use of alcohol or other

drugs, mitigating the occurrence of negative and dangerous consequences, and breaking the dependence cycle early is more relevant. In some cases tertiary prevention or actual treatment is indicated, particularly in students who self-report addiction or dependence.

Cigarette Smoking:

More than 1 in 4 (28.6%) students have ever smoked cigarettes. Fully 19.3% of students had smoked cigarettes in the last 12 months, and 13.7% of students had smoked in the past 30 days. Thus, about two-thirds of lifetime smokers had smoked in the last 12 months, and close to half (47%) of lifetime smokers had smoked in the past 30 days.

Students who had smoked cigarettes on 20 or more of the last 30 days comprised 4% of all students. Those who smoked 11 or more cigarettes in the past 30 days represented 2.2% of students. Also, 29.7% of current or 30-day smokers smoked cigarettes on 20+ of the past 30 days, and 16.7% of current smokers smoked 11 or more cigarettes in the past 30 days.

Smokeless Tobacco (Chewing Tobacco, Snuff, Plug, Dipping Tobacco):

While 14.2% of students have ever used smokeless tobacco, 8.9% had used smokeless tobacco in the last 12 months, and 5.8% had used it in the past 30 days. Thus, 61% of lifetime users had used smokeless tobacco in the last 12 months, while 39.5% of lifetime users had used smokeless tobacco in the past 30 days.

Students who had used smokeless tobacco on 20 or more of the last 30 days comprised 1.5% of all students. Around 27% of current or 30-day smokeless tobacco users used it on 20+ of the past 30 days.

Alcoholic Beverages (Beer, Wine, Wine Coolers or Liquor):

More than one-third (36%) of these middle school students, ranging in age from 11 to 15 years, had drunk alcoholic beverages more than a few sips at least once in their lifetimes. Fully 24.7% had drunk alcohol in the past 12 months, and 16.9% had done so in the past 30 days. Thus, given that students had ever used alcohol, 67% of them had drunk alcohol in the past 12 months, and 45.5% had drunk alcohol in the past 30 days.

Students who had used alcohol on 20 or more of the last 30 days comprised 1% of all students, and 6.3% of current drinkers. Students who reported daily alcohol consumption over the past 30 days represented 0.5% of all students. Daily drinkers made up 3% of current (30-day) drinkers among these students, and nearly half (47.1%) of students who reported drinking on 20 or more of the last 30 days drank alcohol daily.

Among these middle school students, 3.6% drank 5 or more drinks of alcohol per day on their drinking days. These “binge drinkers” are 22.1% of current drinkers (last 30 days). Less than 1% (0.7%) of students reported drinking 5 or more drinks on 20 or more of the

past 30 days. Again, as a percentage of students drinking on 20 or more days in the last 30, those who drank 5 or more drinks represent 64.7%. These "binge" drinkers comprise 4.1% of students who drank any alcohol in the past 30 days. Finally 0.4% of students overall reported drinking 5 or more drinks of alcohol daily in the past 30 days. They comprise 75% of daily drinkers, and 2.2% of current or 30-day drinkers.

In answer to the question, "Have you **ever** gotten drunk or felt very high or intoxicated from drinking alcohol?", 14.5% of all students said that they had gotten drunk. This number represents 40.1% of lifetime drinkers.

Marijuana (Pot, Grass, Hash, etc.) Use:

About 15% (15.2%) of middle school students in East Tennessee had ever used marijuana, while 10.9% had used marijuana in the past 12 months, and 7.6% in the past 30 days. While 69.6% of lifetime marijuana users used marijuana in the past 12 months, nearly half (48.1%) of lifetime users had used marijuana in the past 30 days.

Students who had used marijuana on 20 or more of the last 30 days comprised 1.4% of all students, and students who reported daily marijuana use over the past 30 days represented 0.7% of all students. However, among current marijuana users (30-day users), 19.3% used on 20 or more of the past 30 days and 9.8% of current users reported daily marijuana use.

Percentage of Students Reporting Illegal Drug Use by Type of Drug and Lifetime, Recent or Current Use	**% Yes, Ever**	**% Yes, in the Last 12 Months**	**% Yes, in the Last 30 Days**
a. Cocaine or crack	3.8	2.7	2.0
b. Substances you "sniff": paint thinners, glue, gasoline, white-out, butane, aerosol sprays, etc.	9.1	7.3	5.9
c. LSD (acid) or other hallucinogens such as peyote, jimson weed, mushrooms, PCP (angel dust), etc.	5.9	4.2	3.4
d. Other illegal drugs such as ecstasy, ice (crystal meth), heroin (smack, horse, skag), etc.	4.3	3.5	2.8

It is very clear that inhalants are one drug of choice for these youth, since of the 9% of students who report lifetime use of inhalants to get high, 80.2% had used inhalants in the last 12 months, and 64.7% had used them in the last 30 days. Cocaine, on the other hand, was less likely to involve sustained use, since of the lifetime users of cocaine or crack among these middle school students, 69.8% had used cocaine in the last 12 months, and 51.3% in the last 30 days. For other illegal drugs and for hallucinogens such as LSD, the percentages of ever users who used in the last 12 months are 81.7% and 64.3%, respectively, while the proportions of ever users who used in the last 30 days are 57.1%

for LSD and other hallucinogens, and 64.3% for other illegal drugs. About 0.6% to 0.7% of East Tennessee students reported use of one or more of these illegal drugs daily in the last 30 days.

OVERALL ATOD, AOD AND DRUG USE PREVALENCE:

ATOD: Overall, nearly half or 47.4% of middle schools students in East Tennessee reported using alcohol, tobacco or other drugs (ATOD) in their lifetimes, while 36.7% reported 12-month use, and 28.5%, 30-day use of one or more substances (excluding caffeine and prescription drugs).

Given lifetime use, 74.4% had used ATOD in 12 months, and 56.9% in 30 days. Of 12-month users, 76.5% were 30-day users, suggesting that when youth begin their drug use careers, relatively few stop soon.

AOD: Excluding tobacco and looking only at the prevalence of use of alcohol and other drugs (save caffeine and prescription drugs), the lifetime prevalence of alcohol and other drug (AOD) use among these middle school students is 40.2%, the 12-month prevalence, 29.5%, and the 30-day prevalence, 22.5%. Here again, given lifetime use, 70.7% had used AOD in 12 months, and 53.1% in 30 days. Of 12-month users, 75.1% were 30-day users.

Drugs: Considering drugs only, 19.9% of middle school students had ever used one or more illegal drugs (excluding alcohol, tobacco or prescription drugs as well as caffeine). This compares to a 12-month drug use prevalence rate of 15.6%, and a 30-day prevalence rate of 12.5%. About 76.5% of lifetime drug users used drugs in the past 12 months. Among lifetime drug users 60.7% used drugs in the last 30 days. Among 12-month drug users, 79.2% were current or 30-day users.

AVERAGE AGE AT FIRST USE OF AOD:

Average Age at First Use by Type of Drug:	**Average Age of First Use (in Years)**
a. smoked cigarettes	10.0
b. used smokeless tobacco	10.3
c. drank alcoholic beverages	10.5
d. began drinking alcoholic beverages regularly, that is at least once or twice a month	11.6
e. got drunk or felt very high or intoxicated from drinking alcohol	11.9
f. used marijuana/pot	11.7

Average Age at First Use by Type of Drug:	Average Age of First Use (in Years)
g. used cocaine or crack	11.9
h. used substances you "sniff"	11.2
i. used LSD (acid) or other hallucinogens	11.5
j. used other illegal drugs such as ecstasy, Ice (crystal meth), heroin, etc.	12.1

Cigarette smoking is the earliest onset substance use, beginning, on average, in these middle school students at age 10, followed by using smokeless tobacco at age 10.3 years and drinking alcohol at age 10.5 years. Inhalant use was reported as initiated at the average age of 11.2 years among these students. The use of LSD or other hallucinogens began at 11.5 years. While regular alcohol consumption (at least once or twice a month), started at 11.6 years, and marijuana use, at 11.7 years, the use of cocaine, along with getting drunk or intoxicated, began at age 11.9, on average. The onset of use of other illegal drugs such as ecstasy, crystal meth and heroin was reported at age 12.1 years, the latest of all AOD use practices identified.

Prescription Drug Abuse:

Prescription drug abuse is defined as having taken any prescription drugs or "pills" just to get high or for non-medical purposes, on one's own, without a doctor's prescription. Close to 9% (8.8%) of students reported prescription drug abuse in their lifetimes; 6.6% reported it in the past 12 months, and 3.6% in the past 30 days. Among lifetime prescription drug abusers, 73.5% had abused such drugs in the past 12 months, and 39.9% did so in the past 30 days.

SELF-REPORTED SUBSTANCE ABUSE/ADDICTION:

Answering "yes" to the question of lifetime or current addiction to or dependence on one or more drugs serves as a proxy measure of these youth's need for alcohol and other drug treatment[1]. The following table shows the extent of self-reported addiction among these students by type of drug and by lifetime or current prevalence.

[1]The question contained in its wording a brief definition of addiction: "Do you think you have **EVER** been hooked on or addicted to any of the following substances (for example, did you try to quit or use less and had trouble doing so)? "

Percentage of Students Ever or Now Addicted to Alcohol or Other Drugs by Type of Drug	% Ever Addicted	% Now Addicted
a. Tobacco/nicotine	7.8	5.8
b. Alcohol (beer, wine or liquor)	4.2	3.1
c. Marijuana/pot	4.1	3.2
d. Cocaine or crack	0.9	0.6
e. Hallucinogens like LSD or PCP or ecstasy	1.2	0.7
f. Coffee/cola/caffeine	26.1	20.3
g. A prescription drug or "pill"	3.7	2.2
h. Other drugs or substances	3.0	1.9

Based on lifetime prevalence of self-reported addiction to a drug or substance, caffeine/cola/coffee is the most prevalent drug, addicting about 1 in 4 students, followed, at a much lower level, at about 8%, by tobacco/nicotine, and about 4%, by alcohol and marijuana. Addiction to a prescription drug or "pill" was reported by 3.7% of students, and addiction to other drugs or substances by around 3%. About 1.2% and 1%, respectively of students reported addiction either to hallucinogens like LSD or to cocaine or crack.

Current addiction as self-reported by these students again showed caffeine as the number one drug of addiction, by far, at 20%, followed by tobacco/nicotine, at over 5.8%. Alcohol and marijuana addiction was reported by more than 3% of students each, while prescription drugs or pills, other drugs or substances, hallucinogens and cocaine or crack were reported as current sources of addiction by decreasing percentages of youth, ranging from close to 2% down to 0.6%.

The percentage of lifetime addicted users who are currently addicted suggests some of the power of these drugs over these very young users. The highest percentage of ever addicted students are currently addicted to marijuana (78%), followed closely by caffeine/cola/coffee (76%). Slightly lower rates of ever to current addicted students are observed for tobacco/nicotine (74%), and alcohol (73%). Other illegal drugs or substances, and cocaine or crack had ever-to-current addiction ratios of 63% each. The drug types least likely to be still addicting youth who reported ever being addicted to them are hallucinogens and prescription drugs or "pills," at 59% of students ever addicted to them now addicted to them.

COMMUNITY INFLUENCES ON STUDENTS' AOD RISK:

Questions about students' communities and the areas around where they lived were expected to shed some light on risk and protective factors for alcohol and other drug use among middle school students.

Attitudes to Neighborhood:

Only 12% of students said they did not feel safe in their neighborhood, or the area around where they live, while the remainder or 88% did feel safe. Nineteen percent of students said they did not like their neighborhood, with fully 80% feeling the opposite. While 25.7% of these youth would like to get out of their neighborhood, 74.3% would not. About 37.5% of students report that their neighbors notice when they are doing a good job and let them know about it, while for 67.8% and 65.2% of students respectively, there are lots of adults in their neighborhood they could talk to about something important or there are people in their neighborhood who encourage them to do their best.

Neighborhood Description:

When asked how well each of the following characteristics describe their neighborhood, or the area around where they live, students were most likely to report fights and crime and/or drug selling as characterizing their neighborhoods very well or somewhat well, with less emphasis on empty or abandoned buildings or lots of graffiti.

Percentage of Students Describing Their Neighborhood in Terms of the Following:	% Very Well	% Somewhat Well	% Not Well	% Not at All
a. Crime and/or drug selling	**7.0**	8.1	10.0	**75.0**
b. Fights	**7.7**	10.9	14.2	**67.2**
c. Lots of empty or abandoned buildings	**4.6**	4.8	12.2	**78.4**
d. Lots of graffiti	**4.1**	3.2	7.7	**85.1**

Only about 67% of students reported that their neighborhoods were not at all characterized by fights, and around 75% not at all characterized by crime and/or drug selling. On the other hand, 78% of students reported no empty or abandoned buildings, and 85% reported no profuse graffiti at all in their neighborhoods.

Adults Using Alcohol and Drugs in the Neighborhood:

In the last 12 months, 25.2% of these middle school students from East Tennessee reported that they personally knew one or more adults who had used marijuana/pot,

cocaine/crack or other illegal drugs. About 18.0% reported knowing at least one adult who had sold or dealt drugs in the last 12 months. Around 19.2% of students had known adults who carried handguns or other weapons not for hunting or sport, and about the same percentage (19.5%) had known adults who had done other things that could get them in trouble with the police - stealing, selling stolen goods, mugging, or assaulting others. Finally, 37.9% of youth had known at least one adult who had gotten drunk or high in the last 12 months. Thus, drunkenness was by far the most commonly reported practice observed by these students among the adults in their neighborhoods.

When asked how many adults they knew personally who had engaged in these practices in the past 12 months, 12.7% of students cited 5 or more adults who had gotten drunk or high, while 8% knew 5 or more adults who had used marijuana/pot, cocaine/crack or other illegal drugs. About 4% knew five or more adults who had carried handguns or weapons (3.6%), sold or dealt drugs (4.5%), or done other things that could have gotten them in trouble with the police (4.4%).

Participation in Leisure Time Activities as Protective of AOD Use and Abuse:

The availability and participation in activities that are seen as protective of alcohol and other drug use and abuse in youth is reported on here.

Percentage of Students Participating in the Following Activities:	**% Yes**	**% No**	**% Not Available in Their Community**
a. Sports teams	**73.8**	23.5	2.7
b. Scouting	**24.5**	70.0	5.5
c. Boys and girls clubs	**26.3**	66.2	7.5
d. 4-H clubs	**32.7**	61.0	6.4
e. Service clubs (such as Junior Sertoma, Rainbow, etc.)	**16.8**	65.2	18.0
f. Church youth groups	**70.6**	27.1	2.4
g. Music/art/drama clubs	**40.1**	52.3	7.6
h. Other after school clubs	**44.1**	50.9	5.0

The leisure-time activity reported by most students was participation in sports teams at about 74%, followed by church youth groups at 71%. Moderately popular are music/art/drama clubs and other after school clubs, at about 40% and 44% respectively. Also moderately popular where available are 4-H clubs (around 33%). Least popular were

service clubs (at about 17%), followed by scouting and boys and girls clubs (at 25% and 26%, respectively). Least available activities in these communities were service clubs, boys and girls clubs and 4-H clubs.

Parental Guidance and Support:

Finally, parental guidance and support were assessed by a series of questions, such as "Do your parents want you to call if you are going to be late getting home?" To this question, 82.1% of students responded positively, and 17.9%, negatively. The question, "Does your family have clear rules about alcohol and drug use?" brought responses of 76.6%, "yes", and 23.4%, "no". The extent to which families fight is measured by answers to whether people in students' family often insult or yell at each other, reported by 32.7% of students, compared to 67.3% who say "no". About 26% of students reported that people in their family have serious arguments, while 74% do not report this.

Answers to two hypothetical questions are also revealing of the extent of parental guidance and concern as perceived by these youth. First, 60.7% of students said that if they drank some beer, wine, or hard liquor (for example, vodka, whiskey, or gin) without their parents' permission, they would be caught by their parents, while 74.8% said that if they carried a handgun without their parents' permission, they would be caught by their parents.

POSITIVE PARENTAL ATTITUDES AND PRACTICES:

The frequency with which parents include youth in family decisions and praise and reward them is thought to be associated with protection against alcohol and other drug abuse. For these youth, parental guidance and support appears relatively high.

Percentage of Students Reporting Frequency of Parents:	**% Never/ Rarely**	**% Sometimes**	**% Often/Almost Always**
a. giving them lots of chances to do fun things with them	11.5	36.1	**52.4**
b. asking them what they think before most family decisions affecting the students are made	21.8	39.5	**38.7**
c. noticing when they are doing a good job and letting them know about it	14.0	29.5	**56.5**
d. telling the students they are proud of them for something they have done	11.0	25.9	**63.1**

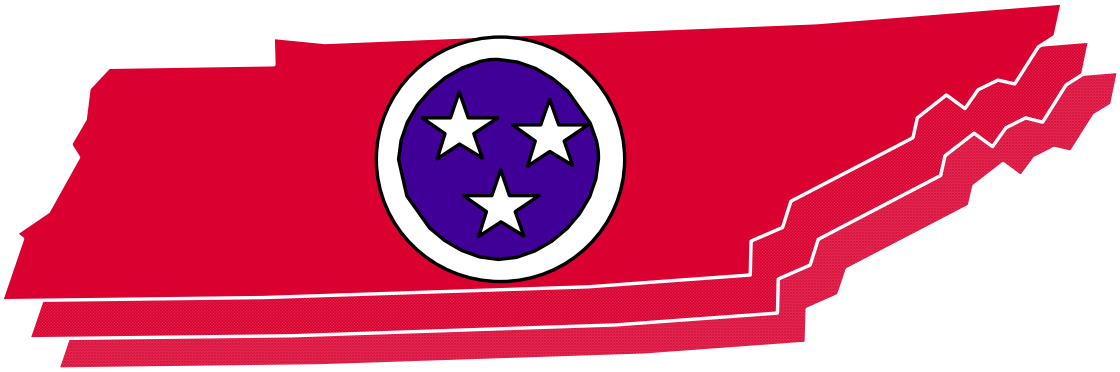
The most commonly reported supportive practice of parents toward these middle school students among the items measured is telling the students they are proud of their accomplishments, at 63% of students reporting parents as often or almost always doing so. This is followed by parents' noticing a good job and letting students know it (around 56.5%), and giving students lots of chances to do fun things with parents (about 52%). Least likely to occur often or almost always is parents' asking students what they think before family decisions affecting them are made, at 38.7% often or almost always doing so.

Finally, 87.4% of students say that their parents ask if they have gotten their homework done, while 12.6% do not. In 87.8% of cases, when students are not at home, one of their parents knows where they are and who they are with, while 12.2% do not. The great majority of students reported that their parents would know if they did not come home on time, at 87.6%, compared to 12.4% whose parents would not know. Eighty percent of students could ask their parents for help if they had a personal problem, compared to 20% who could not do so. Students were more likely to report that they often share their thoughts and feelings with their mothers (66.7%), compared to their fathers (49.5%).

TENNESSEE MIDDLE SCHOOL HEALTH SURVEY, 2001-2002

A SUMMARY OF FINDINGS FROM THE TENNESSEE MIDDLE SCHOOL HEALTH SURVEY

SOUTHEAST REGION



TENNESSEE DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH

AND THE

COMMUNITY HEALTH RESEARCH GROUP

THE UNIVERSITY OF TENNESSEE, KNOXVILLE

June 2003

TENNESSEE MIDDLE SCHOOL SURVEY RESULTS:
SOUTHEAST REGION

SOCIODEMOGRAPHIC CHARACTERISTICS:

Gender: A total of 3,496 students in randomly sampled middle schools grades 6-8 in the Southeast Region completed surveys. They were split evenly by gender, with 49.7% being female and 50.3% male.

Grade: The split by grade was weighted toward the lower grades, with 43.3% of the students sampled in 6th grade, 30.7% in 7th grade and 25.9% in 8th grade.

Age: In terms of age, 13.0% of students were 11 years of age or younger, while 34.6% were age 12; 30.2% were age13; 18.1% were age 14; and 4.2% were 15 years of age or older.

Race/Ethnicity: While 93.6% of students were white, 3.8% were black and 2.5% were of other racial/ethnic groups.

Hispanic Origin: A total of 4.1% of students were of Hispanic origin.

OTHER BACKGROUND CHARACTERISTICS:

Two-Parent Family: Seventy-two percent of students in the study lived in two-parent families, while 28% lived in families of other compositions.

Non-English Spoken At Home: While fully 98.5% of students reported that English was the language used most often in the home, 0.9% reported that language to be Spanish and another 0.6% reported another language as the language most often spoken at home.

Rural/Urban Residence: More than 2 in 5 (43.5%) middle school students lived in a city, town or suburb, i.e., an urban area, while the remaining 56.4% lived in rural areas. Of all students, 44.5% lived in the country, although not on a farm, and 11.9% lived on farms.

Proxy Measures of Poverty: In answer to the question, “Do you live in public housing?”, almost one-quarter (23.5%) of students did not know the answer, while 6.8% reported that they did live in public housing, and another 69.8% that they did not live in public housing. This measure was to be used as one indicator of poverty along with whether the family was on any form of public assistance. That question was phrased: “Does your family receive any form of public assistance, such as food stamps or other forms of welfare (such as Families First, WIC, TennCare/Medicaid, etc.)?” Again, almost one-quarter (24.6%) of the students did not know. Still 21.8% reported that their families did receive public assistance, while 53.6% did not. Combining these two measures produces a prevalence estimate of middle school students in poverty of 23.9% in the region as a whole.

Mobility/Migration: Only 32.0% of students had not changed homes since kindergarten, while 31.7% had changed homes 1-2 times; 18.7% had changed homes 3-4 times; and 17.6% had changed homes 5 times or more since kindergarten (9.4% had done so 5-6 times, and 8.2%, 7 times or more).

The Importance of Religion or Spirituality in Students' Families: Only 15.5% of Southeast region middle school students reported that religion or spirituality was either not very important (11.9%) or not at all important (3.6%) in their families, For almost half (47.0%) of these students, religion or spirituality was very important, while for 37.5%, it was somewhat important.

The Importance of Religion or Spirituality in Students' Own Lives: For 13.3% of Southeast region middle school students, religion or spirituality was either not very important (8.9%) or not at all important (4.4%) in their own lives, while for 33.4%, it was somewhat important, and for more than half (53.3%), it was very important.

Attendance at Religious Services: Asked how often they attend religious services or activities, 14.5% of students said they never did, while less than once a month was the response chosen by another 12.6%. Attendance at religious services or activities occupied 19.8% of students 1-2 times a month, although not every week, while another 53.2% of students attended religious services once a week or more.

SCHOOL EXPERIENCE:

Grades Last Year: Getting mostly A's as grades in the last school year was reported by over one-third (34.2%) of students, while mostly B's were reported by 34.8%, and mostly C's by 22.1%. Only 9.0% of students reported either mostly D's (6.0%) or mostly F's (3%).

A series of questions were asked concerning how often youth had certain experiences in school – whether rarely or never, sometimes or often or almost always. Categories are collapsed here into "often/almost always", and the residual which is "rarely, never or sometimes" in relation to students reporting those problems or experiences.

Percentage of Students Reporting that in the Past School Year They:	% Never/Rarely/ Sometimes	% Often/Almost Always
a. feel physically safe or safe from violence at school	**49.4%**	50.6%
b. try to do your best work in school	**27.9%**	72.1%
c. find most of your courses interesting to you	**81.9%**	18.1%
d. find the school work too hard to understand	89.2%	**10.8%**
e. fool around in class	87.4%	**12.6%**
f. fail to complete or turn in your assignments	93.5%	**6.5%**
g. get sent to the office or have to stay after school because you misbehaved	95.4%	**4.6%**
h. skip a day of school or part of a day (without permission)	97.8%	**2.2%**
i. get better grades than most of the students in your class	**79.6%**	20.4%
j. feel bullied by other kids at school	89.7%	**10.3%**
k. feel bored in school	70.5%	**29.5%**
l. hate being in school	74.3%	**25.7%**
m. think the things you are learning in school are going to be important for your later life	**52.4%**	47.6%

These attitudes among others studied in this survey are seen as protective or detrimental to efforts to prevent or reduce alcohol and other drug (AOD) use, abuse, problems or dependence among these youth. Results suggest that negative attitudes to school such as feeling bored in school and hating being in school were reported often or almost always by the most students at about 30% and 26%, respectively, while fooling around in class often or almost always was reported by 12.6%. Finding school work too hard to understand, failing to complete or turn in assignments, getting punished for misbehaving, or skipping school were reported often or almost always by close to 11%, close to 7%, close to 5% and more than 2% of students, respectively.

Only a little more than half of students felt often or almost always safe at school, with over 10% reporting being often or almost always bullied at school. Other common negative orientations to school were never, rarely or sometimes finding courses interesting, reported by 82% of students, yet with about 80% of students reporting never, rarely, or sometimes getting better grades than most other students. Twenty-eight percent of students reported

never, rarely or sometimes trying to do their best work in school, and a little more than half reported not often thinking that what was learned in school was going to be important later in life.

Missing School: A fairly high percentage of youth (53.4%) missed school at least one time in the past 30 days because of illness or injury, while 12.3% missed school because of skipping or cutting classes, and 41.5% missed school for other reasons.

Opportunities for Participation:

The following results were obtained when students were asked, whether, in their middle school, they had certain opportunities for participation in activities. The purpose was to tap students' attitudes to the school experience in general.

Percentage of Students Reporting Certain Attitudes to School	% NO	% YES
a. In your middle school, do you have chances to be part of class discussions and activities?	**9.9**	90.1
b. do your teachers notice when you are doing a good job and let you know about it?	**24.4**	75.6
c. do you have lots of chances to get involved in school activities outside of class?	**34.4**	65.6
d. do students in your school have chances to talk to teachers one-on-one?	**18.2**	81.8
e. does your school let your parents know when you have done something well?	**56.3**	43.7

Here, only about 1 in 10 students reported feeling as though they did not have chances to participate in class, and a little less than 1 in 5 reported no chances to talk to teachers one-on-one. Almost 1 in 4 students reported teachers not noticing and informing them when they were doing good work, and more than 1 in 3 reported that they do not have lots of chances to get involved in extra-classroom activities at school. Finally, close to 3 in 5 students said that their schools did not let their parents know when they had performed well.

HEALTH AND WELL-BEING OF MIDDLE SCHOOL STUDENTS IN THE SOUTHEAST REGION:

Health Status: Overall, 15.8% of students reported that in general their health was either fair (14.3%) or poor (1.5%), while 24.7% reported good health, 30.6% very good health, and 28.9%, excellent health.

Disability Status: In answer to the question, "Do you now have any physical health problems or disabling conditions that keep you from doing normal activities?", 89.5% of students said "no", while 10.5% reported some disability.

Hyperactivity: In answer to the question, "Are you currently taking prescription drugs or "pills" for hyperactivity (ADD or ADHD) such as Ritalin?", 6.7% of middle school students said "yes", and 93.3% said "no".

Receipt of any Treatment or Counseling Outside School: Lifetime prevalence of receipt of treatment for an emotional or mental health problem outside school was 10.4%. The prevalence of treatment for an alcohol problem was 2.2%; and for a drug problem, it was 3.0%. Receipt of treatment for either an alcohol or another drug problem was reported by 4.0% of middle school students in the Southeast region in 2001.

Attendance at Self-Help or 12-Step Support Group Meetings: Attendance at such self-help or 12-step meetings as Alateen, Al-Anon, Children of Alcoholics (COA), Alcoholics Anonymous (AA), Narcotics Anonymous (NA), Cocaine Anonymous (CA) was reported by 2.9% of students, while the remaining students or 97.1% had not done so.

Utilization of Emergency and Hospital Services:

Emergency Department Services: In the 12 months prior to the survey, 16% of students reported having been taken to an emergency room for an illness, and 25.6%, for an injury. An overall total of over one-third (35.5%) of students had been taken to an ED for either an illness or an injury in the past 12 months.

Hospital Admissions: In the last 12 months, 5.2% of middle school students had stayed at least one night in a hospital for an illness while 4.9% had stayed at least one night for an injury. Either illness- or injury-related hospital admissions were reported by almost 1 in 10 (9.0%) students.

Depression and Suicide Attempts:

Indicators of potential depression and low self-esteem such as thinking that life is not worth it sometimes or that one is no good at all are relatively common among these Southeast middle school students. These two feelings were reported by 31.9% and 24.7% of students, respectively.

More specific questions about depression were asked, such as "How often do you feel very depressed, that is, very "blue" or unhappy?" While 37.0% of students reported never or rarely feeling very depressed, 51.3% reported that they sometimes felt this way, and 11.7% reported often or almost always feeling very depressed.

Almost eighteen percent of middle school students reported ever feeling so desperate that they considered suicide, and 6.8% reported ever attempting suicide. Those young suicide attempters represent 36.2% of students considering suicide.

Finally, 1.9% of students said they had ever gone to a hospital or gotten medical treatment because of a suicide attempt. This represents around 27.9% of those students attempting suicide.

Life Stressors: These students have already experienced a variety of life stresses such as relocations and related changes. Questions about their lifetime experience of selected stressors elicited interesting responses, reported below.

First, in answer to questions concerning whether these youth had experienced a move in the last 12 months, 21.8% of youth reported moving to a different home in the last 12 months, while 26.5% reported starting at a new school in the same period.

In answer to the question of lifetime stressors experienced, the percentages of students reporting each type of life change is presented below:

Percentage of Students Reporting Life Stressors by Type of Stressor in Their Lifetimes	**% Yes**	**% No**
a. had a death in the family	**90.0**	10.0
b. parents (guardians) divorced	**39.9**	60.1
c. family had financial problems	**36.9**	63.1
d. anyone in the family been arrested	**43.5**	56.5
e. new sister or brother born	**33.5**	66.5
f. had a serious illness or injury in your immediate family	**55.8**	44.2
g. had your own serious illness or injury	**34.5**	65.5
h. experienced another very stressful event	**50.2**	49.8

To the extent that these students between the ages of 11 and 15 for the most part have already experienced some major life crises, their coping skills and responses to stressors are of major interest and concern especially as they may protect against or increase the risk of alcohol and other drug use and associated problems.

Particularly prevalent was death in the family experienced by 90% of children, followed by serious illness or injury of a family member, and other stressful events, reported by 50-56%. For around 44% of students, family arrests were reported, and by more than one-

third, divorce, family financial problems, own serious illness or injury and the birth of a sibling were reported in decreasing order of frequency.

FRIENDS/PEER INFLUENCES ON YOUTH BEHAVIOR:

Best Friends' Practices:

When asked about their four best friends (the friends they feel closest to) and whether in the past 12 months any of those best friends had engaged in alcohol or other drug use, a range of from a low of 4.6% to a high of almost 15% of students reported that they did not know.

Percentage of Students with Any Best Friends, who, in the Past 12 Months, Did the Following:	**% Yes**	**% No**	**% Don't Know**
a. smoked cigarettes	**30.5**	55.8	13.7
b. drunk alcoholic beverages -- beer, wine, or hard liquor (for example, vodka, whiskey, or gin)	**28.9**	56.6	14.6
c. used marijuana/pot	**16.6**	71.5	11.9
d. taken "pills" to get high or for non-medical reasons	**13.4**	73.6	13.0
e. used LSD, cocaine, amphetamines/speed, or another illegal drug	**6.4**	81.2	12.4
f. been suspended from school	**32.5**	61.4	6.1
g. carried a handgun or other weapon like a knife (other than for hunting or sport)	**13.4**	77.7	8.9
h. taken a handgun to school	**1.1**	94.0	4.9
i. sold "pills" or illegal drugs	**7.5**	84.5	8.0
j. stolen or tried to steal a motor vehicle such as a car or a motorcycle	**4.5**	88.3	7.2
k. been arrested	**10.3**	83.4	6.3
l. dropped out of school	**5.2**	90.3	4.6
m. been members of a gang	**10.0**	81.9	8.2

Most frequently reported behaviors among best friends were being suspended from school (33%), and smoking cigarettes or drinking alcohol at 29-31% of students each. These were

followed by using marijuana (16.6%), carrying a weapon and taking "pills" to get high at 13.4% each, and being arrested and being gang members at about 10% each. Selling pills or illegal drugs was reported by about 8% of students in relation to their best friends. On the other hand, taking a handgun to school was the least common practice reported for best friends at only around 1%, followed by stealing or trying to steal a motor vehicle, dropping out of school, and using illegal drugs, which were reported for their best friends by about 4.5-6% of these youth.

Perceptions of Being Cool:

To elicit attitudes to the acceptability with peers of alcohol and other drug use, a series of questions was asked about how "cool" certain practices are perceived to be by middle school students, with the following results:

Percentage of Students Reporting the Chances They Would be Seen as Cool if They:	**% No or Very Little Chance**	**% Some Chance**	**% Pretty Good or Very Good Chance**
a. smoked cigarettes	75.9	16.8	**7.3**
b. began drinking alcoholic beverages regularly, that is, at least once or twice a month	76.3	15.7	**8.0**
c. smoked marijuana	79.3	11.5	**9.2**
d. carried a handgun	87.2	8.0	**4.8**

Clearly, behavior associated with the most "cool" perception is smoking marijuana, while the least "cool" is carrying a handgun. Regular alcohol use and smoking cigarettes were perceived as almost equally "cool".

PERCEIVED RISK AND AVAILABILITY OF AOD:

The University of Michigan Monitoring the Future surveys of high school and middle school youth have found that the combination of perceived risk of harm and availability of substances together account for higher consumption of substances among the youth studied. The Tennessee students' responses to these questions are provided below:

Perceived Risk of Substance Use:

How much students think people risk harming themselves (physically or in other ways) if they engage in each of the following practices involving AOD use gives a clear indication of students' assessment of relative risk of harm.

Percentage of Students Perceiving People's Risk of Harm from AOD Use:	% No Risk	% Slight Risk	% Moderate Risk	% Great Risk
a. smoke one or more packs of cigarettes per day	7.1	12.0	27.3	**53.6**
b. use smokeless tobacco	11.6	26.3	35.3	**26.8**
c. try marijuana once or twice	13.5	23.0	23.7	**39.8**
d. smoke marijuana regularly (at least once or twice a month)	10.6	11.5	21.8	**56.0**
e. drink any alcoholic beverages (beer, wine, liquor)	10.2	24.5	32.5	**32.8**
f. take one or two drinks of an alcoholic beverage nearly every day	12.2	19.1	27.3	**41.4**

Clearly, the most risk of physical or other harm is perceived by these middle school students from smoking marijuana regularly at 56% reporting great risk, followed by smoking one or more packs of cigarettes a day (about 54% reporting great risk), while the lowest perceived risk is assessed for using smokeless tobacco (about 27% great risk), drinking any alcohol (about 33% great risk). Intermediate risks of harm are attributed to trying marijuana once or twice (40% great risk) and taking one or two drinks of alcoholic beverages nearly every day, at 41% of students assessing great risk of harm to this practice.

Perceived Ease of Access to AOD:

Like perceived harmfulness or risk of harm from drugs, including alcohol, perceived ease of access to or availability of drugs serves as an important predictor of risk of AOD use and problems related to it.

Percentage of Students Reporting Relative Ease of Access to Drugs by Type – Q: How easy do you think it would be for you to get each of the following types of drugs if you wanted some?	% Very or Somewhat Easy	% Very or Somewhat Hard
a. Cigarettes	**56.6**	43.4
b. Smokeless tobacco	**45.2**	54.8
c. Alcohol (beer, wine or hard liquor)	**47.6**	52.4
d. Marijuana/pot	**29.7**	70.3
e. Drugs like cocaine/crack, LSD (acid), heroin, etc.	**20.4**	79.6
f. "Pills" like uppers/speed, downers, painkillers, tranquilizers	**34.1**	65.9
g. Something to sniff like glue or gasoline	**60.7**	39.3

The easiest substances for middle school students to access appear to be inhalants and cigarettes, followed by alcohol and smokeless tobacco. Pills like uppers, downers, etc. and marijuana were seen as moderately easy to obtain, with illicit drugs like cocaine, hallucinogens, and heroin, for example, as the hardest to access in these students' opinions.

Ease of Access to a Gun:

In answer to the question, "If you wanted to get a gun, how easy would it be for you to get one?", 28.4% of middle school students said it would be very easy, and another 15.4% said somewhat easy, for a total of 43.8% reporting easy access to guns. The remaining 56.2% of students reported access to guns to be hard – either somewhat hard, at 15.6%, or very hard, at 40.6%.

Perceived Wrongness of Certain Personal Choices and Practices:

In answer to the question concerning how wrong one thinks it is for someone the student's age to use certain substances and engage in certain risky practices, the following were the results:

Percentage of Students Perceiving it Wrong to:	% Very Wrong	% Somewhat Wrong	% Not Very Wrong	% Not Wrong at All
a. drink beer, wine, or hard liquor (for example, vodka, whiskey, or gin) regularly (at least once or twice a month)	**70.0**	18.2	7.8	4.0
b. smoke cigarettes	**68.8**	18.9	7.4	4.9
c. smoke marijuana/pot	**83.8**	8.2	4.2	3.8
d. use LSD, cocaine, amphetamines/ speed or another illegal drug	**91.1**	5.2	1.7	1.9
e. steal anything worth more than $5	**72.9**	20.2	4.6	2.4
f. take a handgun or other weapon to school	**93.9**	3.5	1.0	1.5
g. pick a fight with someone	**45.2**	35.8	12.5	6.6
h. stay away from school all day when your parents think you are at school (skip school)	**70.7**	20.6	5.1	3.6
i. attack someone with the idea of seriously hurting them	**84.1**	10.9	2.6	2.4
j. beat up people if they start a fight	**45.6**	25.6	10.9	17.9

The practices perceived as most wrong, with the highest percentage of students reporting them as very wrong, were taking a handgun or weapon to school (93.9% reported this as very wrong) or using illegal drugs like LSD, cocaine or speed (91% very wrong). Attacking someone with the idea of hurting them or smoking pot/marijuana (at about 84% each) were less likely to be judged as very wrong. Even less likely to be seen as very wrong were stealing anything worth more than $5, skipping school, drinking alcohol regularly, or smoking cigarettes, each of which was reported by about 68-73% of students as being very wrong. Picking a fight with someone or beating up people if they start a fight were seen as very wrong by a little less than half (about 45-46%) of students. This suggests that picking fights or beating people up in fights, which are types of violent behavior, are less likely to be judged as very wrong by students themselves than is drug use – whether using alcohol, smoking cigarettes or using illegal drugs.

Students' Perceptions of How Wrong Parents Would Think Certain Behaviors:

Similar questions to those above were asked of students concerning parental views of how wrong certain practices are; the results follow:

Percentage of Students Reporting the Degree to which Their Parents Would Think it Wrong for Them to:	% Very Wrong	% Somewhat Wrong	% Not Very Wrong	% Not Wrong at All
a. drink beer, wine, or hard liquor (for example, vodka, whiskey, or gin) regularly (at least once or twice a month)	**87.1**	7.4	3.0	2.5
b. smoke cigarettes	**85.3**	8.3	3.1	3.3
c. smoke marijuana/pot	**93.6**	2.8	1.4	2.2
d. steal anything worth more than $5.00	**91.0**	5.7	1.3	2.0
e. draw graffiti, write things, or draw pictures on buildings or other property (without the owner's permission)	**90.3**	5.8	1.9	2.0
f. pick a fight with someone	**74.0**	17.3	5.3	3.5

Smoking marijuana ranks first in the percentage of students who think their parents would assess the practice as very wrong, at about 94%, followed by stealing anything worth more than $5 (91%), and drawing graffiti and related activities (90%). Slightly less wrong in student-assessed parental judgment are drinking alcohol regularly and smoking cigarettes, which each drew responses of "very wrong" from 85-87% of students. Consistent with earlier results, picking a fight with someone was seen as least likely to be seen as wrong for students to do by their parents, with about 74% of students assessing that behavior as very wrong from a parental viewpoint.

Students' Perceptions of How Wrong Adults in Their Neighborhood Think Certain Behaviors Are:

In parallel with the questions asked of the students themselves and their parents reported above, students were asked to assess how wrong most adults in their neighborhood, or the area around where they live, would think it is for kids their age to use alcohol and other drugs and engage in risky or illegal behaviors. The results are striking in comparison with those for the students and their parents.

Percentage of Students Reporting How Wrong Adults in their Neighborhood Think it is for Middle School Age Kids:	% Very Wrong	% Somewhat Wrong	% Not Very Wrong	% Not Wrong At All
a. to use marijuana	88.3	5.8	**2.7**	**3.3**
b. to drink alcohol	78.8	11.1	**5.4**	**4.6**
c. to smoke cigarettes	73.3	13.7	**6.6**	**6.5**

These students perceive that adults in their neighborhood, like their parents, think that use of marijuana is very wrong, followed by drinking alcohol and smoking cigarettes, with 88%, 79% and 73% of students reporting these behaviors as very wrong for kids their age to indulge in, according to adults in their neighborhood. On the other hand, about 7%, 5% and 3% of students, respectively, think adults in their neighborhood see nothing wrong in kids their age smoking cigarettes, drinking alcohol or using marijuana, in that order.

STUDENTS' LIFE PROBLEMS AND HIGH RISK PRACTICES:

Asked whether they had ever participated in several problematic behaviors, such as gang membership, suspension from school or violence-related behavior, the following results were observed for all middle school students surveyed in the Southeast region. Over 6% (6.2%) reported that they had belonged to a gang, while 5.5% reported having been arrested at least once in their lifetimes. Suspension from school was reported by 16.6% of students. Certain practices related to violence or risk of violence were reported as follows: 5.5% of students had carried a handgun other than for hunting or sport, while 14.1% had attacked someone with the idea of seriously hurting them.

The results for students' exposure to and participation in risky and violent behaviors in the past 12 months, overall and in school, are reported below.

Percentage of Students who Reported in the Past 12 Months that They Had....	%Yes, Overall	% Yes, at School
a. gotten into a physical fight	33.3	15.4
b. taken part in a gang fight where a group of your friends was against another group	8.7	3.6
c. been injured in a fight	10.0	3.0
d. been physically abused or assaulted	9.3	3.9
e. stolen "pills" or prescription drugs including from home	3.8	0.7
f. stolen illegal drugs	3.0	0.6

Percentage of Students who Reported in the Past 12 Months that They Had....	%Yes, Overall	% Yes, at School
g. bought “pills” or an illegal drug	4.3	1.3
h. been offered or given “pills” or an illegal drug	20.5	8.6

These results suggest that getting into physical fights is very frequent behavior in these middle school students, with more than 1 in 3 reporting fighting in the past 12 months and with about 46% of those fights occurring at school. Being offered or given pills or illicit drugs is next most frequent among these students, at close to 21% reporting this experience, with about 42% of such contacts occurring at school. Less frequently reported were being injured in a fight, at about 1 in 10 students – with about 30% of those injuries occurring at school. Being physically abused or assaulted was reported by about 9% of students, with 42% occurring at school. Participation in gang fights was reported by nearly 9% of youth. About 41% of these gang fights reportedly occurred at school. Buying pills or an illegal drug, stealing pills or prescription drugs including from home, and stealing illegal drugs were reported by about 4%, 3.8% and 3.0% of students, respectively. In about one-third of cases of buying pills or illegal drugs, this occurred at school, while in about 18-19% of cases where drugs were stolen – whether pills/prescription drugs or illegal drugs – the stealing was reported to have occurred at school.

Other High Risk Behaviors in the Past 12 Months:

Overall, 12.1% of students reported that they had been suspended from school one or more times in the last 12 months. Substantially lower percentages of students reported serious criminal behavior – thus, 2.2% reported that they had stolen or tried to steal a motor vehicle, such as a car or a motorcycle, while 4.3% reported that they had been arrested at least once in the last 12 months.

Violent behavior was reported by 10.6% of students who said that they had attacked someone (physically) with the idea of seriously hurting them in the last 12 months. Overall, 9.6% of students had carried a weapon (such as a handgun, knife or club) other than for hunting or sport, and 1.6% had taken a weapon such as a gun to school at least once in the period in question.

In terms of alcohol and other drug use, 7.8% of these Southeast region middle school students had been drunk or high at school, and 1% reported this had occurred 20 times or more in the last 12 months. More than 3 percent (3.1%) of these youth reported that they had sold “pills” or illegal drugs in the past 12 months, and 1.9% of students overall reported that they had sold “pills” or illegal drugs at school.

Attitudes to Risky and Illegal Practices:

Tapping dimensions of impulsivity and rebelliousness, as well as other negative attitudes, these students' responses indicate that impulsivity is very characteristic of these young people. Over half report that they often do things without thinking of consequences. Overall, 23.9% think it is not important to think before they act, and 20.6% have to have everything right away. Measures of rebelliousness and testing limits - liking to see how much they can get away with, reported by about 26% of students, ignoring rules that get in the way (about 24%), and doing the opposite of what people tell them just to provoke a reaction (19.9%) - are also relatively commonly reported by these students. The two depression-related questions above are discussed in an earlier section. Thinking it is OK to cheat at school was reported by around 16% of students.

Percentage of Students Whose Attitudes Put Them at High Risk and Therefore Who	**% Yes**	**% No**
a. think it is okay to cheat at school	**16.1**	83.9
b. like to see how much you can get away with	**25.7**	74.3
c. sometimes think that life is not worth it	**31.9**	68.1
d. think you are no good at all	**24.7**	75.3
e. ignore rules that get in your way	**23.7**	76.3
f. often do things without thinking what will happen	**51.1**	48.9
g. have to have everything right away	**20.6**	79.4
h. think it is important to think before you act	76.1	**23.9**
i. do the opposite of what people tell you, just to get them mad	**19.9**	80.1

Other Risk Taking:

Students who say that they often or almost always have done what feels good no matter what or have done something dangerous because someone dared them to do it represent 14.5% and 8.0% of students, respectively. Those students who conversely report that they never or rarely have done what feels good no matter what or done something dangerous on a dare comprise 44.4% and 69.3% of students, overall.

FAMILIAL AND PEER ALCOHOL OR DRUG PROBLEMS:

Familial Alcohol or Drug Abuse:

Fully 32.6% percent of students reported that someone in their family has had a severe alcohol or drug problem.

Parental AOD Use: Answering the question, "Do you think one or both of your parents (stepparents or guardians) is drinking too much or has a problem with alcohol?", 12.1% of students said "Yes". Over 8% (8.2%) of students said that they think one or both of their parents is using or abusing drugs other than alcohol. A total of nearly 16% (15.7%) of students think that one or both of their parents is using or abusing alcohol or has a problem with it.

Siblings' AOD Use: Asked about alcohol and other drug use and high risk practices in their siblings, 9.5% of students had no brothers or sisters. However, for continuity and consistency of denominators, the following percentages are reported for all students.

Percentage of Students Reporting that One or More of Their Brothers or Sisters	% of All Students
a. drinks beer, wine, or hard liquor (for example, vodka, whiskey or gin)	18.0
b. smokes marijuana	9.4
c. smokes cigarettes	23.7
d. has taken a handgun to school	1.1
e. has been suspended or expelled from school	17.7

Cigarette smoking is most frequently reported for sibling drug use by these students at about 24%, followed by alcohol use and suspension from school at around 18% each. Marijuana use was reported for over 9% of students' siblings. Handguns at school was least common at 1.1%.

Close Friends' Alcohol or Drug Problems: About 8.3% of students reported that they think that one or more of their close friends is drinking too much or has a problem with alcohol, and 10.7% said that they think that one or more of the close friends is using or abusing drugs other than alcohol.

STUDENT'S OWN ALCOHOL/DRUG USE:

While this was mainly a prevention survey, it is clear that many of these middle school students have already begun their alcohol and other drug use careers so that primary prevention, delaying onset of the initiation of first use of alcohol or other drugs, is for many an inappropriate strategy. Secondary prevention, reducing the use of alcohol or other drugs, mitigating the occurrence of negative and dangerous consequences, and breaking the dependence cycle early is more relevant. In some cases tertiary prevention or actual treatment is indicated, particularly in students who self-report addiction or dependence.

Cigarette Smoking:

More than 1 in 3 (34.7%) students have ever smoked cigarettes. Fully 24.5% of students had smoked cigarettes in the last 12 months, and 16.7% of students had smoked in the past 30 days. Thus, over two-thirds of lifetime smokers had smoked in the last 12 months, and close to half (47%) of lifetime smokers had smoked in the past 30 days.

Students who had smoked cigarettes on 20 or more of the last 30 days comprised 4.2% of all students. Those who smoked 11 or more cigarettes in the past 30 days represented 2.3% of students. Also, 25.3% of current or 30-day smokers smoked cigarettes on 20+ of the past 30 days, and 14.0% of current smokers smoked 11 or more cigarettes in the past 30 days.

Smokeless Tobacco (Chewing Tobacco, Snuff, Plug, Dipping Tobacco):

Almost 1 in 5 (18.5%) students have ever used smokeless tobacco. Fully 12.5% of students had used smokeless tobacco in the last 12 months, and 8.7% of students had used it in the past 30 days. Thus, 65.7% of lifetime users had used smokeless tobacco in the last 12 months, while 45.8% of lifetime users had used smokeless tobacco in the past 30 days.

Students who had used smokeless tobacco on 20 or more of the last 30 days comprised 2.4% of all students. Around 29% of current or 30-day smokeless tobacco users used it on 20+ of the past 30 days.

Alcoholic Beverages (Beer, Wine, Wine Coolers or Liquor):

More than 2 in 5 (40.7%) of these middle school students, ranging in age from 11 to 15 years, had drunk alcoholic beverages more than a few sips at least once in their lifetimes. Fully 29.0% had drunk alcohol in the past 12 months, and 20.0% had done so in the past 30 days. Thus, given that students had ever used alcohol, 69.0% of them had drunk alcohol in the past 12 months, and 47.3% had drunk alcohol in the past 30 days.

Students who had used alcohol on 20 or more of the last 30 days comprised 1.0% of all students, and 5.0% of current drinkers. Students who reported daily alcohol consumption

over the past 30 days represented 0.5% of all students. Daily drinkers made up 2.5% of current (30-day) drinkers among these students, and half (50.0%) of students who reported drinking on 20 or more of the last 30 days drank alcohol daily.

Among these middle school students, 4.3% drank 5 or more drinks of alcohol per day on their drinking days. These "binge drinkers" are 22.3% of current drinkers (last 30 days). Less than 1% (0.5%) of students reported drinking 5 or more drinks on 20 or more of the past 30 days. Again, as a percentage of students drinking on 20 or more days in the last 30, those who drank 5 or more drinks represent 50.0%. These "binge" drinkers comprise 2.5% of students who drank any alcohol in the past 30 days. Finally 0.4% of students overall reported drinking 5 or more drinks of alcohol daily in the past 30 days. They comprise 77.8% of daily drinkers, and 2.0% of current or 30-day drinkers.

In answer to the question, "Have you **ever** gotten drunk or felt very high or intoxicated from drinking alcohol?", 17.7% of all students said that they had gotten drunk. This number represents 43.6% of lifetime drinkers.

Marijuana (Pot, Grass, Hash, etc.) Use:

About 15% (15.4%) of middle school students in the Southeast region had ever used marijuana, while 10.7% had used marijuana in the past 12 months, and 7.2% in the past 30 days. While 67.4% of lifetime marijuana users used marijuana in the past 12 months, nearly half (44.8%) of lifetime users had used marijuana in the past 30 days.

Students who had used marijuana on 20 or more of the last 30 days comprised 1.2% of all students, and students who reported daily marijuana use over the past 30 days represented 0.8% of all students. However, among current marijuana users (30-day users), 17.4% used on 20 or more of the past 30 days and 11.6% of current users reported daily marijuana use.

Percentage of Students Reporting Illegal Drug Use by Type of Drug and Lifetime, Recent or Current Use	**% Yes, Ever**	**% Yes, in the Last 12 Months**	**% Yes, in the Last 30 Days**
a. Cocaine or crack	3.6	2.5	1.9
b. Substances you "sniff": paint thinners, glue, gasoline, white-out, butane, aerosol sprays, etc.	11.5	9.4	7.3
c. LSD (acid) or other hallucinogens such as peyote, jimson weed, mushrooms, PCP (angel dust), etc.	5.9	4.5	3.7
d. Other illegal drugs such as ecstasy, ice (crystal meth), heroin (smack, horse, skag), etc.	4.1	3.3	2.6

It is very clear that inhalants are one drug of choice for these youth, since of the 11.5% of students who report lifetime use of inhalants to get high, 81.8% had used inhalants in the last 12 months, and 63.1% had used them in the last 30 days. Cocaine, on the other hand, was less likely to involve sustained use, since of the lifetime users of cocaine or crack among these middle school students, 70.1% had used cocaine in the last 12 months, and 52.2% in the last 30 days. For other illegal drugs and for hallucinogens such as LSD, the percentages of ever users who used in the last 12 months are 81.6% and 76.4%, respectively, while the proportions of ever users who used in the last 30 days are 62.7% for LSD and other hallucinogens, and 63.2% for other illegal drugs. About 0.5% to 0.8% of Southeast region students reported use of one or more of these illegal drugs daily in the last 30 days.

OVERALL ATOD, AOD AND DRUG USE PREVALENCE:

ATOD: Overall, over half or 54.6% of middle schools students in the Southeast region reported using alcohol, tobacco or other drugs (ATOD) in their lifetimes, while 43.9% reported 12-month use, and 34.4%, 30-day use of one or more substances (excluding caffeine and prescription drugs).

Given lifetime use, 76.8% had used ATOD in 12 months, and 59.0% in 30 days. Of 12-month users, 76.9% were 30-day users, suggesting that when youth begin their drug use careers, relatively few stop soon.

AOD: Excluding tobacco and looking only at the prevalence of use of alcohol and other drugs (save caffeine and prescription drugs), the lifetime prevalence of alcohol and other drug (AOD) use among these middle school students is 47.0%, the 12-month prevalence, 35.9%, and the 30-day prevalence, 27.0%. Here again, given lifetime use, 73.2% had used AOD in 12 months, and 54.2% in 30 days. Of 12-month users, 74.0% were 30-day users.

Drugs: Considering drugs only, 23.3% of middle school students had ever used one or more illegal drugs (excluding alcohol, tobacco or prescription drugs as well as caffeine). This compares to a 12-month drug use prevalence rate of 18.2%, and a 30-day prevalence rate of 13.9%. About 75.9% of lifetime drug users used drugs in the past 12 months. Fifty-seven percent of lifetime drug users used drugs in the last 30 days. Among 12-month drug users, 75.6% were current or 30-day users.

AVERAGE AGE AT FIRST USE OF AOD:

Average Age at First Use by Type of Drug:	**Average Age of First Use (in Years)**
a. smoked cigarettes	9.9
b. used smokeless tobacco	10.3

Average Age at First Use by Type of Drug:	Average Age of First Use (in Years)
c. drank alcoholic beverages	10.4
d. began drinking alcoholic beverages regularly, that is at least once or twice a month	11.4
e. got drunk or felt very high or intoxicated from drinking alcohol	11.6
f. used marijuana/pot	11.5
g. used cocaine or crack	11.1
h. used substances you "sniff"	10.9
i. used LSD (acid) or other hallucinogens	11.5
j. used other illegal drugs such as ecstasy, Ice (crystal meth), heroin, etc.	11.6

Cigarette smoking is the earliest onset substance use, beginning, on average, in these middle school students at close to age 10 (9.9 years), followed by using smokeless tobacco at age 10.3 years and drinking alcohol at age 10.4 years. Inhalant use was reported as initiated at the average age of 10.9 years among these students. The onset of cocaine use was reported at age 11.1, followed by regular alcohol consumption (at least once or twice a month), starting at 11.4 years, and the use of LSD and other hallucinogens at age 11.5. The use of other illegal drugs such as ecstasy, crystal meth and heroin, and getting drunk or intoxicated, began at age 11.6, on average, the latest of all AOD use practices identified.

Prescription Drug Abuse:

Prescription drug abuse is defined as having taken any prescription drugs or "pills" just to get high or for non-medical purposes, on one's own, without a doctor's prescription. Nine percent of students reported prescription drug abuse in their lifetimes; 6.6% reported it in the past 12 months, and 3.7% in the past 30 days. Among lifetime prescription drug abusers, 72.1% had abused such drugs in the past 12 months, and 40.6% did so in the past 30 days.

SELF-REPORTED SUBSTANCE ABUSE/ADDICTION:

Answering "yes" to the question of lifetime or current addiction to or dependence on one or more drugs serves as a proxy measure of these youth's need for alcohol and other drug

treatment.[1] The following table shows the extent of self-reported addiction among these students by type of drug and by lifetime or current prevalence.

Percentage of Students Ever or Now Addicted to Alcohol or Other Drugs by Type of Drug	% Ever Addicted	% Now Addicted
a. Tobacco/nicotine	11.2	8.1
b. Alcohol (beer, wine or liquor)	6.3	4.1
c. Marijuana/pot	4.2	3.4
d. Cocaine or crack	1.0	0.6
e. Hallucinogens like LSD or PCP or ecstasy	1.2	0.7
f. Coffee/cola/caffeine	36.2	29.3
g. A prescription drug or "pill"	4.3	2.0
h. Other drugs or substances	3.1	1.8

Based on lifetime prevalence of self-reported addiction to a drug or substance, caffeine/cola/coffee is the most prevalent drug, addicting over 1 in 3 students, followed, at a much lower level, at about 11%, by tobacco/nicotine, and about 6.3%, by alcohol. Addiction to a prescription drug or "pill" or to marijuana was reported by around 4% of students, and addiction to other drugs or substances by around 3%. About 1% of students reported addiction either to hallucinogens like LSD or to cocaine or crack.

Current addiction as self-reported by these students again showed caffeine as the number one drug of addiction, by far, at 29%, followed by tobacco/nicotine, at over 8%, and alcohol at over 4%. Marijuana addiction was reported by more than 3% of students, while prescription drugs or pills, other drugs or substances, hallucinogens and cocaine or crack were reported as current sources of addiction by decreasing percentages of youth, ranging from 2% down to 0.6%.

The percentage of lifetime addicted users who are currently addicted suggests some of the power of these drugs over these very young users. The highest percentage of ever addicted students are currently addicted to marijuana (80%), followed closely by caffeine/cola/coffee (79.0%). Slightly lower rates of ever to current addicted students are observed for tobacco/nicotine (72.1%), and alcohol (63.5%). Cocaine or crack, other drugs or substances, and hallucinogens such as LSD, had ever-to-current addiction ratios

[1]The question contained in its wording a brief definition of addiction: "Do you think you have **EVER** been hooked on or addicted to any of the following substances (for example, did you try to quit or use less and had trouble doing so)? "

of 58.8%, 58.2% and 57.1%, respectively. The drug types least likely to be still addicting youth who reported ever being addicted to them are prescription drugs or "pills," at 46.1% of students ever addicted to them now addicted to them.

COMMUNITY INFLUENCES ON STUDENTS' AOD RISK:

Questions about students' communities and the areas around where they lived were expected to shed some light on risk and protective factors for alcohol and other drug use among middle school students.

Attitudes to Neighborhood:

Only 12.3% of students said they did not feel safe in their neighborhood, or the area around where they live, while the remainder or 87.7% did feel safe. Almost twenty percent of students said they did not like their neighborhood, with fully 80% feeling the opposite. Twenty-five percent of these youth would like to get out of their neighborhood, compared to the 75% who would not. About 36% of students report that their neighbors notice when they are doing a good job and let them know about it, while for 65.1% and 65.8% of students respectively, there are lots of adults in their neighborhood they could talk to about something important or there are people in their neighborhood who encourage them to do their best.

Neighborhood Description:

When asked how well each of the following characteristics describe their neighborhood, or the area around where they live, students were most likely to report fights and crime and/or drug selling as characterizing their neighborhoods very well or somewhat well, with less emphasis on empty or abandoned buildings or lots of graffiti.

Percentage of Students Describing Their Neighborhood in Terms of the Following:	% Very Well	% Somewhat Well	% Not Well	% Not at All
a. Crime and/or drug selling	**8.1**	8.4	9.5	**73.9**
b. Fights	**9.6**	10.1	13.2	**67.2**
c. Lots of empty or abandoned buildings	**5.1**	4.8	10.5	**79.6**
d. Lots of graffiti	**5.3**	2.8	6.7	**85.2**

Only about 67% of students reported that their neighborhoods were not at all characterized by fights, and around 74% not at all characterized by crime and/or drug selling. On the other hand, close to 80% of students reported no empty or abandoned buildings, and 85% reported no profuse graffiti at all in their neighborhoods.

Adults Using Alcohol and Drugs in the Neighborhood:

In the last 12 months, 29.2% of these middle school students from the Southeast region reported that they personally knew one or more adults who had used marijuana/pot, cocaine/crack or other illegal drugs. About 21.0% reported knowing at least one adult who had sold or dealt drugs in the last 12 months. Around 22.5% of students had known adults who carried handguns or other weapons not for hunting or sport, and about the same percentage (22.0%) had known adults who had done other things that could get them in trouble with the police - stealing, selling stolen goods, mugging, or assaulting others. Finally, about 2 out of 5 (43.1%) of youth had known at least one adult who had gotten drunk or high in the last 12 months. Thus, drunkenness was by far the most commonly reported practice observed by these students among the adults in their neighborhoods.

When asked how many adults they knew personally who had engaged in these practices in the past 12 months, 13.3% of students cited 5 or more adults who had gotten drunk or high, while 8.0% knew 5 or more adults who had used marijuana/pot, cocaine/crack or other illegal drugs. About 5% knew five or more adults who had carried handguns or weapons (4.8%), sold or dealt drugs (4.6%), or done other things that could have gotten them in trouble with the police (5.1%).

Participation in Leisure Time Activities as Protective of AOD Use and Abuse:

The availability and participation in activities that are seen as protective of alcohol and other drug use and abuse in youth is reported on here.

Percentage of Students Participating in the Following Activities:	**% Yes**	**% No**	**% Not Available in Their Community**
a. Sports teams	**72.1**	24.8	3.1
b. Scouting	**22.2**	69.9	7.9
c. Boys and girls clubs	**26.4**	63.2	10.4
d. 4-H clubs	**59.0**	37.4	3.6
e. Service clubs (such as Junior Sertoma, Rainbow, etc.)	**14.4**	64.0	21.6
f. Church youth groups	**67.5**	29.8	2.7
g. Music/art/drama clubs	**44.5**	48.0	7.5
h. Other after school clubs	**41.1**	53.1	5.8

The leisure-time activity reported by most students was participation in sports teams at about 72%, followed by church youth groups at 67.5% and 4-H clubs at 59.0%.

Moderately popular are music/art/drama clubs and other after school clubs, at about 45% and 41% respectively. Least popular were service clubs (at about 14%), followed by scouting and boys and girls clubs (at 22% and 26%, respectively). Least available activities in these communities were service clubs, and boys and girls clubs.

Parental Guidance and Support:

Finally, parental guidance and support were assessed by a series of questions, such as "Do your parents want you to call if you are going to be late getting home?" To this question, 81.1% of students responded positively, and 18.9%, negatively. The question, "Does your family have clear rules about alcohol and drug use?" brought responses of 76.5%, "yes", and 23.5%, "no". The extent to which families fight is measured by answers to whether people in students' family often insult or yell at each other, reported by 34.8% of students, compared to 65.2% who say "no". About 27% (27.3%) of students reported that people in their family have serious arguments, while 72.7% do not report this.

Answers to two hypothetical questions are also revealing of the extent of parental guidance and concern as perceived by these youth. First, 60.8% of students said that if they drank some beer, wine, or hard liquor (for example, vodka, whiskey, or gin) without their parents' permission, they would be caught by their parents, while 73.2% said that if they carried a handgun without their parents' permission, they would be caught by their parents.

POSITIVE PARENTAL ATTITUDES AND PRACTICES:

The frequency with which parents include youth in family decisions and praise and reward them is thought to be associated with protection against alcohol and other drug abuse. For these youth, parental guidance and support appears relatively high.

Percentage of Students Reporting Frequency of Parents:	% Never/ Rarely	% Sometimes	% Often/Almost Always
a. giving them lots of chances to do fun things with them	12.1	39.4	**48.5**
b. asking them what they think before most family decisions affecting the students are made	24.4	40.4	**35.2**
c. noticing when they are doing a good job and letting them know about it	13.8	32.0	**54.2**
d. telling the students they are proud of them for something they have done	10.8	26.8	**62.4**

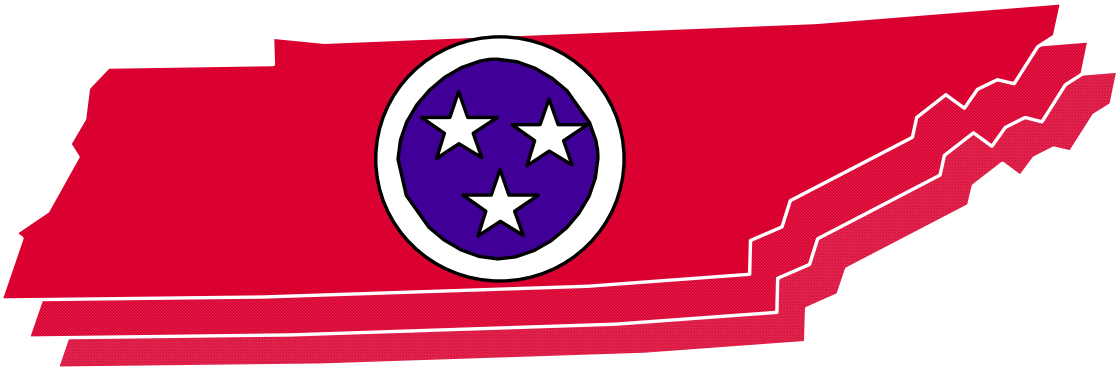
The most commonly reported supportive practice of parents toward these middle school students among the items measured is telling the students they are proud of their accomplishments, at over 62% of students reporting parents as often or almost always doing so. This is followed by parents' noticing a good job and letting students know it (around 54%), and giving students lots of chances to do fun things with parents (about 48.5%). Least likely to occur often or almost always is parents' asking students what they think before family decisions affecting them are made, at 35.2% often or almost always doing so.

Finally, 88.6% of students say that their parents ask if they have gotten their homework done, while 11.3% do not. In 88.5% of cases, when students are not at home, one of their parents knows where they are and who they are with, while 11.5% do not. The great majority of students reported that their parents would know if they did not come home on time, at 88.1%, compared to 11.9% whose parents would not know. Eighty percent of students could ask their parents for help if they had a personal problem, compared to 20% who could not do so. Students were more likely to report that they often share their thoughts and feelings with their mothers (67.4%), compared to their fathers (47.6%).

TENNESSEE MIDDLE SCHOOL HEALTH SURVEY, 2001-2002

A SUMMARY OF FINDINGS FROM THE TENNESSEE MIDDLE SCHOOL HEALTH SURVEY

UPPER CUMBERLAND REGION



TENNESSEE DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH

AND THE

COMMUNITY HEALTH RESEARCH GROUP

THE UNIVERSITY OF TENNESSEE, KNOXVILLE

June 2003

TENNESSEE MIDDLE SCHOOL SURVEY RESULTS:
UPPER CUMBERLAND REGION

SOCIODEMOGRAPHIC CHARACTERISTICS:

Gender: A total of 3,050 students in randomly sampled middle schools grades 6-8 in the Upper Cumberland region of Tennessee completed surveys. They were split evenly by gender, with 51% being female and 49% male.

Grade: The split was approximately even by grade, 32.7% of the students sampled were in 6th grade, 34.3% in 7th grade and 33.0% in 8th grade.

Age: In terms of age, 8.8% of students were 11 years of age or younger, while 28.7% were age 12; 34.0% were age13; 23.5% were age 14; and 5.2% were 15 years of age or older.

Race/Ethnicity: While 96.6% of students were white, 1.1% were black and 2.4% were of other racial/ethnic groups.

Hispanic Origin: A total of 3.2% of students were of Hispanic origin.

OTHER BACKGROUND CHARACTERISTICS:

Two-Parent Family: Almost 74% of students in the Upper Cumberland region lived in two-parent families, 26% lived in families of other compositions.

Non-English Spoken At Home: While fully 98.8% of students reported that English was the language used most often in the home, 0.7% reported that language to be Spanish and another 0.5% reported another language as the language most often spoken at home.

Rural/Urban Residence: Almost one-third (30.2%) of middle school students lived in a city, town or suburb, i.e., an urban area, while the remaining 69.8% lived in rural areas. Of all students, 49.1% lived in the country, although not on a farm, and 20.7% lived on farms.

Proxy Measures of Poverty: In answer to the question, “Do you live in public housing?”, 16.7%of students did not know the answer, while 4.7% reported that they did live in public housing, and another 78.6% that they did not live in public housing. This measure was to be used as one indicator of poverty along with whether the family was on any form of public assistance. That question was phrased: “Does your family receive any form of public assistance, such as food stamps or other forms of welfare (such as Families First, WIC, TennCare/Medicaid, etc.)?” More than one in five (21.0%) of the students did not know. Still 22.1% reported that their families did receive public assistance, while 56.9% did not. Combining these two measures produces a prevalence estimate of middle school students in poverty of 21.9% in the region as a whole.

Mobility/Migration: Only 33.1% of students had not changed homes since kindergarten, while 32.2% had changed homes 1-2 times; 18.2% had changed homes 3-4 times; and 16.4% had changed homes 5 times or more since kindergarten (9.3% had done so 5-6 times, and 7.1%, 7 times or more).

The Importance of Religion or Spirituality in Students' Families: Only 15.4% of Upper Cumberland middle school students reported that religion or spirituality was either not very important (12.1%) or not at all important (3.3%) in their families, For almost half (47.5%) of these students, religion or spirituality was very important, while for 37.2%, it was somewhat important.

The Importance of Religion or Spirituality in Students' Own Lives: For 13.4% of Upper Cumberland middle school students, religion or spirituality was either not very important (9.3%) or not at all important (4.1%) in their own lives, while for 33.3%, it was somewhat important, and for more than half (53.3%), it was very important.

Attendance at Religious Services: Asked how often they attend religious services or activities, 13.7% of students said they never did, while less than once a month was the response chosen by another 11.4%. Attendance at religious services or activities occupied 18% of students 1-2 times a month, although not every week, while another 56.9% of students attended religious services once a week or more.

SCHOOL EXPERIENCE:

Grades Last Year: Getting mostly A's as grades in the last school year was reported by more than one-quarter (24.1%) of students, while mostly B's were reported by 41.3%, and mostly C's by 23.7%. Only 10.9% of students reported either mostly D's (6.8%) or mostly F's (4.1%).

A series of questions were asked concerning how often youth had certain experiences in school - whether rarely or never, sometimes or often or almost always. Categories are collapsed here into "often/almost always", and the residual which is "rarely, never or sometimes" in relation to students reporting those problems or experiences.

Percentage of Students Reporting that in the Past School Year They:	% Never/Rarely/ Sometimes	% Often/Almost Always
a. feel physically safe or safe from violence at school	**41.6%**	58.4%
b. try to do your best work in school	**30.8%**	69.2%
c. find most of your courses interesting to you	**85.8%**	14.2%
d. find the school work too hard to understand	90.3%	**9.7%**
e. fool around in class	84.3%	**15.7%**
f. fail to complete or turn in your assignments	94.2%	**5.8%**
g. get sent to the office or have to stay after school because you misbehaved	96.0%	**4.0%**
h. skip a day of school or part of a day (without permission)	97.8%	**2.2%**
i. get better grades than most of the students in your class	**80.2%**	19.8%
j. feel bullied by other kids at school	90.8%	**9.2%**
k. feel bored in school	68.8%	**31.2%**
l. hate being in school	74.1%	**25.9%**
m. think the things you are learning in school are going to be important for your later life	**53.1%**	46.9%

These attitudes among others studied in this survey are seen as protective or detrimental to efforts to prevent or reduce alcohol and other drug (AOD) use, abuse, problems or dependence among these youth. Results suggest that negative attitudes to school such as feeling bored in school and hating being in school were reported often or almost always by the most students at about 31% and 26%, respectively, while fooling around in class often or almost always was reported by nearly 16%. Finding school work too hard to understand, failing to complete or turn in assignments, getting punished for misbehaving, or skipping school were reported often or almost always by close to 10%, close to 6%, 4% and over 2% of students, respectively.

A little more than half of students felt often or almost always safe at school (58.4%), with about 9% reporting being often or almost always bullied at school. Other common negative orientations to school were never, rarely or sometimes finding courses interesting, reported by almost 86% of students, with about 80% of students reporting never, rarely, or sometimes getting better grades than most other students. Thirty-one percent of students

reported never, rarely or sometimes trying to do their best work in school, and a little more than half (53.1%) reported not often thinking that what was learned in school was going to be important later in life.

Missing School: A fairly high percentage of youth (47.8%) missed school at least one time in the past 30 days because of illness or injury, while 15.1% missed school because of skipping or cutting classes, and 36.8% missed school for other reasons.

Opportunities for Participation:

The following results were obtained when students were asked, whether, in their middle school, they had certain opportunities for participation in activities. The purpose was to tap students' attitudes to the school experience in general.

Percentage of Students Reporting Certain Attitudes to School	% NO	% YES
a. In your middle school, do you have chances to be part of class discussions and activities?	**9.9**	90.1
b. do your teachers notice when you are doing a good job and let you know about it?	**24.1**	75.9
c. do you have lots of chances to get involved in school activities outside of class?	**34.5**	65.5
d. do students in your school have chances to talk to teachers one-on-one?	**15.6**	84.4
e. does your school let your parents know when you have done something well?	**54.1**	45.9

Here, only about 1 in 10 students reported feeling as though they did not have chances to participate in class, and 15.6% reported no chances to talk to teachers one-on-one. Almost 1 in 4 students reported teachers not noticing and informing them when they were doing good work, and 1 in 3 reported that they do not have lots of chances to get involved in extra-classroom activities at school. Finally, over half of the students said that their schools did not let their parents know when they had performed well.

HEALTH AND WELL-BEING OF MIDDLE SCHOOL STUDENTS IN THE UPPER CUMBERLAND REGION:

Health Status: Overall, 16.0% of students reported that in general their health was either fair (15.0%) or poor (1.0%), while 25.0% reported good health, 31.5% very good health, and 27.4%, excellent health.

Disability Status: In answer to the question, “Do you now have any physical health problems or disabling conditions that keep you from doing normal activities?”, 90.6% of students said “no”, while 9.4% reported some disability.

Hyperactivity: In answer to the question, “Are you currently taking prescription drugs or “pills” for hyperactivity (ADD or ADHD) such as Ritalin?”, 4.4% of middle school students said “yes”, and 95.6% said “no”.

Receipt of any Treatment or Counseling Outside School: Lifetime prevalence of receipt of treatment for an emotional or mental health problem outside school was 9.7%. The prevalence of treatment for an alcohol problem was 2.2%; and for a drug problem, it was 2.8%. Receipt of treatment for either an alcohol or another drug problem was reported by 3.5% of middle school students in the Upper Cumberland region in 2001.

Attendance at Self-Help or 12-Step Support Group Meetings: Attendance at such self-help or 12-step meetings as Alateen, Al-Anon, Children of Alcoholics (COA), Alcoholics Anonymous (AA), Narcotics Anonymous (NA), Cocaine Anonymous (CA) was reported by 2.5% of students, while the remaining students or 97.5% had not done so.

Utilization of Emergency and Hospital Services:

Emergency Department Services: In the 12 months prior to the survey, 18.6% of students reported having been taken to an emergency room for an illness, and 25.2%, for an injury. An overall total of over one-third (36.2%) of students had been taken to an ED for either an illness or an injury in the past 12 months.

Hospital Admissions: In the last 12 months, 6.5% of middle school students had stayed at least one night in a hospital for an illness while 4.6% had stayed at least one night for an injury. Either illness- or injury-related hospital admissions were reported by nearly 1 in 10 (9.9%) students.

Depression and Suicide Attempts:

Indicators of potential depression and low self-esteem such as thinking that life is not worth it sometimes or that one is no good at all are relatively common among these Upper Cumberland middle school students. These two feelings were reported by 30.7% and 25.8% of students, respectively.

More specific questions about depression were asked, such as “How often do you feel very depressed, that is, very “blue” or unhappy?” While 40.3% of students reported never or rarely feeling very depressed, 48.7% reported that they sometimes felt this way, and 11.0% reported often or almost always feeling very depressed.

Over 18% of middle school students reported ever feeling so desperate that they considered suicide, 7.5% reported ever attempting suicide. Those young suicide attempters represent 39.0% of students considering suicide.

Finally, 2.3% of students said they had ever gone to a hospital or gotten medical treatment because of a suicide attempt. This represents around 30.4% of those students attempting suicide.

Life Stressors: These students have already experienced a variety of life stresses such as relocations and related changes. Questions about their lifetime experience of selected stressors elicited interesting responses, reported below.

First, in answer to questions concerning whether these youth had experienced a move in the last 12 months, 21.4% of youth reported moving to a different home in the last 12 months, while 12.0% reported starting at a new school in the same period.

In answer to the question of lifetime stressors experienced, the percentages of students reporting each type of life change is presented below:

Percentage of Students Reporting Life Stressors by Type of Stressor in Their Lifetimes	**% Yes**	**% No**
a. had a death in the family	**90.0**	10.0
b. parents (guardians) divorced	**40.3**	59.7
c. family had financial problems	**36.4**	63.6
d. anyone in the family been arrested	**40.6**	59.4
e. new sister or brother born	**34.0**	66.0
f. had a serious illness or injury in your immediate family	**56.1**	43.9
g. had your own serious illness or injury	**32.9**	67.1
h. experienced another very stressful event	**50.3**	49.7

To the extent that these students between the ages of 11 and 15 for the most part have already experienced some major life crises, their coping skills and responses to stressors are of major interest and concern especially as they may protect against or increase the risk of alcohol and other drug use and associated problems.

Particularly prevalent was death in the family experienced by 90% of children, followed by serious illness or injury of a family member, and other stressful events, reported by 50%-56% of students. For around 40% of students, family arrests were reported, and by more

than one-third (41%), divorce, family financial problems, the birth of a sibling, and their own serious illness or injury were reported in decreasing order of frequency.

FRIENDS/PEER INFLUENCES ON YOUTH BEHAVIOR:

Best Friends' Practices:

When asked about their four best friends (the friends they feel closest to) and whether in the past 12 months any of those best friends had engaged in alcohol or other drug use, a range of from a low of 4% to a high of about 14% of students reported that they did not know.

Percentage of Students with Any Best Friends, who, in the Past 12 Months, Did the Following:	**% Yes**	**% No**	**% Don't Know**
a. smoked cigarettes	**30.7**	56.1	13.2
b. drunk alcoholic beverages -- beer, wine, or hard liquor (for example, vodka, whiskey, or gin)	**29.0**	56.8	14.2
c. used marijuana/pot	**16.3**	72.1	11.5
d. taken "pills" to get high or for non-medical reasons	**10.9**	77.5	11.6
e. used LSD, cocaine, amphetamines/speed, or another illegal drug	**6.0**	82.8	11.1
f. been suspended from school	**20.6**	73.6	5.8
g. carried a handgun or other weapon like a knife (other than for hunting or sport)	**11.6**	80.2	8.2
h. taken a handgun to school	**1.1**	94.3	4.7
i. sold "pills" or illegal drugs	**7.0**	85.1	7.9
j. stolen or tried to steal a motor vehicle such as a car or a motorcycle	**4.0**	89.4	6.7
k. been arrested	**8.8**	85.0	6.2
l. dropped out of school	**4.9**	91.1	4.0
m. been members of a gang	**8.6**	83.0	8.4

Most frequently reported behaviors among best friends were smoking cigarettes and drinking alcohol at about 30% of students each. These were followed by been suspended

from school (20.6%), using marijuana (16.3%), carrying a weapon (11.6%), taking pills to get high at more than 10%, and being arrested and being a member of a gang at about 9% each. Selling pills or illegal drugs was reported by about 7% of students in relation to their best friends. On the other hand, taking a handgun to school was the least common practice reported for best friends at only 1%, followed by stealing or trying to steal a motor vehicle, dropping out of school, and using illegal drugs, which were reported for their best friends by about 4-6% of these youth.

Perceptions of Being Cool:

To elicit attitudes to the acceptability with peers of alcohol and other drug use, a series of questions was asked about how "cool" certain practices are perceived to be by middle school students, with the following results:

Percentage of Students Reporting the Chances They Would be Seen as Cool if They:	**% No or Very Little Chance**	**% Some Chance**	**% Pretty Good or Very Good Chance**
a. smoked cigarettes	78.8	14.1	**7.2**
b. began drinking alcoholic beverages regularly, that is, at least once or twice a month	79.5	13.5	**6.9**
c. smoked marijuana	81.1	10.8	**8.1**
d. carried a handgun	88.4	7.3	**4.3**

Clearly, behavior associated with the most "cool" perception is smoking marijuana, while the least "cool" is carrying a handgun. Regular alcohol use and smoking cigarettes were perceived as moderately "cool".

PERCEIVED RISK AND AVAILABILITY OF AOD:

The University of Michigan Monitoring the Future surveys of high school and middle school youth have found that the combination of perceived risk of harm and availability of substances together account for higher consumption of substances among the youth studied. The Upper Cumberland students' responses to these questions are provided below:

Perceived Risk of Substance Use:

How much students think people risk harming themselves (physically or in other ways) if they engage in each of the following practices involving AOD use gives a clear indication of students' assessment of relative risk of harm.

Percentage of Students Perceiving People's Risk of Harm from AOD Use:	% No Risk	% Slight Risk	% Moderate Risk	% Great Risk
a. smoke one or more packs of cigarettes per day	6.1	10.5	28.4	**55.0**
b. use smokeless tobacco	8.2	23.4	36.3	**32.2**
c. try marijuana once or twice	10.8	20.8	23.6	**44.8**
d. smoke marijuana regularly (at least once or twice a month)	8.2	9.9	18.8	**63.1**
e. drink any alcoholic beverages (beer, wine, liquor)	7.1	22.8	33.8	**36.2**
f. take one or two drinks of an alcoholic beverage nearly every day	10.2	17.7	28.0	**44.1**

Clearly, the most risk of physical or other harm is perceived by these middle school students from smoking marijuana regularly at about 63% reporting great risk, followed by smoking one or more packs of cigarettes a day (about 55% reporting great risk), while the lowest perceived risk is assessed for using smokeless tobacco or drinking any alcohol (about 32% and 36% great risk, respectively). Intermediate risks of harm are attributed to taking one or two drinks of alcoholic beverages nearly every day and trying marijuana once or twice, at 44-45% of students assessing great risk of harm to those practices.

Perceived Ease of Access to AOD:

Like perceived harmfulness or risk of harm from drugs, including alcohol, perceived ease of access to or availability of drugs serves as an important predictor of risk of AOD use and problems related to it.

Percentage of Students Reporting Relative Ease of Access to Drugs by Type - Q: How easy do you think it would be for you to get each of the following types of drugs if you wanted some?	% Very or Somewhat Easy	% Very or Somewhat Hard
a. Cigarettes	**58.6**	41.4
b. Smokeless tobacco	**48.0**	52.0
c. Alcohol (beer, wine or hard liquor)	**47.7**	52.3
d. Marijuana/pot	**31.3**	68.7
e. Drugs like cocaine/crack, LSD (acid), heroin, etc.	**21.2**	78.8
f. "Pills" like uppers/speed, downers, painkillers, tranquilizers	**31.4**	68.6
g. Something to sniff like glue or gasoline	**61.3**	38.7

The easiest substances for middle school students to access appear to be inhalants and cigarettes, followed by smokeless tobacco and alcohol. Marijuana and pills like uppers, downers, etc., were seen as moderately easy to obtain, with illicit drugs like cocaine, hallucinogens, and heroin, for example, as the hardest to access in these students' opinions.

Ease of Access to a Gun:

In answer to the question, "If you wanted to get a gun, how easy would it be for you to get one?", 30.7% of middle school students said it would be very easy, and another 16.6% said somewhat easy, for a total of 47.3% reporting easy access to guns. The remaining 52.7% of students reported access to guns to be hard - either somewhat hard, at 16.7%, or very hard, at 36.0%.

Perceived Wrongness of Certain Personal Choices and Practices:

In answer to the question concerning how wrong one thinks it is for someone the student's age to use certain substances and engage in certain risky practices, the following were the results:

Percentage of Students Perceiving it Wrong to:	% Very Wrong	% Somewhat Wrong	% Not Very Wrong	% Not Wrong at All
a. drink beer, wine, or hard liquor (for example, vodka, whiskey, or gin) regularly (at least once or twice a month)	**68.6**	19.9	7.6	3.9
b. smoke cigarettes	**67.3**	20.3	7.7	4.7
c. smoke marijuana/pot	**83.5**	8.7	3.8	3.9
d. use LSD, cocaine, amphetamines/ speed or another illegal drug	**92.2**	4.3	1.2	2.2
e. steal anything worth more than $5	**75.2**	18.6	3.8	2.4
f. take a handgun or other weapon to school	**93.5**	3.8	1.0	1.7
g. pick a fight with someone	**44.0**	35.4	14.1	6.5
h. stay away from school all day when your parents think you are at school (skip school)	**68.8**	22.3	5.4	3.5
i. attack someone with the idea of seriously hurting them	**84.5**	10.6	2.5	2.8
j. beat up people if they start a fight	**46.3**	24.0	11.9	17.8

The practices perceived as most wrong, with the highest percentage of students reporting them as very wrong, were taking a handgun or weapon to school (93.5% reported this as very wrong) or using illegal drugs like LSD, cocaine or speed (92.2% very wrong). Attacking someone with the idea of hurting them or smoking pot/marijuana (at about 84% each) were less likely to be judged as very wrong. Even less likely to be seen as very wrong were smoking cigarettes, drinking alcohol regularly, stealing anything worth more than $5, or skipping school, each of which was reported by about 67-75% of students as being very wrong. Picking a fight with someone or beating up people if they start a fight were seen as very wrong by less than half (about 44-46%) of students. This suggests that picking fights or beating people up in fights, which are types of violent behavior, are less likely to be judged as very wrong by students themselves than is drug use - whether using alcohol, smoking cigarettes or using illegal drugs.

Students' Perceptions of How Wrong Parents Would Think Certain Behaviors:

Similar questions to those above were asked of students concerning parental views of how wrong certain practices are; the results follow:

Percentage of Students Reporting the Degree to which Their Parents Would Think it Wrong for Them to:	% Very Wrong	% Somewhat Wrong	% Not Very Wrong	% Not Wrong at All
a. drink beer, wine, or hard liquor (for example, vodka, whiskey, or gin) regularly (at least once or twice a month)	**87.4**	7.9	2.5	2.2
b. smoke cigarettes	**85.8**	8.7	2.6	3.0
c. smoke marijuana/pot	**93.8**	2.7	1.1	2.3
d. steal anything worth more than $5.00	**92.9**	4.2	1.0	1.9
e. draw graffiti, write things, or draw pictures on buildings or other property (without the owner's permission)	**90.5**	5.0	2.1	2.4
f. pick a fight with someone	**73.9**	17.0	5.6	3.4

Smoking marijuana ranks first in the percentage of students who think their parents would assess the practice as very wrong, at about 94%, followed by stealing anything worth more than $5 (93%), and drawing graffiti and related activities (91%). Slightly less wrong in student-assessed parental judgment are drinking alcohol regularly, and smoking cigarettes, which each drew responses of "very wrong" from about 86-87% of students. Consistent with earlier results, picking a fight with someone was seen as least likely to be seen as wrong for students to do by their parents, with about 74% of students assessing that behavior as very wrong from a parental viewpoint.

Students' Perceptions of How Wrong Adults in Their Neighborhood Think Certain Behaviors Are:

In parallel with the questions asked of the students themselves and their parents reported above, students were asked to assess how wrong most adults in their neighborhood, or the area around where they live, would think it is for kids their age to use alcohol and other drugs and engage in risky or illegal behaviors. The results are striking in comparison with those for the students and their parents.

Percentage of Students Reporting How Wrong Adults in their Neighborhood Think it is for Middle School Age Kids:	% Very Wrong	% Somewhat Wrong	% Not Very Wrong	% Not Wrong At All
a. to use marijuana	88.7	6.1	**2.4**	**2.8**
b. to drink alcohol	79.9	11.3	**5.2**	**3.6**
c. to smoke cigarettes	73.1	14.9	**6.4**	**5.6**

These students perceive that adults in their neighborhood, like their parents, think that use of marijuana is very wrong, followed by drinking alcohol and smoking cigarettes, with 89%, 80% and 73% of students reporting these behaviors as very wrong for kids their age to indulge in, according to adults in their neighborhood. On the other hand, about 6%, 4% and 3% of students, respectively, think adults in their neighborhood see nothing wrong in kids their age smoking cigarettes, drinking alcohol or using marijuana, in that order.

STUDENTS' LIFE PROBLEMS AND HIGH RISK PRACTICES:

Asked whether they had ever participated in several problematic behaviors, such as gang membership, suspension from school or violence-related behavior, the following results were observed for all middle school students surveyed in the Upper Cumberland region. Over 6% (6.1%) reported that they had belonged to a gang, while 5.0% reported having been arrested at least once in their lifetimes. Suspension from school was reported by just over 1 in 10 (12.8%) of students. Certain practices related to violence or risk of violence were reported as follows: 4.8% of students had carried a handgun other than for hunting or sport, while 13.2% had attacked someone with the idea of seriously hurting them.

The results for students' exposure to and participation in risky and violent behaviors in the past 12 months, overall and in school, are reported below.

Percentage of Students who Reported in the Past 12 Months that They Had....	%Yes, Overall	% Yes, at School
a. gotten into a physical fight	32.6	14.2
b. taken part in a gang fight where a group of your friends was against another group	7.1	2.7
c. been injured in a fight	9.6	2.6
d. been physically abused or assaulted	7.2	2.4
e. stolen "pills" or prescription drugs including from home	3.5	0.4
f. stolen illegal drugs	2.6	0.6

Percentage of Students who Reported in the Past 12 Months that They Had....	%Yes, Overall	% Yes, at School
g. bought “pills” or an illegal drug	4.4	1.2
h. been offered or given “pills” or an illegal drug	19.5	5.1

These results suggest that getting into physical fights is very frequent behavior in these middle school students, with almost 1 in 3 reporting fighting in the past 12 months and with about 44% of those fights occurring at school. Being offered or given pills or illicit drugs is next most frequent among these students, at close to 20% reporting this experience, with about 26% of such contacts occurring at school. Less frequently reported were being injured in a fight, at about 1 in 10 students - with about 27% of those injuries occurring at school. Being physically abused or assaulted was reported by about 7% of students, with close to one-third occurring at school. Participation in gang fights was reported by over 7% of youth. About 39% of these gang fights reportedly occurred at school. Buying pills or an illegal drug, stealing pills or prescription drugs including from home, and stealing illegal drugs were reported by over 4%, 3.5% and 2.6% of students, respectively. In over one-quarter of cases (28.1%) of buying pills or illegal drugs, this occurred at school, while in 13.3% of cases where prescription drugs were stolen and in 24% of cases where illegal drugs were stolen, the stealing was reported to have occurred at school.

Other High Risk Behaviors in the Past 12 Months:

Overall, 7.5% of students reported that they had been suspended from school one or more times in the last 12 months. Substantially lower percentages of students reported serious criminal behavior - thus, 1.8% reported that they had stolen or tried to steal a motor vehicle, such as a car or a motorcycle, while 3.6% reported that they had been arrested at least once in the last 12 months.

Violent behavior was reported by 9.7% of students who said that they had attacked someone (physically) with the idea of seriously hurting them in the last 12 months. Overall, 8.4% of students had carried a weapon (such as a handgun, knife or club) other than for hunting or sport, and 1.2% had taken a weapon such as a gun to school at least once in the period in question.

In terms of alcohol and other drug use, 7.1% of these East Tennessee middle school students had been drunk or high at school, and 1.1% reported this had occurred 20 times or more in the last 12 months. Almost 3 percent (2.9%) of these youth reported that they had sold “pills” or illegal drugs in the past 12 months, and 1.7% of students overall reported that they had sold “pills” or illegal drugs at school.

Attitudes to Risky and Illegal Practices:

Tapping dimensions of impulsivity and rebelliousness, as well as other negative attitudes, these students' responses indicate that impulsivity is very characteristic of these young people. Nearly half report that they often do things without thinking of consequences. Overall, 23% think it is not important to think before they act, and 16.9% have to have everything right away. Measures of rebelliousness and testing limits - liking to see how much they can get away with, reported by about 26% of students, ignoring rules that get in the way (about 23%), and doing the opposite of what people tell them just to provoke a reaction (about 19%) - are also relatively commonly reported by these students. The two depression-related questions above are discussed in an earlier section. Thinking it is OK to cheat at school was reported by around 21% of students.

Percentage of Students Whose Attitudes Put Them at High Risk and Therefore Who.....	**% Yes**	**% No**
a. think it is okay to cheat at school	**20.7**	79.3
b. like to see how much you can get away with	**26.1**	73.9
c. sometimes think that life is not worth it	**30.7**	69.3
d. think you are no good at all	**25.8**	74.2
e. ignore rules that get in your way	**22.6**	77.4
f. often do things without thinking what will happen	**51.8**	48.2
g. have to have everything right away	**16.9**	83.1
h. think it is important to think before you act	76.8	**23.2**
i. do the opposite of what people tell you, just to get them mad	**19.2**	80.8

Other Risk Taking:

Students who say that they often or almost always have done what feels good no matter what or have done something dangerous because someone dared them to do it represent 13.6% and 7.2% of students, respectively. Those students who conversely report that they never or rarely have done what feels good no matter what or done something dangerous on a dare comprise 46.7% and 68.4% of students in the Upper Cumberland region.

FAMILIAL AND PEER ALCOHOL OR DRUG PROBLEMS:

Familial Alcohol or Drug Abuse:

Fully 32% percent of students reported that someone in their family has had a severe alcohol or drug problem.

Parental AOD Use: Answering the question, "Do you think one or both of your parents (stepparents or guardians) is drinking too much or has a problem with alcohol?", 10.2% of students said "Yes". Seven percent of students said that they think one or both of their parents is using or abusing drugs other than alcohol. A total of nearly 14% (13.6%) of students think that one or both of their parents is using or abusing alcohol or has a problem with it.

Siblings' AOD Use: Asked about alcohol and other drug use and high risk practices in their siblings, about 7% of students had no brothers or sisters. However, for continuity and consistency of denominators, the following percentages are reported for all students:

Percentage of Students Reporting that One or More of Their Brothers or Sisters....	% of All Students
a. drinks beer, wine, or hard liquor (for example, vodka, whiskey or gin)	17.4
b. smokes marijuana	10.0
c. smokes cigarettes	24.9
d. has taken a handgun to school	1.9
e. has been suspended or expelled from school	14.9

Cigarette smoking is most frequently reported for sibling drug use by these students at about 25%, followed by alcohol use and suspension from school at around 17% and 15% respectively. Marijuana use was reported for 10% of students' siblings. Handguns at school was least common at 2%.

Close Friends' Alcohol or Drug Problems: About 7.1% of students reported that they think that one or more of their close friends is drinking too much or has a problem with alcohol, and 10.3% said that they think that one or more of the close friends is using or abusing drugs other than alcohol.

STUDENT'S OWN ALCOHOL/DRUG USE:

While this was mainly a prevention survey, it is clear that many of these middle school students have already begun their alcohol and other drug use careers so that primary

prevention, delaying onset of the initiation of first use of alcohol or other drugs, is for many an inappropriate strategy. Secondary prevention, reducing the use of alcohol or other drugs, mitigating the occurrence of negative and dangerous consequences, and breaking the dependence cycle early is more relevant. In some cases tertiary prevention or actual treatment is indicated, particularly in students who self-report addiction or dependence.

Cigarette Smoking:

More than 1 in 3 (36.3%) students have ever smoked cigarettes. Fully 23.1% of students had smoked cigarettes in the last 12 months, and 16.6% of students had smoked in the past 30 days. Thus, almost two-thirds of lifetime smokers had smoked in the last 12 months, and close to half (45.2%) of lifetime smokers had smoked in the past 30 days.

Students who had smoked cigarettes on 20 or more of the last 30 days comprised 5.1% of all students. Those who smoked 11 or more cigarettes in the past 30 days represented 2.1% of students. Also, 30.8% of current or 30-day smokers smoked cigarettes on 20+ of the past 30 days, and 12.8% of current smokers smoked 11 or more cigarettes in the past 30 days.

Smokeless Tobacco (Chewing Tobacco, Snuff, Plug, Dipping Tobacco):

Fully 1 in 5 (20.0%) students have ever used smokeless tobacco, More than 1 in 10 (12.5%) had used smokeless tobacco in the last 12 months, and 7.9% had used it in the past 30 days. Thus, 61.6% of lifetime users had used smokeless tobacco in the last 12 months, while 38.8% of lifetime users had used smokeless tobacco in the past 30 days.

Students who had used smokeless tobacco on 20 or more of the last 30 days comprised 2.1% of all students. Around 27% of current or 30-day smokeless tobacco users used it on 20+ of the past 30 days.

Alcoholic Beverages (Beer, Wine, Wine Coolers or Liquor):

Over 2 in 5 (41.8%) of these middle school students, ranging in age from 11 to 15 years, had drunk alcoholic beverages more than a few sips at least once in their lifetimes. Fully 28.6% had drunk alcohol in the past 12 months, and 19.3% had done so in the past 30 days. Thus, given that students had ever used alcohol, 67.1% of them had drunk alcohol in the past 12 months, and 45.1% had drunk alcohol in the past 30 days.

Students who had used alcohol on 20 or more of the last 30 days comprised 1.2% of all students, and 6.3% of current drinkers. Students who reported daily alcohol consumption over the past 30 days represented 0.5% of all students. Daily drinkers made up 2.5% of current (30-day) drinkers among these students, and close to half (40.0%) of students who reported drinking on 20 or more of the last 30 days drank alcohol daily.

Among these middle school students, 4.1% drank 5 or more drinks of alcohol per day on their drinking days. These "binge drinkers" are 21.3% of current drinkers (last 30 days). Less than 1% (0.8%) of students reported drinking 5 or more drinks on 20 or more of the past 30 days. Again, as a percentage of students drinking on 20 or more days in the last 30, those who drank 5 or more drinks represent 66.7%. These "binge" drinkers comprise 4.2% of students who drank any alcohol in the past 30 days. Finally 0.4% of students overall reported drinking 5 or more drinks of alcohol daily in the past 30 days. They comprise 100% of daily drinkers, and 2.5% of current or 30-day drinkers.

In answer to the question, "Have you **ever** gotten drunk or felt very high or intoxicated from drinking alcohol?", 16.8% of all students said that they had gotten drunk. This number represents 40.0% of lifetime drinkers.

Marijuana (Pot, Grass, Hash, etc.) Use:

About 16% (15.6%) of middle school students in East Tennessee had ever used marijuana, while 11% had used marijuana in the past 12 months, and 7.7% in the past 30 days. While 68.8% of lifetime marijuana users used marijuana in the past 12 months, nearly half (48.1%) of lifetime users had used marijuana in the past 30 days.

Students who had used marijuana on 20 or more of the last 30 days comprised 1.9% of all students, and students who reported daily marijuana use over the past 30 days represented 1.1% of all students. However, among current marijuana users (30-day users), 24.2% used on 20 or more of the past 30 days and 13.2% of current users reported daily marijuana use.

Percentage of Students Reporting Illegal Drug Use by Type of Drug and Lifetime, Recent or Current Use	**% Yes, Ever**	**% Yes, in the Last 12 Months**	**% Yes, in the Last 30 Days**
a. Cocaine or crack	3.5	2.6	2.1
b. Substances you "sniff": paint thinners, glue, gasoline, white-out, butane, aerosol sprays, etc.	8.8	7.1	6.0
c. LSD (acid) or other hallucinogens such as peyote, jimson weed, mushrooms, PCP (angel dust), etc.	4.9	3.9	3.5
d. Other illegal drugs such as ecstasy, ice (crystal meth), heroin (smack, horse, skag), etc.	4.2	3.4	2.8

It is very clear that inhalants are one drug of choice for these youth, since of the nearly 9% of students who report lifetime use of inhalants to get high, 80.4% had used inhalants in the last 12 months, and 67.9% had used them in the last 30 days. Cocaine, on the other hand, was less likely to involve sustained use, since of the lifetime users of cocaine or crack

among these middle school students, 73.3% had used cocaine in the last 12 months, and 60.0% in the last 30 days. For other illegal drugs and for hallucinogens such as LSD, the percentages of ever users who used in the last 12 months are 81.1% and 79.0%, respectively, while the proportions of ever users who used in the last 30 days are 71.0% for LSD and other hallucinogens, and 66.0% for other illegal drugs. About 0.6% to 0.8% of Upper Cumberland students reported use of one or more of these illegal drugs daily in the last 30 days.

OVERALL ATOD, AOD AND DRUG USE PREVALENCE:

ATOD: Overall, over half (54.7%) of middle schools students in the Upper Cumberland region reported using alcohol, tobacco or other drugs (ATOD) in their lifetimes, while 41.3% reported 12-month use, and 31.9%, 30-day use of one or more substances (excluding caffeine and prescription drugs).

Given lifetime use, 72.9% had used ATOD in 12 months, and 55.3% in 30 days. Of 12-month users, 75.8% were 30-day users, suggesting that when youth begin their drug use careers, relatively few stop soon.

AOD: Excluding tobacco and looking only at the prevalence of use of alcohol and other drugs (save caffeine and prescription drugs), the lifetime prevalence of alcohol and other drug (AOD) use among these middle school students is 45.9%, the 12-month prevalence, 33.5%, and the 30-day prevalence, 24.7%. Here again, given lifetime use, 70.7% had used AOD in 12 months, and 51.5% in 30 days. Of 12-month users, 72.9% were 30-day users.

Drugs: Considering drugs only, 20.7% of middle school students had ever used one or more illegal drugs (excluding alcohol, tobacco or prescription drugs as well as caffeine). This compares to a 12-month drug use prevalence rate of 15.7%, and a 30-day prevalence rate of 12.3%. About 73.5% of lifetime drug users used drugs in the past 12 months. Fifty-eight percent of lifetime drug users used drugs in the last 30 days. Among 12-month drug users, 78.7% were current or 30-day users.

AVERAGE AGE AT FIRST USE OF AOD:

Average Age at First Use by Type of Drug:	**Average Age of First Use (in Years)**
a. smoked cigarettes	9.7
b. used smokeless tobacco	10.2
c. drank alcoholic beverages	10.5
d. began drinking alcoholic beverages regularly, that is at least once or twice a month	11.7

Average Age at First Use by Type of Drug:	Average Age of First Use (in Years)
e. got drunk or felt very high or intoxicated from drinking alcohol	11.8
f. used marijuana/pot	11.6
g. used cocaine or crack	11.3
h. used substances you "sniff"	10.9
i. used LSD (acid) or other hallucinogens	11.8
j. used other illegal drugs such as ecstasy, Ice (crystal meth), heroin, etc.	11.8

Cigarette smoking is the earliest onset substance use, beginning, on average, in these middle school students at age 9.7, followed by using smokeless tobacco at age 10.2 years and drinking alcohol at age 10.5 years. Inhalant use was reported as initiated at the average age of 10.9 years among these students. The onset of cocaine use was reported at age 11.3 followed by marijuana use at 11.6 years, and regular alcohol consumption (at least once or twice a month), starting at 11.7 years. The use of other illegal drugs such as ecstasy, crystal meth and heroin began at age 11.8 years, on average as did getting drunk or intoxicated and using LSD and other hallucinogens, the latest of all AOD use practices identified.

Prescription Drug Abuse:

Prescription drug abuse is defined as having taken any prescription drugs or "pills" just to get high or for non-medical purposes, on one's own, without a doctor's prescription. More than 8% (8.2%) of students reported prescription drug abuse in their lifetimes; 6.2% reported it in the past 12 months, and 3.8% in the past 30 days. Among lifetime prescription drug abusers, 74.8% had abused such drugs in the past 12 months, and 44.7% did so in the past 30 days.

SELF-REPORTED SUBSTANCE ABUSE/ADDICTION:

Answering "yes" to the question of lifetime or current addiction to or dependence on one or more drugs serves as a proxy measure of these youth's need for alcohol and other drug treatment[1]. The following table shows the extent of self-reported addiction among these students by type of drug and by lifetime or current prevalence.

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[1]The question contained in its wording a brief definition of addiction: "Do you think you have **EVER** been hooked on or addicted to any of the following substances (for example, did you try to quit or use less and had trouble doing so)? "

Percentage of Students Ever or Now Addicted to Alcohol or Other Drugs by Type of Drug	% Ever Addicted	% Now Addicted
a. Tobacco/nicotine	11.1	8.3
b. Alcohol (beer, wine or liquor)	5.7	3.9
c. Marijuana/pot	3.9	3.3
d. Cocaine or crack	1.0	0.6
e. Hallucinogens like LSD or PCP or ecstasy	1.0	0.8
f. Coffee/cola/caffeine	29.4	24.3
g. A prescription drug or “pill”	3.3	2.1
h. Other drugs or substances	2.7	1.7

Based on lifetime prevalence of self-reported addiction to a drug or substance, caffeine/cola/coffee is the most prevalent drug, addicting over 1 in 4 students, followed, at a much lower level, at about 11.1%, by tobacco/nicotine, and about 4-6%, by alcohol and marijuana. Addiction to a prescription drug or “pill” and other drugs or substances was reported by around 3% of students. About 1% of students reported addiction either to hallucinogens like LSD or to cocaine or crack.

Current addiction as self-reported by these students again showed caffeine as the number one drug of addiction, by far, at 24%, followed by tobacco/nicotine, at over 8%, and alcohol at close to 4%. Marijuana addiction was reported by more than 3% of students, while prescription drugs or pills, other drugs or substances, hallucinogens and cocaine or crack were reported as current sources of addiction by decreasing percentages of youth, ranging from just over 2% (2.1%) down to 0.6%.

The percentage of lifetime addicted users who are currently addicted suggests some of the power of these drugs over these very young users. The highest percentage of ever addicted students are currently addicted to marijuana (85.4%), followed closely by caffeine/cola/coffee (81.7%). Slightly lower rates of ever to current addicted students are observed for hallucinogens such as LSD (75%), and tobacco/nicotine (74.1%). Alcohol, prescription drugs or “pills”, and other drugs or substances had ever-to-current addiction ratios of 68.1%, 65% and 63.6%, respectively. The drug types least likely to be still addicting youth who reported ever being addicted to them are cocaine or crack at 58.3% of students ever addicted to them now addicted to them.

COMMUNITY INFLUENCES ON STUDENTS' AOD RISK:

Questions about students' communities and the areas around where they lived were expected to shed some light on risk and protective factors for alcohol and other drug use among middle school students.

Attitudes to Neighborhood:

Only 10.7% of students said they did not feel safe in their neighborhood, or the area around where they live, while the remainder or 89.3% did feel safe. Almost eighteen percent of students said they did not like their neighborhood, with fully 82.4% feeling the opposite. Twenty-four percent of these youth would like to get out of their neighborhood, compared to the 76% who would not. About 34% of students report that their neighbors notice when they are doing a good job and let them know about it, while for 63.4% and 61.8% of students respectively, there are people in their neighborhood who encourage them to do their best, or there are lots of adults in their neighborhood they could talk to about something important.

Neighborhood Description:

When asked how well each of the following characteristics describe their neighborhood, or the area around where they live, students were most likely to report fights and crime and/or drug selling as characterizing their neighborhoods very well or somewhat well, with less emphasis on empty or abandoned buildings or lots of graffiti.

Percentage of Students Describing Their Neighborhood in Terms of the Following:	% Very Well	% Somewhat Well	% Not Well	% Not at All
a. Crime and/or drug selling	**7.6**	9.4	11.6	**71.4**
b. Fights	**8.1**	11.0	14.0	**66.9**
c. Lots of empty or abandoned buildings	**4.8**	6.2	12.1	**76.9**
d. Lots of graffiti	**4.7**	2.9	8.5	**83.9**

Only about 67% of students reported that their neighborhoods were not at all characterized by fights, and around 71% not at all characterized by crime and/or drug selling. On the other hand, close to 77% of students reported no empty or abandoned buildings, and 84% reported no profuse graffiti at all in their neighborhoods.

Adults Using Alcohol and Drugs in the Neighborhood:

In the last 12 months, 29.9% of these middle school students from the Upper Cumberland region reported that they personally knew one or more adults who had used marijuana/pot, cocaine/crack or other illegal drugs. About 21.6% reported knowing at least one adult who had sold or dealt drugs in the last 12 months. Around 20.2% of students had known adults who carried handguns or other weapons not for hunting or sport, and about the same percentage (20.6%) had known adults who had done other things that could get them in trouble with the police - stealing, selling stolen goods, mugging, or assaulting others. Finally, over 2 in 5 (42.3%) of youth had known at least one adult who had gotten drunk or high in the last 12 months. Thus, drunkenness was by far the most commonly reported practice observed by these students among the adults in their neighborhoods.

When asked how many adults they knew personally who had engaged in these practices in the past 12 months, 13.1% of students cited 5 or more adults who had gotten drunk or high, while 8.2% knew 5 or more adults who had used marijuana/pot, cocaine/crack or other illegal drugs. Four to five percent knew five or more adults who had carried handguns or weapons (4.6%), sold or dealt drugs (4.8%), or done other things that could have gotten them in trouble with the police (4.2%).

Participation in Leisure Time Activities as Protective of AOD Use and Abuse:

The availability and participation in activities that are seen as protective of alcohol and other drug use and abuse in youth is reported on here.

Percentage of Students Participating in the Following Activities:	% Yes	% No	% Not Available in Their Community
a. Sports teams	**76.3**	21.4	2.3
b. Scouting	**23.5**	69.3	7.2
c. Boys and girls clubs	**23.1**	63.6	13.3
d. 4-H clubs	**63.7**	34.1	2.2
e. Service clubs (such as Junior Sertoma, Rainbow, etc.)	**15.4**	61.4	23.2
f. Church youth groups	**62.7**	34.4	2.9
g. Music/art/drama clubs	**33.5**	55.4	11.2
h. Other after school clubs	**41.0**	51.4	7.6

The leisure-time activity reported by most students was participation in sports teams at about 76.3%, followed by 4-H clubs at 63.7% and church youth groups at 62.7%. Moderately popular are other after school clubs and music/art/drama clubs, at 34% and 41% respectively. Least popular were service clubs at about 15%, followed by boys and girls clubs and scouting (at 23.1% and 23.5%, respectively). Least available activities in these communities were service clubs, boys and girls clubs and music/art/drama clubs.

Parental Guidance and Support:

Finally, parental guidance and support were assessed by a series of questions, such as "Do your parents want you to call if you are going to be late getting home?" To this question, 83.3% of students responded positively, and 16.7%, negatively. The question, "Does your family have clear rules about alcohol and drug use?" brought responses of 77%, "yes", and 23%, "no". The extent to which families fight is measured by answers to whether people in students' family often insult or yell at each other, reported by 34.3% of students, compared to 65.7% who say "no". About 25% (25.2%) of students reported that people in their family have serious arguments, while 74.8% do not report this.

Answers to two hypothetical questions are also revealing of the extent of parental guidance and concern as perceived by these youth. First 61.1% of students said that if they drank some beer, wine, or hard liquor (for example, vodka, whiskey, or gin) without their parents' permission, they would be caught by their parents, while 75.4% said that if they carried a handgun without their parents' permission, they would be caught by their parents.

POSITIVE PARENTAL ATTITUDES AND PRACTICES

The frequency with which parents include youth in family decisions and praise and reward them is thought to be associated with protection against alcohol and other drug abuse. For these youth, parental guidance and support appears relatively high.

Percentage of Students Reporting Frequency of Parents:	**% Never/ Rarely**	**% Sometimes**	**% Often/Almost Always**
a. giving them lots of chances to do fun things with them	12.4	38.5	**49.1**
b. asking them what they think before most family decisions affecting the students are made	23.8	39.9	**36.3**
c. noticing when they are doing a good job and letting them know about it	14.8	33.7	**51.5**
d. telling the students they are proud of them	12.7	27.7	**59.5**

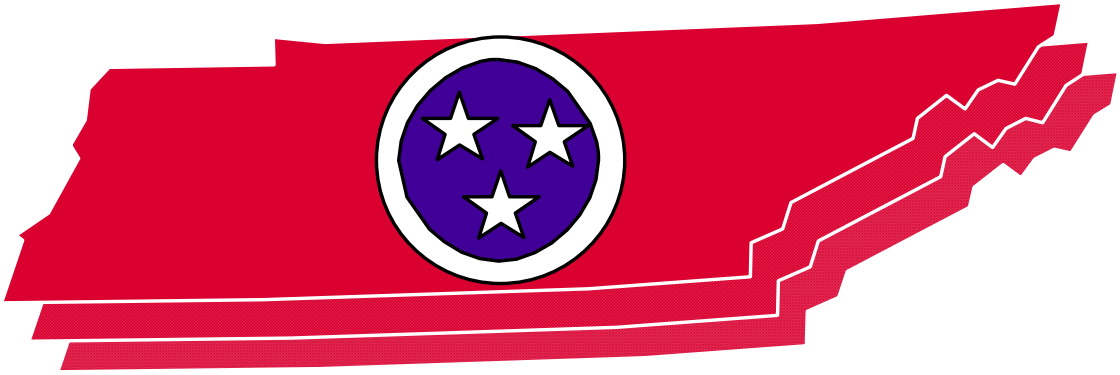
The most commonly reported supportive practice of parents toward these middle school students among the items measured is telling the students they are proud of their accomplishments, at almost 60% of students reporting parents as often or almost always doing so. This is followed by parents' noticing a good job and letting students know it (around 52%), and giving students lots of chances to do fun things with parents (about 49%). Least likely to occur often or almost always is parents' asking students what they think before family decisions affecting them are made, at 36.3% often or almost always doing so.

Finally, 86.7% of students say that their parents ask if they have gotten their homework done, while 13.3% do not. In 88.8% of cases, when students are not at home, one of their parents knows where they are and who they are with, while 11.2% do not. The great majority of students reported that their parents would know if they did not come home on time, at 89.1%, compared to 10.9% whose parents would not know. Eighty-one percent of students could ask their parents for help if they had a personal problem, compared to 19% who could not do so. Students were more likely to report that they often share their thoughts and feelings with their mothers (65.9%), compared to their fathers (45.4%).

TENNESSEE MIDDLE SCHOOL HEALTH SURVEY, 2001-2002

A SUMMARY OF FINDINGS FROM THE TENNESSEE MIDDLE SCHOOL HEALTH SURVEY

MID-CUMBERLAND REGION



TENNESSEE DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH

AND THE

COMMUNITY HEALTH RESEARCH GROUP

THE UNIVERSITY OF TENNESSEE, KNOXVILLE

June 2003

***TENNESSEE MIDDLE SCHOOL SURVEY RESULTS*:**
MID-CUMBERLAND REGION

SOCIODEMOGRAPHIC CHARACTERISTICS:

Gender: A total of 3,950 students in randomly sampled middle schools grades 6-8 in the Mid-Cumberland Region completed surveys. They were split fairly evenly by gender, with 47.9% being female and 52.1% male.

Grade: The split was approximately even by grade, 32.7% of the students sampled were in 6th grade, 35.5% in 7th grade and 31.7% in 8th grade.

Age: In terms of age, 9.6% of students were 11 years of age or younger, while 30% were age 12; 34.9% were age13; 22% were age 14; and 3.4% were 15 years of age or older.

Race/Ethnicity: While 84.6% of students were white, 11.5% were black and 4.0% were of other racial/ethnic groups.

Hispanic Origin: A total of 4.9% of students were of Hispanic origin.

OTHER BACKGROUND CHARACTERISTICS:

Two-Parent Family: Overall, 73.9% of Mid-Cumberland students in the study lived in two-parent families, while 26.1% lived in families of other compositions.

Non-English Spoken At Home: While fully 97.9% of students reported that English was the language used most often in the home, 0.8% reported that language to be Spanish and another 1.2% reported another language as the language most often spoken at home.

Rural/Urban Residence: More than half (57.8%) of Mid-Cumberland middle school students lived in a city, town or suburb, i.e., an urban area, while the remaining 42.2% lived in rural areas. Of all students, 35.3% lived in the country, although not on a farm, and 6.8% lived on farms.

Proxy Measures of Poverty: In answer to the question, “Do you live in public housing?”, more than one-quarter (28.9%) of students did not know the answer, while 7.7% reported that they did live in public housing, and another 63.4% that they did not live in public housing. This measure was to be used as one indicator of poverty along with whether the family was on any form of public assistance. That question was phrased: “Does your family receive any form of public assistance, such as food stamps or other forms of welfare (such as Families First, WIC, TennCare/Medicaid, etc.)?” Again, more than one-quarter (25.9%) of the students did not know. Still 11.8% reported that their families did receive public assistance, while 62.3% did not. Combining these two measures produces a prevalence estimate of middle school students in poverty of 17.8% in the region as a whole.

Mobility/Migration: Only 29.4% of students had not changed homes since kindergarten, while 34.8% had changed homes 1-2 times; 20.4% had changed homes 3-4 times; and 15.5% had changed homes 5 times or more since kindergarten (8.6% had done so 5-6 times, and 6.9%, 7 times or more).

The Importance of Religion or Spirituality in Students' Families: Only 16.5% of Mid-Cumberland middle school students reported that religion or spirituality was either not very important (12.6%) or not at all important (3.9%) in their families, For nearly half (46.4%) of these students, religion or spirituality was very important, while for 37%, it was somewhat important.

The Importance of Religion or Spirituality in Students' Own Lives: For 14.3% of Mid-Cumberland middle school students, religion or spirituality was either not very important (9.5%) or not at all important (4.8%) in their own lives, while for 35.7%, it was somewhat important, and for 13.7%, it was very important.

Attendance at Religious Services: Asked how often they attend religious services or activities, 13.7% of students said they never did, while less than once a month was the response chosen by another 12.8%. Attendance at religious services or activities occupied 20% of students 1-2 times a month, although not every week, while another 53.5% of students attended religious services once a week or more.

SCHOOL EXPERIENCE:

Grades Last Year: Getting mostly A's as grades in the last school year was reported by about one-third (32.1%) of students, while mostly B's were reported by 36.1%, and mostly C's by 23.3%. Only 8.9% of students reported either mostly D's (5.8%) or mostly F's (2.7%).

A series of questions were asked concerning how often youth had certain experiences in school - whether rarely or never, sometimes or often or almost always. Categories are collapsed here into "often/almost always", and the residual which is "rarely, never or sometimes" in relation to students reporting those problems or experiences.

Percentage of Students Reporting that in the Past School Year They:	% Never/Rarely/ Sometimes	% Often/Almost Always
a. feel physically safe or safe from violence at school	**45.6%**	54.4%
b. try to do your best work in school	**32.5%**	67.5%
c. find most of your courses interesting to you	**87.8%**	12.2%
d. find the school work too hard to understand	91.6%	**8.4%**

Percentage of Students Reporting that in the Past School Year They:	% Never/Rarely/ Sometimes	% Often/Almost Always
e. fool around in class	85.7%	**14.3%**
f. fail to complete or turn in your assignments	94.1%	**5.9%**
g. get sent to the office or have to stay after school because you misbehaved	96.5%	**3.5%**
h. skip a day of school or part of a day (without permission)	98.1%	**1.9%**
i. get better grades than most of the students in your class	**78.7%**	21.3%
j. feel bullied by other kids at school	92.3%	**7.7%**
k. feel bored in school	65.0%	**35.0%**
l. hate being in school	75.8%	**24.2%**
m. think the things you are learning in school are going to be important for your later life	**61.9%**	38.1%

These attitudes among others studied in this survey are seen as protective or detrimental to efforts to prevent or reduce alcohol and other drug (AOD) use, abuse, problems or dependence among these youth. Results suggest that negative attitudes to school such as feeling bored in school and hating being in school were reported often or almost always by the most students at about 35% and 24%, respectively, while fooling around in class often or almost always was reported by 14%. Finding school work too hard to understand, failing to complete or turn in assignments, getting punished for misbehaving, or skipping school were reported often or almost always by about 8%, around 6%, 3.5% and close to 2% of students, respectively.

Only a little more than half of students felt often or almost always safe at school, with about 8% reporting being often or almost always bullied at school. Other common negative orientations to school were never, rarely or sometimes finding courses interesting, reported by 88% of students, with about 79% of students reporting never, rarely, or sometimes getting better grades than most other students. Nearly one-third of students reported never, rarely or sometimes trying to do their best work in school, and about 62% reported not often thinking that what was learned in school was going to be important later in life.

Missing School: A fairly high percentage of youth (47.5%) missed school at least one time in the past 30 days because of illness or injury, while 9.7% missed school because of skipping or cutting classes, and 38% missed school for other reasons.

Opportunities for Participation:

The following results were obtained when students were asked, whether, in their middle school, they had certain opportunities for participation in activities. The purpose was to tap students' attitudes to the school experience in general.

Percentage of Students Reporting Certain Attitudes to School	% NO	% YES
a. In your middle school, do you have chances to be part of class discussions and activities?	**9.9**	90.1
b. do your teachers notice when you are doing a good job and let you know about it?	**33.2**	66.8
c. do you have lots of chances to get involved in school activities outside of class?	**40.7**	59.3
d. do students in your school have chances to talk to teachers one-on-one?	**21.5**	78.5
e. does your school let your parents know when you have done something well?	**66.3**	33.7

Here, only about 1 in 10 students reported feeling as though they did not have chances to participate in class, and a little more than 1 in 5 reported no chances to talk to teachers one-on-one. About one-third of students reported teachers not noticing and informing them when they were doing good work, and 41% reported that they do not have lots of chances to get involved in extra-classroom activities at school. Finally, close to two-thirds of students said that their schools did not let their parents know when they had performed well.

HEALTH AND WELL-BEING OF MIDDLE SCHOOL STUDENTS IN THE MID-CUMBERLAND REGION:

Health Status: Overall, 13.3% of students reported that in general their health was either fair (12.4%) or poor (0.9%), while 23.9% reported good health, 32.5% very good health, and 30.3%, excellent health.

Disability Status: In answer to the question, "Do you now have any physical health problems or disabling conditions that keep you from doing normal activities?", 89.9% of students said "no", while 10.1% reported some disability.

Hyperactivity: In answer to the question, "Are you currently taking prescription drugs or "pills" for hyperactivity (ADD or ADHD) such as Ritalin?", 8.6% of middle school students said "yes", and 91.4% said "no".

Receipt of any Treatment or Counseling Outside School: Lifetime prevalence of receipt of treatment for an emotional or mental health problem outside school was 12.3%. The prevalence of treatment for an alcohol problem was 1.7%; and for a drug problem, it was 2.8%. Receipt of treatment for either an alcohol or another drug problem was reported by 3.1% of middle school students in Mid-Cumberland in 2001.

Attendance at Self-Help or 12-Step Support Group Meetings: Attendance at such self-help or 12-step meetings as Alateen, Al-Anon, Children of Alcoholics (COA), Alcoholics Anonymous (AA), Narcotics Anonymous (NA), Cocaine Anonymous (CA) was reported by 2.6% of students, while the remaining students or 97.4% had not done so.

Utilization of Emergency and Hospital Services:

Emergency Department Services: In the 12 months prior to the survey, 13.2% of students reported having been taken to an emergency room for an illness, and 25.3%, for an injury. An overall total of about one-third (32.8%) of students had been taken to an ED for either an illness or an injury in the past 12 months.

Hospital Admissions: In the last 12 months, 4.2% of middle school students had stayed at least one night in a hospital for an illness while 5.2% had stayed at least one night for an injury. Either illness- or injury-related hospital admissions were reported by nearly 1 in 10 (8.1%) students.

Depression and Suicide Attempts:

Indicators of potential depression and low self-esteem such as thinking that life is not worth it sometimes or that one is no good at all are relatively common among these Mid-Cumberland middle school students. These two feelings were reported by 30.8% and 23.3% of students, respectively.

More specific questions about depression were asked, such as “How often do you feel very depressed, that is, very “blue” or unhappy?” While 38% of students reported never or rarely feeling very depressed, 50.1% reported that they sometimes felt this way, and 11.9% reported often or almost always feeling very depressed.

Overall, 19.9% of middle school students reported ever feeling so desperate that they considered suicide, and 7.5% reported ever attempting suicide. Those young suicide attempters represent 36% of students considering suicide.

Finally, 1.8% of students said they had ever gone to a hospital or gotten medical treatment because of a suicide attempt. This represents around 23.6% of those students attempting suicide.

Life Stressors: These students have already experienced a variety of life stresses such as relocations and related changes. Questions about their lifetime experience of selected stressors elicited interesting responses, reported below.

First, in answer to questions concerning whether these youth had experienced a move in the last 12 months, 21.4% of youth reported moving to a different home in the last 12 months, while 26.4% reported starting at a new school in the same period.

In answer to the question of lifetime stressors experienced, the percentages of students reporting each type of life change is presented below:

Percentage of Students Reporting Life Stressors by Type of Stressor in Their Lifetimes	**% Yes**	**% No**
a. had a death in the family	**86.9**	13.1
b. parents (guardians) divorced	**38.0**	62.0
c. family had financial problems	**34.5**	65.5
d. anyone in the family been arrested	**36.9**	63.1
e. new sister or brother born	**36.8**	63.2
f. had a serious illness or injury in your immediate family	**53.1**	46.9
g. had your own serious illness or injury	**33.5**	66.5
h. experienced another very stressful event	**53.5**	46.5

To the extent that these students between the ages of 11 and 15 for the most part have already experienced some major life crises, their coping skills and responses to stressors are of major interest and concern especially as they may protect against or increase the risk of alcohol and other drug use and associated problems.

Particularly prevalent was death in the family experienced by close to 87% of children, followed by serious illness or injury of a family member, and other stressful events, reported by around half, each. For around 38% of students, parental divorce was reported, followed at 37% by family arrests, the birth of a sibling, with family financial problems, and own serious illness or injury reported in decreasing order of frequency.

FRIENDS/PEER INFLUENCES ON YOUTH BEHAVIOR:

Best Friends' Practices:

When asked about their four best friends (the friends they feel closest to) and whether in the past 12 months any of those best friends had engaged in alcohol or other drug use, a range of from a low of 4% to a high of about 13% of students reported that they did not know.

Percentage of Students with Any Best Friends, who, in the Past 12 Months, Did the Following:	**% Yes**	**% No**	**% Don't Know**
a. smoked cigarettes	**25.1**	61.6	13.2
b. drunk alcoholic beverages -- beer, wine, or hard liquor (for example, vodka, whiskey, or gin)	**25.7**	61.7	12.6
c. used marijuana/pot	**15.7**	73.4	10.9
d. taken "pills" to get high or for non-medical reasons	**9.1**	79.5	11.4
e. used LSD, cocaine, amphetamines/speed, or another illegal drug	**5.3**	83.3	11.4
f. been suspended from school	**30.3**	62.9	6.8
g. carried a handgun or other weapon like a knife (other than for hunting or sport)	**11.0**	81.2	7.8
h. taken a handgun to school	**1.3**	94.1	4.6
i. sold "pills" or illegal drugs	**8.1**	84.9	6.9
j. stolen or tried to steal a motor vehicle such as a car or a motorcycle	**4.4**	89.6	6.0
k. been arrested	**8.8**	85.1	6.1
l. dropped out of school	**3.8**	92.2	4.0
m. been members of a gang	**8.3**	83.6	8.1

Most frequently reported behaviors among best friends were being suspended from school (30%), and drinking alcohol or smoking cigarettes at about one quarter of students each. These were followed by using marijuana (16%), carrying a weapon (11%), being arrested, being gang members, selling pills or illegal drugs, and taking pills to get high at 8-9%, each. On the other hand, taking a handgun to school was the least common practice reported for

best friends at 1.3%, followed by dropping out of school, and stealing or trying to steal a motor vehicle at about 4%. Using illegal drugs, was reported for their best friends by about 5% of these youth.

Perceptions of Being Cool:

To elicit attitudes to the acceptability with peers of alcohol and other drug use, a series of questions was asked about how "cool" certain practices are perceived to be by middle school students, with the following results:

Percentage of Students Reporting the Chances They Would be Seen as Cool if They:	**% No or Very Little Chance**	**% Some Chance**	**% Pretty Good or Very Good Chance**
a. smoked cigarettes	78.3	16.7	**5.0**
b. began drinking alcoholic beverages regularly, that is, at least once or twice a month	78.9	16.0	**5.1**
c. smoked marijuana	77.7	14.1	**8.2**
d. carried a handgun	87.1	8.6	**4.3**

Clearly, behavior associated with the most "cool" perception is smoking marijuana, while the least "cool" is carrying a handgun. Regular alcohol use and smoking cigarettes were perceived as about equally "cool".

PERCEIVED RISK AND AVAILABILITY OF AOD:

The University of Michigan Monitoring the Future surveys of high school and middle school youth have found that the combination of perceived risk of harm and availability of substances together account for higher consumption of substances among the youth studied. The Mid-Cumberland students' responses to these questions are provided below:

Perceived Risk of Substance Use:

How much students think people risk harming themselves (physically or in other ways) if they engage in each of the following practices involving AOD use gives a clear indication of students' assessment of relative risk of harm.

Percentage of Students Perceiving People's Risk of Harm from AOD Use:	% No Risk	% Slight Risk	% Moderate Risk	% Great Risk
a. smoke one or more packs of cigarettes per day	5.8	9.7	29.1	**55.5**
b. use smokeless tobacco	8.0	23.3	37.0	**31.7**
c. try marijuana once or twice	12.2	25.8	24.0	**38.2**
d. smoke marijuana regularly (at least once or twice a month)	8.4	12.0	22.6	**57.0**
e. drink any alcoholic beverages (beer, wine, liquor)	9.6	27.2	33.8	**29.3**
f. take one or two drinks of an alcoholic beverage nearly every day	9.7	18.5	25.9	**45.9**

Clearly, the most risk of physical or other harm is perceived by these middle school students from smoking marijuana regularly or smoking one or more packs of cigarettes a day (about 56-57% reporting great risk), while the lowest perceived risk is assessed for drinking any alcohol or using smokeless tobacco (about 29-32% great risk each), followed by trying marijuana once or twice (38% great risk). Intermediate risks of harm are attributed to taking one or two drinks of alcoholic beverages nearly every day, at 46% of students assessing great risk of harm to this practice.

Perceived Ease of Access to AOD:

Like perceived harmfulness or risk of harm from drugs, including alcohol, perceived ease of access to or availability of drugs serves as an important predictor of risk of AOD use and problems related to it.

Percentage of Students Reporting Relative Ease of Access to Drugs by Type - Q: How easy do you think it would be for you to get each of the following types of drugs if you wanted some?	% Very or Somewhat Easy	% Very or Somewhat Hard
a. Cigarettes	**58.8**	41.2
b. Smokeless tobacco	**41.5**	58.5
c. Alcohol (beer, wine or hard liquor)	**53.0**	47.0
d. Marijuana/pot	**32.2**	67.7

Percentage of Students Reporting Relative Ease of Access to Drugs by Type - Q: How easy do you think it would be for you to get each of the following types of drugs if you wanted some?	% Very or Somewhat Easy	% Very or Somewhat Hard
e. Drugs like cocaine/crack, LSD (acid), heroin, etc.	**20.9**	79.1
f. "Pills" like uppers/speed, downers, painkillers, tranquilizers	**33.8**	66.2
g. Something to sniff like glue or gasoline	**65.7**	34.3

The easiest substances for middle school students to access appear to be inhalants and cigarettes, followed by alcohol and smokeless tobacco. Pills like uppers, downers, etc. and marijuana were seen as moderately easy to obtain, with illicit drugs like cocaine, hallucinogens, and heroin, for example, as the hardest to access in these students' opinions.

Ease of Access to a Gun:

In answer to the question, "If you wanted to get a gun, how easy would it be for you to get one?", 23% of middle school students said it would be very easy, and another 17% said somewhat easy, for a total of 40% reporting easy access to guns. The remaining students reported access to guns to be hard - either somewhat hard, at 17.4%, or very hard, at 42.7%.

Perceived Wrongness of Certain Personal Choices and Practices:

In answer to the question concerning how wrong one thinks it is for someone the student's age to use certain substances and engage in certain risky practices, the following were the results:

Percentage of Students Perceiving it Wrong to:	% Very Wrong	% Somewhat Wrong	% Not Very Wrong	% Not Wrong at All
a. drink beer, wine, or hard liquor (for example, vodka, whiskey, or gin) regularly (at least once or twice a month)	**67.5**	21.1	7.7	3.7
b. smoke cigarettes	**69.9**	19.6	7.3	3.1
c. smoke marijuana/pot	**81.3**	9.9	5.0	3.8
d. use LSD, cocaine, amphetamines/ speed or another illegal drug	**90.9**	5.5	1.9	1.7

Percentage of Students Perceiving it Wrong to:	% Very Wrong	% Somewhat Wrong	% Not Very Wrong	% Not Wrong at All
e. steal anything worth more than $5	**69.7**	22.1	5.5	2.7
f. take a handgun or other weapon to school	**93.4**	3.9	1.3	1.4
g. pick a fight with someone	**41.2**	38.0	14.3	6.6
h. stay away from school all day when your parents think you are at school (skip school)	**65.9**	24.8	6.3	3.0
i. attack someone with the idea of seriously hurting them	**82.3**	12.5	3.1	2.2
j. beat up people if they start a fight	**42.8**	27.1	13.3	16.9

The practices perceived as most wrong, with the highest percentage of students reporting them as very wrong, were taking a handgun or weapon to school (93% reported this as very wrong) or using illegal drugs like LSD, cocaine or speed (91% very wrong). Attacking someone with the idea of hurting them or smoking pot/marijuana (at about 81-82% each) were less likely to be judged as very wrong. Even less likely to be seen as very wrong were smoking cigarettes, stealing anything worth more than $5 (70% each) as well as drinking alcohol regularly, or skipping school, reported as very wrong by 68% and 66% of students, respectively. Picking a fight with someone or beating up people if they start a fight were seen as very wrong by about 41-43% of students. This suggests that picking fights or beating people up in fights, which are types of violent behavior, are less likely to be judged as very wrong by students themselves than is drug use - whether using alcohol, smoking cigarettes or using illegal drugs.

Students' Perceptions of How Wrong Parents Would Think Certain Behaviors:

Similar questions to those above were asked of students concerning parental views of how wrong certain practices are; the results follow:

Percentage of Students Reporting the Degree to which Their Parents Would Think it Wrong for Them to:	% Very Wrong	% Somewhat Wrong	% Not Very Wrong	% Not Wrong at All
a. drink beer, wine, or hard liquor (for example, vodka, whiskey, or gin) regularly (at least once or twice a month)	**85.6**	9.2	3.3	1.9
b. smoke cigarettes	**87.4**	7.8	2.7	2.2
c. smoke marijuana/pot	**93.7**	3.4	1.3	1.6
d. steal anything worth more than $5.00	**91.7**	5.6	1.2	1.5
e. draw graffiti, write things, or draw pictures on buildings or other property (without the owner's permission)	**90.7**	6.0	1.5	1.8
f. pick a fight with someone	**72.9**	19.4	5.1	2.6

Smoking marijuana ranks first in the percentage of students who think their parents would assess the practice as very wrong, at about 94%, followed by stealing anything worth more than $5 (92%), and drawing graffiti and related activities (91%). Slightly less wrong in student-assessed parental judgment are smoking cigarettes and drinking alcohol regularly, which each drew responses of "very wrong" from about 87% and 86% of students, respectively. Consistent with earlier results, picking a fight with someone was seen as least likely to be seen as wrong for students to do by their parents, with about 73% of students assessing that behavior as very wrong from a parental viewpoint.

Students' Perceptions of How Wrong Adults in Their Neighborhood Think Certain Behaviors Are:

In parallel with the questions asked of the students themselves and their parents reported above, students were asked to assess how wrong most adults in their neighborhood, or the area around where they live, would think it is for kids their age to use alcohol and other drugs and engage in risky or illegal behaviors. The results are striking in comparison with those for the students and their parents.

Percentage of Students Reporting How Wrong Adults in their Neighborhood Think it is for Middle School Age Kids:	% Very Wrong	% Somewhat Wrong	% Not Very Wrong	% Not Wrong At All
a. to use marijuana	89.6	5.6	**2.3**	**2.6**
b. to drink alcohol	79.1	13.0	**4.9**	**3.1**
c. to smoke cigarettes	75.9	14.8	**5.5**	**3.8**

These students perceive that adults in their neighborhood, like their parents, think that use of marijuana is very wrong, followed by drinking alcohol and smoking cigarettes, with 90%, 79% and 76% of students, respectively, reporting these behaviors as very wrong for kids their age to indulge in, according to adults in their neighborhood. On the other hand, about 4%, 3% and 2.6% of students, respectively, think adults in their neighborhood see nothing wrong in kids their age smoking cigarettes, drinking alcohol or using marijuana, in that order.

STUDENTS' LIFE PROBLEMS AND HIGH RISK PRACTICES:

Asked whether they had ever participated in several problematic behaviors, such as gang membership, suspension from school or violence-related behavior, the following results were observed for all middle school students surveyed in Mid-Cumberland Region of Tennessee. Nearly 6% (5.5%) reported that they had belonged to a gang, while 5% reported having been arrested at least once in their lifetimes. Suspension from school was reported by nearly 1 in 5 (17.8%) students. Certain practices related to violence or risk of violence were reported as follows: 4.9% of students had carried a handgun other than for hunting or sport, while 14.2% had attacked someone with the idea of seriously hurting them.

The results for students' exposure to and participation in risky and violent behaviors in the past 12 months, overall and in school, are reported below.

Percentage of Students who Reported in the Past 12 Months that They Had....	%Yes, Overall	% Yes, at School
a. gotten into a physical fight	36.1	13.2
b. taken part in a gang fight where a group of your friends was against another group	6.9	2.2
c. been injured in a fight	9.8	2.4
d. been physically abused or assaulted	8.2	2.9
e. stolen "pills" or prescription drugs including from home	2.7	0.5

Percentage of Students who Reported in the Past 12 Months that They Had....	%Yes, Overall	% Yes, at School
f. stolen illegal drugs	2.9	0.5
g. bought “pills” or an illegal drug	4.7	1.2
h. been offered or given “pills” or an illegal drug	12.3	4.9

These results suggest that getting into physical fights is very frequent behavior in these middle school students, with more than 1 in 3 reporting fighting in the past 12 months and with 36.5% of those fights occurring at school. Being offered or given pills or illicit drugs is next most frequent among these students, at about 17% reporting this experience, with 28.5% of such contacts occurring at school. Less frequently reported were being injured in a fight, at about 1 in 10 students - with about 25% of those injuries occurring at school. Being physically abused or assaulted was reported by about 8% of students, with around 35% occurring at school. Participation in gang fights was reported by nearly 7% of youth. About 31% of these gang fights reportedly occurred at school. Buying pills or an illegal drug, stealing pills or prescription drugs including from home, and stealing illegal drugs were reported by 4.7%, 2.7% and 2.9% of students, respectively. In about one-quarter of cases of buying pills or illegal drugs, this occurred at school, while in 18% of cases where drugs were stolen - whether pills/prescription drugs or illegal drugs - the stealing was reported to have occurred at school.

Other High Risk Behaviors in the Past 12 Months:

Overall, 11.4% of students reported that they had been suspended from school one or more times in the last 12 months. Substantially lower percentages of students reported serious criminal behavior - thus, 2.4% reported that they had stolen or tried to steal a motor vehicle, such as a car or a motorcycle, while 4% reported that they had been arrested at least once in the last 12 months.

Violent behavior was reported by 10.9% of students who said that they had attacked someone (physically) with the idea of seriously hurting them in the last 12 months. Overall, 8.5% of students had carried a weapon (such as a handgun, knife or club) other than for hunting or sport, and 1.6% had taken a weapon such as a gun to school at least once in the period in question.

In terms of alcohol and other drug use, 6.8% of these Mid-Cumberland middle school students had been drunk or high at school, and about 1% reported this had occurred 20 times or more in the last 12 months. More than 3% (3.3%) of these youth reported that they had sold “pills” or illegal drugs in the past 12 months, and 1.9% of students overall reported that they had sold “pills” or illegal drugs at school.

Attitudes to Risky and Illegal Practices:

Tapping dimensions of impulsivity and rebelliousness, as well as other negative attitudes, these students' responses indicate that impulsivity is very characteristic of these young people. Over half report that they often do things without thinking of consequences. Overall, 23.5% think it is not important to think before they act, and about 20% have to have everything right away. Measures of rebelliousness and testing limits - liking to see how much they can get away with, reported by about 26% of students, ignoring rules that get in the way (24.5%), and doing the opposite of what people tell them just to provoke a reaction (20.6%) - are also relatively commonly reported by these students. The two depression-related questions above are discussed in an earlier section. Thinking it is OK to cheat at school was reported by around 17% of students.

Percentage of Students Whose Attitudes Put Them at High Risk and Therefore Who	**% Yes**	**% No**
a. think it is okay to cheat at school	**16.7**	83.3
b. like to see how much you can get away with	**26.0**	74.0
c. sometimes think that life is not worth it	**30.8**	69.2
d. think you are no good at all	**23.3**	76.7
e. ignore rules that get in your way	**24.5**	75.5
f. often do things without thinking what will happen	**52.5**	47.5
g. have to have everything right away	**19.8**	80.2
h. think it is important to think before you act	76.5	**23.5**
i. do the opposite of what people tell you, just to get them mad	**20.6**	79.4

Other Risk Taking:

Students who say that they often or almost always have done what feels good no matter what or have done something dangerous because someone dared them to do it represent 13.6% and 6.9% of students, respectively. Those students who conversely report that they never or rarely have done what feels good no matter what or done something dangerous on a dare comprise 43.4% and 68.6% of students, overall.

FAMILIAL AND PEER ALCOHOL OR DRUG PROBLEMS:

Familial Alcohol or Drug Abuse:

Fully 27.4% percent of students reported that someone in their family has had a severe alcohol or drug problem.

Parental AOD Use: Answering the question, "Do you think one or both of your parents (stepparents or guardians) is drinking too much or has a problem with alcohol?", 11.8% of students said "Yes". Close to 7% (6.6%) of students said that they think one or both of their parents is using or abusing drugs other than alcohol. A total of nearly 15% (14.6%) of students think that one or both of their parents is using or abusing alcohol or has a problem with it.

Siblings' AOD Use: Asked about alcohol and other drug use and high risk practices in their siblings, 8% of students had no brothers or sisters. However, for continuity and consistency of denominators, the following percentages are reported for all students.

Percentage of Students Reporting that One or More of Their Brothers or Sisters	% of All Students
a. drinks beer, wine, or hard liquor (for example, vodka, whiskey or gin)	17.8
b. smokes marijuana	10.3
c. smokes cigarettes	22.2
d. has taken a handgun to school	1.3
e. has been suspended or expelled from school	18.4

Cigarette smoking is most frequently reported for sibling drug use by these students at about 22%, followed by suspension from school and alcohol use at around 18% each. Marijuana use was reported for about 10% of students' siblings. Handguns at school was least common at 1.3%.

Close Friends' Alcohol or Drug Problems: About 5.7% of students reported that they think that one or more of their close friends is drinking too much or has a problem with alcohol, and 10% said that they think that one or more of the close friends is using or abusing drugs other than alcohol.

STUDENT'S OWN ALCOHOL/DRUG USE:

While this was mainly a prevention survey, it is clear that many of these middle school students have already begun their alcohol and other drug use careers so that primary prevention, delaying onset of the initiation of first use of alcohol or other drugs, is for many

an inappropriate strategy. Secondary prevention, reducing the use of alcohol or other drugs, mitigating the occurrence of negative and dangerous consequences, and breaking the dependence cycle early is more relevant. In some cases tertiary prevention or actual treatment is indicated, particularly in students who self-report addiction or dependence.

Cigarette Smoking:

More than 1 in 4 (27.9%) Mid-Cumberland students have ever smoked cigarettes. Fully 19.2% of students had smoked cigarettes in the last 12 months, and 12% of students had smoked in the past 30 days. Thus, about two-thirds of lifetime smokers had smoked in the last 12 months, and more than 2 in 5 (43.3%) lifetime smokers had smoked in the past 30 days.

Students who had smoked cigarettes on 20 or more of the last 30 days comprised 3% of all students. Those who smoked 11 or more cigarettes in the past 30 days represented 1.2% of students. Also, 25.4% of current or 30-day smokers smoked cigarettes on 20+ of the past 30 days, and 10.4% of current smokers smoked 11 or more cigarettes in the past 30 days.

Smokeless Tobacco (Chewing Tobacco, Snuff, Plug, Dipping Tobacco):

Around 1 in 10 (9.1%) students have ever used smokeless tobacco. Fully 5.5% of students had used smokeless tobacco in the last 12 months, and 3.3% of students had used it in the past 30 days. Thus, 58.6% of lifetime users had used smokeless tobacco in the last 12 months, while 35.4% of lifetime users had used smokeless tobacco in the past 30 days.

Students who had used smokeless tobacco on 20 or more of the last 30 days comprised 0.7% of all students. Around 21% of current or 30-day smokeless tobacco users used it on 20+ of the past 30 days.

Alcoholic Beverages (Beer, Wine, Wine Coolers or Liquor):

Close to 2 in 5 (39.3%) of these middle school students, ranging in age from 11 to 15 years, had drunk alcoholic beverages more than a few sips at least once in their lifetimes. Fully 27.4% had drunk alcohol in the past 12 months, and 16.9% had done so in the past 30 days. Thus, given that students had ever used alcohol, 68.3% of them had drunk alcohol in the past 12 months, and 42% had drunk alcohol in the past 30 days.

Students who had used alcohol on 20 or more of the last 30 days comprised 0.5% of all students, and 3.2% of current drinkers. Students who reported daily alcohol consumption over the past 30 days represented 0.2% of all students. Daily drinkers made up 1.4% of current (30-day) drinkers among these students, and nearly half (44.2%) of students who reported drinking on 20 or more of the last 30 days drank alcohol daily.

Among these middle school students, 2.3% drank 5 or more drinks of alcohol per day on their drinking days. These "binge drinkers" are 14.1% of current drinkers (last 30 days). Less than 1% (0.4%) of students reported drinking 5 or more drinks on 20 or more of the past 30 days. Finally 0.3% of students overall reported drinking 5 or more drinks of alcohol daily in the past 30 days.

In answer to the question, "Have you **ever** gotten drunk or felt very high or intoxicated from drinking alcohol?", 15.2% of all students said that they had gotten drunk. This number represents 38.6% of lifetime drinkers.

Marijuana (Pot, Grass, Hash, etc.) Use:

About 15% (15.2%) of middle school students in the Mid-Cumberland Region had ever used marijuana, while 11.4% had used marijuana in the past 12 months, and 7.7% in the past 30 days. While 73% of lifetime marijuana users used marijuana in the past 12 months, nearly half (49.4%) of lifetime users had used marijuana in the past 30 days.

Students who had used marijuana on 20 or more of the last 30 days comprised 1.5% of all students, and students who reported daily marijuana use over the past 30 days represented 0.7% of all students. However, among current marijuana users (30-day users), 18.9% used on 20 or more of the past 30 days and 9.6% of current users reported daily marijuana use.

Percentage of Students Reporting Illegal Drug Use by Type of Drug and Lifetime, Recent or Current Use	**% Yes, Ever**	**% Yes, in the Last 12 Months**	**% Yes, in the Last 30 Days**
a. Cocaine or crack	3.1	2.2	1.7
b. Substances you "sniff": paint thinners, glue, gasoline, white-out, butane, aerosol sprays, etc.	8.9	7.3	5.9
c. LSD (acid) or other hallucinogens such as peyote, jimson weed, mushrooms, PCP (angel dust), etc.	5.7	4.3	3.4
d. Other illegal drugs such as ecstasy, ice (crystal meth), heroin (smack, horse, skag), etc.	4.6	3.5	2.8

It is very clear that inhalants are one drug of choice for these youth, since of the 9% of students who report lifetime use of inhalants to get high, 82.2% had used inhalants in the last 12 months, and 66.2% had used them in the last 30 days. Cocaine, on the other hand, was less likely to involve sustained use, since of the lifetime users of cocaine or crack among these middle school students, 72% had used cocaine in the last 12 months, and 54.3% in the last 30 days. For other illegal drugs and for hallucinogens such as LSD, the percentages of ever users who used in the last 12 months are 75.8% and 76.7%, respectively, while the proportions of ever users who used in the last 30 days are 59.3%

for LSD and other hallucinogens, and 61.3% for other illegal drugs. About 0.7% to 0.8% of Mid-Cumberland Region students reported use of one or more of these illegal drugs daily in the last 30 days.

OVERALL ATOD, AOD AND DRUG USE PREVALENCE:

ATOD: Overall, around half or 49.1% of middle schools students in the Mid-Cumberland Region reported using alcohol, tobacco or other drugs (ATOD) in their lifetimes, while 37.7% reported 12-month use, and 27.2%, 30-day use of one or more substances (excluding caffeine and prescription drugs).

Given lifetime use, 74.3% had used ATOD in 12 months, and 52.3% in 30 days. Of 12-month users, 70.5% were 30-day users, suggesting that when youth begin their drug use careers, relatively few stop soon.

AOD: Excluding tobacco and looking only at the prevalence of use of alcohol and other drugs (save caffeine and prescription drugs), the lifetime prevalence of alcohol and other drug (AOD) use among these middle school students is 44.7%, the 12-month prevalence, 33.2%, and the 30-day prevalence, 23%. Here again, given lifetime use, 72.2% had used AOD in 12 months, and 49.2% in 30 days. Of 12-month users, 68.2% were 30-day users.

Drugs: Considering drugs only, 20.9% of middle school students had ever used one or more illegal drugs (excluding alcohol, tobacco or prescription drugs as well as caffeine). This compares to a 12-month drug use prevalence rate of 16.7%, and a 30-day prevalence rate of 12.6%. About 78.2% of lifetime drug users used drugs in the past 12 months. Fifty-nine percent of lifetime drug users used drugs in the last 30 days. Among 12-month drug users, 75.3% were current or 30-day users.

AVERAGE AGE AT FIRST USE OF AOD:

Average Age at First Use by Type of Drug:	**Average Age of First Use (in Years)**
a. smoked cigarettes	10.1
b. used smokeless tobacco	10.5
c. drank alcoholic beverages	10.3
d. began drinking alcoholic beverages regularly, that is at least once or twice a month	11.3
e. got drunk or felt very high or intoxicated from drinking alcohol	11.6
f. used marijuana/pot	11.6

Average Age at First Use by Type of Drug:	Average Age of First Use (in Years)
g. used cocaine or crack	11.2
h. used substances you "sniff"	10.7
i. used LSD (acid) or other hallucinogens	11.6
j. used other illegal drugs such as ecstasy, Ice (crystal meth), heroin, etc.	11.7

Cigarette smoking is the earliest onset substance use, beginning, on average, in these middle school students at age 10.1, followed by using alcohol at age 10.3 years and using smokeless tobacco at age 10.5 years. Inhalant use was reported as initiated at the average age of 10.7 years among these students. The onset of cocaine use was reported at age 11.2, followed by regular alcohol consumption (at least once or twice a month), starting at 11.4 years. While marijuana use, using LSD or other hallucinogens, or getting drunk started at age 11.6 years. The use of other illegal drugs such as ecstasy, crystal meth and heroin, began at age 11.7, on average, the latest of all AOD use practices identified.

Prescription Drug Abuse:

Prescription drug abuse is defined as having taken any prescription drugs or "pills" just to get high or for non-medical purposes, on one's own, without a doctor's prescription. Close to 7% (6.6%) of students reported prescription drug abuse in their lifetimes; 5.1% reported it in the past 12 months, and 2.6% in the past 30 days. Among lifetime prescription drug abusers, 76% had abused such drugs in the past 12 months, and 38.2% did so in the past 30 days.

SELF-REPORTED SUBSTANCE ABUSE/ADDICTION:

Answering "yes" to the question of lifetime or current addiction to or dependence on one or more drugs serves as a proxy measure of these youth's need for alcohol and other drug treatment[1]. The following table shows the extent of self-reported addiction among these students by type of drug and by lifetime or current prevalence.

[1]The question contained in its wording a brief definition of addiction: "Do you think you have **EVER** been hooked on or addicted to any of the following substances (for example, did you try to quit or use less and had trouble doing so)? "

Percentage of Students Ever or Now Addicted to Alcohol or Other Drugs by Type of Drug	% Ever Addicted	% Now Addicted
a. Tobacco/nicotine	6.8	4.7
b. Alcohol (beer, wine or liquor)	3.8	2.7
c. Marijuana/pot	3.9	3.2
d. Cocaine or crack	0.8	0.4
e. Hallucinogens like LSD or PCP or ecstasy	1.1	0.7
f. Coffee/cola/caffeine	24.3	18.1
g. A prescription drug or "pill"	3.0	1.6
h. Other drugs or substances	1.9	1.3

Based on lifetime prevalence of self-reported addiction to a drug or substance, caffeine/cola/coffee is the most prevalent drug, addicting about 1 in 4 students, followed, at a much lower level, at about 7%, by tobacco/nicotine, and about 3.8-3.9%, by alcohol and marijuana. Addiction to a prescription drug or "pill" was reported by around 3% of students, and addiction to other drugs or substances by around 2%. About 0.8% of students reported addiction either to hallucinogens like LSD or to cocaine or crack.

Current addiction as self-reported by these students again showed caffeine as the number one drug of addiction, by far, at 18%, followed by tobacco/nicotine, at around 5%, and marijuana at close to 3%. Alcohol addiction was reported by 2.7% of students, while prescription drugs or pills, other drugs or substances, hallucinogens and cocaine or crack were reported as current sources of addiction by decreasing percentages of youth, at 1.6%, 1.3%, 0.7% and 0.4%, respectively.

The percentage of lifetime addicted users who are currently addicted suggests some of the power of these drugs over these very young users. The highest percentage of ever addicted students are currently addicted to marijuana (81%), followed closely by caffeine/cola/coffee (72.8%). Slightly lower rates of ever to current addicted students are observed for alcohol (71%), and tobacco/nicotine (68.4%). Hallucinogens such as LSD, other drugs or substances, had ever-to-current addiction ratios of 60%, and 67.3%, respectively. The drug types least likely to be still addicting youth who reported ever being addicted to them are prescription drugs or "pills," at 54% and cocaine or crack at 46% of students ever addicted to them now addicted to them.

COMMUNITY INFLUENCES ON STUDENTS' AOD RISK:

Questions about students' communities and the areas around where they lived were expected to shed some light on risk and protective factors for alcohol and other drug use among middle school students.

Attitudes to Neighborhood:

Only 1.4% of students said they did not feel safe in their neighborhood, or the area around where they live, while the remainder or 89.6% did feel safe. Overall, 18.3% of students said they did not like their neighborhood, with 81.7% feeling the opposite. About one-quarter (24.8%) of these youth would like to get out of their neighborhood, compared to the more than three-fourths (75.2%) who would not. About 69.7% of students report that their neighbors notice when they are doing a good job and let them know about it, while for 62.8% and 60.3% of students respectively, there are lots of adults in their neighborhood they could talk to about something important or there are people in their neighborhood who encourage them to do their best.

Neighborhood Description:

When asked how well each of the following characteristics describe their neighborhood, or the area around where they live, students were most likely to report fights and crime and/or drug selling as characterizing their neighborhoods very well or somewhat well, with less emphasis on empty or abandoned buildings or lots of graffiti.

Percentage of Students Describing Their Neighborhood in Terms of the Following:	% Very Well	% Somewhat Well	% Not Well	% Not at All
a. Crime and/or drug selling	**6.5**	8.1	10.1	**75.4**
b. Fights	**7.8**	10.9	14.1	**67.2**
c. Lots of empty or abandoned buildings	**4.4**	3.8	9.9	**81.9**
d. Lots of graffiti	**4.4**	3.3	7.3	**85.0**

Only about 67% of students reported that their neighborhoods were not at all characterized by fights, and around 75% not at all characterized by crime and/or drug selling. On the other hand, close to 82% of students reported no empty or abandoned buildings, and 85% reported no profuse graffiti at all in their neighborhoods.

Adults Using Alcohol and Drugs in the Neighborhood:

In the last 12 months, 23.7% of these middle school students from the Mid-Cumberland Region reported that they personally knew one or more adults who had used

marijuana/pot, cocaine/crack or other illegal drugs. About 15.6% reported knowing at least one adult who had sold or dealt drugs in the last 12 months. Around 19.3% of students had known adults who carried handguns or other weapons not for hunting or sport, and close to the same percentage (17.9%) had known adults who had done other things that could get them in trouble with the police - stealing, selling stolen goods, mugging, or assaulting others. Finally, about 2 out of 5 (38.6%) of youth had known at least one adult who had gotten drunk or high in the last 12 months. Thus, drunkenness was by far the most commonly reported practice observed by these students among the adults in their neighborhoods.

When asked how many adults they knew personally who had engaged in these practices in the past 12 months, 11% of students cited 5 or more adults who had gotten drunk or high, while 6% knew 5 or more adults who had used marijuana/pot, cocaine/crack or other illegal drugs. About 4% knew five or more adults who had carried handguns or weapons (3.7%), sold or dealt drugs (3.9%), or done other things that could have gotten them in trouble with the police (3.5%).

Participation in Leisure Time Activities as Protective of AOD Use and Abuse:

The availability and participation in activities that are seen as protective of alcohol and other drug use and abuse in youth is reported on here.

Percentage of Students Participating in the Following Activities:	**% Yes**	**% No**	**% Not Available in Their Community**
a. Sports teams	**72.8**	24.7	2.6
b. Scouting	**21.9**	72.7	5.4
c. Boys and girls clubs	**20.9**	69.6	9.5
d. 4-H clubs	**31.0**	63.0	6.0
e. Service clubs (such as Junior Sertoma, Rainbow, etc.)	**17.7**	67.7	14.6
f. Church youth groups	**65.0**	32.9	2.2
g. Music/art/drama clubs	**40.1**	54.5	5.4
h. Other after school clubs	**41.8**	54.3	3.9

The leisure-time activity reported by most students was participation in sports teams at about 73%, followed by church youth groups at 65%. Moderately popular are music/art/drama clubs and other after school clubs, at about 40% and 42% respectively. Also moderately popular where available are 4-H clubs (around 31%). Least popular were

service clubs (at about 18%), followed by scouting and boys and girls clubs (at 22% and 21%, respectively). Least available activities in these communities were service clubs, boys and girls clubs and 4-H clubs.

Parental Guidance and Support:

Finally, parental guidance and support were assessed by a series of questions, such as "Do your parents want you to call if you are going to be late getting home?" To this question, 82.8% of students responded positively, and 17.2%, negatively. The question, "Does your family have clear rules about alcohol and drug use?" brought responses of 75.6%, "yes", and 24.4%, "no". The extent to which families fight is measured by answers to whether people in students' family often insult or yell at each other, reported by 35.4% of students, compared to 64.6% who say "no". About 26.4% of students reported that people in their family have serious arguments, while 73.6% do not report this.

Answers to two hypothetical questions are also revealing of the extent of parental guidance and concern as perceived by these youth. First, 60.5% of students said that if they drank some beer, wine, or hard liquor (for example, vodka, whiskey, or gin) without their parents' permission, they would be caught by their parents, while 73.8% said that if they carried a handgun without their parents' permission, they would be caught by their parents.

POSITIVE PARENTAL ATTITUDES AND PRACTICES:

The frequency with which parents include youth in family decisions and praise and reward them is thought to be associated with protection against alcohol and other drug abuse. For these youth, parental guidance and support appears relatively high.

Percentage of Students Reporting Frequency of Parents:	**% Never/ Rarely**	**% Sometimes**	**% Often/Almost Always**
a. giving them lots of chances to do fun things with them	11.3	41.8	**47.0**
b. asking them what they think before most family decisions affecting the students are made	23.6	41.7	**34.7**
c. noticing when they are doing a good job and letting them know about it	14.2	35.4	**50.3**
d. telling the students they are proud of them for something they have done	10.8	29.8	**59.5**

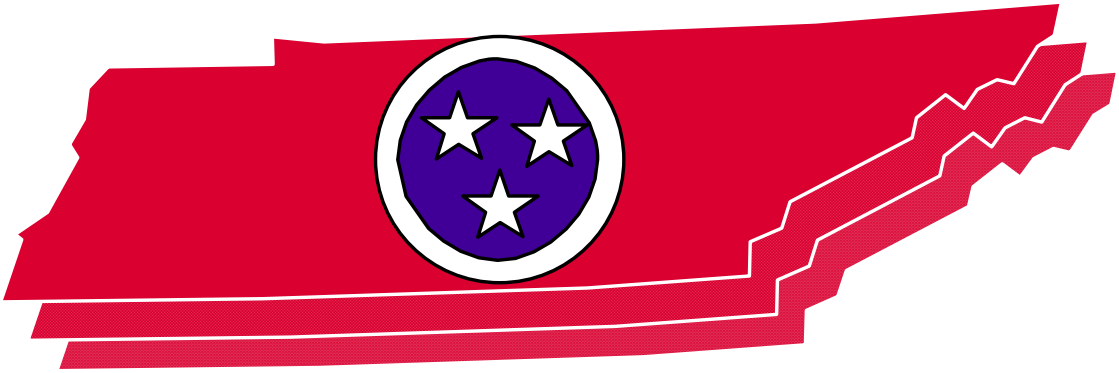
The most commonly reported supportive practice of parents toward these middle school students among the items measured is telling the students they are proud of their accomplishments, at 60% of students reporting parents as often or almost always doing so. This is followed by parents' noticing a good job and letting students know it (around 50%), and giving students lots of chances to do fun things with parents (about 47%). Least likely to occur often or almost always is parents' asking students what they think before family decisions affecting them are made, at 34.7% often or almost always doing so.

Finally, 88.2% of students say that their parents ask if they have gotten their homework done, while 11.8% do not. In 87.9% of cases, when students are not at home, one of their parents knows where they are and who they are with, while 12.1% do not. The great majority of students reported that their parents would know if they did not come home on time, at 86.7%, compared to 13.3% whose parents would not know. Overall, 78.9% of students could ask their parents for help if they had a personal problem, compared to 21.1% who could not do so. Students were more likely to report that they often share their thoughts and feelings with their mothers (64.4%), compared to their fathers (44.2%).

TENNESSEE MIDDLE SCHOOL HEALTH SURVEY, 2001-2002

A SUMMARY OF FINDINGS FROM THE TENNESSEE MIDDLE SCHOOL HEALTH SURVEY

SOUTH CENTRAL REGION



TENNESSEE DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH

AND THE

COMMUNITY HEALTH RESEARCH GROUP

THE UNIVERSITY OF TENNESSEE, KNOXVILLE

June 2003

TENNESSEE MIDDLE SCHOOL SURVEY RESULTS:
SOUTH CENTRAL TENNESSEE

SOCIODEMOGRAPHIC CHARACTERISTICS:

Gender: A total of 2,619 students in randomly sampled middle schools grades 6-8 in South Central Tennessee completed surveys. They were split evenly by gender, with 50.1% being female and 49.9% male.

Grade: The split was approximately even by grade, 32.6% of the students sampled were in 6th grade, 35.2% in 7th grade and 32.2% in 8th grade.

Age: In terms of age, 9.4% of students were 11 years of age or younger, while 29.6% were age 12; 34.9% were age13; 22.5% were age 14; and 3.7% were 15 years of age or older.

Race/Ethnicity: While 94.4% of students were white, 3.2% were black and 2.4% were of other racial/ethnic groups.

Hispanic Origin: A total of 4.1% of students were of Hispanic origin.

OTHER BACKGROUND CHARACTERISTICS:

Two-Parent Family: Seventy-four percent of students in the study lived in two-parent families, while 26% lived in families of other compositions.

Non-English Spoken At Home: While fully 99.2% of students reported that English was the language used most often in the home, 0.4% reported that language to be Spanish and another 0.4% reported another language as the language most often spoken at home.

Rural/Urban Residence: More than one-third (35.5%) of middle school students lived in a city, town or suburb, i.e., an urban area. Of all students, 48.2% lived in the country, although not on a farm, and 16.4% lived on farms.

Proxy Measures of Poverty: In answer to the question, “Do you live in public housing?”, 19.9% of students did not know the answer, while 5.2% reported that they did live in public housing, and another 74.9% that they did not live in public housing. This measure was to be used as one indicator of poverty along with whether the family was on any form of public assistance. That question was phrased: “Does your family receive any form of public assistance, such as food stamps or other forms of welfare (such as Families First, WIC, TennCare/Medicaid, etc.)?” More than one-quarter (25.3%) of the students did not know. Still 19.3% reported that their families did receive public assistance, while 55.4% did not. Combining these two measures produces a prevalence estimate of middle school students in poverty of 20.7% in the region as a whole.

Mobility/Migration: Only 33.6% of students had not changed homes since kindergarten, while 32% had changed homes 1-2 times; 19.1% had changed homes 3-4 times; and 15.2% had changed homes 5 times or more since kindergarten (7.5% had done so 5-6 times, and 7.7%, 7 times or more).

The Importance of Religion or Spirituality in Students' Families: Only 17.3% of South Central Tennessee middle school students reported that religion or spirituality was either not very important (12.8%) or not at all important (4.5%) in their families. For 44.4% of these students, religion or spirituality was very important, while for 38.3%, it was somewhat important.

The Importance of Religion or Spirituality in Students' Own Lives: For 16.2% of South Central Tennessee middle school students, religion or spirituality was either not very important (11.2%) or not at all important (5.0%) in their own lives, while for 34.9%, it was somewhat important, and for about half (48.9%), it was very important.

Attendance at Religious Services: Asked how often they attend religious services or activities, 14.1% of students said they never did, while less than once a month was the response chosen by another 12.8%. Attendance at religious services or activities occupied 19.8% of students 1-2 times a month, although not every week, while another 53.3% of students attended religious services once a week or more.

SCHOOL EXPERIENCE:

Grades Last Year: Getting mostly A's as grades in the last school year was reported by about one-third (31.3%) of students, while mostly B's were reported by 42.0%, and mostly C's by 18.5%. Only 8.2% of students reported either mostly D's (5.9%) or mostly F's (2.3%).

A series of questions were asked concerning how often youth had certain experiences in school - whether rarely or never, sometimes or often or almost always. Categories are collapsed here into "often/almost always", and the residual which is "rarely, never or sometimes" in relation to students reporting those problems or experiences.

Percentage of Students Reporting that in the Past School Year They:	% Never/Rarely/ Sometimes	% Often/Almost Always
a. feel physically safe or safe from violence at school	**41.3%**	58.7%
b. try to do your best work in school	**29.8%**	70.2%
c. find most of your courses interesting to you	**83.0%**	17.0%
d. find the school work too hard to understand	89.7%	**10.3%**

Percentage of Students Reporting that in the Past School Year They:	% Never/Rarely/ Sometimes	% Often/Almost Always
e. fool around in class	87.0%	**13.0%**
f. fail to complete or turn in your assignments	94.1%	**5.9%**
g. get sent to the office or have to stay after school because you misbehaved	97.5%	**2.5%**
h. skip a day of school or part of a day (without permission)	97.9%	**2.1%**
i. get better grades than most of the students in your class	**80.2%**	19.8%
j. feel bullied by other kids at school	91.7%	**8.3%**
k. feel bored in school	70.1%	**29.9%**
l. hate being in school	76.4%	**23.6%**
m. think the things you are learning in school are going to be important for your later life	**56.1%**	43.9%

These attitudes among others studied in this survey are seen as protective or detrimental to efforts to prevent or reduce alcohol and other drug (AOD) use, abuse, problems or dependence among these youth. Results suggest that negative attitudes to school such as feeling bored in school and hating being in school were reported often or almost always by the most students at about 30% and 24%, respectively, while fooling around in class often or almost always was reported by 13%. Finding school work too hard to understand, failing to complete or turn in assignments, getting punished for misbehaving, or skipping school were reported often or almost always by more than 10%, about 6%, 2.5% and 2.1% of students, respectively.

More than half of students (58.7%) felt often or almost always safe at school, with over 8% reporting being often or almost always bullied at school. Other common negative orientations to school were never, rarely or sometimes finding courses interesting, reported by 83% of students, and with about 80% of students reporting never, rarely, or sometimes getting better grades than most other students. About 30% of students reported never, rarely or sometimes trying to do their best work in school, and more than half (56%) reported not often thinking that what was learned in school was going to be important later in life.

Missing School: A fairly high percentage of youth (47%) missed school at least one time in the past 30 days because of illness or injury, while 11.2% missed school because of skipping or cutting classes, and 36.7% missed school for other reasons.

Opportunities for Participation:

The following results were obtained when students were asked, whether, in their middle school, they had certain opportunities for participation in activities. The purpose was to tap students' attitudes to the school experience in general.

Percentage of Students Reporting Certain Attitudes to School	% NO	% YES
a. In your middle school, do you have chances to be part of class discussions and activities?	**9.6**	90.4
b. do your teachers notice when you are doing a good job and let you know about it?	**22.2**	77.8
c. do you have lots of chances to get involved in school activities outside of class?	**32.4**	67.6
d. do students in your school have chances to talk to teachers one-on-one?	**17.2**	82.8
e. does your school let your parents know when you have done something well?	**53.3**	46.7

Here, only about 1 in 10 students reported feeling as though they did not have chances to participate in class, and about 17% reported no chances to talk to teachers one-on-one. More than 1 in 5 students reported teachers not noticing and informing them when they were doing good work, and about 1 in 3 reported that they do not have lots of chances to get involved in extra-classroom activities at school. Finally, more than half of students said that their schools did not let their parents know when they had performed well.

HEALTH AND WELL-BEING OF MIDDLE SCHOOL STUDENTS IN SOUTH CENTRAL TENNESSEE:

Health Status: Overall, 15.9% of students reported that in general their health was either fair (14.8%) or poor (1.1%), while 26.4% reported good health, 30.5% very good health, and 27.1%, excellent health.

Disability Status: In answer to the question, "Do you now have any physical health problems or disabling conditions that keep you from doing normal activities?", 88.9% of students said "no", while 11.1% reported some disability.

Hyperactivity: In answer to the question, “Are you currently taking prescription drugs or “pills” for hyperactivity (ADD or ADHD) such as Ritalin?”, 6.1% of middle school students said “yes”, and 93.9% said “no”.

Receipt of any Treatment or Counseling Outside School: Lifetime prevalence of receipt of treatment for an emotional or mental health problem outside school was 10.8%. The prevalence of treatment for an alcohol problem was 2%; and for a drug problem, it was 2.3%. Receipt of treatment for either an alcohol or another drug problem was reported by 3% of middle school students in South Central Tennessee in 2001.

Attendance at Self-Help or 12-Step Support Group Meetings: Attendance at such self-help or 12-step meetings as Alateen, Al-Anon, Children of Alcoholics (COA), Alcoholics Anonymous (AA), Narcotics Anonymous (NA), Cocaine Anonymous (CA) was reported by 2.2% of students, while the remaining students or 97.8% had not done so.

Utilization of Emergency and Hospital Services:

Emergency Department Services: In the 12 months prior to the survey, 14.5% of students reported having been taken to an emergency room for an illness, and 25.1%, for an injury. An overall total of 34.1% of students had been taken to an ED for either an illness or an injury in the past 12 months.

Hospital Admissions: In the last 12 months, 5.3% of middle school students had stayed at least one night in a hospital for an illness while 5.5% had stayed at least one night for an injury. Either illness- or injury-related hospital admissions were reported by nearly 1 in 10 (9.6%) students.

Depression and Suicide Attempts:

Indicators of potential depression and low self-esteem such as thinking that life is not worth it sometimes or that one is no good at all are relatively common among these South Central Tennessee middle school students. These two feelings were reported by 29% and 23.5% of students, respectively.

More specific questions about depression were asked, such as “How often do you feel very depressed, that is, very “blue” or unhappy?” While 39.5% of students reported never or rarely feeling very depressed, 50% reported that they sometimes felt this way, and 10.6% reported often or almost always feeling very depressed.

While 18.2% of middle school students reported ever feeling so desperate that they considered suicide, 7% reported ever attempting suicide. Those young suicide attempters represent 36.4% of students considering suicide.

Finally, 2% of students said they had ever gone to a hospital or gotten medical treatment because of a suicide attempt. This represents around 29% of those students attempting suicide.

Life Stressors: These students have already experienced a variety of life stresses such as relocations and related changes. Questions about their lifetime experience of selected stressors elicited interesting responses, reported below.

First, in answer to questions concerning whether these youth had experienced a move in the last 12 months, 21.9% of youth reported moving to a different home in the last 12 months, while 13.3% reported starting at a new school in the same period.

In answer to the question of lifetime stressors experienced, the percentages of students reporting each type of life change is presented below:

Percentage of Students Reporting Life Stressors by Type of Stressor in Their Lifetimes	**% Yes**	**% No**
a. had a death in the family	**89.5**	10.5
b. parents (guardians) divorced	**41.1**	58.9
c. family had financial problems	**32.4**	67.6
d. anyone in the family been arrested	**36.5**	63.5
e. new sister or brother born	**32.2**	67.8
f. had a serious illness or injury in your immediate family	**51.9**	48.1
g. had your own serious illness or injury	**32.9**	67.1
h. experienced another very stressful event	**46.3**	53.7

To the extent that these students between the ages of 11 and 15 for the most part have already experienced some major life crises, their coping skills and responses to stressors are of major interest and concern especially as they may protect against or increase the risk of alcohol and other drug use and associated problems.

Particularly prevalent was death in the family experienced by close to 90% of children, followed by serious illness or injury of a family member, and other stressful events, reported by 52% and 46% of students, respectively. For around 41% and 36.5% of students, parental divorce and family arrests were reported, and family financial problems, own serious illness or injury and the birth of a sibling were reported by around 32-33%.

FRIENDS/PEER INFLUENCES ON YOUTH BEHAVIOR:

Best Friends' Practices:

When asked about their four best friends (the friends they feel closest to) and whether in the past 12 months any of those best friends had engaged in alcohol or other drug use, a range of from a low of 7.6% to a high of about 14.4% of students reported that they did not know.

Percentage of Students with Any Best Friends, who, in the Past 12 Months, Did the Following:	**% Yes**	**% No**	**% Don't Know**
a. smoked cigarettes	**27.9**	57.8	14.4
b. drunk alcoholic beverages -- beer, wine, or hard liquor (for example, vodka, whiskey, or gin)	**28.2**	58.7	13.1
c. used marijuana/pot	**15.1**	74.1	10.8
d. taken "pills" to get high or for non-medical reasons	**12.0**	76.7	11.4
e. used LSD, cocaine, amphetamines/speed, or another illegal drug	**5.4**	83.4	11.2
f. been suspended from school	**15.2**	78.8	6.0
g. carried a handgun or other weapon like a knife (other than for hunting or sport)	**8.9**	83.2	7.9
h. taken a handgun to school	**0.8**	95.0	4.2
i. sold "pills" or illegal drugs	**6.3**	86.1	7.6
j. stolen or tried to steal a motor vehicle such as a car or a motorcycle	**3.4**	90.1	6.6
k. been arrested	**6.5**	87.6	5.9
l. dropped out of school	**3.7**	92.0	4.3
m. been members of a gang	**9.3**	82.3	8.4

Most frequently reported behaviors among best friends were drinking alcohol or smoking cigarettes at about 28% of students each. These were followed by being suspended from school and using marijuana (15%), taking "pills" to get high (12%), and carrying a weapon, and being gang members at about 9% each, being arrested and selling pills or illegal drugs was reported by 6.5% and 6% of students', respectively, in relation to their best friends.

On the other hand, taking a handgun to school was the least common practice reported for best friends at 0.8%, followed by stealing or trying to steal a motor vehicle, dropping out of school, and using illegal drugs, which were reported for their best friends by 3.4%, 3.7%, and 5.4% of these youth, respectively.

Perceptions of Being Cool:

To elicit attitudes to the acceptability with peers of alcohol and other drug use, a series of questions was asked about how "cool" certain practices are perceived to be by middle school students, with the following results:

Percentage of Students Reporting the Chances They Would be Seen as Cool if They:	**% No or Very Little Chance**	**% Some Chance**	**% Pretty Good or Very Good Chance**
a. smoked cigarettes	78.6	15.9	**5.5**
b. began drinking alcoholic beverages regularly, that is, at least once or twice a month	77.1	16.4	**6.5**
c. smoked marijuana	81.0	11.6	**7.4**
d. carried a handgun	89.3	7.0	**3.6**

Clearly, behavior associated with the most "cool" perception is smoking marijuana, while the least "cool" is carrying a handgun. Regular alcohol use and smoking cigarettes were perceived as moderately and similarly "cool".

PERCEIVED RISK AND AVAILABILITY OF AOD:

The University of Michigan Monitoring the Future surveys of high school and middle school youth have found that the combination of perceived risk of harm and availability of substances together account for higher consumption of substances among the youth studied. The South Central Tennessee students' responses to these questions are provided below:

Perceived Risk of Substance Use:

How much students think people risk harming themselves (physically or in other ways) if they engage in each of the following practices involving AOD use gives a clear indication of students' assessment of relative risk of harm.

Percentage of Students Perceiving People's Risk of Harm from AOD Use:	% No Risk	% Slight Risk	% Moderate Risk	% Great Risk
a. smoke one or more packs of cigarettes per day	7.2	10.4	29.3	**53.1**
b. use smokeless tobacco	10.3	25.2	33.9	**30.6**
c. try marijuana once or twice	12.6	24.8	22.6	**40.0**
d. smoke marijuana regularly (at least once or twice a month)	9.5	11.8	20.9	**57.8**
e. drink any alcoholic beverages (beer, wine, liquor)	9.8	24.2	31.8	**34.3**
f. take one or two drinks of an alcoholic beverage nearly every day	12.0	20.1	26.3	**41.5**

Clearly, the most risk of physical or other harm is perceived by these middle school students from smoking marijuana regularly or smoking one or more packs of cigarettes a day (at about 58% and 53%, respectively, reporting great risk) , while the lowest perceived risk is assessed for using smokeless tobacco or drinking any alcohol (about 31% and 34%, respectively, reporting great risk). Intermediate risks of harm are attributed to trying marijuana once or twice and taking one or two drinks of alcoholic beverages nearly every day, at 40% and 41.5% of students assessing great risk of harm to these practices, respectively.

Perceived Ease of Access to AOD:

Like perceived harmfulness or risk of harm from drugs, including alcohol, perceived ease of access to or availability of drugs serves as an important predictor of risk of AOD use and problems related to it.

Percentage of Students Reporting Relative Ease of Access to Drugs by Type - Q: How easy do you think it would be for you to get each of the following types of drugs if you wanted some?	% Very or Somewhat Easy	% Very or Somewhat Hard
a. Cigarettes	**56.4**	43.6
b. Smokeless tobacco	**46.1**	53.9
c. Alcohol (beer, wine or hard liquor)	**48.6**	51.4
d. Marijuana/pot	**27.9**	72.1
e. Drugs like cocaine/crack, LSD (acid), heroin, etc.	**19.3**	80.7
f. "Pills" like uppers/speed, downers, painkillers, tranquilizers	**31.0**	69.0
g. Something to sniff like glue or gasoline	**60.0**	40.0

The easiest substances for middle school students to access appear to be inhalants and cigarettes, followed by alcohol and smokeless tobacco. Pills like uppers, downers, etc. and marijuana were seen as moderately easy to obtain, with illicit drugs like cocaine, hallucinogens, and heroin, for example, as the hardest to access in these students' opinions.

Ease of Access to a Gun:

In answer to the question, "If you wanted to get a gun, how easy would it be for you to get one?", 28.2% of middle school students said it would be very easy, and another 16.3% said somewhat easy, for a total of 44.5% reporting easy access to guns. The remaining 55.5% of students reported access to guns to be hard - either somewhat hard, at 16.6%, or very hard, at 38.9%.

Perceived Wrongness of Certain Personal Choices and Practices:

In answer to the question concerning how wrong one thinks it is for someone the student's age to use certain substances and engage in certain risky practices, the following were the results:

Percentage of Students Perceiving it Wrong to:	% Very Wrong	% Somewhat Wrong	% Not Very Wrong	% Not Wrong at All
a. drink beer, wine, or hard liquor (for example, vodka, whiskey, or gin) regularly (at least once or twice a month)	**67.4**	20.9	7.9	3.9
b. smoke cigarettes	**68.3**	20.3	7.3	4.0
c. smoke marijuana/pot	**83.4**	9.0	4.1	3.5
d. use LSD, cocaine, amphetamines/ speed or another illegal drug	**91.2**	5.1	1.7	2.0
e. steal anything worth more than $5	**73.8**	19.1	4.2	2.8
f. take a handgun or other weapon to school	**94.0**	4.0	0.9	1.2
g. pick a fight with someone	**45.5**	34.7	13.1	6.7
h. stay away from school all day when your parents think you are at school (skip school)	**67.9**	22.6	6.1	3.4
i. attack someone with the idea of seriously hurting them	**84.0**	10.7	2.9	2.3
j. beat up people if they start a fight	**48.7**	25.7	10.6	15.0

The practices perceived as most wrong, with the highest percentage of students reporting them as very wrong, were taking a handgun or weapon to school (94% reported this as very wrong) or using illegal drugs like LSD, cocaine or speed (91% very wrong). Attacking someone with the idea of hurting them or smoking pot/marijuana (at about 83-84% each) were less likely to be judged as very wrong. Even less likely to be seen as very wrong was stealing anything worth more than $5 reported by about 74% of students as being very wrong. Smoking cigarettes, skipping school and drinking alcohol regularly were reported as being very wrong by 67-68% of students, while picking a fight with someone or beating up people if they start a fight were seen as very wrong by a little less than half (about 46-49%) of students. This suggests that picking fights or beating people up in fights, which are types of violent behavior, are less likely to be judged as very wrong by students themselves than is drug use - whether using alcohol, smoking cigarettes or using illegal drugs.

Students' Perceptions of How Wrong Parents Would Think Certain Behaviors:

Similar questions to those above were asked of students concerning parental views of how wrong certain practices are; the results follow:

Percentage of Students Reporting the Degree to which Their Parents Would Think it Wrong for Them to:	% Very Wrong	% Somewhat Wrong	% Not Very Wrong	% Not Wrong at All
a. drink beer, wine, or hard liquor (for example, vodka, whiskey, or gin) regularly (at least once or twice a month)	**86.7**	8.4	2.6	2.3
b. smoke cigarettes	**87.1**	8.3	2.5	2.2
c. smoke marijuana/pot	**94.9**	2.5	1.0	1.7
d. steal anything worth more than $5.00	**92.5**	5.0	0.9	1.6
e. draw graffiti, write things, or draw pictures on buildings or other property (without the owner's permission)	**90.2**	6.1	1.9	1.7
f. pick a fight with someone	**74.3**	17.5	5.0	3.2

Smoking marijuana ranks first in the percentage of students who think their parents would assess the practice as very wrong, at about 95%, followed by stealing anything worth more than $5 (92.5%), and drawing graffiti and related activities (90%). Slightly less wrong in student-assessed parental judgment are smoking cigarettes and drinking alcohol regularly, which each drew responses of "very wrong" from about 87% of students. Consistent with earlier results, picking a fight with someone was seen as least likely to be seen as wrong for students to do by their parents, with about 74% of students assessing that behavior as very wrong from a parental viewpoint.

Students' Perceptions of How Wrong Adults in Their Neighborhood Think Certain Behaviors Are:

In parallel with the questions asked of the students themselves and their parents reported above, students were asked to assess how wrong most adults in their neighborhood, or the area around where they live, would think it is for kids their age to use alcohol and other drugs and engage in risky or illegal behaviors. The results are striking in comparison with those for the students and their parents.

Percentage of Students Reporting How Wrong Adults in their Neighborhood Think it is for Middle School Age Kids:	% Very Wrong	% Somewhat Wrong	% Not Very Wrong	% Not Wrong At All
a. to use marijuana	89.8	5.7	**1.9**	**2.6**
b. to drink alcohol	79.9	12.6	**3.9**	**3.7**
c. to smoke cigarettes	75.4	14.3	**5.4**	**4.9**

These students perceive that adults in their neighborhood, like their parents, think that use of marijuana is very wrong, followed by drinking alcohol and smoking cigarettes, with 90%, 80% and 75% of students reporting these behaviors as very wrong for kids their age to indulge in, according to adults in their neighborhood. On the other hand, about 5%, 4% and 3% of students, respectively, think adults in their neighborhood see nothing wrong in kids their age smoking cigarettes, drinking alcohol or using marijuana, in that order.

STUDENTS' LIFE PROBLEMS AND HIGH RISK PRACTICES:

Asked whether they had ever participated in several problematic behaviors, such as gang membership, suspension from school or violence-related behavior, the following results were observed for all middle school students surveyed in South Central Tennessee. Six percent of students reported that they had belonged to a gang, while 3.7% reported having been arrested at least once in their lifetimes. Suspension from school was reported by 8.6% of students. Certain practices related to violence or risk of violence were reported as follows: 4.1% of students had carried a handgun other than for hunting or sport, while 12.1% had attacked someone with the idea of seriously hurting them.

The results for students' exposure to and participation in risky and violent behaviors in the past 12 months, overall and in school, are reported below.

Percentage of Students who Reported in the Past 12 Months that They Had....	%Yes, Overall	% Yes, at School
a. gotten into a physical fight	30.7	14.2
b. taken part in a gang fight where a group of your friends was against another group	6.5	2.7
c. been injured in a fight	8.5	3.0
d. been physically abused or assaulted	6.9	2.7
e. stolen "pills" or prescription drugs including from home	3.5	0.6
f. stolen illegal drugs	2.5	0.4

Percentage of Students who Reported in the Past 12 Months that They Had....	%Yes, Overall	% Yes, at School
g. bought “pills” or an illegal drug	4.4	1.3
h. been offered or given “pills” or an illegal drug	16.4	4.9

These results suggest that getting into physical fights is very frequent behavior in these middle school students, with more than 30%reporting fighting in the past 12 months and with about 46% of those fights occurring at school. Being offered or given pills or illicit drugs is next most frequent among these students, at more than 16% reporting this experience, with about 30% of such contacts occurring at school. Less frequently reported were being injured in a fight, at 8.5% of students - with about 35% of those injuries occurring at school. Being physically abused or assaulted was reported by 6.9% of students, with 40% occurring at school. Participation in gang fights was reported by 6.5% of youth. About 40% of these gang fights reportedly occurred at school. Buying pills or an illegal drug, stealing pills or prescription drugs including from home, and stealing illegal drugs were reported by 4.4%, 3.5% and 2.5% of students, respectively. In about 28% of cases of buying pills or illegal drugs, this occurred at school, while in cases where drugs were stolen - whether pills/prescription drugs or illegal drugs - the stealing was reported to have occurred at school in 19% and 16% respectively.

Other High Risk Behaviors in the Past 12 Months:

Overall, 5% of students reported that they had been suspended from school one or more times in the last 12 months. Substantially lower percentages of students reported serious criminal behavior - thus, 2% reported that they had stolen or tried to steal a motor vehicle, such as a car or a motorcycle, while 2.8% reported that they had been arrested at least once in the last 12 months.

Violent behavior was reported by 9.3% of students who said that they had attacked someone (physically) with the idea of seriously hurting them in the last 12 months. Overall, 6.7% of students had carried a weapon (such as a handgun, knife or club) other than for hunting or sport, and 0.9% had taken a weapon such as a gun to school at least once in the period in question.

In terms of alcohol and other drug use, 6.8% of these South Central Tennessee middle school students had been drunk or high at school, and 1% reported this had occurred 20 times or more in the last 12 months. While 2.8% of these youth reported that they had sold “pills” or illegal drugs in the past 12 months, and 1.8% of students overall reported that they had sold “pills” or illegal drugs at school.

Attitudes to Risky and Illegal Practices:

Tapping dimensions of impulsivity and rebelliousness, as well as other negative attitudes, these students' responses indicate that impulsivity is very characteristic of these young people. Nearly half report that they often do things without thinking of consequences. Overall, about 26% think it is not important to think before they act, and 18% have to have everything right away. Measures of rebelliousness and testing limits - liking to see how much they can get away with, reported by 26% of students, ignoring rules that get in the way (about 23%), and doing the opposite of what people tell them just to provoke a reaction (18%) - are also relatively commonly reported by these students. The two depression-related questions above are discussed in an earlier section. Thinking it is OK to cheat at school was reported by 19% of students.

Percentage of Students Whose Attitudes Put Them at High Risk and Therefore Who	**% Yes**	**% No**
a. think it is okay to cheat at school	**19.1**	80.9
b. like to see how much you can get away with	**26.0**	74.0
c. sometimes think that life is not worth it	**29.0**	71.0
d. think you are no good at all	**23.5**	76.5
e. ignore rules that get in your way	**22.7**	77.3
f. often do things without thinking what will happen	**48.5**	51.5
g. have to have everything right away	**18.1**	81.9
h. think it is important to think before you act	74.4	**25.6**
i. do the opposite of what people tell you, just to get them mad	**18.0**	82.0

Other Risk Taking:

Students who say that they often or almost always have done what feels good no matter what or have done something dangerous because someone dared them to do it represent 13.2% and 7.3% of students, respectively. Those students who conversely report that they never or rarely have done what feels good no matter what or done something dangerous on a dare comprise 47.9% and 67.9% of students in South Central Tennessee.

FAMILIAL AND PEER ALCOHOL OR DRUG PROBLEMS:

Familial Alcohol or Drug Abuse:

Fully 29.1% percent of students in South Central Tennessee reported that someone in their family has had a severe alcohol or drug problem.

Parental AOD Use: Answering the question, "Do you think one or both of your parents (stepparents or guardians) is drinking too much or has a problem with alcohol?", 9.5% of students said "Yes". Close to 7% (6.5%) of students said that they think one or both of their parents is using or abusing drugs other than alcohol. A total of nearly 13% (12.9%) of students think that one or both of their parents is using or abusing alcohol or has a problem with it.

Siblings' AOD Use: Asked about alcohol and other drug use and high risk practices in their siblings, 9% of students had no brothers or sisters. However, for continuity and consistency of denominators, the following percentages are reported for all students.

Percentage of Students Reporting that One or More of Their Brothers or Sisters	% of All Students
a. drinks beer, wine, or hard liquor (for example, vodka, whiskey or gin)	19.0
b. smokes marijuana	10.2
c. smokes cigarettes	23.4
d. has taken a handgun to school	1.4
e. has been suspended or expelled from school	11.6

Cigarette smoking is most frequently reported for sibling drug use by these students at about 23%, followed by alcohol use and suspension from school at around 19% and 12%, respectively. Marijuana use was reported for about 10% of students' siblings. Handguns at school was least common at 1.4%.

Close Friends' Alcohol or Drug Problems: About 7.1% of students reported that they think that one or more of their close friends is drinking too much or has a problem with alcohol, and 9.1% said that they think that one or more of the close friends is using or abusing drugs other than alcohol.

STUDENT'S OWN ALCOHOL/DRUG USE:

While this was mainly a prevention survey, it is clear that many of these middle school students have already begun their alcohol and other drug use careers so that primary prevention, delaying onset of the initiation of first use of alcohol or other drugs, is for many

an inappropriate strategy. Secondary prevention, reducing the use of alcohol or other drugs, mitigating the occurrence of negative and dangerous consequences, and breaking the dependence cycle early is more relevant. In some cases tertiary prevention or actual treatment is indicated, particularly in students who self-report addiction or dependence.

Cigarette Smoking:

More than 1 in 3 (34.5%) students have ever smoked cigarettes. Fully 22.5% of students had smoked cigarettes in the last 12 months, and 15.3% of students had smoked in the past 30 days. Thus, 64.1% of lifetime smokers had smoked in the last 12 months, and 43.5% of lifetime smokers had smoked in the past 30 days.

Students who had smoked cigarettes on 20 or more of the last 30 days comprised 3.9% of all students. Those who smoked 11 or more cigarettes in the past 30 days represented 1.8% of students. Also, 25.9% of current or 30-day smokers smoked cigarettes on 20+ of the past 30 days, and 11.8% of current smokers smoked 11 or more cigarettes in the past 30 days.

Smokeless Tobacco (Chewing Tobacco, Snuff, Plug, Dipping Tobacco):

While 18.2% of South Central Tennessee students have ever used smokeless tobacco, 11.5% of students had used smokeless tobacco in the last 12 months, and 7.6% of students had used it in the past 30 days. Thus, 61.7% of lifetime users had used smokeless tobacco in the last 12 months, while 40.9% of lifetime users had used smokeless tobacco in the past 30 days.

Students who had used smokeless tobacco on 20 or more of the last 30 days comprised 2% of all students. Around 26.8% of current or 30-day smokeless tobacco users used it on 20+ of the past 30 days.

Alcoholic Beverages (Beer, Wine, Wine Coolers or Liquor):

More than 2 in 5 (41.1%) of these middle school students, ranging in age from 11 to 15 years, had drunk alcoholic beverages more than a few sips at least once in their lifetimes. Fully 28.8% had drunk alcohol in the past 12 months, and 20.2% had done so in the past 30 days. Thus, given that students had ever used alcohol, 68% of them had drunk alcohol in the past 12 months, and 47.7% had drunk alcohol in the past 30 days.

Students who had used alcohol on 20 or more of the last 30 days comprised 1.0% of all students, and 4.7% of current drinkers. Students who reported daily alcohol consumption over the past 30 days represented 0.6% of all students. Daily drinkers made up 3.4% of current (30-day) drinkers among these students, and 71.4% of students who reported drinking on 20 or more of the last 30 days drank alcohol daily.

Among these middle school students, 3.9% drank 5 or more drinks of alcohol per day on their drinking days. These "binge drinkers" are 19.7% of current drinkers (last 30 days). Less than 1% (0.7%) of students reported drinking 5 or more drinks on 20 or more of the past 30 days. Again, as a percentage of students drinking on 20 or more days in the last 30, those who drank 5 or more drinks represent 78.6%. These "binge" drinkers comprise 3.7% of students who drank any alcohol in the past 30 days. Finally 0.4% of students overall reported drinking 5 or more drinks of alcohol daily in the past 30 days. They comprise 70% of daily drinkers, and 2.4% of current or 30-day drinkers.

In answer to the question, "Have you **ever** gotten drunk or felt very high or intoxicated from drinking alcohol?", 17% of all students said that they had gotten drunk. This number represents 41.4% of lifetime drinkers.

Marijuana (Pot, Grass, Hash, etc.) Use:

While 15% of middle school students in South Central Tennessee had ever used marijuana, 10.6% had used marijuana in the past 12 months, and 6.9% in the past 30 days. While 68.7% of lifetime marijuana users used marijuana in the past 12 months, nearly half (44.4%) of lifetime users had used marijuana in the past 30 days.

Students who had used marijuana on 20 or more of the last 30 days comprised 0.9% of all students, and students who reported daily marijuana use over the past 30 days represented 0.5% of all students. However, among current marijuana users (30-day users), 13.7% used on 20 or more of the past 30 days and 7.4% of current users reported daily marijuana use.

Percentage of Students Reporting Illegal Drug Use by Type of Drug and Lifetime, Recent or Current Use	**% Yes, Ever**	**% Yes, in the Last 12 Months**	**% Yes, in the Last 30 Days**
a. Cocaine or crack	3.1	2.2	1.6
b. Substances you "sniff": paint thinners, glue, gasoline, white-out, butane, aerosol sprays, etc.	9.0	7.0	6.0
c. LSD (acid) or other hallucinogens such as peyote, jimson weed, mushrooms, PCP (angel dust), etc.	5.2	4.2	3.7
d. Other illegal drugs such as ecstasy, ice (crystal meth), heroin (smack, horse, skag), etc.	3.9	3.3	2.6

It is very clear that inhalants are one drug of choice for these youth, since of the 9% of students who report lifetime use of inhalants to get high, 77% had used inhalants in the last 12 months, and 66.7% had used them in the last 30 days. Cocaine, on the other hand, was less likely to involve sustained use, since of the lifetime users of cocaine or crack (3%)

among these middle school students, 70.2% had used cocaine in the last 12 months, and 48.9% in the last 30 days. For other illegal drugs and for hallucinogens such as LSD, the percentages of ever users who used in the last 12 months are 84.5% and 81%, respectively, while the proportions of ever users who used in the last 30 days are 69.6% for LSD and other hallucinogens, and 65.5% for other illegal drugs. From 0.5 to 0.8% of South Central Tennessee students reported use of one or more of these illegal drugs daily in the last 30 days.

OVERALL ATOD, AOD AND DRUG USE PREVALENCE:

ATOD: Overall, more than half or 53.9% of middle schools students in South Central Tennessee reported using alcohol, tobacco or other drugs (ATOD) in their lifetimes, while 41.8% reported 12-month use, and 32.1%, 30-day use of one or more substances (excluding caffeine and prescription drugs).

Given lifetime use, 74.3% had used ATOD in 12 months, and 55.9% in 30 days. Of 12-month users, 75.2% were 30-day users, suggesting that when youth begin their drug use careers, relatively few stop soon.

AOD: Excluding tobacco and looking only at the prevalence of use of alcohol and other drugs (save caffeine and prescription drugs), the lifetime prevalence of alcohol and other drug (AOD) use among these middle school students is 45.3%, the 12-month prevalence, 33.9%, and the 30-day prevalence, 25.5%. Here again, given lifetime use, 71.9% had used AOD in 12 months, and 53.3% in 30 days. Of 12-month users, 74.1% were 30-day users.

Drugs: Considering drugs only, 20.3% of South Central Tennessee middle school students had ever used one or more illegal drugs (excluding alcohol, tobacco or prescription drugs as well as caffeine). This compares to a 12-month drug use prevalence rate of 16.3%, and a 30-day prevalence rate of 12.3%. About 77.9% of lifetime drug users used drugs in the past 12 months, while 58.6% used drugs in the last 30 days. Among 12-month drug users, 75.2% were current or 30-day users.

AVERAGE AGE AT FIRST USE OF AOD:

Average Age at First Use by Type of Drug:	**Average Age of First Use (in Years)**
a. smoked cigarettes	9.9
b. used smokeless tobacco	10.2
c. drank alcoholic beverages	10.5
d. began drinking alcoholic beverages regularly, that is at least once or twice a month	11.6

Average Age at First Use by Type of Drug:	Average Age of First Use (in Years)
e. got drunk or felt very high or intoxicated from drinking alcohol	11.9
f. used marijuana/pot	11.6
g. used cocaine or crack	11.3
h. used substances you "sniff"	11.2
i. used LSD (acid) or other hallucinogens	11.4
j. used other illegal drugs such as ecstasy, Ice (crystal meth), heroin, etc.	11.9

Cigarette smoking is the earliest onset substance use, beginning, on average, in these middle school students at around age 10, followed by using smokeless tobacco at age 10.2 years and drinking alcohol at age 10.5 years. Inhalant use was reported as initiated at the average age of 11.2 years among these students. The onset of cocaine use was reported at age 11.3, while the use of LSD and other hallucinogens, starting at 11.4 years was followed by regular alcohol consumption (at least once or twice a month), and marijuana use, at 11.6 years each. The use of other illegal drugs such as ecstasy, crystal meth and heroin, began at age 11.9, on average, as did getting drunk or intoxicated. The later two practices had the latest onset of all AOD use practices identified.

Prescription Drug Abuse:

Prescription drug abuse is defined as having taken any prescription drugs or "pills" just to get high or for non-medical purposes, on one's own, without a doctor's prescription. More than 8% (8.5%) of students reported prescription drug abuse in their lifetimes; 5.9% reported it in the past 12 months, and 3.2% in the past 30 days. Among lifetime prescription drug abusers, 67.5% had abused such drugs in the past 12 months, and 37.3% did so in the past 30 days.

SELF-REPORTED SUBSTANCE ABUSE/ADDICTION:

Answering "yes" to the question of lifetime or current addiction to or dependence on one or more drugs serves as a proxy measure of these youth's need for alcohol and other drug treatment[1]. The following table shows the extent of self-reported addiction among these students by type of drug and by lifetime or current prevalence.

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[1]The question contained in its wording a brief definition of addiction: "Do you think you have **EVER** been hooked on or addicted to any of the following substances (for example, did you try to quit or use less and had trouble doing so)? "

Percentage of Students Ever or Now Addicted to Alcohol or Other Drugs by Type of Drug	% Ever Addicted	% Now Addicted
a. Tobacco/nicotine	9.7	6.7
b. Alcohol (beer, wine or liquor)	5.2	3.7
c. Marijuana/pot	3.9	3.1
d. Cocaine or crack	0.7	0.4
e. Hallucinogens like LSD or PCP or ecstasy	0.9	0.6
f. Coffee/cola/caffeine	29.4	23.9
g. A prescription drug or "pill"	2.9	1.7
h. Other drugs or substances	1.9	1.4

Based on lifetime prevalence of self-reported addiction to a drug or substance, caffeine/cola/coffee is the most prevalent drug, addicting about 29% of students, followed, at a much lower level, at about 10%, by tobacco/nicotine, and about 4-5%, by alcohol and marijuana. Addiction to a prescription drug or "pill" was reported by around 3% of students, and addiction to other drugs or substances by 1.9%. Less than 1% of students reported addiction either to hallucinogens like LSD (0.9%) or to cocaine or crack (0.7%).

Current addiction as self-reported by these students again showed caffeine as the number one drug of addiction, by far, at 24%, followed by tobacco/nicotine, at close to 7%, and alcohol at about 4%. Addiction to marijuana was reported by around 3% of students, while prescription drugs or pills, other drugs or substances, hallucinogens and cocaine or crack were reported as current sources of addiction by decreasing percentages of youth, ranging from close to 2% (1.7%) down to 0.4%.

The percentage of lifetime addicted users who are currently addicted suggests some of the power of these drugs over these very young users. The highest percentage of ever addicted students are currently addicted to caffeine/cola/coffee (80%), followed closely by marijuana (79%). Slightly lower rates of ever to current addicted students are observed for alcohol (71.1%), and other drugs or substances (71.4%). Tobacco, hallucinogens such as LSD, and cocaine or crack had ever-to-current addiction ratios of 68.5%, 66.7% and 60%, respectively. The drug types least likely to be still addicting youth who reported ever being addicted to them are prescription drugs or "pills," at 59.5% of students ever addicted to them now addicted to them.

COMMUNITY INFLUENCES ON STUDENTS' AOD RISK:

Questions about students' communities and the areas around where they lived were expected to shed some light on risk and protective factors for alcohol and other drug use among middle school students.

Attitudes to Neighborhood:

Only 9.9% of students said they did not feel safe in their neighborhood, or the area around where they live, while the remainder or 90.1% did feel safe. While 19.5% of students said they did not like their neighborhood, 80.5% felt the opposite. Twenty-five percent of these youth would like to get out of their neighborhood, compared to the 75% who would not. While 34.4% of students report that their neighbors notice when they are doing a good job and let them know about it, for 64.2% and 63.1% of students respectively, there are lots of adults in their neighborhood they could talk to about something important or there are people in their neighborhood who encourage them to do their best.

Neighborhood Description:

When asked how well each of the following characteristics describe their neighborhood, or the area around where they live, students were most likely to report fights and crime and/or drug selling as characterizing their neighborhoods very well or somewhat well, with less emphasis on empty or abandoned buildings or lots of graffiti.

Percentage of Students Describing Their Neighborhood in Terms of the Following:	% Very Well	% Somewhat Well	% Not Well	% Not at All
a. Crime and/or drug selling	**6.1**	5.7	9.7	**78.5**
b. Fights	**6.5**	92	12.7	**71.6**
c. Lots of empty or abandoned buildings	**4.2**	5.2	10.1	**80.5**
d. Lots of graffiti	**3.7**	2.9	7.6	**85.8**

Only about 72% of students reported that their neighborhoods were not at all characterized by fights, and around 78.5% not at all characterized by crime and/or drug selling. On the other hand, 80.5% of students reported no empty or abandoned buildings, and around 86% reported no profuse graffiti at all in their neighborhoods.

Adults Using Alcohol and Drugs in the Neighborhood:

In the last 12 months, 26.8% of these middle school students from South Central Tennessee reported that they personally knew one or more adults who had used marijuana/pot, cocaine/crack or other illegal drugs. About 19.3% reported knowing at least

one adult who had sold or dealt drugs in the last 12 months. Around 18.4% of students had known adults who carried handguns or other weapons not for hunting or sport, and about the same percentage (17.8%) had known adults who had done other things that could get them in trouble with the police - stealing, selling stolen goods, mugging, or assaulting others. Finally, about 2 out of 5 (41.6%) of youth had known at least one adult who had gotten drunk or high in the last 12 months. Thus, drunkenness was by far the most commonly reported practice observed by these students among the adults in their neighborhoods.

When asked how many adults they knew personally who had engaged in these practices in the past 12 months, 13.6% of students cited 5 or more adults who had gotten drunk or high, while 6.9% knew 5 or more adults who had used marijuana/pot, cocaine/crack or other illegal drugs. About 4% knew five or more adults who had carried handguns or weapons (3.8%), sold or dealt drugs (4.3%), or done other things that could have gotten them in trouble with the police (4.2%).

Participation in Leisure Time Activities as Protective of AOD Use and Abuse:

The availability and participation in activities that are seen as protective of alcohol and other drug use and abuse in youth is reported on here.

Percentage of Students Participating in the Following Activities:	**% Yes**	**% No**	**% Not Available in Their Community**
a. Sports teams	**74.0**	24.0	2.0
b. Scouting	**23.0**	71.2	5.9
c. Boys and girls clubs	**21.4**	66.2	12.4
d. 4-H clubs	**56.4**	40.3	3.4
e. Service clubs (such as Junior Sertoma, Rainbow, etc.)	**14.8**	61.9	23.3
f. Church youth groups	**64.1**	33.6	2.3
g. Music/art/drama clubs	**35.6**	53.4	11.1
h. Other after school clubs	**36.5**	56.5	7.0

The leisure-time activity reported by most students was participation in sports teams at about 74%, followed by church youth groups at 64%. Popular where available are 4-H clubs (around 56%). Moderately popular are music/art/drama clubs and other after school clubs, at 36-37%. Least popular were service clubs (at about 15%), followed by boys and

girls clubs and scouting (at 21% and 23%, respectively). Least available activities in these communities were service clubs, boys and girls clubs and music/art/drama clubs.

Parental Guidance and Support:

Finally, parental guidance and support were assessed by a series of questions, such as "Do your parents want you to call if you are going to be late getting home?" To this question, 80.9% of students responded positively, and 19.1%, negatively. The question, "Does your family have clear rules about alcohol and drug use?" brought responses of 72.6%, "yes", and 27.4%, "no". The extent to which families fight is measured by answers to whether people in students' family often insult or yell at each other, reported by 30.6% of students, compared to 69.4% who say "no". About 23.5% of students reported that people in their family have serious arguments, while 76.5% do not report this.

Answers to two hypothetical questions are also revealing of the extent of parental guidance and concern as perceived by these youth. First, 57.4% of students said that if they drank some beer, wine, or hard liquor (for example, vodka, whiskey, or gin) without their parents' permission, they would be caught by their parents, while 72.7% said that if they carried a handgun without their parents' permission, they would be caught by their parents.

POSITIVE PARENTAL ATTITUDES AND PRACTICES:

The frequency with which parents include youth in family decisions and praise and reward them is thought to be associated with protection against alcohol and other drug abuse. For these youth, parental guidance and support appears relatively high.

Percentage of Students Reporting Frequency of Parents:	**% Never/ Rarely**	**% Sometimes**	**% Often/Almost Always**
a. giving them lots of chances to do fun things with them	12.2	40.6	**47.2**
b. asking them what they think before most family decisions affecting the students are made	23.1	41.3	**35.6**
c. noticing when they are doing a good job and letting them know about it	13.7	33.1	**53.3**
d. telling the students they are proud of them for something they have done	11.3	28.1	**60.5**

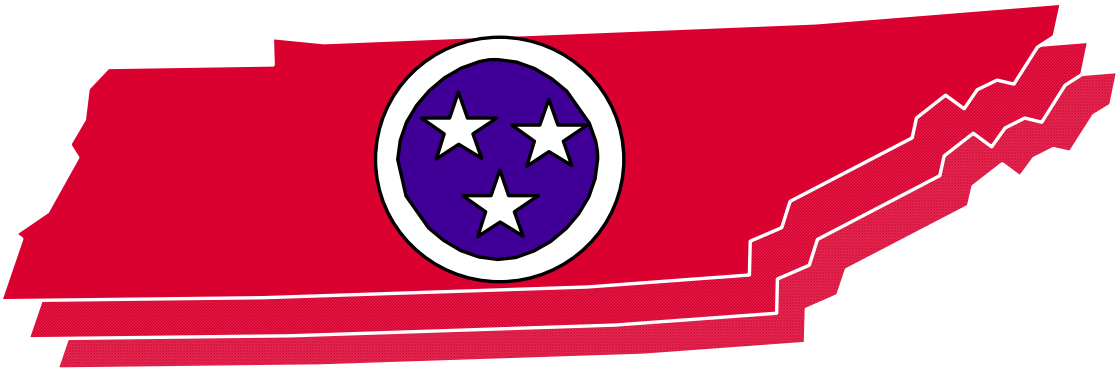
The most commonly reported supportive practice of parents toward these middle school students among the items measured is telling the students they are proud of their accomplishments, at 60.5% of students reporting parents as often or almost always doing so. This is followed by parents' noticing a good job and letting students know it (around 53%), and giving students lots of chances to do fun things with parents (about 47%). Least likely to occur often or almost always is parents' asking students what they think before family decisions affecting them are made, at 35.6% often or almost always doing so.

Finally, 86.7% of students say that their parents ask if they have gotten their homework done, while 13.3% do not. In 88.4% of cases, when students are not at home, one of their parents knows where they are and who they are with, while 11.6% do not. The great majority of students reported that their parents would know if they did not come home on time, at 89.1%, compared to 10.9% whose parents would not know. While 79.7% of students could ask their parents for help if they had a personal problem, 20.3% could not do so. Students were more likely to report that they often share their thoughts and feelings with their mothers (65.5%), compared to their fathers (48.0%).

TENNESSEE MIDDLE SCHOOL HEALTH SURVEY, 2001-2002

A SUMMARY OF FINDINGS FROM THE TENNESSEE MIDDLE SCHOOL HEALTH SURVEY

NORTHWEST REGION



TENNESSEE DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH

AND THE

COMMUNITY HEALTH RESEARCH GROUP

THE UNIVERSITY OF TENNESSEE, KNOXVILLE

June 2003

TENNESSEE MIDDLE SCHOOL SURVEY RESULTS: NORTHWEST REGION

SOCIODEMOGRAPHIC CHARACTERISTICS:

Gender: A total of 4,026 students in randomly sampled middle schools grades 6-8 in the Northwest region of Tennessee completed surveys. They were split evenly by gender, with 49.2% being female and 50.8% male.

Grade: The split was approximately even by grade, 36.9% of the students sampled were in 6th grade, 31.9% in 7th grade and 31.2% in 8th grade.

Age: In terms of age, 10.8% of students were 11 years of age or younger, while 31.4% were age 12; 31.3% were age13; 22.6% were age 14; and 3.9% were 15 years of age or older.

Race/Ethnicity: While 81.1% of students were white, 16.2% were black and 2.7% were of other racial/ethnic groups.

Hispanic Origin: A total of 6.0% of students were of Hispanic origin.

OTHER BACKGROUND CHARACTERISTICS:

Two-Parent Family: Seventy-one percent of students in the study lived in two-parent families, while 29% lived in families of other compositions.

Non-English Spoken At Home: While fully 97.8% of students reported that English was the language used most often in the home, 1.5% reported that language to be Spanish and another 0.7% reported another language as the language most often spoken at home.

Rural/Urban Residence: More than half (53.8%) of middle school students lived in a city, town or suburb, i.e., an urban area, while the remaining 46.2% lived in rural areas. Of all students, 39.0% lived in the country, although not on a farm, and 7.2% lived on farms.

Proxy Measures of Poverty: In answer to the question, “Do you live in public housing?”, almost one-quarter (22.4%) of students did not know the answer, while 8.4% reported that they did live in public housing, and another 69.2% that they did not live in public housing. This measure was to be used as one indicator of poverty along with whether the family was on any form of public assistance. That question was phrased: “Does your family receive any form of public assistance, such as food stamps or other forms of welfare (such as Families First, WIC, TennCare/Medicaid, etc.)?” More than one-fifth (22.9%) of the students did not know. Still 21.7% reported that their families did receive public assistance, while 55.4% did not. Combining these two measures produces a prevalence estimate of middle school students in poverty of 25.3% in the region as a whole.

Mobility/Migration: Only 29.1% of students had not changed homes since kindergarten, while 32.8% had changed homes 1-2 times; 19.4% had changed homes 3-4 times; and 18.7% had changed homes 5 times or more since kindergarten (9.6% had done so 5-6 times, and 9.1%, 7 times or more).

The Importance of Religion or Spirituality in Students' Families: Only 13.5% of the Northwest region middle school students reported that religion or spirituality was either not very important (10.5%) or not at all important (3.0%) in their families, For more than half (52.0%) of these students, religion or spirituality was very important, while for 34.5%, it was somewhat important.

The Importance of Religion or Spirituality in Students' Own Lives: For 10.9% of the Northwest region middle school students, religion or spirituality was either not very important (7.6%) or not at all important (3.3%) in their own lives, while for 31.6%, it was somewhat important, and for more than half (57.6%), it was very important.

Attendance at Religious Services: Asked how often they attend religious services or activities, 10.8% of students said they never did, while less than once a month was the response chosen by another 10.2%. Attendance at religious services or activities occupied 18.4% of students 1-2 times a month, although not every week, while another 60.7% of students attended religious services once a week or more.

SCHOOL EXPERIENCE:

Grades Last Year: Getting mostly A's as grades in the last school year was reported by about one-third (30.9%) of students, while mostly B's were reported by 39.6%, and mostly C's by 21.7%. Only 7.8% of students reported either mostly D's (5.1%) or mostly F's (2.7%).

A series of questions were asked concerning how often youth had certain experiences in school – whether rarely or never, sometimes or often or almost always. Categories are collapsed here into "often/almost always", and the residual which is "rarely, never or sometimes" in relation to students reporting those problems or experiences.

Percentage of Students Reporting that in the Past School Year They:	% Never/Rarely/ Sometimes	% Often/Almost Always
a. feel physically safe or safe from violence at school	**44.4%**	55.6%
b. try to do your best work in school	**26.4%**	73.6%
c. find most of your courses interesting to you	**83.2%**	16.8%
d. find the school work too hard to understand	90.9%	**9.1%**

Percentage of Students Reporting that in the Past School Year They:	% Never/Rarely/ Sometimes	% Often/Almost Always
e. fool around in class	87.9%	**12.1%**
f. fail to complete or turn in your assignments	94.9%	**5.1%**
g. get sent to the office or have to stay after school because you misbehaved	96.7%	**3.3%**
h. skip a day of school or part of a day (without permission)	98.2%	**1.8%**
i. get better grades than most of the students in your class	**78.0%**	22.0%
j. feel bullied by other kids at school	90.7%	**9.3%**
k. feel bored in school	71.6%	**28.4%**
l. hate being in school	78.0%	**22.0%**
m. think the things you are learning in school are going to be important for your later life	**49.1%**	50.9%

These attitudes among others studied in this survey are seen as protective or detrimental to efforts to prevent or reduce alcohol and other drug (AOD) use, abuse, problems or dependence among these youth. Results suggest that negative attitudes to school such as feeling bored in school and hating being in school were reported often or almost always by the most students at about 30% and 22%, respectively, while fooling around in class often or almost always was reported by 12%. Finding school work too hard to understand, failing to complete or turn in assignments, getting punished for misbehaving, or skipping school were reported often or almost always by close to 9%, close to 5%, more than 3% and almost 2% of students, respectively.

More than half of students felt often or almost always safe at school, with over 9% reporting being often or almost always bullied at school. Other common negative orientations to school were never, rarely or sometimes finding courses interesting, reported by 83% of students, yet with 78% of students reporting never, rarely, or sometimes getting better grades than most other students. Twenty-six percent of students reported never, rarely or sometimes trying to do their best work in school, and a little less than half reported not often thinking that what was learned in school was going to be important later in life.

Missing School: A fairly high percentage of youth (45.8%) missed school at least one time in the past 30 days because of illness or injury, while 7.7% missed school because of skipping or cutting classes, and 33.6% missed school for other reasons.

Opportunities for Participation:

The following results were obtained when students were asked, whether, in their middle school, they had certain opportunities for participation in activities. The purpose was to tap students' attitudes to the school experience in general.

Percentage of Students Reporting Certain Attitudes to School	% NO	% YES
a. In your middle school, do you have chances to be part of class discussions and activities?	**8.7**	91.3
b. do your teachers notice when you are doing a good job and let you know about it?	**20.5**	79.5
c. do you have lots of chances to get involved in school activities outside of class?	**32.4**	67.6
d. do students in your school have chances to talk to teachers one-on-one?	**17.3**	82.7
e. does your school let your parents know when you have done something well?	**55.5**	44.5

Here, less than 1 in 10 students reported feeling as though they did not have chances to participate in class, and less than 1 in 5 reported no chances to talk to teachers one-on-one. About 1 in 5 students reported teachers not noticing and informing them when they were doing good work, and 1 in 3 reported that they do not have lots of chances to get involved in extra-classroom activities at school. Finally, close to 3 in 5 students said that their schools did not let their parents know when they had performed well.

HEALTH AND WELL-BEING OF MIDDLE SCHOOL STUDENTS IN THE NORTHWEST REGION:

Health Status: Overall, 14.2% of students reported that in general their health was either fair (13.1%) or poor (1.1%), while 26.9% reported good health, 30.7% very good health, and 28.2%, excellent health.

Disability Status: In answer to the question, "Do you now have any physical health problems or disabling conditions that keep you from doing normal activities?", 89.1% of students said "no", while 10.1% reported some disability.

Hyperactivity: In answer to the question, "Are you currently taking prescription drugs or "pills" for hyperactivity (ADD or ADHD) such as Ritalin?", 7.4% of middle school students said "yes", and 92.6% said "no".

Receipt of any Treatment or Counseling Outside School: Lifetime prevalence of receipt of treatment for an emotional or mental health problem outside school was 11.5%. The prevalence of treatment for an alcohol problem was 1.6%; and for a drug problem, it was 2.1%. Receipt of treatment for either an alcohol or another drug problem was reported by 2.7% of middle school students in the Northwest region in 2001.

Attendance at Self-Help or 12-Step Support Group Meetings: Attendance at such self-help or 12-step meetings as Alateen, Al-Anon, Children of Alcoholics (COA), Alcoholics Anonymous (AA), Narcotics Anonymous (NA), Cocaine Anonymous (CA) was reported by 2.6% of students, while the remaining students or 97.4% had not done so.

Utilization of Emergency and Hospital Services:

Emergency Department Services: In the 12 months prior to the survey, 14.8% of students reported having been taken to an emergency room for an illness, and 25.1%, for an injury. An overall total of about one-third (34.0%) of students had been taken to an ED for either an illness or an injury in the past 12 months.

Hospital Admissions: In the last 12 months, 5.1% of middle school students had stayed at least one night in a hospital for an illness while 5.5% had stayed at least one night for an injury. Either illness- or injury-related hospital admissions were reported by nearly 1 in 10 (9.4%) students.

Depression and Suicide Attempts:

Indicators of potential depression and low self-esteem such as thinking that life is not worth it sometimes or that one is no good at all are relatively common among these Tennessee middle school students. These two feelings were reported by 29.3% and 22.0% of students, respectively.

More specific questions about depression were asked, such as “How often do you feel very depressed, that is, very “blue” or unhappy?” While 38.0% of students reported never or rarely feeling very depressed, 51.8% reported that they sometimes felt this way, and 10.2% reported often or almost always feeling very depressed.

Sixteen percent of middle school students reported ever feeling so desperate that they considered suicide, and 6.1% reported ever attempting suicide. Those young suicide attempters represent 34.3% of students considering suicide.

Finally, 1.9% of students said they had ever gone to a hospital or gotten medical treatment because of a suicide attempt. This represents around 31.5% of those students attempting suicide.

Life Stressors: These students have already experienced a variety of life stresses such as relocations and related changes. Questions about their lifetime experience of selected stressors elicited interesting responses, reported below.

First, in answer to questions concerning whether these youth had experienced a move in the last 12 months, 26.0% of youth reported moving to a different home in the last 12 months, while 14.8% reported starting at a new school in the same period.

In answer to the question of lifetime stressors experienced, the percentages of students reporting each type of life change is presented below:

Percentage of Students Reporting Life Stressors by Type of Stressor in Their Lifetimes	**% Yes**	**% No**
a. had a death in the family	**91.2**	8.8
b. parents (guardians) divorced	**40.1**	59.9
c. family had financial problems	**36.7**	63.3
d. anyone in the family been arrested	**42.5**	57.5
e. new sister or brother born	**34.5**	65.5
f. had a serious illness or injury in your immediate family	**57.0**	43.0
g. had your own serious illness or injury	**34.9**	65.1
h. experienced another very stressful event	**49.5**	50.5

To the extent that these students between the ages of 11 and 15 for the most part have already experienced some major life crises, their coping skills and responses to stressors are of major interest and concern especially as they may protect against or increase the risk of alcohol and other drug use and associated problems.

Particularly prevalent was death in the family experienced by more than 90% of children, followed by serious illness or injury of a family member, and other stressful events, reported by 57% and 50% respectively. For around 40% of students, family arrests were reported, and by more than one-third, divorce, family financial problems, own serious illness or injury and the birth of a sibling were reported in decreasing order of frequency.

FRIENDS/PEER INFLUENCES ON YOUTH BEHAVIOR:

Best Friends' Practices:

When asked about their four best friends (the friends they feel closest to) and whether in the past 12 months any of those best friends had engaged in alcohol or other drug use, a range of from a low of 4% to a high of about 14% of students reported that they did not know.

Percentage of Students with Any Best Friends, who, in the Past 12 Months, Did the Following:	**% Yes**	**% No**	**% Don't Know**
a. smoked cigarettes	**26.8**	58.9	14.3
b. drunk alcoholic beverages -- beer, wine, or hard liquor (for example, vodka, whiskey, or gin)	**27.1**	58.7	14.2
c. used marijuana/pot	**12.5**	75.6	11.9
d. taken "pills" to get high or for non-medical reasons	**8.0**	80.4	11.6
e. used LSD, cocaine, amphetamines/speed, or another illegal drug	**4.2**	84.5	11.3
f. been suspended from school	**21.5**	72.8	5.7
g. carried a handgun or other weapon like a knife (other than for hunting or sport)	**11.7**	80.1	8.2
h. taken a handgun to school	**1.6**	93.5	4.9
i. sold "pills" or illegal drugs	**5.7**	86.2	8.1
j. stolen or tried to steal a motor vehicle such as a car or a motorcycle	**3.3**	90.1	6.6
k. been arrested	**7.4**	85.9	6.7
l. dropped out of school	**3.2**	92.8	4.0
m. been members of a gang	**7.7**	83.5	8.8

Most frequently reported behaviors among best friends were drinking alcohol and smoking cigarettes (close to 27%), followed by being suspended from school at about one-fifth of students. These were followed by using marijuana (12.5%), carrying a weapon (11.7%), taking pills to get high at 8%, and being arrested and being gang members at about 7-8% each. Selling pills or illegal drugs was reported by about 6% of students in relation to their

best friends. On the other hand, taking a handgun to school was the least common practice reported for best friends at 1.7%, followed by dropping out of school, stealing or trying to steal a motor vehicle, and using illegal drugs, which were reported for their best friends by about 3-4% of these youth.

Perceptions of Being Cool:

To elicit attitudes to the acceptability with peers of alcohol and other drug use, a series of questions was asked about how "cool" certain practices are perceived to be by middle school students, with the following results:

Percentage of Students Reporting the Chances They Would be Seen as Cool if They:	**% No or Very Little Chance**	**% Some Chance**	**% Pretty Good or Very Good Chance**
a. smoked cigarettes	78.8	15.9	**5.3**
b. began drinking alcoholic beverages regularly, that is, at least once or twice a month	76.3	17.3	**6.4**
c. smoked marijuana	82.7	10.5	**6.8**
d. carried a handgun	89.4	6.6	**4.0**

Clearly, behavior associated with the most "cool" perception is smoking marijuana, while the least "cool" is carrying a handgun. Regular alcohol use was perceived as slightly more "cool" than smoking cigarettes.

PERCEIVED RISK AND AVAILABILITY OF AOD:

The University of Michigan Monitoring the Future surveys of high school and middle school youth have found that the combination of perceived risk of harm and availability of substances together account for higher consumption of substances among the youth studied. The Tennessee students' responses to these questions are provided below:

Perceived Risk of Substance Use:

How much students think people risk harming themselves (physically or in other ways) if they engage in each of the following practices involving AOD use gives a clear indication of students' assessment of relative risk of harm.

Percentage of Students Perceiving People's Risk of Harm from AOD Use:	% No Risk	% Slight Risk	% Moderate Risk	% Great Risk
a. smoke one or more packs of cigarettes per day	7.5	10.8	26.3	**55.4**
b. use smokeless tobacco	10.2	25.1	34.8	**29.9**
c. try marijuana once or twice	11.5	22.2	23.7	**42.6**
d. smoke marijuana regularly (at least once or twice a month)	9.5	10.4	20.1	**59.9**
e. drink any alcoholic beverages (beer, wine, liquor)	9.5	24.8	32.0	**33.6**
f. take one or two drinks of an alcoholic beverage nearly every day	11.9	19.5	26.7	**41.9**

Clearly, the most risk of physical or other harm is perceived by these middle school students from smoking marijuana regularly or smoking one or more packs of cigarettes a day (more than 55% reporting great risk) each , while the lowest perceived risk is assessed for drinking any alcohol or using smokeless tobacco (about 30-34% great risk), followed by trying marijuana once or twice (42.6% great risk). Other risks of harm are attributed to taking one or two drinks of alcoholic beverages nearly every day, at 41.9% of students assessing great risk of harm to this practice.

Perceived Ease of Access to AOD:

Like perceived harmfulness or risk of harm from drugs, including alcohol, perceived ease of access to or availability of drugs serves as an important predictor of risk of AOD use and problems related to it.

Percentage of Students Reporting Relative Ease of Access to Drugs by Type – Q: How easy do you think it would be for you to get each of the following types of drugs if you wanted some?	% Very or Somewhat Easy	% Very or Somewhat Hard
a. Cigarettes	**56.0**	44.0
b. Smokeless tobacco	**42.5**	57.5
c. Alcohol (beer, wine or hard liquor)	**48.6**	51.4
d. Marijuana/pot	**25.2**	74.8

Percentage of Students Reporting Relative Ease of Access to Drugs by Type – Q: How easy do you think it would be for you to get each of the following types of drugs if you wanted some?	% Very or Somewhat Easy	% Very or Somewhat Hard
e. Drugs like cocaine/crack, LSD (acid), heroin, etc.	**16.8**	83.2
f. "Pills" like uppers/speed, downers, painkillers, tranquilizers	**28.0**	72.0
g. Something to sniff like glue or gasoline	**59.6**	40.4

The easiest substances for middle school students to access appear to be inhalants and cigarettes, followed by alcohol and smokeless tobacco. Pills like uppers, downers, etc. and marijuana were seen as moderately easy to obtain, with illicit drugs like cocaine, hallucinogens, and heroin, for example, as the hardest to access in these students' opinions.

Ease of Access to a Gun:

In answer to the question, "If you wanted to get a gun, how easy would it be for you to get one?", 26.3% of middle school students said it would be very easy, and another 15.7% said somewhat easy, for a total of 42.0% reporting easy access to guns. The remaining 58.0% of students reported access to guns to be hard – either somewhat hard, at 16.2%, or very hard, at 41.9%.

Perceived Wrongness of Certain Personal Choices and Practices:

In answer to the question concerning how wrong one thinks it is for someone the student's age to use certain substances and engage in certain risky practices, the following were the results:

Percentage of Students Perceiving it Wrong to:	% Very Wrong	% Somewhat Wrong	% Not Very Wrong	% Not Wrong at All
a. drink beer, wine, or hard liquor (for example, vodka, whiskey, or gin) regularly (at least once or twice a month)	**72.5**	18.2	6.3	3.1
b. smoke cigarettes	**72.4**	17.4	6.6	3.5
c. smoke marijuana/pot	**87.6**	6.7	2.7	3.0
d. use LSD, cocaine, amphetamines/ speed or another illegal drug	**93.5**	3.9	1.1	1.5
e. steal anything worth more than $5	**75.9**	18.8	3.4	1.9
f. take a handgun or other weapon to school	**95.6**	2.6	0.6	1.2
g. pick a fight with someone	**46.1**	38.0	10.8	5.0
h. stay away from school all day when your parents think you are at school (skip school)	**73.3**	19.9	4.0	2.7
i. attack someone with the idea of seriously hurting them	**85.9**	9.5	2.3	2.3
j. beat up people if they start a fight	**47.8**	26.9	11.0	14.3

The practices perceived as most wrong, with the highest percentage of students reporting them as very wrong, were taking a handgun or weapon to school (95.6% reported this as very wrong) or using illegal drugs like LSD, cocaine or speed (93.5 very wrong). Attacking someone with the idea of hurting them or smoking pot/marijuana (at more than 85% each) were less likely to be judged as very wrong. Even less likely to be seen as very wrong were smoking cigarettes, drinking alcohol regularly, stealing anything worth more than $5, or skipping school, each of which was reported by about 72-76% of students as being very wrong. Picking a fight with someone or beating up people if they start a fight were seen as very wrong by a little less than half (about 46-48%) of students. This suggests that picking fights or beating people up in fights, which are types of violent behavior, are less likely to be judged as very wrong by students themselves than is drug use – whether using alcohol, smoking cigarettes or using illegal drugs.

Students' Perceptions of How Wrong Parents Would Think Certain Behaviors:

Similar questions to those above were asked of students concerning parental views of how wrong certain practices are; the results follow:

Percentage of Students Reporting the Degree to which Their Parents Would Think it Wrong for Them to:	% Very Wrong	% Somewhat Wrong	% Not Very Wrong	% Not Wrong at All
a. drink beer, wine, or hard liquor (for example, vodka, whiskey, or gin) regularly (at least once or twice a month)	**85.9**	9.1	2.6	2.3
b. smoke cigarettes	**85.7**	9.2	2.5	2.6
c. smoke marijuana/pot	**94.4**	2.9	0.8	1.9
d. steal anything worth more than $5.00	**91.2**	5.8	0.9	2.1
e. draw graffiti, write things, or draw pictures on buildings or other property (without the owner's permission)	**90.4**	6.1	1.4	2.0
f. pick a fight with someone	**73.8**	18.2	4.7	3.3

Smoking marijuana ranks first in the percentage of students who think their parents would assess the practice as very wrong, at about 94%, followed by stealing anything worth more than $5 (91%), and drawing graffiti and related activities (90%). Slightly less wrong in student-assessed parental judgment are smoking cigarettes and drinking alcohol regularly, which each drew responses of "very wrong" from about 86% of students. Consistent with earlier results, picking a fight with someone was seen as least likely to be seen as wrong for students to do by their parents, with about 74% of students assessing that behavior as very wrong from a parental viewpoint.

Students' Perceptions of How Wrong Adults in Their Neighborhood Think Certain Behaviors Are:

In parallel with the questions asked of the students themselves and their parents reported above, students were asked to assess how wrong most adults in their neighborhood, or the area around where they live, would think it is for kids their age to use alcohol and other drugs and engage in risky or illegal behaviors. The results are striking in comparison with those for the students and their parents.

Percentage of Students Reporting How Wrong Adults in their Neighborhood Think it is for Middle School Age Kids:	% Very Wrong	% Somewhat Wrong	% Not Very Wrong	% Not Wrong At All
a. to use marijuana	91.2	4.6	**1.8**	**2.5**
b. to drink alcohol	81.3	11.3	**3.9**	**3.5**
c. to smoke cigarettes	76.8	13.1	**5.6**	**4.5**

These students perceive that adults in their neighborhood, like their parents, think that use of marijuana is very wrong, followed by drinking alcohol and smoking cigarettes, with 91%, 81% and 77% of students reporting these behaviors as very wrong for kids their age to indulge in, according to adults in their neighborhood. On the other hand, about 5%, 4% and 3% of students, respectively, think adults in their neighborhood see nothing wrong in kids their age smoking cigarettes, drinking alcohol or using marijuana, in that order.

STUDENTS' LIFE PROBLEMS AND HIGH RISK PRACTICES:

Asked whether they had ever participated in several problematic behaviors, such as gang membership, suspension from school or violence-related behavior, the following results were observed for all middle school students surveyed in the Northwest region. Nearly 6% (5.6%) reported that they had belonged to a gang, while 4.7% reported having been arrested at least once in their lifetimes. Suspension from school was reported by close to 1 in 3 (13.5%) students. Certain practices related to violence or risk of violence were reported as follows: 4.6% of students had carried a handgun other than for hunting or sport, while 12.9% had attacked someone with the idea of seriously hurting them.

The results for students' exposure to and participation in risky and violent behaviors in the past 12 months, overall and in school, are reported below.

Percentage of Students who Reported in the Past 12 Months that They Had....	**%Yes, Overall**	**% Yes, at School**
a. gotten into a physical fight	32.8	12.1
b. taken part in a gang fight where a group of your friends was against another group	6.6	2.1
c. been injured in a fight	8.2	1.9
d. been physically abused or assaulted	7.4	2.2
e. stolen "pills" or prescription drugs including from home	2.5	0.6
f. stolen illegal drugs	2.3	0.6
g. bought "pills" or an illegal drug	3.7	1.4
h. been offered or given "pills" or an illegal drug	15.1	4.0

These results suggest that getting into physical fights is very frequent behavior in these middle school students, with close to 1 in 3 reporting fighting in the past 12 months and with about 37% of those fights occurring at school. Being offered or given pills or illicit drugs is next most frequent among these students, at about 15% reporting this experience, with about 26% of such contacts occurring at school. Less frequently reported were being injured in a fight, at less than 1 in 10 students – with about one-fourth of those injuries

occurring at school. Being physically abused or assaulted was reported by about 7% of students, with close to 30% occurring at school. Participation in gang fights was reported by nearly 7% of youth. About 31% of these gang fights reportedly occurred at school. Buying pills or an illegal drug, stealing pills or prescription drugs including from home, and stealing illegal drugs were reported by 3.7%, 2.5% and 2.3% of students, respectively. In about one-third of cases of buying pills or illegal drugs, this occurred at school, while in around 26% of cases where drugs were stolen – whether pills/prescription drugs or illegal drugs – the stealing was reported to have occurred at school.

Other High Risk Behaviors in the Past 12 Months:

Overall, 7.7% of students reported that they had been suspended from school one or more times in the last 12 months. Lower percentages of students reported serious criminal behavior – thus, 1.9% reported that they had stolen or tried to steal a motor vehicle, such as a car or a motorcycle, while 3.3% reported that they had been arrested at least once in the last 12 months.

Violent behavior was reported by 9.7% of students who said that they had attacked someone (physically) with the idea of seriously hurting them in the last 12 months. Overall, 8.4% of students had carried a weapon (such as a handgun, knife or club) other than for hunting or sport, and 1.2% had taken a weapon such as a gun to school at least once in the period in question.

In terms of alcohol and other drug use, 5.1% of these Northwest region middle school students had been drunk or high at school, and 0.7% reported this had occurred 20 times or more in the last 12 months. More than 2 percent (2.4%) of these youth reported that they had sold “pills” or illegal drugs in the past 12 months, and close to 2% of students overall reported that they had sold “pills” or illegal drugs at school.

Attitudes to Risky and Illegal Practices:

Tapping dimensions of impulsivity and rebelliousness, as well as other negative attitudes, these students’ responses indicate that impulsivity is very characteristic of these young people. More than half report that they often do things without thinking of consequences. Overall, 20.4% think it is not important to think before they act, and 19.9% have to have everything right away. Measures of rebelliousness and testing limits - liking to see how much they can get away with, reported by about 23% of students, ignoring rules that get in the way (20%), and doing the opposite of what people tell them just to provoke a reaction (16.9%) - are also relatively commonly reported by these students. The two depression-related questions above are discussed in an earlier section. Thinking it is OK to cheat at school was reported by around 14% of students.

Percentage of Students Whose Attitudes Put Them at High Risk and Therefore Who	% Yes	% No
a. think it is okay to cheat at school	**13.8**	86.2
b. like to see how much you can get away with	**23.1**	76.9
c. sometimes think that life is not worth it	**29.3**	70.7
d. think you are no good at all	**22.0**	78.0
e. ignore rules that get in your way	**20.0**	80.0
f. often do things without thinking what will happen	**51.3**	48.7
g. have to have everything right away	**19.9**	80.1
h. think it is important to think before you act	79.6	**20.4**
i. do the opposite of what people tell you, just to get them mad	**16.9**	83.1

Other Risk Taking:

Students who say that they often or almost always have done what feels good no matter what or have done something dangerous because someone dared them to do it represent 13.5% and 6.5% of students, respectively. Those students who conversely report that they never or rarely have done what feels good no matter what or done something dangerous on a dare comprise 43.0% and 70.7% of students, overall.

FAMILIAL AND PEER ALCOHOL OR DRUG PROBLEMS:

Familial Alcohol or Drug Abuse:

Fully 29.4% percent of students reported that someone in their family has had a severe alcohol or drug problem.

Parental AOD Use: Answering the question, “Do you think one or both of your parents (stepparents or guardians) is drinking too much or has a problem with alcohol?”, 12.1% of students said “Yes”. Close to 7% (7.1%) of students said that they think one or both of their parents is using or abusing drugs other than alcohol. A total of nearly 15% (15.3%) of students think that one or both of their parents is using or abusing drugs or has a problem with alcohol.

Siblings’ AOD Use: Asked about alcohol and other drug use and high risk practices in their siblings, 9% of students had no brothers or sisters. However, for continuity and consistency of denominators, the following percentages are reported for all students.

Percentage of Students Reporting that One or More of Their Brothers or Sisters	% of All Students
a. drinks beer, wine, or hard liquor (for example, vodka, whiskey or gin)	19.0
b. smokes marijuana	8.1
c. smokes cigarettes	22.9
d. has taken a handgun to school	1.4
e. has been suspended or expelled from school	14.3

Cigarette smoking is most frequently reported for sibling drug use by these students at more than 20%, followed by alcohol use and suspension from school at around 19% and 14% respectively. Marijuana use was reported for about 8% of students' siblings. Handguns at school was least common at less than 1.5%.

Close Friends' Alcohol or Drug Problems: About 6.7% of students reported that they think that one or more of their close friends is drinking too much or has a problem with alcohol, and 8.1% said that they think that one or more of the close friends is using or abusing drugs other than alcohol.

STUDENT'S OWN ALCOHOL/DRUG USE:

While this was mainly a prevention survey, it is clear that many of these middle school students have already begun their alcohol and other drug use careers so that primary prevention, delaying onset of the initiation of first use of alcohol or other drugs, is for many an inappropriate strategy. Secondary prevention, reducing the use of alcohol or other drugs, mitigating the occurrence of negative and dangerous consequences, and breaking the dependence cycle early is more relevant. In some cases tertiary prevention or actual treatment is indicated, particularly in students who self-report addiction or dependence.

Cigarette Smoking:

Close to 1 in 3 (31.1%) students have ever smoked cigarettes. Fully 20.9% of students had smoked cigarettes in the last 12 months, and 14.2% of students had smoked in the past 30 days. Thus, about two-thirds of lifetime smokers had smoked in the last 12 months, and close to half (45%) of lifetime smokers had smoked in the past 30 days.

Students who had smoked cigarettes on 20 or more of the last 30 days comprised 3.9% of all students. Those who smoked 11 or more cigarettes in the past 30 days represented 1.9% of students. Also, 27.6% of current or 30-day smokers smoked cigarettes on 20+ of the past 30 days, and 13.1% of current smokers smoked 11 or more cigarettes in the past 30 days.

Smokeless Tobacco (Chewing Tobacco, Snuff, Plug, Dipping Tobacco):

More than 1 in 6 (15.7%) students have ever used smokeless tobacco. Fully 10.1% of students had used smokeless tobacco in the last 12 months, and 6.2% of students had used it in the past 30 days. Thus, 63.2% of lifetime users had used smokeless tobacco in the last 12 months, while 38.9% of lifetime users had used smokeless tobacco in the past 30 days.

Students who had used smokeless tobacco on 20 or more of the last 30 days comprised 1.2% of all students. Around 20% of current or 30-day smokeless tobacco users used it on 20+ of the past 30 days.

Alcoholic Beverages (Beer, Wine, Wine Coolers or Liquor):

More than one-third (39.9%) of these middle school students, ranging in age from 11 to 15 years, had drunk alcoholic beverages more than a few sips at least once in their lifetimes. Fully 28.2% had drunk alcohol in the past 12 months, and 18.6% had done so in the past 30 days. Thus, given that students had ever used alcohol, 68.8% of them had drunk alcohol in the past 12 months, and 45.4% had drunk alcohol in the past 30 days.

Students who had used alcohol on 20 or more of the last 30 days comprised 1.0% of all students, and 5.6% of current drinkers. Students who reported daily alcohol consumption over the past 30 days represented 0.5% of all students. Daily drinkers made up 2.8% of current (30-day) drinkers among these students, and half (50.0%) of students who reported drinking on 20 or more of the last 30 days drank alcohol daily.

Among these middle school students, 3.6% drank 5 or more drinks of alcohol per day on their drinking days. These “binge drinkers” are 19.7% of current drinkers (last 30 days). Less than 1% (0.5%) of students reported drinking 5 or more drinks on 20 or more of the past 30 days. Again, as a percentage of students drinking on 20 or more days in the last 30, those who drank 5 or more drinks represent 50%. These “binge” drinkers comprise 2.8% of students who drank any alcohol in the past 30 days. Finally 0.4% of students overall reported drinking 5 or more drinks of alcohol daily in the past 30 days. They comprise 87.5% of daily drinkers, and 2.5% of current or 30-day drinkers.

In answer to the question, “Have you **ever** gotten drunk or felt very high or intoxicated from drinking alcohol?”, 15.4% of all students said that they had gotten drunk. This number represents 38.6% of lifetime drinkers.

Marijuana (Pot, Grass, Hash, etc.) Use:

About 1 in 8 (13.3%) of middle school students in the Northwest region had ever used marijuana, while 9.2% had used marijuana in the past 12 months, and 5.9% in the past 30 days. While 67.7% of lifetime marijuana users used marijuana in the past 12 months, less than half (42.9%) of lifetime users had used marijuana in the past 30 days.

Students who had used marijuana on 20 or more of the last 30 days comprised 0.9% of all students, and students who reported daily marijuana use over the past 30 days represented 0.4% of all students. However, among current marijuana users (30-day users), 16.5% used on 20 or more of the past 30 days and 7.1% of current users reported daily marijuana use.

Percentage of Students Reporting Illegal Drug Use by Type of Drug and Lifetime, Recent or Current Use	**% Yes, Ever**	**% Yes, in the Last 12 Months**	**% Yes, in the Last 30 Days**
a. Cocaine or crack	3.0	2.1	1.4
b. Substances you "sniff": paint thinners, glue, gasoline, white-out, butane, aerosol sprays, etc.	9.1	7.1	5.6
c. LSD (acid) or other hallucinogens such as peyote, jimson weed, mushrooms, PCP (angel dust), etc.	4.4	3.5	2.8
d. Other illegal drugs such as ecstasy, ice (crystal meth), heroin (smack, horse, skag), etc.	3.0	2.5	1.8

It is very clear that inhalants are one drug of choice for these youth, since of the 9.1% of students who report lifetime use of inhalants to get high, 77.5% had used inhalants in the last 12 months, and 61.3% had used them in the last 30 days. Cocaine, on the other hand, was less likely to involve sustained use, since of the lifetime users of cocaine or crack among these middle school students, 71.7% had used cocaine in the last 12 months, and 50% in the last 30 days. For other illegal drugs and for hallucinogens such as LSD, the percentages of ever users who used in the last 12 months are 84.8% and 78.3%, respectively, while the proportions of ever users who used in the last 30 days are 62.3% for LSD and other hallucinogens, and 63.0% for other illegal drugs. About 0.4% to 0.6% of Northwest students reported use of one or more of these illegal drugs daily in the last 30 days.

OVERALL ATOD, AOD AND DRUG USE PREVALENCE:

ATOD: Overall, more than half or 51.0% of middle schools students in the Northwest region reported using alcohol, tobacco or other drugs (ATOD) in their lifetimes, while 39.2% reported 12-month use, and 29.4%, 30-day use of one or more substances (excluding caffeine and prescription drugs).

Given lifetime use, 73.8% had used ATOD in 12 months, and 54.2% in 30 days. Of 12 month users, 73.5% were 30-day users, suggesting that when youth begin their drug use careers, relatively few stop soon.

AOD: Excluding tobacco and looking only at the prevalence of use of alcohol and other drugs (save caffeine and prescription drugs), the lifetime prevalence of alcohol and other

drug (AOD) use among these middle school students is 44.6%, the 12-month prevalence, 33.3%, and the 30-day prevalence, 23.9%. Here again, given lifetime use, 72% had used AOD in 12 months, and 50.7% in 30 days. Of 12-month users, 70.5% were 30-day users.

Drugs: Considering drugs only, 19.5% of middle school students had ever used one or more illegal drugs (excluding alcohol, tobacco or prescription drugs as well as caffeine). This compares to a 12-month drug use prevalence rate of 14.7%, and a 30-day prevalence rate of 10.8%. About 73.4% of lifetime drug users used drugs in the past 12 months. Fifty-four percent of lifetime drug users used drugs in the last 30 days. Among 12-month drug users, 73.6% were current or 30-day users.

AVERAGE AGE AT FIRST USE OF AOD:

Average Age at First Use by Type of Drug:	**Average Age of First Use (in Years)**
a. smoked cigarettes	10.0
b. used smokeless tobacco	10.6
c. drank alcoholic beverages	10.6
d. began drinking alcoholic beverages regularly, that is at least once or twice a month	11.8
e. got drunk or felt very high or intoxicated from drinking alcohol	11.9
f. used marijuana/pot	11.6
g. used cocaine or crack	11.4
h. used substances you “sniff”	10.9
i. used LSD (acid) or other hallucinogens	11.3
j. used other illegal drugs such as ecstasy, Ice (crystal meth), heroin, etc.	11.9

Cigarette smoking is the earliest onset substance use, beginning, on average, in these middle school students at age 10, followed by using smokeless tobacco and drinking alcohol at age 10.6 years. Inhalant use was reported as initiated at the average age of 10.9 years among these students. The onset of cocaine use was reported at age 11.4, as was the use of LSD and other hallucinogens (11.3), followed by marijuana use at 11.6 years and regular alcohol consumption (at least once or twice a month), starting at 11.8 years. The use of other illegal drugs such as ecstasy, crystal meth and heroin, began at age 11.9, on average, with getting drunk or intoxicated reported at first onset at age 11.9 years.

Prescription Drug Abuse:

Prescription drug abuse is defined as having taken any prescription drugs or "pills" just to get high or for non-medical purposes, on one's own, without a doctor's prescription. More than 6% (6.2%) of students reported prescription drug abuse in their lifetimes; 4.1% reported it in the past 12 months, and 1.9% in the past 30 days. Among lifetime prescription drug abusers, 63.5% had abused such drugs in the past 12 months, and 29.2% did so in the past 30 days.

SELF-REPORTED SUBSTANCE ABUSE/ADDICTION:

Answering "yes" to the question of lifetime or current addiction to or dependence on one or more drugs serves as a proxy measure of these youth's need for alcohol and other drug treatment.[1] The following table shows the extent of self-reported addiction among these students by type of drug and by lifetime or current prevalence.

Percentage of Students Ever or Now Addicted to Alcohol or Other Drugs by Type of Drug	% Ever Addicted	% Now Addicted
a. Tobacco/nicotine	9.2	6.2
b. Alcohol (beer, wine or liquor)	4.5	3.4
c. Marijuana/pot	3.0	2.1
d. Cocaine or crack	0.8	0.6
e. Hallucinogens like LSD or PCP or ecstasy	0.8	0.6
f. Coffee/cola/caffeine	25.3	20.3
g. A prescription drug or "pill"	2.4	1.1
h. Other drugs or substances	2.1	1.4

Based on lifetime prevalence of self-reported addiction to a drug or substance, caffeine/cola/coffee is the most prevalent drug, addicting about 1 in 4 students, followed, at a much lower level, at about 9%, by tobacco/nicotine, and about 3-4.5%, by alcohol and marijuana. Addiction to a prescription drug or "pill" was reported by 2.4% of students, and addiction to other drugs or substances by around 2%. Less than 1% of students reported addiction either to hallucinogens like LSD or to cocaine or crack.

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[1]The question contained in its wording a brief definition of addiction: "Do you think you have **EVER** been hooked on or addicted to any of the following substances (for example, did you try to quit or use less and had trouble doing so)? "

Current addiction as self-reported by these students again showed caffeine as the number one drug of addiction, by far, at 20.3%, followed by tobacco/nicotine, at over 6%, and alcohol at 3.4%. Marijuana addiction was reported by more than 2% of students, while prescription drugs or pills, other drugs or substances, hallucinogens and cocaine or crack were reported as current sources of addiction by decreasing percentages of youth, ranging from 1.4% down to 0.6%.

The percentage of lifetime addicted users who are currently addicted suggests some of the power of these drugs over these very young users. The highest percentage of ever addicted students are currently addicted to caffeine/cola/coffee 79%, followed by cocaine or crack (75%). Lower rates of ever to current addicted students are observed for alcohol (73.9%), marijuana (69.6%), and tobacco/nicotine (66.4%). Hallucinogens such as LSD and other drugs or substances had ever-to-current addiction ratios of 61.5% and 65.6%, respectively. The drug types least likely to be still addicting youth who reported ever being addicted to them are prescription drugs or "pills," at 43.2% of students ever addicted to them now addicted to them.

COMMUNITY INFLUENCES ON STUDENTS' AOD RISK:

Questions about students' communities and the areas around where they lived were expected to shed some light on risk and protective factors for alcohol and other drug use among middle school students.

Attitudes to Neighborhood:

Only 9.9% of students said they did not feel safe in their neighborhood, or the area around where they live, while the remainder or 90.1% did feel safe. Eighteen percent of students said they did not like their neighborhood, with fully 82% feeling the opposite. Twenty-six percent of these youth would like to get out of their neighborhood, compared to the 74% who would not. About 35.7% of students report that their neighbors notice when they are doing a good job and let them know about it, while for 65.2% and 66.7% of students respectively, there are lots of adults in their neighborhood they could talk to about something important or there are people in their neighborhood who encourage them to do their best.

Neighborhood Description:

When asked how well each of the following characteristics describe their neighborhood, or the area around where they live, students were most likely to report fights and crime and/or drug selling as characterizing their neighborhoods very well or somewhat well, with less emphasis on empty or abandoned buildings or lots of graffiti.

Percentage of Students Describing Their Neighborhood in Terms of the Following:	% Very Well	% Somewhat Well	% Not Well	% Not at All
a. Crime and/or drug selling	**6.8**	8.5	11.2	**73.5**
b. Fights	**8.1**	11.3	14.1	**66.5**
c. Lots of empty or abandoned buildings	**4.5**	5.5	12.2	**77.8**
d. Lots of graffiti	**3.8**	3.1	8.4	**84.6**

Only about 66.5% of students reported that their neighborhoods were not at all characterized by fights, and around 73.5% not at all characterized by crime and/or drug selling. On the other hand, close to 78% of students reported no empty or abandoned buildings, and 85% reported no profuse graffiti at all in their neighborhoods.

Adults Using Alcohol and Drugs in the Neighborhood:

In the last 12 months, 25.0% of these middle school students from the Northwest region reported that they personally knew one or more adults who had used marijuana/pot, cocaine/crack or other illegal drugs. About 19.5% reported knowing at least one adult who had sold or dealt drugs in the last 12 months. Around 20.4% of students had known adults who carried handguns or other weapons not for hunting or sport, and a higher percentage (21.1%) had known adults who had done other things that could get them in trouble with the police - stealing, selling stolen goods, mugging, or assaulting others. Finally, about 2 out of 5 (41.6%) of youth had known at least one adult who had gotten drunk or high in the last 12 months. Thus, drunkenness was by far the most commonly reported practice observed by these students among the adults in their neighborhoods.

When asked how many adults they knew personally who had engaged in these practices in the past 12 months, 13.8% of students cited 5 or more adults who had gotten drunk or high, while 7.3% knew 5 or more adults who had used marijuana/pot, cocaine/crack or other illegal drugs. More than 4% knew five or more adults who had carried handguns or weapons (4.4%), sold or dealt drugs (5.1%), or done other things that could have gotten them in trouble with the police (4.8%).

Participation in Leisure Time Activities as Protective of AOD Use and Abuse:

The availability and participation in activities that are seen as protective of alcohol and other drug use and abuse in youth is reported on here.

Percentage of Students Participating in the Following Activities:	% Yes	% No	% Not Available in Their Community
a. Sports teams	**74.9**	23.1	2.1
b. Scouting	**24.5**	67.8	7.8
c. Boys and girls clubs	**24.2**	61.4	14.4
d. 4-H clubs	**51.3**	42.8	5.9
e. Service clubs (such as Junior Sertoma, Rainbow, etc.)	**17.3**	56.5	26.2
f. Church youth groups	**73.0**	25.0	1.9
g. Music/art/drama clubs	**38.1**	50.7	11.3
h. Other after school clubs	**42.4**	50.4	7.2

The leisure-time activity reported by most students was participation in sports teams at about 75%, followed by church youth groups at 73%. Moderately popular are 4-H clubs and other after school clubs, at about 51% and 42% respectively. Also moderately popular where available are music/art/drama clubs (around 38%). Least popular were service clubs (at about 17%), followed by scouting and boys and girls clubs (at about 24%). Least available activities in these communities were service clubs and boys and girls clubs.

Parental Guidance and Support:

Finally, parental guidance and support were assessed by a series of questions, such as "Do your parents want you to call if you are going to be late getting home?" To this question, 83.3% of students responded positively, and 16.7%, negatively. The question, "Does your family have clear rules about alcohol and drug use?" brought responses of 76.7%, "yes", and 23.3%, "no". The extent to which families fight is measured by answers to whether people in students' family often insult or yell at each other, reported by 33.6% of students, compared to 66.4% who say "no". About 28% (27.6%) of students reported that people in their family have serious arguments, while 72.4% do not report this.

Answers to two hypothetical questions are also revealing of the extent of parental guidance and concern as perceived by these youth. First, 62% of students said that if they drank some beer, wine, or hard liquor (for example, vodka, whiskey, or gin) without their parents' permission, they would be caught by their parents, while 75.3% said that if they carried a handgun without their parents' permission, they would be caught by their parents.

POSITIVE PARENTAL ATTITUDES AND PRACTICES:

The frequency with which parents include youth in family decisions and praise and reward them is thought to be associated with protection against alcohol and other drug abuse. For these youth, parental guidance and support appears relatively high.

Percentage of Students Reporting Frequency of Parents:	**% Never/ Rarely**	**% Sometimes**	**% Often/Almost Always**
a. giving them lots of chances to do fun things with them	11.4	39.2	**49.4**
b. asking them what they think before most family decisions affecting the students are made	22.2	41.7	**36.1**
c. noticing when they are doing a good job and letting them know about it	12.2	33.2	**54.6**
d. telling the students they are proud of them for something they have done	10.2	27.8	**62.0**

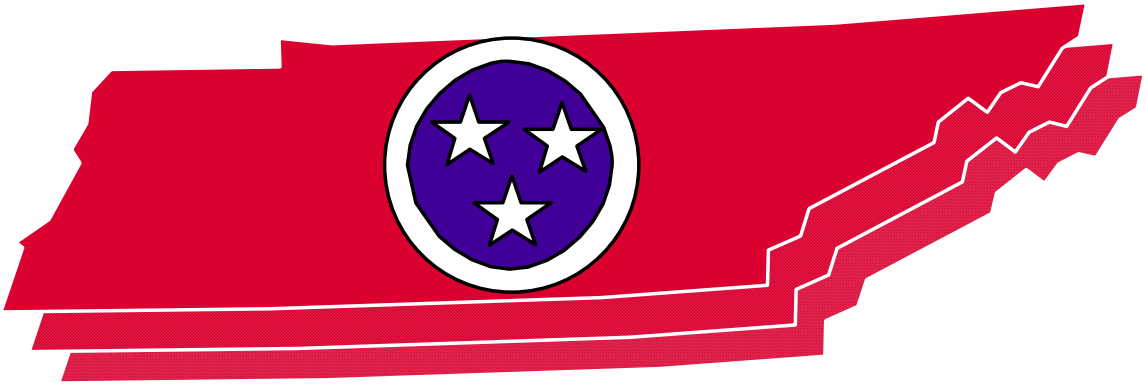
The most commonly reported supportive practice of parents toward these middle school students among the items measured is telling the students they are proud of their accomplishments, at 62% of students reporting parents as often or almost always doing so. This is followed by parents' noticing a good job and letting students know it (around 55%), and giving students lots of chances to do fun things with parents (about 49%). Least likely to occur often or almost always is parents' asking students what they think before family decisions affecting them are made, at 36.1% often or almost always doing so.

Finally, 88.6% of students say that their parents ask if they have gotten their homework done, while 11.4% do not. In 88.4% of cases, when students are not at home, one of their parents knows where they are and who they are with, while 11.6% do not. The great majority of students reported that their parents would know if they did not come home on time, at 88.6%, compared to 11.4% whose parents would not know. Almost 82% (81.6%) of students could ask their parents for help if they had a personal problem, compared to 18.4% who could not do so. Students were more likely to report that they often share their thoughts and feelings with their mothers (66.7%), compared to their fathers (48.3%).

TENNESSEE MIDDLE SCHOOL HEALTH SURVEY, 2001-2002

A SUMMARY OF FINDINGS FROM THE TENNESSEE MIDDLE SCHOOL HEALTH SURVEY

SOUTHWEST REGION



TENNESSEE DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH

AND THE

COMMUNITY HEALTH RESEARCH GROUP

THE UNIVERSITY OF TENNESSEE, KNOXVILLE

June 2003

TENNESSEE MIDDLE SCHOOL SURVEY RESULTS: SOUTHWEST REGION

SOCIODEMOGRAPHIC CHARACTERISTICS:

Gender: A total of 3,642 students in randomly sampled middle schools grades 6-8 in the Southwest Region completed surveys. They were split evenly by gender, with 50.3% being female and 49.7% male.

Grade: By grade, 32.7% of the students sampled were in 6th grade, 30.8% in 7th grade and 36.5% in 8th grade.

Age: In terms of age, 8.6% of students were 11 years of age or younger, while 26.7% were age 12; 33.1% were age13; 25.8% were age 14; and 5.8% were 15 years of age or older.

Race/Ethnicity: While 67.7% of students were white, 29.7% were black and 2.7% were of other racial/ethnic groups.

Hispanic Origin: A total of 4.5% of students were of Hispanic origin.

OTHER BACKGROUND CHARACTERISTICS:

Two-Parent Family: While 67.2% of students in the study lived in two-parent families, 32.8% lived in families of other compositions.

Non-English Spoken At Home: While fully 98.9% of students reported that English was the language used most often in the home, 0.4% reported that language to be Spanish and another 0.7% reported another language as the language most often spoken at home.

Rural/Urban Residence: About half (49%) of middle school students lived in a city, town or suburb, i.e., an urban area. Of all students, 46.2% lived in the country, although not on a farm, and 4.8% lived on farms.

Proxy Measures of Poverty: In answer to the question, “Do you live in public housing?”, 22.9% of students did not know the answer, while 9.6% reported that they did live in public housing, and another 67.5% that they did not live in public housing. This measure was to be used as one indicator of poverty along with whether the family was on any form of public assistance. That question was phrased: “Does your family receive any form of public assistance, such as food stamps or other forms of welfare (such as Families First, WIC, TennCare/Medicaid, etc.)?” About one-quarter (24.4%) of the students did not know. Still 18.6% reported that their families did receive public assistance, while 57% did not. Combining these two measures produces a prevalence estimate of middle school students in poverty of 24.5% in the region as a whole.

Mobility/Migration: Only 27% of students had not changed homes since kindergarten, while 33.6% had changed homes 1-2 times; 22.2% had changed homes 3-4 times; and 17.2% had changed homes 5 times or more since kindergarten (9.5% had done so 5-6 times, and 7.7%, 7 times or more).

The Importance of Religion or Spirituality in Students' Families: Only 14.2% of Southwest Region middle school students reported that religion or spirituality was either not very important (10.7%) or not at all important (3.5%) in their families, For more than half (51.7%) of these students, religion or spirituality was very important, while for 34%, it was somewhat important.

The Importance of Religion or Spirituality in Students' Own Lives: For 11.9% of Southwest Region middle school students, religion or spirituality was either not very important (8.1%) or not at all important (3.8%) in their own lives, while for 32.1%, it was somewhat important, and for more than half (56%), it was very important.

Attendance at Religious Services: Asked how often they attend religious services or activities, 12% of students said they never did, while less than once a month was the response chosen by another 10.5%. Attendance at religious services or activities occupied 20.6% of students 1-2 times a month, although not every week, while another 56.9% of students attended religious services once a week or more.

SCHOOL EXPERIENCE:

Grades Last Year: Getting mostly A's as grades in the last school year was reported by 23.1% of students, while mostly B's were reported by 40.7%, and mostly C's by 27.7%. Only 8.4% of students reported either mostly D's (5.4%) or mostly F's (3%).

A series of questions were asked concerning how often youth had certain experiences in school - whether rarely or never, sometimes or often or almost always. Categories are collapsed here into "often/almost always", and the residual which is "rarely, never or sometimes" in relation to students reporting those problems or experiences.

Percentage of Students Reporting that in the Past School Year They:	% Never/Rarely/ Sometimes	% Often/Almost Always
a. feel physically safe or safe from violence at school	**51.8%**	48.2%
b. try to do your best work in school	**29.9%**	70.1%
c. find most of your courses interesting to you	**84.8%**	15.2%
d. find the school work too hard to understand	91.7%	**8.3%**
e. fool around in class	87.9%	**12.1%**
f. fail to complete or turn in your assignments	94.2%	**5.8%**
g. get sent to the office or have to stay after school because you misbehaved	95.4%	**4.6%**
h. skip a day of school or part of a day (without permission)	98.2%	**1.8%**
i. get better grades than most of the students in your class	**82.0%**	18.0%
j. feel bullied by other kids at school	90.6%	**9.4%**
k. feel bored in school	68.6%	**31.4%**
l. hate being in school	76.0%	**24.0%**
m. think the things you are learning in school are going to be important for your later life	**49.6%**	50.4%

These attitudes among others studied in this survey are seen as protective or detrimental to efforts to prevent or reduce alcohol and other drug (AOD) use, abuse, problems or dependence among these youth. Results suggest that negative attitudes to school such as feeling bored in school and hating being in school were reported often or almost always by the most students at about 31% and 24%, respectively, while fooling around in class often or almost always was reported by 12%. Finding school work too hard to understand, failing to complete or turn in assignments, getting punished for misbehaving, or skipping school were reported often or almost always by about 8%, around 6%, nearly 5% and 1.8% of students, respectively.

Less than half of students felt often or almost always safe at school (48%), with over 9% reporting being often or almost always bullied at school. Other common negative orientations to school were never, rarely or sometimes finding courses interesting, reported by about 85% of students, and never, rarely, or sometimes getting better grades than most other students reported by 82% of these youth. Nearly 30% of students reported never,

rarely or sometimes trying to do their best work in school, and a little less than half reported not often thinking that what was learned in school was going to be important later in life.

Missing School: A fairly high percentage of youth (53.4%) missed school at least one time in the past 30 days because of illness or injury, while 10.7% missed school because of skipping or cutting classes, and 40.6% missed school for other reasons.

Opportunities for Participation:

The following results were obtained when students were asked, whether, in their middle school, they had certain opportunities for participation in activities. The purpose was to tap students' attitudes to the school experience in general.

Percentage of Students Reporting Certain Attitudes to School	% NO	% YES
a. In your middle school, do you have chances to be part of class discussions and activities?	**9.2**	90.8
b. do your teachers notice when you are doing a good job and let you know about it?	**24.9**	75.1
c. do you have lots of chances to get involved in school activities outside of class?	**35.1**	64.9
d. do students in your school have chances to talk to teachers one-on-one?	**19.3**	80.7
e. does your school let your parents know when you have done something well?	**56.7**	43.3

Here, only about 9% students reported feeling as though they did not have chances to participate in class, and a little less than 1 in 5 reported no chances to talk to teachers one-on-one. Almost 1 in 4 students reported teachers not noticing and informing them when they were doing good work, and more than 1 in 3 reported that they do not have lots of chances to get involved in extra-classroom activities at school. Finally, about 57% of students said that their schools did not let their parents know when they had performed well.

HEALTH AND WELL-BEING OF MIDDLE SCHOOL STUDENTS IN SOUTHWEST REGION:

Health Status: Overall, 15.3% of students reported that in general their health was either fair (14.3%) or poor (1%), while 24.7% reported good health, 30% very good health, and 29.9%, excellent health.

Disability Status: In answer to the question, "Do you now have any physical health problems or disabling conditions that keep you from doing normal activities?", 88.6% of students said "no", while 11.4% reported some disability.

Hyperactivity: In answer to the question, "Are you currently taking prescription drugs or "pills" for hyperactivity (ADD or ADHD) such as Ritalin?", 7.2% of middle school students said "yes", and 92.8% said "no".

Receipt of any Treatment or Counseling Outside School: Lifetime prevalence of receipt of treatment for an emotional or mental health problem outside school was 12.2%. The prevalence of treatment for an alcohol problem was 2.2%; and for a drug problem, it was 2.7%. Receipt of treatment for either an alcohol or another drug problem was reported by 3.7% of middle school students in Southwest Region in 2001.

Attendance at Self-Help or 12-Step Support Group Meetings: Attendance at such self-help or 12-step meetings as Alateen, Al-Anon, Children of Alcoholics (COA), Alcoholics Anonymous (AA), Narcotics Anonymous (NA), Cocaine Anonymous (CA) was reported by 3.2% of students, while the remaining students or 96.8% had not done so.

Utilization of Emergency and Hospital Services:

Emergency Department Services: In the 12 months prior to the survey, 16.8% of students reported having been taken to an emergency room for an illness, and 21.1%, for an injury. An overall total of about one-third (32.5%) of students had been taken to an ED for either an illness or an injury in the past 12 months.

Hospital Admissions: In the last 12 months, 5.2% of middle school students had stayed at least one night in a hospital for an illness while 5% had stayed at least one night for an injury. Either illness- or injury-related hospital admissions were reported by 8.9% of students.

Depression and Suicide Attempts:

Indicators of potential depression and low self-esteem such as thinking that life is not worth it sometimes or that one is no good at all are relatively common among these Southwest Region middle school students. These two feelings were reported by 30.5% and 22.5% of students, respectively.

More specific questions about depression were asked, such as "How often do you feel very depressed, that is, very "blue" or unhappy?" While 35.9% of students reported never or rarely feeling very depressed, 51.8% reported that they sometimes felt this way, and 12.3% reported often or almost always feeling very depressed.

While 18.6% of middle school students reported ever feeling so desperate that they considered suicide, 8.3% reported ever attempting suicide. Those young suicide attempters represent 42.4% of students considering suicide.

Finally, 3.2% of students said they had ever gone to a hospital or get medical treatment because of a suicide attempt. This represents around 38.8% of those students attempting suicide.

Life Stressors: These students have already experienced a variety of life stresses such as relocations and related changes. Questions about their lifetime experience of selected stressors elicited interesting responses, reported below.

First, in answer to questions concerning whether these youth had experienced a move in the last 12 months, 23.5% of youth reported moving to a different home in the last 12 months, while 16.2% reported starting at a new school in the same period.

In answer to the question of lifetime stressors experienced, the percentages of students reporting each type of life change is presented below:

Percentage of Students Reporting Life Stressors by Type of Stressor in Their Lifetimes	**% Yes**	**% No**
a. had a death in the family	**89.8**	10.2
b. parents (guardians) divorced	**38.7**	61.3
c. family had financial problems	**36.7**	63.3
d. anyone in the family been arrested	**45.5**	54.5
e. new sister or brother born	**34.5**	65.5
f. had a serious illness or injury in your immediate family	**56.7**	43.3
g. had your own serious illness or injury	**36.1**	63.9
h. experienced another very stressful event	**48.6**	51.4

To the extent that these students between the ages of 11 and 15 for the most part have already experienced some major life crises, their coping skills and responses to stressors are of major interest and concern especially as they may protect against or increase the risk of alcohol and other drug use and associated problems.

Particularly prevalent was death in the family experienced by close to 90% of children, followed by serious illness or injury of a family member, and other stressful events, reported by about 57% and 49% of these youth, respectively. For around 46% of students, family arrests were reported, and by more than one-third, divorce, family financial problems, own

serious illness or injury and the birth of a sibling were reported in decreasing order of frequency.

FRIENDS/PEER INFLUENCES ON YOUTH BEHAVIOR:

Best Friends' Practices:

When asked about their four best friends (the friends they feel closest to) and whether in the past 12 months any of those best friends had engaged in alcohol or other drug use, a range of from a low of 4.7% to a high of about 15.5% of students reported that they did not know.

Percentage of Students with Any Best Friends, who, in the Past 12 Months, Did the Following:	**% Yes**	**% No**	**% Don't Know**
a. smoked cigarettes	**31.6**	53.2	15.2
b. drunk alcoholic beverages -- beer, wine, or hard liquor (for example, vodka, whiskey, or gin)	**30.7**	53.8	15.5
c. used marijuana/pot	**17.4**	69.3	13.3
d. taken "pills" to get high or for non-medical reasons	**10.5**	75.9	13.6
e. used LSD, cocaine, amphetamines/speed, or another illegal drug	**6.1**	81.5	12.5
f. been suspended from school	**35.7**	58.0	6.3
g. carried a handgun or other weapon like a knife (other than for hunting or sport)	**12.1**	79.0	8.9
h. taken a handgun to school	**1.5**	92.9	5.6
i. sold "pills" or illegal drugs	**8.0**	82.1	9.9
j. stolen or tried to steal a motor vehicle such as a car or a motorcycle	**4.4**	88.0	7.6
k. been arrested	**9.6**	83.0	7.4
l. dropped out of school	**4.4**	91.0	4.7
m. been members of a gang	**9.4**	81.5	9.1

Most frequently reported behaviors among best friends were being suspended from school (36%), and smoking cigarettes or drinking alcohol at close to one-third of students each.

These were followed by using marijuana (17%), carrying a weapon (12%), taking pills to get high at over 10%, and being arrested and being gang members at more than 9% each. Selling pills or illegal drugs was reported by about 8% of students in relation to their best friends. On the other hand, taking a handgun to school was the least common practice reported for best friends at only around 2%, followed by dropping out of school, stealing or trying to steal a motor vehicle, and using illegal drugs, which were reported for their best friends by 4-6% of these youth.

Perceptions of Being Cool:

To elicit attitudes to the acceptability with peers of alcohol and other drug use, a series of questions was asked about how "cool" certain practices are perceived to be by middle school students, with the following results:

Percentage of Students Reporting the Chances They Would be Seen as Cool if They:	**% No or Very Little Chance**	**% Some Chance**	**% Pretty Good or Very Good Chance**
a. smoked cigarettes	75.4	17.3	**7.3**
b. began drinking alcoholic beverages regularly, that is, at least once or twice a month	74.7	16.9	**8.4**
c. smoked marijuana	77.2	12.7	**10.0**
d. carried a handgun	87.4	7.5	**5.2**

Clearly, behavior associated with the most "cool" perception is smoking marijuana, while the least "cool" is carrying a handgun. Regular alcohol use and smoking cigarettes were perceived as moderately "cool".

PERCEIVED RISK AND AVAILABILITY OF AOD:

The University of Michigan Monitoring the Future surveys of high school and middle school youth have found that the combination of perceived risk of harm and availability of substances together account for higher consumption of substances among the youth studied. The Southwest Region students' responses to these questions are provided below:

Perceived Risk of Substance Use:

How much students think people risk harming themselves (physically or in other ways) if they engage in each of the following practices involving AOD use gives a clear indication of students' assessment of relative risk of harm.

Percentage of Students Perceiving People's Risk of Harm from AOD Use:	% No Risk	% Slight Risk	% Moderate Risk	% Great Risk
a. smoke one or more packs of cigarettes per day	10.5	12.4	28.4	**48.7**
b. use smokeless tobacco	14.3	25.8	34.4	**25.5**
c. try marijuana once or twice	16.0	22.9	23.0	**38.1**
d. smoke marijuana regularly (at least once or twice a month)	12.7	12.9	21.0	**53.4**
e. drink any alcoholic beverages (beer, wine, liquor)	12.8	25.4	32.0	**29.8**
f. take one or two drinks of an alcoholic beverage nearly every day	15.3	17.9	26.5	**40.3**

Clearly, the most risk of physical or other harm is perceived by these middle school students from smoking marijuana regularly (at about 53% perceiving great risk) or smoking one or more packs of cigarettes a day (about 49% reporting great risk), while the lowest perceived risk is assessed for using smokeless tobacco or drinking any alcohol (about 26% and 30% great risk, respectively). Intermediate risks of harm are attributed to trying marijuana once or twice (38% great risk), taking one or two drinks of alcoholic beverages nearly every day, at 40% of students assessing great risk of harm to this practice.

Perceived Ease of Access to AOD:

Like perceived harmfulness or risk of harm from drugs, including alcohol, perceived ease of access to or availability of drugs serves as an important predictor of risk of AOD use and problems related to it.

Percentage of Students Reporting Relative Ease of Access to Drugs by Type - Q: How easy do you think it would be for you to get each of the following types of drugs if you wanted some?	% Very or Somewhat Easy	% Very or Somewhat Hard
a. Cigarettes	**60.0**	40.0
b. Smokeless tobacco	**44.8**	55.2
c. Alcohol (beer, wine or hard liquor)	**52.5**	47.5
d. Marijuana/pot	**34.0**	66.0
e. Drugs like cocaine/crack, LSD (acid), heroin, etc.	**22.6**	77.4
f. "Pills" like uppers/speed, downers, painkillers, tranquilizers	**33.2**	66.8
g. Something to sniff like glue or gasoline	**60.2**	39.8

The easiest substances for middle school students to access appear to be inhalants and cigarettes, followed by alcohol, then smokeless tobacco. Marijuana and pills like uppers, downers, etc. were seen as moderately easy to obtain, with illicit drugs like cocaine, hallucinogens, and heroin, for example, as the hardest to access in these students' opinions.

Ease of Access to a Gun:

In answer to the question, "If you wanted to get a gun, how easy would it be for you to get one?", 25% of middle school students said it would be very easy, and another 15.8% said somewhat easy, for a total of 40.8% reporting easy access to guns. The remaining 59.2% of students reported access to guns to be hard - either somewhat hard, at 15.2%, or very hard, at 44.1%.

Perceived Wrongness of Certain Personal Choices and Practices:

In answer to the question concerning how wrong one thinks it is for someone the student's age to use certain substances and engage in certain risky practices, the following were the results:

Percentage of Students Perceiving it Wrong to:	% Very Wrong	% Somewhat Wrong	% Not Very Wrong	% Not Wrong at All
a. drink beer, wine, or hard liquor (for example, vodka, whiskey, or gin) regularly (at least once or twice a month)	**69.5**	19.3	7.3	4.0
b. smoke cigarettes	**67.9**	19.9	7.8	4.4
c. smoke marijuana/pot	**83.4**	8.6	3.9	4.1
d. use LSD, cocaine, amphetamines/ speed or another illegal drug	**91.1**	5.4	1.5	2.0
e. steal anything worth more than $5	**73.0**	20.1	4.1	2.7
f. take a handgun or other weapon to school	**93.9**	3.4	0.9	1.8
g. pick a fight with someone	**48.0**	34.5	12.1	5.4
h. stay away from school all day when your parents think you are at school (skip school)	**70.7**	20.5	5.4	3.4
i. attack someone with the idea of seriously hurting them	**84.5**	9.6	2.6	3.3
j. beat up people if they start a fight	**47.6**	24.3	11.2	16.8

The practices perceived as most wrong, with the highest percentage of students reporting them as very wrong, were taking a handgun or weapon to school (about 94% reported this as very wrong) or using illegal drugs like LSD, cocaine or speed (91% very wrong). Attacking someone with the idea of hurting them or smoking pot/marijuana (at about 83-85% each) were less likely to be judged as very wrong. Even less likely to be seen as very wrong were stealing anything worth more than $5, skipping school, drinking alcohol regularly, smoking cigarettes, each of which was reported by about 68-73% of students as being very wrong. Picking a fight with someone or beating up people if they start a fight were seen as very wrong by a little less than half (about 48% each) of students. This suggests that picking fights or beating people up in fights, which are types of violent behavior, are less likely to be judged as very wrong by students themselves than is drug use - whether using alcohol, smoking cigarettes or using illegal drugs.

Students' Perceptions of How Wrong Parents Would Think Certain Behaviors:

Similar questions to those above were asked of students concerning parental views of how wrong certain practices are; the results follow:

Percentage of Students Reporting the Degree to which Their Parents Would Think it Wrong for Them to:	% Very Wrong	% Somewhat Wrong	% Not Very Wrong	% Not Wrong at All
a. drink beer, wine, or hard liquor (for example, vodka, whiskey, or gin) regularly (at least once or twice a month)	**85.1**	8.2	3.2	3.5
b. smoke cigarettes	**85.2**	8.7	2.6	3.5
c. smoke marijuana/pot	**93.0**	2.6	1.8	2.6
d. steal anything worth more than $5.00	**91.1**	5.1	1.6	2.3
e. draw graffiti, write things, or draw pictures on buildings or other property (without the owner's permission)	**89.3**	5.8	2.2	2.7
f. pick a fight with someone	**74.3**	17.4	5.0	3.3

Smoking marijuana ranks first in the percentage of students who think their parents would assess the practice as very wrong, at 93%, followed by stealing anything worth more than $5 (91%), and drawing graffiti and related activities (89%). Slightly less wrong in student-assessed parental judgment are smoking cigarettes and drinking alcohol regularly, which each drew responses of "very wrong" from about 85% of students. Consistent with earlier results, picking a fight with someone was seen as least likely to be seen as wrong for students to do by their parents, with about 74% of students assessing that behavior as very wrong from a parental viewpoint.

Students' Perceptions of How Wrong Adults in Their Neighborhood Think Certain Behaviors Are:

In parallel with the questions asked of the students themselves and their parents reported above, students were asked to assess how wrong most adults in their neighborhood, or the area around where they live, would think it is for kids their age to use alcohol and other drugs and engage in risky or illegal behaviors. The results are striking in comparison with those for the students and their parents.

Percentage of Students Reporting How Wrong Adults in their Neighborhood Think it is for Middle School Age Kids:	% Very Wrong	% Somewhat Wrong	% Not Very Wrong	% Not Wrong At All
a. to use marijuana	87.3	5.8	**3.0**	**3.9**
b. to drink alcohol	77.2	11.9	**5.8**	**5.1**
c. to smoke cigarettes	73.4	13.0	**6.7**	**6.9**

The vast majority of these students perceive that adults in their neighborhood, like their parents, think that use of marijuana is very wrong, followed by drinking alcohol and smoking cigarettes, with 87%, 77% and 73% of students reporting these behaviors as very wrong for kids their age to indulge in, according to adults in their neighborhood. On the other hand, about 7%, 5% and 4% of students, respectively, think adults in their neighborhood see nothing wrong in kids their age smoking cigarettes, drinking alcohol or using marijuana, in that order.

STUDENTS' LIFE PROBLEMS AND HIGH RISK PRACTICES:

Asked whether they had ever participated in several problematic behaviors, such as gang membership, suspension from school or violence-related behavior, the following results were observed for all middle school students surveyed in the Southwest Region. Nearly 6% (5.9%) reported that they had belonged to a gang, while 6.4% reported having been arrested at least once in their lifetimes. Suspension from school was reported by more than 1 in 4 (27.4%) students. Certain practices related to violence or risk of violence were reported as follows: 6.1% of students had carried a handgun other than for hunting or sport, while 15.5% had attacked someone with the idea of seriously hurting them.

The results for students' exposure to and participation in risky and violent behaviors in the past 12 months, overall and in school, are reported below.

Percentage of Students who Reported in the Past 12 Months that They Had....	%Yes, Overall	% Yes, at School
a. gotten into a physical fight	37.2	16.5
b. taken part in a gang fight where a group of your friends was against another group	7.7	2.7
c. been injured in a fight	9.6	3.0
d. been physically abused or assaulted	8.9	3.4
e. stolen "pills" or prescription drugs including from home	3.5	0.9

Percentage of Students who Reported in the Past 12 Months that They Had....	%Yes, Overall	% Yes, at School
f. stolen illegal drugs	3.5	1.1
g. bought “pills” or an illegal drug	5.9	2.2
h. been offered or given “pills” or an illegal drug	19.8	6.1

These results suggest that getting into physical fights is very frequent behavior in these middle school students, with more than 1 in 3 reporting fighting in the past 12 months and with about 44% of those fights occurring at school. Being offered or given pills or illicit drugs is next most frequent among these students, at close to 20% reporting this experience, with about 31% of such contacts occurring at school. Less frequently reported were being injured in a fight, at about 1 in 10 students - with about 31% of those injuries occurring at school. Being physically abused or assaulted was reported by about 9% of students, with over 38% occurring at school. Participation in gang fights was reported by nearly 8% of youth. About 35% of these gang fights reportedly occurred at school. Buying pills or an illegal drug, stealing pills or prescription drugs including from home, and stealing illegal drugs were reported by nearly 6%, 3.5% and 3.5% of students, respectively. In about 37% of cases of buying pills or illegal drugs, this occurred at school, while in cases where drugs were stolen - whether pills/prescription drugs or illegal drugs - the stealing was reported to have occurred at school by 25% and 30% of students, respectively.

Other High Risk Behaviors in the Past 12 Months:

Overall, 17.2% of Southwest Region students reported that they had been suspended from school one or more times in the last 12 months. Substantially lower percentages of students reported serious criminal behavior - thus, 2.8% reported that they had stolen or tried to steal a motor vehicle, such as a car or a motorcycle, while 4.8% reported that they had been arrested at least once in the last 12 months.

Violent behavior was reported by 11.8% of students who said that they had attacked someone (physically) with the idea of seriously hurting them in the last 12 months. Overall, 8.8% of students had carried a weapon (such as a handgun, knife or club) other than for hunting or sport, and 1.5% had taken a weapon such as a gun to school at least once in the period in question.

In terms of alcohol and other drug use, 8.4% of these Southwest Region middle school students had been drunk or high at school, and 1% reported this had occurred 20 times or more in the last 12 months. Close to 4% (3.9%) of these youth reported that they had sold “pills” or illegal drugs in the past 12 months, and 2.4% of students overall reported that they had sold “pills” or illegal drugs at school.

Attitudes to Risky and Illegal Practices:

Tapping dimensions of impulsivity and rebelliousness, as well as other negative attitudes, these students' responses indicate that impulsivity is very characteristic of these young people. More than half report that they often do things without thinking of consequences. Overall, about 23% think it is not important to think before they act, and around 22% have to have everything right away. Measures of rebelliousness and testing limits - liking to see how much they can get away with, reported by 25.5% of students, ignoring rules that get in the way (about 24%), and doing the opposite of what people tell them just to provoke a reaction (20.5%) - are also relatively commonly reported by these students. The two depression-related questions above are discussed in an earlier section. Thinking it is OK to cheat at school was reported by around 18% of students.

Percentage of Students Whose Attitudes Put Them at High Risk and Therefore Who	**% Yes**	**% No**
a. think it is okay to cheat at school	**17.7**	82.3
b. like to see how much you can get away with	**25.5**	74.5
c. sometimes think that life is not worth it	**30.5**	69.5
d. think you are no good at all	**22.5**	77.5
e. ignore rules that get in your way	**24.3**	75.7
f. often do things without thinking what will happen	**52.8**	47.2
g. have to have everything right away	**21.7**	78.3
h. think it is important to think before you act	77.3	**22.7**
i. do the opposite of what people tell you, just to get them mad	**20.5**	79.5

Other Risk Taking:

Students who say that they often or almost always have done what feels good no matter what or have done something dangerous because someone dared them to do it represent 14.8% and 6.7% of students, respectively. Those students who conversely report that they never or rarely have done what feels good no matter what or done something dangerous on a dare comprise 40.7% and 69.4% of students, overall.

FAMILIAL AND PEER ALCOHOL OR DRUG PROBLEMS:

Familial Alcohol or Drug Abuse:

Fully 32.4% of students reported that someone in their family has had a severe alcohol or drug problem.

Parental AOD Use: Answering the question, "Do you think one or both of your parents (stepparents or guardians) is drinking too much or has a problem with alcohol?", 13.4% of students said "Yes". Close to 8% (7.9%) of students said that they think one or both of their parents is using or abusing drugs other than alcohol. A total of nearly 17% (16.8%) of students think that one or both of their parents is using or abusing alcohol or has a problem with it.

Siblings' AOD Use: Asked about alcohol and other drug use and high risk practices in their siblings, about 8% of students had no brothers or sisters. However, for continuity and consistency of denominators, the following percentages are reported for all students.

Percentage of Students Reporting that One or More of Their Brothers or Sisters	% of All Students
a. drinks beer, wine, or hard liquor (for example, vodka, whiskey or gin)	22.1
b. smokes marijuana	11.4
c. smokes cigarettes	26.6
d. has taken a handgun to school	1.5
e. has been suspended or expelled from school	20.6

Cigarette smoking is most frequently reported for sibling drug use by these students at about 27%, followed by alcohol use and suspension from school at around 22% and 21% respectively. Marijuana use was reported for more than 11% of students' siblings. Handguns at school was least common at 1.5%.

Close Friends' Alcohol or Drug Problems: About 7.8% of students reported that they think that one or more of their close friends is drinking too much or has a problem with alcohol, and 11.3% said that they think that one or more of the close friends is using or abusing drugs other than alcohol.

STUDENT'S OWN ALCOHOL/DRUG USE:

While this was mainly a prevention survey, it is clear that many of these middle school students have already begun their alcohol and other drug use careers so that primary prevention, delaying onset of the initiation of first use of alcohol or other drugs, is for many an inappropriate strategy. Secondary prevention, reducing the use of alcohol or other drugs, mitigating the occurrence of negative and dangerous consequences, and breaking

the dependence cycle early is more relevant. In some cases tertiary prevention or actual treatment is indicated, particularly in students who self-report addiction or dependence.

Cigarette Smoking:

While 38% of Southwest Region students have ever smoked cigarettes, 25.7% had smoked cigarettes in the last 12 months, and 17.5% had done so in the past 30 days. Thus, about two-thirds of lifetime smokers had smoked in the last 12 months, and close to half (45%) of lifetime smokers had smoked in the past 30 days.

Students who had smoked cigarettes on 20 or more of the last 30 days comprised 4.5% of all students. Those who smoked 11 or more cigarettes in the past 30 days represented 2% of students. Also, 26.2% of current or 30-day smokers smoked cigarettes on 20+ of the past 30 days, and 11.3% of current smokers smoked 11 or more cigarettes in the past 30 days.

Smokeless Tobacco (Chewing Tobacco, Snuff, Plug, Dipping Tobacco):

While 15.1% of students have ever used smokeless tobacco, 9.4% had used smokeless tobacco in the last 12 months, and 6.1% had done so in the past 30 days. Thus, 59.9% of lifetime users had used smokeless tobacco in the last 12 months, while 38.9% of lifetime users had used smokeless tobacco in the past 30 days.

Students who had used smokeless tobacco on 20 or more of the last 30 days comprised 0.8% of all students. Around 14.1% of current or 30-day smokeless tobacco users used it on 20+ of the past 30 days.

Alcoholic Beverages (Beer, Wine, Wine Coolers or Liquor):

Close to half (46.1%) of these middle school students, ranging in age from 11 to 15 years, had drunk alcoholic beverages more than a few sips at least once in their lifetimes. Fully 32.4% had drunk alcohol in the past 12 months, and 23% had done so in the past 30 days. Thus, given that students had ever used alcohol, 68.3% of them had drunk alcohol in the past 12 months, and 48.4% had drunk alcohol in the past 30 days.

Students who had used alcohol on 20 or more of the last 30 days comprised 1.5% of all students, and 6.5% of current drinkers. Students who reported daily alcohol consumption over the past 30 days represented 0.8% of all students. Daily drinkers made up 3.3% of current (30-day) drinkers among these students, and more than half (51.5%) of students who reported drinking on 20 or more of the last 30 days drank alcohol daily.

Among these middle school students, 4.1% drank 5 or more drinks of alcohol per day on their drinking days. These “binge drinkers” are 18.2% of current drinkers (last 30 days). One percent of students reported drinking 5 or more drinks on 20 or more of the past 30 days. Again, as a percentage of students drinking on 20 or more days in the last 30, those

who drank 5 or more drinks represent 66.7%. These “binge” drinkers comprise 4.3% of students who drank any alcohol in the past 30 days. Finally 0.5% of students overall reported drinking 5 or more drinks of alcohol daily in the past 30 days. They comprise 64.7% of daily drinkers, and 2.2% of current or 30-day drinkers.

In answer to the question, “Have you **ever** gotten drunk or felt very high or intoxicated from drinking alcohol?”, 18.3% of all students said that they had gotten drunk. This number represents 39.5% of lifetime drinkers.

Marijuana (Pot, Grass, Hash, etc.) Use:

About 19% (18.6%) of middle school students in the Southwest Region had ever used marijuana, while 13.5% had used marijuana in the past 12 months, and 9.7% in the past 30 days. While 70.1% of lifetime marijuana users used marijuana in the past 12 months, nearly half (50.4%) of lifetime users had used marijuana in the past 30 days.

Students who had used marijuana on 20 or more of the last 30 days comprised 1.8% of all students, and students who reported daily marijuana use over the past 30 days represented 0.9% of all students. However, among current marijuana users (30-day users), 18.8% used on 20 or more of the past 30 days and 9.4% of current users reported daily marijuana use.

Percentage of Students Reporting Illegal Drug Use by Type of Drug and Lifetime, Recent or Current Use	**% Yes, Ever**	**% Yes, in the Last 12 Months**	**% Yes, in the Last 30 Days**
a. Cocaine or crack	4.1	3.2	2.3
b. Substances you “sniff”: paint thinners, glue, gasoline, white-out, butane, aerosol sprays, etc.	9.6	7.7	6.2
c. LSD (acid) or other hallucinogens such as peyote, jimson weed, mushrooms, PCP (angel dust), etc.	7.0	5.7	4.6
d. Other illegal drugs such as ecstasy, ice (crystal meth), heroin (smack, horse, skag), etc.	4.7	4.0	3.1

It is very clear that inhalants are one drug of choice for these youth, since of the roughly 10% of students who report lifetime use of inhalants to get high, 80.1% had used inhalants in the last 12 months, and 64.8% had used them in the last 30 days. Cocaine, on the other hand, was less likely to involve sustained use, since of the lifetime users of cocaine or crack (4%)among these middle school students, 77.4% had used cocaine in the last 12 months, and 55.9% in the last 30 days. For other illegal drugs and for hallucinogens such as LSD, the percentages of ever users who used in the last 12 months are 84% and 80.5%, respectively, while the proportions of ever users who used in the last 30 days are 65.4% for LSD and other hallucinogens, and 66% for other illegal drugs. About 0.7% to 0.8% of

Southwest Region students reported use of one or more of these illegal drugs daily in the last 30 days.

OVERALL ATOD, AOD AND DRUG USE PREVALENCE:

ATOD: Overall, over half (58.7%) of middle schools students in the Southwest Region reported using alcohol, tobacco or other drugs (ATOD) in their lifetimes, while 45% reported 12-month use, and 35.2%, 30-day use of one or more substances (excluding caffeine and prescription drugs).

Given lifetime use, 73.7% had used ATOD in 12 months, and 56.6% in 30 days. Of 12-month users, about 77% were 30-day users, suggesting that when youth begin their drug use careers, relatively few stop soon.

AOD: Excluding tobacco and looking only at the prevalence of use of alcohol and other drugs (save caffeine and prescription drugs), the lifetime prevalence of alcohol and other drug (AOD) use among these middle school students is 48.4%, the 12-month prevalence, 38.3%, and the 30-day prevalence, 29.3%. Here again, given lifetime use, 71.6% had used AOD in 12 months, and 54% in 30 days. Of 12-month users, 75.4% were 30-day users.

Drugs: Considering drugs only, 24.6% of middle school students had ever used one or more illegal drugs (excluding alcohol, tobacco or prescription drugs as well as caffeine). This compares to a 12-month drug use prevalence rate of 19.2%, and a 30-day prevalence rate of 15.2%. Seventy-six percent of lifetime drug users used drugs in the past 12 months, and 59.9% of lifetime drug users used drugs in the last 30 days. Among 12-month drug users, 78.9% were current or 30-day users.

AVERAGE AGE AT FIRST USE OF AOD:

Average Age at First Use by Type of Drug:	**Average Age of First Use (in Years)**
a. smoked cigarettes	10.0
b. used smokeless tobacco	10.6
c. drank alcoholic beverages	10.5
d. began drinking alcoholic beverages regularly, that is at least once or twice a month	11.6
e. got drunk or felt very high or intoxicated from drinking alcohol	11.8
f. used marijuana/pot	11.6

Average Age at First Use by Type of Drug:	Average Age of First Use (in Years)
g. used cocaine or crack	11.1
h. used substances you "sniff"	10.8
i. used LSD (acid) or other hallucinogens	11.4
j. used other illegal drugs such as ecstasy, Ice (crystal meth), heroin, etc.	11.8

Cigarette smoking is the earliest onset substance use, beginning, on average, in these middle school students at age 10, followed by drinking alcohol at age 10.5 years and using smokeless tobacco at age 10.6 years. Inhalant use was reported as initiated at the average age of 10.8 years among these students. The onset of cocaine use was reported at age 11.1, while the use of LSD and other hallucinogens, started at age 11.4. This is followed by regular alcohol consumption (at least once or twice a month), starting at 11.6 years, and marijuana use, at the same age 11.6 years. The use of other illegal drugs such as ecstasy, crystal meth and heroin, began at age 11.8, on average, as did getting drunk or intoxicated also reported at first onset at age 11.8 years.

Prescription Drug Abuse:

Prescription drug abuse is defined as having taken any prescription drugs or "pills" just to get high or for non-medical purposes, on one's own, without a doctor's prescription. While 8.4% of students reported prescription drug abuse in their lifetimes; 6% reported it in the past 12 months, and 3.3% in the past 30 days. Among lifetime prescription drug abusers, 69.9% had abused such drugs in the past 12 months, and 37.6% did so in the past 30 days.

SELF-REPORTED SUBSTANCE ABUSE/ADDICTION:

Answering "yes" to the question of lifetime or current addiction to or dependence on one or more drugs serves as a proxy measure of these youth's need for alcohol and other drug treatment[1]. The following table shows the extent of self-reported addiction among these students by type of drug and by lifetime or current prevalence.

[1]The question contained in its wording a brief definition of addiction: "Do you think you have **EVER** been hooked on or addicted to any of the following substances (for example, did you try to quit or use less and had trouble doing so)? "

Percentage of Students Ever or Now Addicted to Alcohol or Other Drugs by Type of Drug	% Ever Addicted	% Now Addicted
a. Tobacco/nicotine	9.6	7.0
b. Alcohol (beer, wine or liquor)	6.2	4.8
c. Marijuana/pot	4.9	3.9
d. Cocaine or crack	0.8	0.6
e. Hallucinogens like LSD or PCP or ecstasy	0.9	0.7
f. Coffee/cola/caffeine	26.1	20.1
g. A prescription drug or "pill"	3.3	1.9
h. Other drugs or substances	2.7	1.7

Based on lifetime prevalence of self-reported addiction to a drug or substance, caffeine/cola/coffee is the most prevalent drug, addicting about 26% of students, followed, at a much lower level, at about 10%, by tobacco/nicotine, and by alcohol at 6%, and marijuana at about 5%. Addiction to a prescription drug or "pill" was reported by around 3.3% of students, and addiction to other drugs or substances by 2.7%. Less than 1% of students reported addiction either to hallucinogens like LSD or to cocaine or crack.

Current addiction as self-reported by these students again showed caffeine as the number one drug of addiction, by far, at 20%, followed by tobacco/nicotine, at 7%. Alcohol addiction was reported by close to 5% of students, and marijuana at close to 4%. While prescription drugs or pills, other drugs or substances, hallucinogens and cocaine or crack were reported as current sources of addiction by decreasing percentages of youth, ranging from close to 2% (1.9%) down to 0.6%.

The percentage of lifetime addicted users who are currently addicted suggests some of the power of these drugs over these very young users. The highest percentage of ever addicted students are currently addicted to marijuana (78%), followed very closely by alcohol at 77%. Slightly lower rates of ever to current addicted students are observed for cocaine at 76.5%, caffeine/cola/coffee at around 76%, and tobacco/nicotine (at about 72%). Hallucinogens such as LSD, and other drugs or substances, had ever-to-current addiction ratios of 70%, and 61%, respectively. The drug types least likely to be still addicting youth who reported ever being addicted to them are prescription drugs or "pills," at about 56% of students ever addicted to them now addicted to them.

COMMUNITY INFLUENCES ON STUDENTS' AOD RISK:

Questions about students' communities and the areas around where they lived were expected to shed some light on risk and protective factors for alcohol and other drug use among middle school students.

Attitudes to Neighborhood:

Only 13% of students said they did not feel safe in their neighborhood, or the area around where they live, while the remainder or 87% did feel safe. While 21.2% of students said they did not like their neighborhood, 78.8% felt the opposite. Overall, 28.1% of these youth would like to get out of their neighborhood, compared to the 71.9% who would not. About 35.1% of students report that their neighbors notice when they are doing a good job and let them know about it, while for 61.7% and 61.1% of students respectively, there are lots of adults in their neighborhood they could talk to about something important or there are people in their neighborhood who encourage them to do their best.

Neighborhood Description:

When asked how well each of the following characteristics describe their neighborhood, or the area around where they live, students were most likely to report fights and crime and/or drug selling as characterizing their neighborhoods very well or somewhat well, with less emphasis on empty or abandoned buildings or lots of graffiti.

Percentage of Students Describing Their Neighborhood in Terms of the Following:	% Very Well	% Somewhat Well	% Not Well	% Not at All
a. Crime and/or drug selling	**8.8**	9.3	11.1	**70.8**
b. Fights	**10.6**	13.5	15.4	**60.4**
c. Lots of empty or abandoned buildings	**4.8**	4.9	10.9	**79.4**
d. Lots of graffiti	**5.0**	3.5	8.1	**83.4**

Only about 60% of students reported that their neighborhoods were not at all characterized by fights, and around 71% not at all characterized by crime and/or drug selling. On the other hand, about 79% of students reported no empty or abandoned buildings, and 83% reported no profuse graffiti at all in their neighborhoods.

Adults Using Alcohol and Drugs in the Neighborhood:

In the last 12 months, 29.9% of these middle school students from the Southwest Region reported that they personally knew one or more adults who had used marijuana/pot,

cocaine/crack or other illegal drugs. About 22.8% reported knowing at least one adult who had sold or dealt drugs in the last 12 months. Around 24.8% of students had known adults who carried handguns or other weapons not for hunting or sport, and about the same percentage (23.6%) had known adults who had done other things that could get them in trouble with the police - stealing, selling stolen goods, mugging, or assaulting others. Finally, 44.9% of youth had known at least one adult who had gotten drunk or high in the last 12 months. Thus, drunkenness was by far the most commonly reported practice observed by these students among the adults in their neighborhoods.

When asked how many adults they knew personally who had engaged in these practices in the past 12 months, 16.4% of students cited 5 or more adults who had gotten drunk or high, while 8.9% knew 5 or more adults who had used marijuana/pot, cocaine/crack or other illegal drugs. About 5-6% knew five or more adults who had carried handguns or weapons (5.1%), sold or dealt drugs (6.3%), or done other things that could have gotten them in trouble with the police (5.8%).

Participation in Leisure Time Activities as Protective of AOD Use and Abuse:

The availability and participation in activities that are seen as protective of alcohol and other drug use and abuse in youth is reported on here.

Percentage of Students Participating in the Following Activities:	**% Yes**	**% No**	**% Not Available in Their Community**
a. Sports teams	**72.3**	22.8	4.9
b. Scouting	**22.4**	67.4	10.2
c. Boys and girls clubs	**23.2**	62.9	13.9
d. 4-H clubs	**37.9**	52.1	10.0
e. Service clubs (such as Junior Sertoma, Rainbow, etc.)	**15.9**	61.5	22.6
f. Church youth groups	**70.7**	25.8	3.5
g. Music/art/drama clubs	**41.3**	48.3	10.4
h. Other after school clubs	**43.8**	49.1	7.2

The leisure-time activity reported by most students was participation in sports teams at about 72%, followed very closely by church youth groups at 71%. Moderately popular are music/art/drama clubs and other after school clubs, at about 41% and 44%, respectively. Also moderately popular where available are 4-H clubs (around 38%). Least popular were service clubs (at about 16%), followed by scouting and boys and girls clubs (at 22% and

23%, respectively). Least available activities in these communities were service clubs, and boys and girls clubs.

Parental Guidance and Support:

Finally, parental guidance and support were assessed by a series of questions, such as "Do your parents want you to call if you are going to be late getting home?" To this question, 81.9% of students responded positively, and 18.1%, negatively. The question, "Does your family have clear rules about alcohol and drug use?" brought responses of 74.1%, "yes", and 25.3%, "no". The extent to which families fight is measured by answers to whether people in students' family often insult or yell at each other, reported by 36.5% of students, compared to 63.5% who say "no". Twenty-nine percent of students reported that people in their family have serious arguments, while 71% do not report this.

Answers to two hypothetical questions are also revealing of the extent of parental guidance and concern as perceived by these youth. First, 55.3% of students said that if they drank some beer, wine, or hard liquor (for example, vodka, whiskey, or gin) without their parents' permission, they would be caught by their parents, while 70.2% said that if they carried a handgun without their parents' permission, they would be caught by their parents.

POSITIVE PARENTAL ATTITUDES AND PRACTICES:

The frequency with which parents include youth in family decisions and praise and reward them is thought to be associated with protection against alcohol and other drug abuse. For these youth, parental guidance and support appears relatively high.

Percentage of Students Reporting Frequency of Parents:	**% Never/ Rarely**	**% Sometimes**	**% Often/Almost Always**
a. giving them lots of chances to do fun things with them	14.5	38.3	**47.3**
b. asking them what they think before most family decisions affecting the students are made	23.8	43.0	**33.2**
c. noticing when they are doing a good job and letting them know about it	16.1	33.7	**50.3**
d. telling the students they are proud of them for something they have done	12.0	28.9	**59.1**

The most commonly reported supportive practice of parents toward these middle school students among the items measured is telling the students they are proud of their

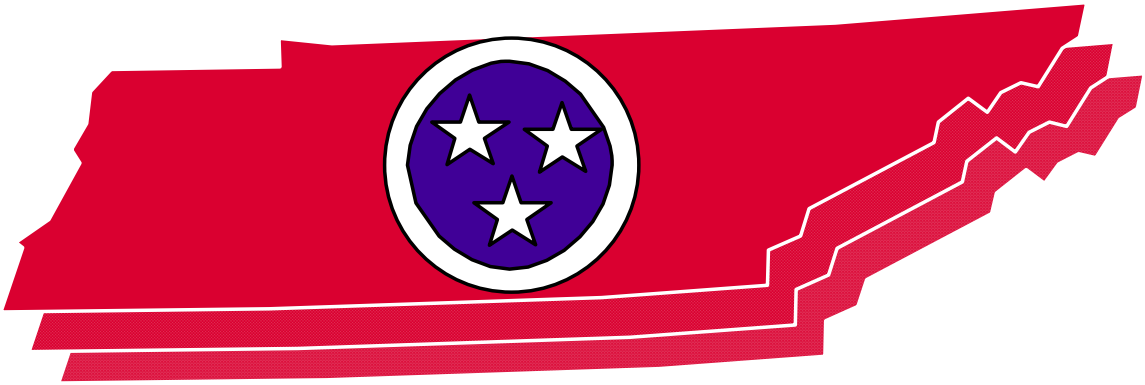
accomplishments, at 59% of students reporting parents as often or almost always doing so. This is followed by parents' noticing a good job and letting students know it (around 50%), and giving students lots of chances to do fun things with parents (about 47%). Least likely to occur often or almost always is parents' asking students what they think before family decisions affecting them are made, at 33.2% often or almost always doing so.

Finally, 87.9% of students say that their parents ask if they have gotten their homework done, while 12.1% do not. In 87% of cases, when students are not at home, one of their parents knows where they are and who they are with, while 13% do not. The great majority of students reported that their parents would know if they did not come home on time, at 86.1%, compared to 13.9% whose parents would not know. While 78.2%of students could ask their parents for help if they had a personal problem, compared to 21.8% who could not do so. Students were more likely to report that they often share their thoughts and feelings with their mothers (65.5%), compared to their fathers (43.8%).

TENNESSEE MIDDLE SCHOOL HEALTH SURVEY, 2001-2002

A SUMMARY OF FINDINGS FROM THE TENNESSEE MIDDLE SCHOOL HEALTH SURVEY

SHELBY COUNTY



TENNESSEE DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH

AND THE

COMMUNITY HEALTH RESEARCH GROUP

THE UNIVERSITY OF TENNESSEE, KNOXVILLE

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TENNESSEE MIDDLE SCHOOL SURVEY RESULTS:
SHELBY COUNTY

SOCIODEMOGRAPHIC CHARACTERISTICS:

Gender: A total of 4,355 students in randomly sampled middle schools grades 6-8 in Shelby completed surveys. They were split evenly by gender, with 50.6% being female and 49.4% male.

Grade: All grades were well represented, 27.1% of the students sampled in 6th grade, 37.9% in 7th grade and 35.0% in 8th grade.

Age: In terms of age, 6.8% of students were 11 years of age or younger, while 25.4% were age 12; 35.7% were age13; 25.9% were age 14; and 6.1% were 15 years of age or older.

Race/Ethnicity: While 67.7% of students were black, 27.3% were white and 5.0% were of other racial/ethnic groups.

Hispanic Origin: A total of 6.7% of students were of Hispanic origin.

OTHER BACKGROUND CHARACTERISTICS:

Two-Parent Family: Fifty-five percent of students in the study lived in two-parent families, while 44.9% lived in families of other compositions.

Non-English Spoken At Home: While fully 94.9% of students reported that English was the language used most often in the home, 2.2% reported that language to be Spanish and another 2.9% reported another language as the language most often spoken at home.

Rural/Urban Residence: Nine out of ten (91.8%) middle school students in Shelby county lived in a city, town or suburb, i.e., an urban area, while the remaining 8.2% lived in rural areas. Of all students, 7.7% lived in the country, although not on a farm, and 0.5% lived on farms.

Proxy Measures of Poverty: In answer to the question, “Do you live in public housing?”, more than one-quarter (28.9%) of students did not know the answer, while 18.6% reported that they did live in public housing, and another 52.5% that they did not live in public housing. This measure was to be used as one indicator of poverty along with whether the family was on any form of public assistance. That question was phrased: “Does your family receive any form of public assistance, such as food stamps or other forms of welfare (such as Families First, WIC, TennCare/Medicaid, etc.)?” Again, more than one-fifth (20.8%) of the students did not know. Still 23.1% reported that their families did receive public

assistance, while 56.1% did not. Combining these two measures produces a prevalence estimate of middle school students in poverty of 34.8% in the region as a whole.

Mobility/Migration: Only 25.6% of students had not changed homes since kindergarten, while 30.2% had changed homes 1-2 times; 23.9% had changed homes 3-4 times; and 20.4% had changed homes 5 times or more since kindergarten (11.2% had done so 5-6 times, and 9.2%, 7 times or more).

The Importance of Religion or Spirituality in Students' Families: Only 13.3% of Shelby middle school students reported that religion or spirituality was either not very important (8.9%) or not at all important (4.4%) in their families, For more than half (59.3%) of these students, religion or spirituality was very important, while for 27.4%, it was somewhat important.

The Importance of Religion or Spirituality in Students' Own Lives: For 13.1% of Shelby middle school students, religion or spirituality was either not very important (7.9%) or not at all important (5.1%) in their own lives, while for 29.0%, it was somewhat important, and for more than half (57.9%), it was very important.

Attendance at Religious Services: Asked how often they attend religious services or activities, 16.1% of students said they never did, while less than once a month was the response chosen by another 11.1%. Attendance at religious services or activities occupied 21.8% of students 1-2 times a month, although not every week, while another 51.1% of students attended religious services once a week or more.

SCHOOL EXPERIENCE:

Grades Last Year: Getting mostly A's as grades in the last school year was reported by less than one-third (27.2%) of students, while mostly B's were reported by 38.1%, and mostly C's by 27.2%. Only 7.6% of students reported either mostly D's (5.6%) or mostly F's (1.9%).

A series of questions were asked concerning how often youth had certain experiences in school – whether rarely or never, sometimes or often or almost always. Categories are collapsed here into "often/almost always", and the residual which is "rarely, never or sometimes" in relation to students reporting those problems or experiences.

Percentage of Students Reporting that in the Past School Year They:	% Never/Rarely/ Sometimes	% Often/Almost Always
a. feel physically safe or safe from violence at school	**58.7%**	41.3%
b. try to do your best work in school	**28.0%**	72.0%
c. find most of your courses interesting to you	**81.4%**	18.6%
d. find the school work too hard to understand	92.1%	**7.9%**
e. fool around in class	91.4%	**8.6%**
f. fail to complete or turn in your assignments	93.7%	**6.3%**
g. get sent to the office or have to stay after school because you misbehaved	96.2%	**3.8%**
h. skip a day of school or part of a day (without permission)	98.4%	**1.6%**
i. get better grades than most of the students in your class	**78.2%**	21.8%
j. feel bullied by other kids at school	92.9%	**7.1%**
k. feel bored in school	74.8%	**25.2%**
l. hate being in school	82.9%	**17.1%**
m. think the things you are learning in school are going to be important for your later life	**40.7%**	59.3%

These attitudes among others studied in this survey are seen as protective or detrimental to efforts to prevent or reduce alcohol and other drug (AOD) use, abuse, problems or dependence among these youth. Results suggest that negative attitudes to school such as feeling bored in school and hating being in school were reported often or almost always by the most students at about 25.2% and 17.1%, respectively, while fooling around in class often or almost always was reported by 8.6%. Finding school work too hard to understand, failing to complete or turn in assignments, getting punished for misbehaving, or skipping school were reported often or almost always by close to 8%, more than 6%, nearly 4% and 1.6% of students, respectively.

Only 41.3% of students felt often or almost always safe at school, with over 7% reporting being often or almost always bullied at school. Other common negative orientations to school were never, rarely or sometimes finding courses interesting, reported by 81.4% of students, yet with about 78.2% of students reporting never, rarely, or sometimes getting better grades than most other students. Twenty-eight percent of students reported never,

rarely or sometimes trying to do their best work in school, and two out of five reported not often thinking that what was learned in school was going to be important later in life.

Missing School: A fairly high percentage of youth (57.0%) missed school at least one time in the past 30 days because of illness or injury, while 8.5% missed school because of skipping or cutting classes, and 43.0% missed school for other reasons.

Opportunities for Participation:

The following results were obtained when students were asked, whether, in their middle school, they had certain opportunities for participation in activities. The purpose was to tap students' attitudes to the school experience in general.

Percentage of Students Reporting Certain Attitudes to School	% NO	% YES
a. In your middle school, do you have chances to be part of class discussions and activities?	**9.4**	90.6
b. do your teachers notice when you are doing a good job and let you know about it?	**23.9**	76.1
c. do you have lots of chances to get involved in school activities outside of class?	**33.4**	66.6
d. do students in your school have chances to talk to teachers one-on-one?	**18.6**	81.4
e. does your school let your parents know when you have done something well?	**54.9**	45.1

Here, only about 1 in 10 students reported feeling as though they did not have chances to participate in class, and a little less than 1 in 5 reported no chances to talk to teachers one-on-one. Close to 1 in 4 students reported teachers not noticing and informing them when they were doing good work, and 1 in 3 reported that they do not have lots of chances to get involved in extra-classroom activities at school. Finally, more than half of the students said that their schools did not let their parents know when they had performed well.

HEALTH AND WELL-BEING OF MIDDLE SCHOOL STUDENTS:

Health Status: Overall, 12% of students reported that in general their health was either fair (11%) or poor (1%), while 22.7% reported good health, 30.9% very good health, and 34.5%, excellent health.

Disability Status: In answer to the question, "Do you now have any physical health problems or disabling conditions that keep you from doing normal activities?", 85.5% of students said "no", while 14.5% reported some disability.

Hyperactivity: In answer to the question, "Are you currently taking prescription drugs or "pills" for hyperactivity (ADD or ADHD) such as Ritalin?", 6.4% of middle school students said "yes", and 93.6% said "no".

Receipt of any Treatment or Counseling Outside School: Lifetime prevalence of receipt of treatment for an emotional or mental health problem outside school was 11.4%. The prevalence of treatment for an alcohol problem was 2%; and for a drug problem, it was 2.4%. Receipt of treatment for either an alcohol or another drug problem was reported by 3.4% of middle school students in Shelby in 2001.

Attendance at Self-Help or 12-Step Support Group Meetings: Attendance at such self-help or 12-step meetings as Alateen, Al-Anon, Children of Alcoholics (COA), Alcoholics Anonymous (AA), Narcotics Anonymous (NA), Cocaine Anonymous (CA) was reported by 3.8% of students, while the remaining students or 96.2% had not done so.

Utilization of Emergency and Hospital Services:

Emergency Department Services: In the 12 months prior to the survey, 17.7% of students reported having been taken to an emergency room for an illness, and 17.3%, for an injury. An overall total of less than one-third (29.8%) of students had been taken to an ED for either an illness or an injury in the past 12 months.

Hospital Admissions: In the last 12 months, 8.3% of middle school students had stayed at least one night in a hospital for an illness while 6.0% had stayed at least one night for an injury. Either illness- or injury-related hospital admissions were reported by more than 1 in 10 (12.6%) students.

Depression and Suicide Attempts:

Indicators of potential depression and low self-esteem such as thinking that life is not worth it sometimes or that one is no good at all are relatively common among these Shelby middle school students. These two feelings were reported by 28.5% and 17.3% of students, respectively.

More specific questions about depression were asked, such as "How often do you feel very depressed, that is, very "blue" or unhappy?" While 37.4% of students reported never or rarely feeling very depressed, 52.1% reported that they sometimes felt this way, and 10.6% reported often or almost always feeling very depressed.

Seventeen percent of middle school students reported ever feeling so desperate that they considered suicide, and 7.1% reported ever attempting suicide. Those young suicide attempters represent 38.9% of students considering suicide.

Finally, 3.8% of students said they had ever gone to a hospital or gotten medical treatment because of a suicide attempt. This represents around 53.6% of those students attempting suicide.

Life Stressors: These students have already experienced a variety of life stresses such as relocations and related changes. Questions about their lifetime experience of selected stressors elicited interesting responses, reported below.

First, in answer to questions concerning whether these youth had experienced a move in the last 12 months, 30.9% of youth reported moving to a different home in the last 12 months, while 37.8% reported starting at a new school in the same period.

In answer to the question of lifetime stressors experienced, the percentages of students reporting each type of life change is presented below:

Percentage of Students Reporting Life Stressors by Type of Stressor in Their Lifetimes	**% Yes**	**% No**
a. had a death in the family	**88.9**	11.1
b. parents (guardians) divorced	**29.9**	70.1
c. family had financial problems	**33.2**	66.8
d. anyone in the family been arrested	**51.4**	48.6
e. new sister or brother born	**31.6**	68.4
f. had a serious illness or injury in your immediate family	**55.9**	44.1
g. had your own serious illness or injury	**35.5**	64.5
h. experienced another very stressful event	**44.6**	55.4

To the extent that these students between the ages of 11 and 15 for the most part have already experienced some major life crises, their coping skills and responses to stressors are of major interest and concern especially as they may protect against or increase the risk of alcohol and other drug use and associated problems.

Particularly prevalent was death in the family experienced by close to 90% of children, followed by serious illness or injury of a family member, and family arrests, reported by more than half. For 45% of students, other stressful events were reported, and close to

one-third, own serious illness or injury, family financial problems, birth of a sibling, and divorce were reported in decreasing order of frequency.

FRIENDS/PEER INFLUENCES ON YOUTH BEHAVIOR:

Best Friends' Practices:

When asked about their four best friends (the friends they feel closest to) and whether in the past 12 months any of those best friends had engaged in alcohol or other drug use, a range of from a low of 6% to a high of about 17% of students reported that they did not know.

Percentage of Students with Any Best Friends, who, in the Past 12 Months, Did the Following:	**% Yes**	**% No**	**% Don't Know**
a. smoked cigarettes	**18.7**	64.8	16.5
b. drunk alcoholic beverages -- beer, wine, or hard liquor (for example, vodka, whiskey, or gin)	**21.2**	61.3	17.4
c. used marijuana/pot	**14.0**	72.2	13.8
d. taken "pills" to get high or for non-medical reasons	**5.0**	81.0	14.0
e. used LSD, cocaine, amphetamines/speed, or another illegal drug	**4.1**	82.6	13.2
f. been suspended from school	**48.8**	44.4	6.8
g. carried a handgun or other weapon like a knife (other than for hunting or sport)	**12.7**	77.4	10.0
h. taken a handgun to school	**2.9**	89.8	7.3
i. sold "pills" or illegal drugs	**5.4**	84.4	10.1
j. stolen or tried to steal a motor vehicle such as a car or a motorcycle	**5.1**	85.6	9.3
k. been arrested	**15.9**	74.4	9.7
l. dropped out of school	**5.1**	88.7	6.1
m. been members of a gang	**15.3**	73.4	11.3

Most frequently reported behaviors among best friends were being suspended from school (48.8%), and smoking cigarettes or drinking alcohol at about one fifth of students each.

These were followed by being arrested (15.9%), being gang members (15.3%), using marijuana (14%) and carrying a weapon (12.7%). Selling pills or illegal drugs was reported by about 5.4% of students in relation to their best friends. On the other hand, taking a handgun to school was the least common practice reported for best friends at only around 3%, followed by dropping out of school, stealing or trying to steal a motor vehicle, and using illegal drugs or pills, which were reported for their best friends by about 4 to 5% of these youth.

Perceptions of Being Cool:

To elicit attitudes to the acceptability with peers of alcohol and other drug use, a series of questions was asked about how "cool" certain practices are perceived to be by middle school students, with the following results:

Percentage of Students Reporting the Chances They Would be Seen as Cool if They:	**% No or Very Little Chance**	**% Some Chance**	**% Pretty Good or Very Good Chance**
a. smoked cigarettes	83.2	11.8	**5.0**
b. began drinking alcoholic beverages regularly, that is, at least once or twice a month	80.6	14.0	**5.4**
c. smoked marijuana	79.4	11.8	**8.7**
d. carried a handgun	84.4	9.3	**6.3**

Clearly, behavior associated with the most "cool" perception is smoking marijuana followed by carrying a handgun (6.3%). The least "cool" is smoking cigarettes and regular alcohol use at about 5%.

PERCEIVED RISK AND AVAILABILITY OF AOD:

The University of Michigan Monitoring the Future surveys of high school and middle school youth have found that the combination of perceived risk of harm and availability of substances together account for higher consumption of substances among the youth studied. The Shelby students' responses to these questions are provided below:

Perceived Risk of Substance Use:

How much students think people risk harming themselves (physically or in other ways) if they engage in each of the following practices involving AOD use gives a clear indication of students' assessment of relative risk of harm.

Percentage of Students Perceiving People's Risk of Harm from AOD Use:	% No Risk	% Slight Risk	% Moderate Risk	% Great Risk
a. smoke one or more packs of cigarettes per day	16.8	11.4	20.2	**51.6**
b. use smokeless tobacco	19.9	21.3	29.7	**29.1**
c. try marijuana once or twice	22.7	26.0	20.3	**31.0**
d. smoke marijuana regularly (at least once or twice a month)	19.7	16.4	20.8	**43.1**
e. drink any alcoholic beverages (beer, wine, liquor)	18.3	26.5	27.4	**27.7**
f. take one or two drinks of an alcoholic beverage nearly every day	18.6	14.8	22.6	**43.9**

Clearly, the most risk of physical or other harm is perceived by these middle school students from smoking one or more packs of cigarettes a day (51.6%), drinking daily (43.9%) or smoking marijuana regularly (43.1%), while the lowest perceived risk is assessed for drinking any alcohol or using smokeless tobacco (less than 30% great risk each), followed by trying marijuana once or twice (31% great risk).

Perceived Ease of Access to AOD:

Like perceived harmfulness or risk of harm from drugs, including alcohol, perceived ease of access to or availability of drugs serves as an important predictor of risk of AOD use and problems related to it.

Percentage of Students Reporting Relative Ease of Access to Drugs by Type – Q: How easy do you think it would be for you to get each of the following types of drugs if you wanted some?	% Very or Somewhat Easy	% Very or Somewhat Hard
a. Cigarettes	**48.9**	51.1
b. Smokeless tobacco	**31.1**	68.5
c. Alcohol (beer, wine or hard liquor)	**46.8**	53.2
d. Marijuana/pot	**33.2**	66.8
e. Drugs like cocaine/crack, LSD (acid), heroin, etc.	**20.8**	79.2
f. "Pills" like uppers/speed, downers, painkillers, tranquilizers	**27.9**	72.1
g. Something to sniff like glue or gasoline	**52.2**	47.8

The easiest substances for middle school students to access appear to be inhalants, cigarettes, and alcohol, followed by marijuana. Smokeless tobacco and pills like uppers, downers, etc. were seen as moderately easy to obtain, with illicit drugs like cocaine, hallucinogens, and heroin, for example, as the hardest to access in these students' opinions.

Ease of Access to a Gun:

In answer to the question, "If you wanted to get a gun, how easy would it be for you to get one?", 16.1% of middle school students said it would be very easy, and another 11.9% said somewhat easy, for a total of 27.9% reporting easy access to guns. The remaining 72.1% of students reported access to guns to be hard – either somewhat hard, at 14.7%, or very hard, at 57.4%.

Perceived Wrongness of Certain Personal Choices and Practices:

In answer to the question concerning how wrong one thinks it is for someone the student's age to use certain substances and engage in certain risky practices, the following were the results:

Percentage of Students Perceiving it Wrong to:	% Very Wrong	% Somewhat Wrong	% Not Very Wrong	% Not Wrong at All
a. drink beer, wine, or hard liquor (for example, vodka, whiskey, or gin) regularly (at least once or twice a month)	**73.5**	17.1	6.1	3.3
b. smoke cigarettes	**76.3**	15.8	5.1	2.8
c. smoke marijuana/pot	**83.3**	8.7	4.3	3.7
d. use LSD, cocaine, amphetamines/ speed or another illegal drug	**92.7**	4.1	1.4	1.8
e. steal anything worth more than $5	**71.2**	20.9	5.2	2.7
f. take a handgun or other weapon to school	**92.5**	4.1	1.5	1.9
g. pick a fight with someone	**51.6**	33	10.5	4.9
h. stay away from school all day when your parents think you are at school (skip school)	**75.6**	17.7	4.0	2.7
i. attack someone with the idea of seriously hurting them	**83.8**	10.8	2.9	2.6
j. beat up people if they start a fight	**47.4**	24.5	12.7	15.4

The practices perceived as most wrong, with the highest percentage of students reporting them as very wrong, were taking a handgun or weapon to school (92.5% reported this as very wrong) or using illegal drugs like LSD, cocaine or speed (92.7% very wrong). Attacking someone with the idea of hurting them or smoking pot/marijuana (at about 83-84% each) were less likely to be judged as very wrong. Even less likely to be seen as very wrong were smoking cigarettes, drinking alcohol regularly, stealing anything worth more than $5, or skipping school, each of which was reported by about 71-76% of students as being very wrong. Picking a fight with someone or beating up people if they start a fight were seen as very wrong by around half of students. This suggests that picking fights or beating people up in fights, which are types of violent behavior, are less likely to be judged as very wrong by students themselves than is drug use – whether using alcohol, smoking cigarettes or using illegal drugs.

Students' Perceptions of How Wrong Parents Would Think Certain Behaviors:

Similar questions to those above were asked of students concerning parental views of how wrong certain practices are; the results follow:

Percentage of Students Reporting the Degree to which Their Parents Would Think it Wrong for Them to:	% Very Wrong	% Somewhat Wrong	% Not Very Wrong	% Not Wrong at All
a. drink beer, wine, or hard liquor (for example, vodka, whiskey, or gin) regularly (at least once or twice a month)	**86.3**	7.1	2.8	3.8
b. smoke cigarettes	**89.2**	5.6	1.8	3.5
c. smoke marijuana/pot	**92.8**	2.8	1.1	3.4
d. steal anything worth more than $5.00	**89.9**	5.4	1.5	3.2
e. draw graffiti, write things, or draw pictures on buildings or other property (without the owner's permission)	**89.4**	5.8	1.6	3.1
f. pick a fight with someone	**76.0**	16.1	3.8	4.1

Smoking marijuana ranks first in the percentage of students who think their parents would assess the practice as very wrong, at about 93%, followed by stealing anything worth more than $5 (90%), drawing graffiti and related activities, and smoking cigarettes (both at 89%). Slightly less wrong in student-assessed parental judgment is drinking alcohol regularly, which drew responses of "very wrong" from about 86% of students. Consistent with earlier results, picking a fight with someone was seen as least likely to be seen as wrong for students to do by their parents, with about 76% of students assessing that behavior as very wrong from a parental viewpoint.

Students' Perceptions of How Wrong Adults in Their Neighborhood Think Certain Behaviors Are:

In parallel with the questions asked of the students themselves and their parents reported above, students were asked to assess how wrong most adults in their neighborhood, or the area around where they live, would think it is for kids their age to use alcohol and other drugs and engage in risky or illegal behaviors. The results are striking in comparison with those for the students and their parents.

Percentage of Students Reporting How Wrong Adults in their Neighborhood Think it is for Middle School Age Kids:	% Very Wrong	% Somewhat Wrong	% Not Very Wrong	% Not Wrong At All
a. to use marijuana	84.6	7.3	**3.1**	**4.9**
b. to drink alcohol	76.9	12.8	**4.8**	**5.5**
c. to smoke cigarettes	76.6	11.8	**5.3**	**6.2**

These students perceive that adults in their neighborhood, like their parents, think that use of marijuana is very wrong, followed by drinking alcohol and smoking cigarettes, with 85%, 76.9% and 76.6% of students reporting these behaviors as very wrong for kids their age to indulge in, according to adults in their neighborhood. On the other hand, 5% to 6% of students think adults in their neighborhood see nothing wrong in kids their age smoking cigarettes, drinking alcohol or using marijuana.

STUDENTS' LIFE PROBLEMS AND HIGH RISK PRACTICES:

Asked whether they had ever participated in several problematic behaviors, such as gang membership, suspension from school or violence-related behavior, the following results were observed for all middle school students surveyed in Shelby. Seven percent (7.4%) reported that they had belonged to a gang, while 10.7% reported having been arrested at least once in their lifetimes. Suspension from school was reported by more than 2 in 5 (42.9%) students. Certain practices related to violence or risk of violence were reported as follows: 6.0% of students had carried a handgun other than for hunting or sport, while 18.2% had attacked someone with the idea of seriously hurting them.

The results for students' exposure to and participation in risky and violent behaviors in the past 12 months, overall and in school, are reported below.

Percentage of Students who Reported in the Past 12 Months that They Had....	%Yes, Overall	% Yes, at School
a. gotten into a physical fight	40.3	16.5
b. taken part in a gang fight where a group of your friends was against another group	9.3	3.1
c. been injured in a fight	9.7	3.3
d. been physically abused or assaulted	8.9	3.2
e. stolen "pills" or prescription drugs including from home	2.5	0.9
f. stolen illegal drugs	2.4	1.0

Percentage of Students who Reported in the Past 12 Months that They Had....	%Yes, Overall	% Yes, at School
g. bought "pills" or an illegal drug	3.9	1.4
h. been offered or given "pills" or an illegal drug	13.1	3.5

These results suggest that getting into physical fights is very frequent behavior in these middle school students, with more than 2 in 5 reporting fighting in the past 12 months and with about 41% of those fights occurring at school. Being offered or given pills or illicit drugs is next most frequent among these students, at close to 13.1% reporting this experience, with about 27% of such contacts occurring at school. Less frequently reported were being injured in a fight and participation in gang fights at about 1 in 10 students – with about 33-34% occurring at school. Being physically abused or assaulted was reported by about 9% of students, with close to 36% occurring at school. Buying pills or an illegal drug, stealing pills or prescription drugs including from home, and stealing illegal drugs were reported by nearly 3.9%, 2.5% and 2.4% of students, respectively. In about one-third of cases of buying pills or illegal drugs, this occurred at school, while in over one-third (36-39%) of cases where drugs were stolen – whether pills/prescription drugs or illegal drugs– the stealing was reported to have occurred at school.

Other High Risk Behaviors in the Past 12 Months:

Overall, 30.5% of students reported that they had been suspended from school one or more times in the last 12 months. Substantially lower percentages of students reported serious criminal behavior – thus, 2.5% reported that they had stolen or tried to steal a motor vehicle, such as a car or a motorcycle, while 8.1% reported that they had been arrested at least once in the last 12 months.

Violent behavior was reported by 12.6% of students who said that they had attacked someone (physically) with the idea of seriously hurting them in the last 12 months. Overall, 8% of students had carried a weapon (such as a handgun, knife or club) other than for hunting or sport, and 2% had taken a weapon such as a gun to school at least once in the period in question.

In terms of alcohol and other drug use, 6.1% of these Tennessee middle school students had been drunk or high at school, and 0.6% reported this had occurred 20 times or more in the last 12 months. Less than 3 percent (2.7%) of these youth reported that they had sold "pills" or illegal drugs in the past 12 months, and 1.8% of students overall reported that they had sold "pills" or illegal drugs at school.

Attitudes to Risky and Illegal Practices:

Tapping dimensions of impulsivity and rebelliousness, as well as other negative attitudes, these students' responses indicate that impulsivity is very characteristic of these young

people. Nearly half report that they often do things without thinking of consequences. Overall, 21.5% think it is not important to think before they act, and 22.2% have to have everything right away. Measures of rebelliousness and testing limits - liking to see how much they can get away with, reported by about 25% of students, ignoring rules that get in the way (about 25%), and doing the opposite of what people tell them just to provoke a reaction (20.2%) - are also relatively commonly reported by these students. The two depression-related questions above are discussed in an earlier section. Thinking it is OK to cheat at school was reported by 16.7% of students.

Percentage of Students Whose Attitudes Put Them at High Risk and Therefore Who	**% Yes**	**% No**
a. think it is okay to cheat at school	**16.7**	83.3
b. like to see how much you can get away with	**25**	75
c. sometimes think that life is not worth it	**28.5**	71.5
d. think you are no good at all	**17.3**	82.7
e. ignore rules that get in your way	**24.9**	75.1
f. often do things without thinking what will happen	**47.9**	52.1
g. have to have everything right away	**22.2**	77.8
h. think it is important to think before you act	78.5	**21.5**
i. do the opposite of what people tell you, just to get them mad	**20.2**	79.8

Other Risk Taking:

Students who say that they often or almost always have done what feels good no matter what or have done something dangerous because someone dared them to do it represent 15.3% and 3.4% of students, respectively. Those students who conversely report that they never or rarely have done what feels good no matter what or done something dangerous on a dare comprise 41.6% and 79.3% of students, overall.

FAMILIAL AND PEER ALCOHOL OR DRUG PROBLEMS:

Familial Alcohol or Drug Abuse:

Fully 30.8% percent of students reported that someone in their family has had a severe alcohol or drug problem.

Parental AOD Use: Answering the question, “Do you think one or both of your parents (stepparents or guardians) is drinking too much or has a problem with alcohol?”, 11.5%

of students said “Yes”. Close to 7% (6.9%) of students said that they think one or both of their parents is using or abusing drugs other than alcohol. A total of 14.5% of students think that one or both of their parents is using or abusing drugs or alcohol or has a problem with it.

Siblings’ AOD Use: Asked about alcohol and other drug use and high risk practices in their siblings, close to 9% of students had no brothers or sisters. However, for continuity and consistency of denominators, the following percentages are reported for all students.

Percentage of Students Reporting that One or More of Their Brothers or Sisters	**% of All Students**
a. drinks beer, wine, or hard liquor (for example, vodka, whiskey or gin)	17.5
b. smokes marijuana	11.8
c. smokes cigarettes	16.9
d. has taken a handgun to school	2.5
e. has been suspended or expelled from school	26.4

Suspension from school was reported by over 1 in 4 students. Alcohol use and cigarette smoking were most frequently reported for sibling drug use by these students at about 18%. Marijuana use was reported for nearly 12% of students’ siblings. Handguns at school was least common at less than 3%.

Close Friends’ Alcohol or Drug Problems: About 6.6% of students reported that they think that one or more of their close friends is drinking too much or has a problem with alcohol, and 8.5% said that they think that one or more of the close friends is using or abusing drugs other than alcohol.

STUDENT’S OWN ALCOHOL/DRUG USE:

While this was mainly a prevention survey, it is clear that many of these middle school students have already begun their alcohol and other drug use careers so that primary prevention, delaying onset of the initiation of first use of alcohol or other drugs, is for many an inappropriate strategy. Secondary prevention, reducing the use of alcohol or other drugs, mitigating the occurrence of negative and dangerous consequences, and breaking the dependence cycle early is more relevant. In some cases tertiary prevention or actual treatment is indicated, particularly in students who self-report addiction or dependence.

Cigarette Smoking:

About 1 in 4 (23.9%) students have ever smoked cigarettes. Fully 14.4% of students had smoked cigarettes in the last 12 months, and 10.3% of students had smoked in the past

30 days. Thus, about 60% of lifetime smokers had smoked in the last 12 months, and 42% of lifetime smokers had smoked in the past 30 days.

Students who had smoked cigarettes on 20 or more of the last 30 days comprised 2.2% of all students. Those who smoked 11 or more cigarettes in the past 30 days represented 1.2% of students. Also, 22% of current or 30-day smokers smoked cigarettes on 20+ of the past 30 days, and 11.7% of current smokers smoked 11 or more cigarettes in the past 30 days.

Smokeless Tobacco (Chewing Tobacco, Snuff, Plug, Dipping Tobacco):

Less than 1 in 10 (7.1%) students have ever used smokeless tobacco. Fully 4.2% of students had used smokeless tobacco in the last 12 months, and 3.1% of students had used it in the past 30 days. Thus, 57.6% of lifetime users had used smokeless tobacco in the last 12 months, while 42.4% of lifetime users had used smokeless tobacco in the past 30 days.

Students who had used smokeless tobacco on 20 or more of the last 30 days comprised 0.6% of all students. Around 19% of current or 30-day smokeless tobacco users used it on 20+ of the past 30 days.

Alcoholic Beverages (Beer, Wine, Wine Coolers or Liquor):

More than one-third (38%) of these middle school students, ranging in age from 11 to 15 years, had drunk alcoholic beverages more than a few sips at least once in their lifetimes. Fully 27.7% had drunk alcohol in the past 12 months, and 19.0% had done so in the past 30 days. Thus, given that students had ever used alcohol, 70.5% of them had drunk alcohol in the past 12 months, and 48.2% had drunk alcohol in the past 30 days.

Students who had used alcohol on 20 or more of the last 30 days comprised 0.8% of all students, and 4.2% of current drinkers. Students who reported daily alcohol consumption over the past 30 days represented 0.3% of all students. Daily drinkers made up 1.8% of current (30-day) drinkers among these students, and nearly half (42.3%) of students who reported drinking on 20 or more of the last 30 days drank alcohol daily.

Among these middle school students, 2.1% drank 5 or more drinks of alcohol per day on their drinking days. These “binge drinkers” are 11.3% of current drinkers (last 30 days). Less than 1% (0.7%) of students reported drinking 5 or more drinks on 20 or more of the past 30 days. Again, as a percentage of students drinking on 20 or more days in the last 30, those who drank 5 or more drinks represent 90.4%. These “binge” drinkers comprise 3.8% of students who drank any alcohol in the past 30 days. Finally 0.3% of students overall reported drinking 5 or more drinks of alcohol daily in the past 30 days. They comprise 90.9% of daily drinkers, and 1.6% of current or 30-day drinkers.

In answer to the question, “Have you **ever** gotten drunk or felt very high or intoxicated from drinking alcohol?”, 12.9% of all students said that they had gotten drunk. This number represents 33.4% of lifetime drinkers.

Marijuana (Pot, Grass, Hash, etc.) Use:

More than 15% (15.9%) of middle school students in Shelby had ever used marijuana, while 11.2% had used marijuana in the past 12 months, and 8.3% in the past 30 days. While 67.3% of lifetime marijuana users used marijuana in the past 12 months, nearly half (49.9%) of lifetime users had used marijuana in the past 30 days.

Students who had used marijuana on 20 or more of the last 30 days comprised 1.2% of all students, and students who reported daily marijuana use over the past 30 days represented 0.6% of all students. However, among current marijuana users (30-day users), 14.8% used on 20 or more of the past 30 days and 7% of current users reported daily marijuana use.

Percentage of Students Reporting Illegal Drug Use by Type of Drug and Lifetime, Recent or Current Use	**% Yes, Ever**	**% Yes, in the Last 12 Months**	**% Yes, in the Last 30 Days**
a. Cocaine or crack	3.0	2.3	1.4
b. Substances you “sniff”: paint thinners, glue, gasoline, white-out, butane, aerosol sprays, etc.	7.8	5.9	4.9
c. LSD (acid) or other hallucinogens such as peyote, jimson weed, mushrooms, PCP (angel dust), etc.	5.3	4.1	3.2
d. Other illegal drugs such as ecstasy, ice (crystal meth), heroin (smack, horse, skag), etc.	3.4	2.9	2.4

It is very clear that inhalants are one drug of choice for these youth, since of the close to 8% of students who report lifetime use of inhalants to get high, 75.9% had used inhalants in the last 12 months, and 61.8% had used them in the last 30 days. Cocaine, on the other hand, was less likely to involve sustained use, since of the lifetime users of cocaine or crack among these middle school students, 76.1% had used cocaine in the last 12 months, and 46.3% in the last 30 days. For other illegal drugs and for hallucinogens such as LSD, the percentages of ever users who used in the last 12 months are 86.1% and 76.9%, respectively, while the proportions of ever users who used in the last 30 days are 61% for LSD and other hallucinogens, and 69.5% for other illegal drugs. About 0.7% to 0.8% of Shelby students reported use of one or more of these illegal drugs daily in the last 30 days.

OVERALL ATOD, AOD AND DRUG USE PREVALENCE:

ATOD: Overall, nearly half or 49.1% of middle schools students in Shelby reported using alcohol, tobacco or other drugs (ATOD) in their lifetimes, while 37.8% reported 12-month use, and 29%, 30-day use of one or more substances (excluding caffeine and prescription drugs).

Given lifetime use, 73.1% had used ATOD in 12 months, and 54.6% in 30 days. Of 12 month users, 74.7% were 30-day users, suggesting that when youth begin their drug use careers, relatively few stop soon.

AOD: Excluding tobacco and looking only at the prevalence of use of alcohol and other drugs (save caffeine and prescription drugs), the lifetime prevalence of alcohol and other drug (AOD) use among these middle school students is 45%, the 12-month prevalence, 34.7%, and the 30-day prevalence, 26.0%. Here again, given lifetime use,73.7% had used AOD in 12 months, and 54.0% in 30 days. Of 12-month users, 73.4% were 30-day users.

Drugs: Considering drugs only, 22.0% of middle school students had ever used one or more illegal drugs (excluding alcohol, tobacco or prescription drugs as well as caffeine). This compares to a 12-month drug use prevalence rate of 16.6%, and a 30-day prevalence rate of 12.9%. About 72.7% of lifetime drug users used drugs in the past 12 months. Fifty-six percent of lifetime drug users used drugs in the last 30 days. Among 12-month drug users, 77.2% were current or 30-day users.

AVERAGE AGE AT FIRST USE OF AOD:

Average Age at First Use by Type of Drug:	**Average Age of First Use (in Years)**
a. smoked cigarettes	10.2
b. used smokeless tobacco	10.2
c. drank alcoholic beverages	10.4
d. began drinking alcoholic beverages regularly, that is at least once or twice a month	11.3
e. got drunk or felt very high or intoxicated from drinking alcohol	11.7
f. used marijuana/pot	11.6
g. used cocaine or crack	11.2
h. used substances you “sniff”	10.3

Average Age at First Use by Type of Drug:	Average Age of First Use (in Years)
i. used LSD (acid) or other hallucinogens	10.7
j. used other illegal drugs such as ecstasy, Ice (crystal meth), heroin, etc.	11.6

Cigarette smoking and using smokeless tobacco are the earliest onset substance use, beginning, on average, in these middle school students at age 10.2, followed by inhalant use at age 10.3 years and drinking alcohol at age 10.4 years. The onset of LSD use was reported at age 10.7, followed by cocaine use at 11.2 and regular alcohol consumption starting at age 11.3 years. The use of other illegal drugs such as ecstasy, crystal meth and heroin, and marijuana began at age 11.6, on average, with getting drunk or intoxicated reported at first onset at age 11.7 years, the latest of all AOD use practices identified.

Prescription Drug Abuse:

Prescription drug abuse is defined as having taken any prescription drugs or "pills" just to get high or for non-medical purposes, on one's own, without a doctor's prescription. More than 5% (5.4%) of students reported prescription drug abuse in their lifetimes; 3.6% reported it in the past 12 months, and 1.8% in the past 30 days. Among lifetime prescription drug abusers, 64.1% had abused such drugs in the past 12 months, and 33.1% did so in the past 30 days.

SELF-REPORTED SUBSTANCE ABUSE/ADDICTION:

Answering "yes" to the question of lifetime or current addiction to or dependence on one or more drugs serves as a proxy measure of these youth's need for alcohol and other drug treatment.[1] The following table shows the extent of self-reported addiction among these students by type of drug and by lifetime or current prevalence.

Percentage of Students Ever or Now Addicted to Alcohol or Other Drugs by Type of Drug	% Ever Addicted	% Now Addicted
a. Tobacco/nicotine	3.8	2.6
b. Alcohol (beer, wine or liquor)	4.5	3.4
c. Marijuana/pot	3.6	2.8

[1]The question contained in its wording a brief definition of addiction: "Do you think you have **EVER** been hooked on or addicted to any of the following substances (for example, did you try to quit or use less and had trouble doing so)? "

Percentage of Students Ever or Now Addicted to Alcohol or Other Drugs by Type of Drug	% Ever Addicted	% Now Addicted
d. Cocaine or crack	0.7	0.6
e. Hallucinogens like LSD or PCP or ecstasy	0.9	0.6
f. Coffee/cola/caffeine	17.9	13.2
g. A prescription drug or "pill"	2.4	1.2
h. Other drugs or substances	2.0	1.3

Based on lifetime prevalence of self-reported addiction to a drug or substance, caffeine/cola/coffee is the most prevalent drug, addicting about 1 in 5 students, followed, at a much lower level, at about 5%, by alcohol, and less than 4%, by tobacco/nicotine and marijuana. Addiction to a prescription drug or "pill" was reported by 2.4% of students, and addiction to other drugs or substances by 2%. Less than 1% of students reported addiction either to hallucinogens like LSD or to cocaine or crack.

Current addiction as self-reported by these students again showed caffeine as the number one drug of addiction, by far, at 13%, followed by alcohol, at over 3.4%, and marijuana at close to 3%. Tobacco/nicotine addiction was reported by less than 3% of students, while other drugs or substances , prescription drugs or pills, hallucinogens and cocaine or crack were reported as current sources of addiction by decreasing percentages of youth, ranging from more than 1% (1.3%) down to 0.6%.

The percentage of lifetime addicted users who are currently addicted suggests some of the power of these drugs over these very young users. The highest percentage of ever addicted students are currently addicted to marijuana (75%), followed closely by cocaine or crack (74.5%). Slightly lower rates of ever to current addicted students are observed for alcohol (73.8%), and caffeine/cola/coffee (72.4%). Tobacco/nicotine, other drugs or substances, and LSD or other hallucinogens had ever-to-current addiction ratios of 67.3%, 64.8% and 59.3%, respectively. The drug types least likely to be still addicting youth who reported ever being addicted to them are prescription drugs or "pills," at 51.3% of students ever addicted to them now addicted to them.

COMMUNITY INFLUENCES ON STUDENTS' AOD RISK:

Questions about students' communities and the areas around where they lived were expected to shed some light on risk and protective factors for alcohol and other drug use among middle school students.

Attitudes to Neighborhood:

Close to one-fourth of students (24.3%) said they did not feel safe in their neighborhood, or the area around where they live, while the remainder or 75.7% did feel safe. Twenty-six percent of students said they did not like their neighborhood, with fully 73.9% feeling the opposite. Thirty-six percent of these youth would like to get out of their neighborhood, compared to the 64% who would not. About 33.5% of students report that their neighbors notice when they are doing a good job and let them know about it, while for 57.8% and 57.9% of students respectively, there are lots of adults in their neighborhood they could talk to about something important or there are people in their neighborhood who encourage them to do their best.

Neighborhood Description:

When asked how well each of the following characteristics describe their neighborhood, or the area around where they live, students were most likely to report fights and crime and/or drug selling as characterizing their neighborhoods very well or somewhat well, with less emphasis on empty or abandoned buildings or lots of graffiti.

Percentage of Students Describing Their Neighborhood in Terms of the Following:	% Very Well	% Somewhat Well	% Not Well	% Not at All
a. Crime and/or drug selling	**14.1**	14.9	13.5	**57.5**
b. Fights	**17.4**	19.1	15.1	**48.4**
c. Lots of empty or abandoned buildings	**8.9**	7.3	12.6	**71.2**
d. Lots of graffiti	**9.3**	8.0	11.8	**70.9**

Only about 48% of students reported that their neighborhoods were not at all characterized by fights, and around 58% not at all characterized by crime and/or drug selling. On the other hand, more than 71% of students reported no empty or abandoned buildings, and 71% reported no profuse graffiti at all in their neighborhoods.

Adults Using Alcohol and Drugs in the Neighborhood:

In the last 12 months,28.5% of these middle school students from Shelby reported that they personally knew one or more adults who had used marijuana/pot, cocaine/crack or other illegal drugs. About 23% reported knowing at least one adult who had sold or dealt drugs in the last 12 months. Around 27.1% of students had known adults who carried handguns or other weapons not for hunting or sport, and a lower percentage (24.6%) had known adults who had done other things that could get them in trouble with the police - stealing, selling stolen goods, mugging, or assaulting others. Finally, more than 2 out of 5 (43.5%) of youth had known at least one adult who had gotten drunk or high in the last 12 months. Thus, drunkenness was by far the most commonly reported practice observed by these students among the adults in their neighborhoods.

When asked how many adults they knew personally who had engaged in these practices in the past 12 months, 16.3% of students cited 5 or more adults who had gotten drunk or high, while 9.8% knew 5 or more adults who had used marijuana/pot, cocaine/crack or other illegal drugs. More than 7% knew five or more adults who had carried handguns or weapons (7.5%), sold or dealt drugs (7.1%), or done other things that could have gotten them in trouble with the police (7.5%).

Participation in Leisure Time Activities as Protective of AOD Use and Abuse:

The availability and participation in activities that are seen as protective of alcohol and other drug use and abuse in youth is reported on here.

Percentage of Students Participating in the Following Activities:	**% Yes**	**% No**	**% Not Available in Their Community**
a. Sports teams	**67.6**	25.2	7.2
b. Scouting	**27.8**	59.6	12.6
c. Boys and girls clubs	**32.7**	54.0	13.2
d. 4-H clubs	**18.5**	60.6	21.0
e. Service clubs (such as Junior Sertoma, Rainbow, etc.)	**17.7**	61.2	21.2
f. Church youth groups	**64.4**	30.7	4.8
g. Music/art/drama clubs	**45.2**	44.0	10.8
h. Other after school clubs	**47.9**	44.7	7.4

The leisure-time activity reported by most students was participation in sports teams at about 68%, followed by church youth groups at 64.4%. Moderately popular are music/art/drama clubs and other after school clubs, at about 45% and 48% respectively. Also moderately popular where available are boys and girls clubs (around 33%) and scouting (about 28%). Least popular were service clubs (at about 18%), followed by 4-H clubs (18.5%). Least available activities in these communities were service clubs, boys and girls clubs and 4-H clubs.

Parental Guidance and Support:

Finally, parental guidance and support were assessed by a series of questions, such as "Do your parents want you to call if you are going to be late getting home?" To this question, 79.6% of students responded positively, and 20.4%, negatively. The question, "Does your family have clear rules about alcohol and drug use?" brought responses of 72.2%, "yes", and 27.8%, "no". The extent to which families fight is measured by answers to whether people in students' family often insult or yell at each other, reported by 38.3% of students, compared to 61.7% who say "no". More than 30% (30.9%) of students reported that people in their family have serious arguments, while 69.1% do not report this.

Answers to two hypothetical questions are also revealing of the extent of parental guidance and concern as perceived by these youth. First, 53.7% of students said that if they drank some beer, wine, or hard liquor (for example, vodka, whiskey, or gin) without their parents' permission, they would be caught by their parents, while 67.5% said that if they carried a handgun without their parents' permission, they would be caught by their parents.

POSITIVE PARENTAL ATTITUDES AND PRACTICES:

The frequency with which parents include youth in family decisions and praise and reward them is thought to be associated with protection against alcohol and other drug abuse. For these youth, parental guidance and support appears relatively high.

Percentage of Students Reporting Frequency of Parents:	% Never/ Rarely	% Sometimes	% Often/Almost Always
a. giving them lots of chances to do fun things with them	14.0	40.0	**46.0**
b. asking them what they think before most family decisions affecting the students are made	24.3	42.0	**33.6**
c. noticing when they are doing a good job and letting them know about it	15.4	31.7	**52.8**
d. telling the students they are proud of them for something they have done	13.2	27.9	**59.0**

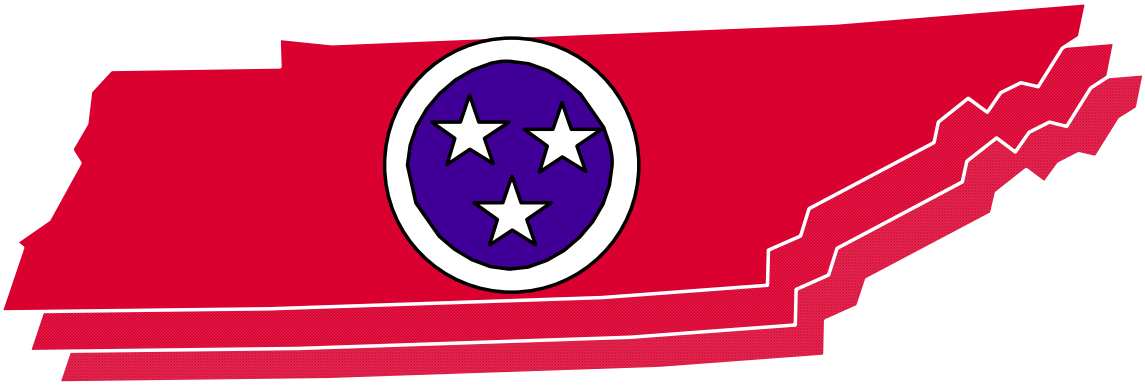
The most commonly reported supportive practice of parents toward these middle school students among the items measured is telling the students they are proud of their accomplishments, at 59% of students reporting parents as often or almost always doing so. This is followed by parents' noticing a good job and letting students know it (52.8%), and giving students lots of chances to do fun things with parents (46%). Least likely to occur often or almost always is parents' asking students what they think before family decisions affecting them are made, at 33.6% often or almost always doing so.

Finally, 86.5% of students say that their parents ask if they have gotten their homework done, while 13.5% do not. In 84.7% of cases, when students are not at home, one of their parents knows where they are and who they are with, while 15.3% do not. The great majority of students reported that their parents would know if they did not come home on time, at 83.8%, compared to 16.2% whose parents would not know. Close to 4 in 5 students (78.4%) could ask their parents for help if they had a personal problem, compared to 21.6% who could not do so. Students were more likely to report that they often share their thoughts and feelings with their mothers (65.1%), compared to their fathers (43.3%).

TENNESSEE MIDDLE SCHOOL HEALTH SURVEY, 2001-2002

A SUMMARY OF FINDINGS FROM THE TENNESSEE MIDDLE SCHOOL HEALTH SURVEY

KNOX COUNTY



TENNESSEE DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH

AND THE

COMMUNITY HEALTH RESEARCH GROUP

THE UNIVERSITY OF TENNESSEE, KNOXVILLE

June 2003

TENNESSEE MIDDLE SCHOOL SURVEY RESULTS:
KNOX COUNTY

SOCIODEMOGRAPHIC CHARACTERISTICS:

Gender: A total of 3,189 students in randomly sampled middle schools grades 6-8 in Knox County completed surveys. They were split evenly by gender, with 49.1% being female and 50.9% male.

Grade: The split was approximately even by grade, with 33.9% of the students sampled in 6th grade, 32.9% in 7th grade and 33.2% in 8th grade.

Age: In terms of age, 25.5% of students were 11 years of age or younger, while 32.5% were age 12; 33.1% were age13; 8.8% were 14 years of age or older.

Race/Ethnicity: While 79.8% of students were white, 12.7% were black and 7.4% were of other racial/ethnic groups.

Hispanic Origin: A total of 6.3% of students were of Hispanic origin.

OTHER BACKGROUND CHARACTERISTICS:

Two-Parent Family: While 71.1% of students in the study lived in two-parent families, 28.9% lived in families of other compositions.

Non-English Spoken At Home: While fully 97% of students reported that English was the language used most often in the home, 0.8% reported that language to be Spanish and another 2.2% reported another language as the language most often spoken at home.

Rural/Urban Residence: Eighty-three percent of middle school students lived in a city, town or suburb, i.e., an urban area, while the remaining 17% lived in rural areas. Of all Knox County students, 14.3% lived in the country, although not on a farm, and 2.8% lived on farms.

Proxy Measures of Poverty: In answer to the question, “Do you live in public housing?”, more than one-quarter (29.4%) of students did not know the answer, while 13.9% reported that they did live in public housing, and another 56.7% that they did not live in public housing. This measure was to be used as one indicator of poverty along with whether the family was on any form of public assistance. That question was phrased: “Does your family receive any form of public assistance, such as food stamps or other forms of welfare (such as Families First, WIC, TennCare/Medicaid, etc.)?” One-quarter (24.8%) of the students did not know. Still 14.9% reported that their families did receive public assistance, while 60.3% did not. Combining these two measures produces a prevalence estimate of middle school students in poverty of 26.6% in the county as a whole.

Mobility/Migration: Only 31% of students had not changed homes since kindergarten, while 35.4% had changed homes 1-2 times; 19.4% had changed homes 3-4 times; and 14.2% had changed homes 5 times or more since kindergarten (7.7% had done so 5-6 times, and 6.5%, 7 times or more).

The Importance of Religion or Spirituality in Students' Families: Only 14.3% of Knox County middle school students reported that religion or spirituality was either not very important (10.1%) or not at all important (4.2%) in their families. For more than half (52.3%) of these students, religion or spirituality was very important, while for 33.3%, it was somewhat important.

The Importance of Religion or Spirituality in Students' Own Lives: For 14.3% of Knox County middle school students, religion or spirituality was either not very important (9.6%) or not at all important (4.7%) in their own lives, while for 31.5%, it was somewhat important, and for more than half (54.1%), it was very important.

Attendance at Religious Services: Asked how often they attend religious services or activities, 13.7% of students said they never did, while less than once a month was the response chosen by another 12.3%. Attendance at religious services or activities occupied 18.6% of students 1-2 times a month, although not every week, while another 55.4% of students attended religious services once a week or more.

SCHOOL EXPERIENCE:

Grades Last Year: Getting mostly A's as grades in the last school year was reported by about two-fifths (41.4%) of students, while mostly B's were reported by 31.3%, and mostly C's by 18.6%. Only 8.7% of students reported either mostly D's (5.5%) or mostly F's (3.2%).

A series of questions were asked concerning how often youth had certain experiences in school - whether rarely or never, sometimes or often or almost always. Categories are collapsed here into "often/almost always", and the residual which is "rarely, never or sometimes" in relation to students reporting those problems or experiences.

Percentage of Students Reporting that in the Past School Year They:	% Never/Rarely/ Sometimes	% Often/Almost Always
a. feel physically safe or safe from violence at school	**45.2%**	54.8%
b. try to do your best work in school	**22.8%**	77.2%
c. find most of your courses interesting to you	**80.2%**	19.8%
d. find the school work too hard to understand	93.0%	**7.0%**

Percentage of Students Reporting that in the Past School Year They:	% Never/Rarely/ Sometimes	% Often/Almost Always
e. fool around in class	90.8%	**9.2%**
f. fail to complete or turn in your assignments	94.3%	**5.7%**
g. get sent to the office or have to stay after school because you misbehaved	97.3%	**2.7%**
h. skip a day of school or part of a day (without permission)	98.4%	**1.6%**
I. get better grades than most of the students in your class	**75.9%**	24.1%
j. feel bullied by other kids at school	92.1%	**7.9%**
k. feel bored in school	73.9%	**26.1%**
l. hate being in school	80.6%	**19.4%**
m. think the things you are learning in school are going to be important for your later life	**48.8%**	51.2%

These attitudes among others studied in this survey are seen as protective or detrimental to efforts to prevent or reduce alcohol and other drug (AOD) use, abuse, problems or dependence among these youth. Results suggest that negative attitudes to school such as feeling bored in school and hating being in school were reported often or almost always by the most students at about 26% and 19%, respectively, while fooling around in class often or almost always was reported by 9%. Finding school work too hard to understand, failing to complete or turn in assignments, getting punished for misbehaving, or skipping school were reported often or almost always by 7%, nearly 6%, nearly 3% and 1.6% of students, respectively.

Only a little more than half of students felt often or almost always safe at school, with about 8% reporting being often or almost always bullied at school. Other common negative orientations to school were never, rarely or sometimes finding courses interesting, reported by 80% of students, with about 76% of students reporting never, rarely, or sometimes getting better grades than most other students. Twenty-three percent of students reported never, rarely or sometimes trying to do their best work in school, and a little less than half reported not often thinking that what was learned in school was going to be important later in life.

Missing School: A fairly high percentage of youth (36.8%) missed school at least one time in the past 30 days because of illness or injury, while 4.3% missed school because of skipping or cutting classes, and 23.5% missed school for other reasons.

Opportunities for Participation:

The following results were obtained when students were asked, whether, in their middle school, they had certain opportunities for participation in activities. The purpose was to tap students' attitudes to the school experience in general.

Percentage of Students Reporting Certain Attitudes to School	% NO	% YES
a. In your middle school, do you have chances to be part of class discussions and activities?	**7.8**	92.2
b. do your teachers notice when you are doing a good job and let you know about it?	**23.6**	76.4
c. do you have lots of chances to get involved in school activities outside of class?	**25.1**	74.9
d. do students in your school have chances to talk to teachers one-on-one?	**18.5**	81.5
e. does your school let your parents know when you have done something well?	**51.6**	48.4

Here, only about 8% of students reported feeling as though they did not have chances to participate in class, and about 18.5% reported no chances to talk to teachers one-on-one. Around 1 in 4 students each reported teachers not noticing and informing them when they were doing good work, and that they do not have lots of chances to get involved in extra-classroom activities at school. Finally, more than half (52%) of students said that their schools did not let their parents know when they had performed well.

HEALTH AND WELL-BEING OF MIDDLE SCHOOL STUDENTS IN KNOX COUNTY:

Health Status: Overall, 10.2% of students reported that in general their health was either fair (9.2%) or poor (1.0%), while 20.7% reported good health, 31.7% very good health, and 37.4%, excellent health.

Disability Status: In answer to the question, "Do you now have any physical health problems or disabling conditions that keep you from doing normal activities?", 89.3% of students said "no", while 10.7% reported some disability.

Hyperactivity: In answer to the question, “Are you currently taking prescription drugs or “pills” for hyperactivity (ADD or ADHD) such as Ritalin?”, 9% of middle school students said “yes”, and 91% said “no”.

Receipt of any Treatment or Counseling Outside School: Lifetime prevalence of receipt of treatment for an emotional or mental health problem outside school was 11.8%. The prevalence of treatment for an alcohol problem was 1.4%; and for a drug problem, it was 1.6%. Receipt of treatment for either an alcohol or another drug problem was reported by 2.3% of middle school students in Knox County in 2001.

Attendance at Self-Help or 12-Step Support Group Meetings: Attendance at such self-help or 12-step meetings as Alateen, Al-Anon, Children of Alcoholics (COA), Alcoholics Anonymous (AA), Narcotics Anonymous (NA), Cocaine Anonymous (CA) was reported by 2.5% of students, while the remaining students or 97.5% had not done so.

Utilization of Emergency and Hospital Services:

Emergency Department Services: In the 12 months prior to the survey, 15% of students reported having been taken to an emergency room for an illness, and 20.7%, for an injury. An overall total of about one-third (30.3%) of students had been taken to an ED for either an illness or an injury in the past 12 months.

Hospital Admissions: In the last 12 months, 6% of middle school students had stayed at least one night in a hospital for an illness while 4.8% had stayed at least one night for an injury. Either illness- or injury-related hospital admissions were reported by nearly 1 in 10 (9.5%) students.

Depression and Suicide Attempts:

Indicators of potential depression and low self-esteem such as thinking that life is not worth it sometimes or that one is no good at all are relatively common among these Knox County middle school students. These two feelings were reported by 23.9% and 18.4% of students, respectively.

More specific questions about depression were asked, such as “How often do you feel very depressed, that is, very “blue” or unhappy?” While 42.9% of students reported never or rarely feeling very depressed, 49% reported that they sometimes felt this way, and 8.1% reported often or almost always feeling very depressed.

While 14.3% of middle school students reported ever feeling so desperate that they considered suicide, 5.8% reported ever attempting suicide. Those young suicide attempters represent 38.9% of students considering suicide.

Finally, 2.2% of students said they had ever gone to a hospital or gotten medical treatment because of a suicide attempt. This represents around 38.6% of those students attempting suicide.

Life Stressors: These students have already experienced a variety of life stresses such as relocations and related changes. Questions about their lifetime experience of selected stressors elicited interesting responses, reported below.

First, in answer to questions concerning whether these youth had experienced a move in the last 12 months, 22.8% of youth reported moving to a different home in the last 12 months, while 29.1% reported starting at a new school in the same period.

In answer to the question of lifetime stressors experienced, the percentages of students reporting each type of life change is presented below:

Percentage of Students Reporting Life Stressors by Type of Stressor in Their Lifetimes	**% Yes**	**% No**
a. had a death in the family	**82.6**	17.4
b. parents (guardians) divorced	**33.2**	66.8
c. family had financial problems	**28.5**	71.5
d. anyone in the family been arrested	**28.5**	71.5
e. new sister or brother born	**32.5**	67.5
f. had a serious illness or injury in your immediate family	**50.4**	49.6
g. had your own serious illness or injury	**33.2**	66.8
h. experienced another very stressful event	**47.0**	53.0

To the extent that these students between the ages of 11 and 15 for the most part have already experienced some major life crises, their coping skills and responses to stressors are of major interest and concern especially as they may protect against or increase the risk of alcohol and other drug use and associated problems.

Particularly prevalent was death in the family experienced by close to 83% of children, followed by serious illness or injury of a family member, and other stressful events, reported by around half. For around one-third parental divorce, own serious illness or injury, and the birth of a sibling were reported. Finally, family financial problems and family arrests were reported by 28.5% of Knox County students.

FRIENDS/PEER INFLUENCES ON YOUTH BEHAVIOR:

Best Friends' Practices:

When asked about their four best friends (the friends they feel closest to) and whether in the past 12 months any of those best friends had engaged in alcohol or other drug use, a range of from a low of 4% to a high of about 10% of students reported that they did not know.

Percentage of Students with Any Best Friends, who, in the Past 12 Months, Did the Following:	**% Yes**	**% No**	**% Don't Know**
a. smoked cigarettes	**14.7**	75.2	10.1
b. drunk alcoholic beverages -- beer, wine, or hard liquor (for example, vodka, whiskey, or gin)	**14.8**	75.4	9.8
c. used marijuana/pot	**8.9**	83.3	7.8
d. taken "pills" to get high or for non-medical reasons	**5.9**	85.2	8.9
e. used LSD, cocaine, amphetamines/speed, or another illegal drug	**3.4**	88.5	8.1
f. been suspended from school	**23.5**	70.0	6.5
g. carried a handgun or other weapon like a knife (other than for hunting or sport)	**7.0**	86.4	6.6
h. taken a handgun to school	**1.6**	93.8	4.6
I. sold "pills" or illegal drugs	**3.3**	90.1	6.6
j. stolen or tried to steal a motor vehicle such as a car or a motorcycle	**3.1**	91.3	5.6
k. been arrested	**5.7**	88.5	5.7
l. dropped out of school	**3.6**	92.2	4.2
m. been members of a gang	**5.0**	87.1	7.9

Most frequently reported behaviors among best friends were being suspended from school (23.5%), and smoking cigarettes or drinking alcohol at about 15% each. These were followed by using marijuana (9%), carrying a weapon (7%), taking pills to get high, and being arrested, each at about 6%. Being gang members was reported by 5% of students in relation to their best friends. On the other hand, taking a handgun to school was the

least common practice reported for best friends at only 1.6%. About 3% of youth reported their best friends trying to steal a motor vehicle (3.1%), selling "pills" or illegal drugs (3.3%), using illegal drugs (3.4%), and dropping out of school (3.6%).

Perceptions of Being Cool:

To elicit attitudes to the acceptability with peers of alcohol and other drug use, a series of questions was asked about how "cool" certain practices are perceived to be by middle school students, with the following results:

Percentage of Students Reporting the Chances They Would be Seen as Cool if They:	**% No or Very Little Chance**	**% Some Chance**	**% Pretty Good or Very Good Chance**
a. smoked cigarettes	86.8	9.8	**3.4**
b. began drinking alcoholic beverages regularly, that is, at least once or twice a month	87.2	9.8	**3.0**
c. smoked marijuana	88.2	7.2	**4.6**
d. carried a handgun	92.0	4.8	**3.2**

Clearly, behavior associated with the most "cool" perception is smoking marijuana, while the least "cool" is regular alcohol use, followed by carrying a handgun, and smoking cigarettes.

PERCEIVED RISK AND AVAILABILITY OF AOD:

The University of Michigan Monitoring the Future surveys of high school and middle school youth have found that the combination of perceived risk of harm and availability of substances together account for higher consumption of substances among the youth studied. The Knox County students' responses to these questions are provided below:

Perceived Risk of Substance Use:

How much students think people risk harming themselves (physically or in other ways) if they engage in each of the following practices involving AOD use gives a clear indication of students' assessment of relative risk of harm.

Percentage of Students Perceiving People's Risk of Harm from AOD Use:	% No Risk	% Slight Risk	% Moderate Risk	% Great Risk
a. smoke one or more packs of cigarettes per day	9.4	7.8	22.3	**60.6**
b. use smokeless tobacco	10.9	17.7	32.0	**39.5**
c. try marijuana once or twice	11.9	20.7	24.3	**43.1**
d. smoke marijuana regularly (at least once or twice a month)	10.3	9.5	18.5	**61.6**
e. drink any alcoholic beverages (beer, wine, liquor)	11.5	24.3	31.1	**33.1**
f. take one or two drinks of an alcoholic beverage nearly every day	12.0	15.5	23.9	**48.6**

Clearly, the most risk of physical or other harm is perceived by these middle school students from smoking marijuana regularly or smoking one or more packs of cigarettes a day (about 61% reporting great risk each), while the lowest perceived risk is assessed for drinking any alcohol (about 33% reporting great risk), followed by using smokeless tobacco and trying marijuana once or twice (at 40% and 43% great risk, respectively). Intermediate risks of harm are attributed to taking one or two drinks of alcoholic beverages nearly every day, at 49% of students assessing great risk of harm to this practice.

Perceived Ease of Access to AOD:

Like perceived harmfulness or risk of harm from drugs, including alcohol, perceived ease of access to or availability of drugs serves as an important predictor of risk of AOD use and problems related to it.

Percentage of Students Reporting Relative Ease of Access to Drugs by Type - Q: How easy do you think it would be for you to get each of the following types of drugs if you wanted some?	% Very or Somewhat Easy	% Very or Somewhat Hard
a. Cigarettes	**44.5**	55.5
b. Smokeless tobacco	**32.3**	67.7
c. Alcohol (beer, wine or hard liquor)	**40.7**	59.3
d. Marijuana/pot	**24.9**	75.1

Percentage of Students Reporting Relative Ease of Access to Drugs by Type - Q: How easy do you think it would be for you to get each of the following types of drugs if you wanted some?	% Very or Somewhat Easy	% Very or Somewhat Hard
e. Drugs like cocaine/crack, LSD (acid), heroin, etc.	**18.3**	81.7
f. "Pills" like uppers/speed, downers, painkillers, tranquilizers	**27.2**	72.8
g. Something to sniff like glue or gasoline	**57.5**	42.5

The easiest substances for middle school students to access appear to be inhalants and cigarettes, followed by alcohol and smokeless tobacco. "Pills" like uppers, downers, etc., and marijuana were seen as moderately easy to obtain, with illicit drugs like cocaine, hallucinogens, and heroin, for example, as the hardest to access in these students' opinions.

Ease of Access to a Gun:

In answer to the question, "If you wanted to get a gun, how easy would it be for you to get one?", 11.2% of middle school students said it would be very easy, and another 12.4% said somewhat easy, for a total of 23.6% reporting easy access to guns. The remaining 76.4% of students reported access to guns to be hard - either somewhat hard, at 16.1%, or very hard, at 60.4%.

Perceived Wrongness of Certain Personal Choices and Practices:

In answer to the question concerning how wrong one thinks it is for someone the student's age to use certain substances and engage in certain risky practices, the following were the results:

Percentage of Students Perceiving it Wrong to:	% Very Wrong	% Somewhat Wrong	% Not Very Wrong	% Not Wrong at All
a. drink beer, wine, or hard liquor (for example, vodka, whiskey, or gin) regularly (at least once or twice a month)	**80.5**	13.1	4.2	2.2
b. smoke cigarettes	**81.9**	12.3	3.5	2.3
c. smoke marijuana/pot	**89.5**	5.8	2.4	2.3
d. use LSD, cocaine, amphetamines/ speed or another illegal drug	**93.9**	3.4	1.0	1.7

Percentage of Students Perceiving it Wrong to:	% Very Wrong	% Somewhat Wrong	% Not Very Wrong	% Not Wrong at All
e. steal anything worth more than $5	**74.1**	20.4	3.5	1.9
f. take a handgun or other weapon to school	**94.8**	2.8	1.0	1.4
g. pick a fight with someone	**53.9**	32.9	10.2	3.1
h. stay away from school all day when your parents think you are at school (skip school)	**78.7**	15.8	3.7	1.8
i. attack someone with the idea of seriously hurting them	**90.1**	6.6	1.6	1.6
j. beat up people if they start a fight	**58.5**	22.1	8.3	11.1

The practices perceived as most wrong, with the highest percentage of students reporting them as very wrong, were taking a handgun or weapon to school (around 95% reported this as very wrong) or using illegal drugs like LSD, cocaine or speed (94% very wrong). Attacking someone with the idea of hurting them or smoking pot/marijuana (at about 90% each) were less likely to be judged as very wrong. Even less likely to be seen as very wrong were smoking cigarettes (82%), drinking alcohol regularly (80.5%), skipping school (79%) and stealing anything worth more than $5 (74%). Picking a fight with someone or beating up people if they start a fight were seen as very wrong by a little more than half (about 54 and 59%, respectively) of students. This suggests that picking fights or beating people up in fights, which are types of violent behavior, are less likely to be judged as very wrong by students themselves than is drug use - whether using alcohol, smoking cigarettes or using illegal drugs.

Students' Perceptions of How Wrong Parents Would Think Certain Behaviors:

Similar questions to those above were asked of students concerning parental views of how wrong certain practices are; the results follow:

Percentage of Students Reporting the Degree to which Their Parents Would Think it Wrong for Them to:	% Very Wrong	% Somewhat Wrong	% Not Very Wrong	% Not Wrong at All
a. drink beer, wine, or hard liquor (for example, vodka, whiskey, or gin) regularly (at least once or twice a month)	**90.3**	5.6	2.0	2.1
b. smoke cigarettes	**91.6**	4.9	1.6	1.9
c. smoke marijuana/pot	**95.8**	1.8	0.8	1.6
d. steal anything worth more than $5.00	**92.5**	4.6	1.1	1.7
e. draw graffiti, write things, or draw pictures on buildings or other property (without the owner's permission)	**92.8**	3.7	1.8	1.7
f. pick a fight with someone	**83.0**	11.6	3.0	2.4

Smoking marijuana ranks first in the percentage of students who think their parents would assess the practice as very wrong, at about 96%, followed by drawing graffiti and related activities, and stealing anything worth more than $5, (about 93%). Slightly less wrong in student-assessed parental judgment are smoking cigarettes and drinking alcohol regularly, which each drew responses of "very wrong" from about 92% and 90%, respectively. Consistent with earlier results, picking a fight with someone was seen as least likely to be seen as wrong for students to do by their parents, with about 83% of students assessing that behavior as very wrong from a parental viewpoint.

Students' Perceptions of How Wrong Adults in Their Neighborhood Think Certain Behaviors Are:

In parallel with the questions asked of the students themselves and their parents reported above, students were asked to assess how wrong most adults in their neighborhood, or the area around where they live, would think it is for kids their age to use alcohol and other drugs and engage in risky or illegal behaviors. The results are striking in comparison with those for the students and their parents.

Percentage of Students Reporting How Wrong Adults in their Neighborhood Think it is for Middle School Age Kids:	% Very Wrong	% Somewhat Wrong	% Not Very Wrong	% Not Wrong At All
a. to use marijuana	92.4	3.6	**1.2**	**2.8**
b. to drink alcohol	85.0	8.4	**3.3**	**3.3**
c. to smoke cigarettes	83.0	8.6	**4.3**	**4.1**

These students perceive that adults in their neighborhood, like their parents, think that use of marijuana is very wrong, followed by drinking alcohol and smoking cigarettes, with 92%, 85% and 83% of students reporting these behaviors as very wrong for kids their age to indulge in, according to adults in their neighborhood. On the other hand, about 4.1%, 3.3% and 2.8% of students, respectively, think adults in their neighborhood see nothing wrong in kids their age smoking cigarettes, drinking alcohol or using marijuana, in that order.

STUDENTS' LIFE PROBLEMS AND HIGH RISK PRACTICES:

Asked whether they had ever participated in several problematic behaviors, such as gang membership, suspension from school or violence-related behavior, the following results were observed for Knox County middle school students surveyed. About four percent reported that they had belonged to a gang, while 3.4% reported having been arrested at least once in their lifetimes. Suspension from school was reported by about 16% students. Certain practices related to violence or risk of violence were reported as follows: 2.8% of students had carried a handgun other than for hunting or sport, while 8.5% had attacked someone with the idea of seriously hurting them.

The results for students' exposure to and participation in risky and violent behaviors in the past 12 months, overall and in school, are reported below.

Percentage of Students who Reported in the Past 12 Months that They Had....	**%Yes, Overall**	**% Yes, at School**
a. gotten into a physical fight	27.5	10.0
b. taken part in a gang fight where a group of your friends was against another group	5.2	1.9
c. been injured in a fight	9.2	3.1
d. been physically abused or assaulted	7.7	3.6
e. stolen "pills" or prescription drugs including from home	2.8	0.9
f. stolen illegal drugs	2.2	0.6
g. bought "pills" or an illegal drug	2.9	1.1
h. been offered or given "pills" or an illegal drug	12.0	3.4

These results suggest that getting into physical fights is very frequent behavior in these middle school students, with more than 1 in 4 reporting fighting in the past 12 months and with about 36% of those fights occurring at school. Being offered or given pills or illicit drugs is next most frequent among these students, at 12% reporting this experience, with about 28.5% of such contacts occurring at school. Less frequently reported were being injured in a fight, at 9.2% of students - with 33.5% of those injuries occurring at school. Being physically abused or assaulted was reported by about 8% of students, with close to

46% occurring at school. Participation in gang fights was reported by more than 5% of youth. About 37% of these gang fights reportedly occurred at school. Buying pills or an illegal drug, stealing pills or prescription drugs including from home, and stealing illegal drugs were reported by nearly 2.9%, 2.8% and 2.2% of students, respectively. In about 38% of cases of buying pills or illegal drugs, this occurred at school, while in 32% and 26%, respectively of cases where drugs were stolen - whether pills/prescription drugs or illegal drugs - the stealing was reported to have occurred at school.

Other High Risk Behaviors in the Past 12 Months:

In Knox County 10.4% of students reported that they had been suspended from school one or more times in the last 12 months. Substantially lower percentages of students reported serious criminal behavior - thus, 1.5% reported that they had stolen or tried to steal a motor vehicle, such as a car or a motorcycle, while 2.6% reported that they had been arrested at least once in the last 12 months.

Violent behavior was reported by 6.4% of students who said that they had attacked someone (physically) with the idea of seriously hurting them in the last 12 months. Overall, 5% of students had carried a weapon (such as a handgun, knife or club) other than for hunting or sport, and 1.2% had taken a weapon such as a gun to school at least once in the period in question.

In terms of alcohol and other drug use, 4.2% of these Knox County middle school students had been drunk or high at school, and 0.8% reported this had occurred 20 times or more in the last 12 months. Two percent of these youth reported that they had sold “pills” or illegal drugs in the past 12 months, and 1.5% of students overall reported that they had sold “pills” or illegal drugs at school.

Attitudes to Risky and Illegal Practices:

Tapping dimensions of impulsivity and rebelliousness, as well as other negative attitudes, these students’ responses indicate that impulsivity is very characteristic of these young people. More than one-third report that they often do things without thinking of consequences. Overall, 24% think it is not important to think before they act, and 18% have to have everything right away. Measures of rebelliousness and testing limits - liking to see how much they can get away with, reported by about 18% of students, ignoring rules that get in the way (about 16%), and doing the opposite of what people tell them just to provoke a reaction (14%) - are also relatively commonly reported by these students. The two depression-related questions above are discussed in an earlier section. Thinking it is OK to cheat at school was reported by around 8% of students.

Percentage of Students Whose Attitudes Put Them at High Risk and Therefore Who	% Yes	% No
a. think it is okay to cheat at school	**8.3**	91.7
b. like to see how much you can get away with	**17.7**	82.3
c. sometimes think that life is not worth it	**23.9**	76.1
d. think you are no good at all	**18.4**	81.6
e. ignore rules that get in your way	**15.5**	84.5
f. often do things without thinking what will happen	**38.7**	61.3
g. have to have everything right away	**17.9**	82.1
h. think it is important to think before you act	75.6	**24.4**
i. do the opposite of what people tell you, just to get them mad	**14.2**	85.8

Other Risk Taking:

Students who say that they often or almost always have done what feels good no matter what or have done something dangerous because someone dared them to do it represent 13.3% and 4.4% of students, respectively. Those students who conversely report that they never or rarely have done what feels good no matter what or done something dangerous on a dare comprise 48.5% and 77.7% of students in Knox County.

FAMILIAL AND PEER ALCOHOL OR DRUG PROBLEMS:

Familial Alcohol or Drug Abuse:

Fully 19.2% percent of students reported that someone in their family has had a severe alcohol or drug problem.

Parental AOD Use: Answering the question, "Do you think one or both of your parents (stepparents or guardians) is drinking too much or has a problem with alcohol?", 8.1% of students said "Yes". Close to 5% (4.6%) of students said that they think one or both of their parents is using or abusing drugs other than alcohol. A total of 10.2% of students think that one or both of their parents is using or abusing drugs or has a problem with alcohol.

Siblings' AOD Use: Asked about alcohol and other drug use and high risk practices in their siblings, around 10% of Knox County students had no brothers or sisters. However, for continuity and consistency of denominators, the following percentages are reported for all students.

Percentage of Students Reporting that One or More of Their Brothers or Sisters	% of All Students
a. drinks beer, wine, or hard liquor (for example, vodka, whiskey or gin)	10.7
b. smokes marijuana	5.1
c. smokes cigarettes	13.8
d. has taken a handgun to school	1.0
e. has been suspended or expelled from school	11.8

Cigarette smoking is most frequently reported for sibling drug use by these students at about 14%, followed by suspension from school and alcohol use at around 12% and 11% respectively. Marijuana use was reported for about 5% of students' siblings. Handguns at school was least common at 1%.

Close Friends' Alcohol or Drug Problems: About 5.2% of students reported that they think that one or more of their close friends is drinking too much or has a problem with alcohol, and 6.4% said that they think that one or more of the close friends is using or abusing drugs other than alcohol.

STUDENT'S OWN ALCOHOL/DRUG USE:

While this was mainly a prevention survey, it is clear that many of these middle school students have already begun their alcohol and other drug use careers so that primary prevention, delaying onset of the initiation of first use of alcohol or other drugs, is for many an inappropriate strategy. Secondary prevention, reducing the use of alcohol or other drugs, mitigating the occurrence of negative and dangerous consequences, and breaking the dependence cycle early is more relevant. In some cases tertiary prevention or actual treatment is indicated, particularly in students who self-report addiction or dependence.

Cigarette Smoking:

Students who have ever smoked cigarettes comprise 16.6% of those sampled from Knox County. Fully 11.5% of students had smoked cigarettes in the last 12 months, and 7.7% of students had smoked in the past 30 days. Thus, about two-thirds of lifetime smokers had smoked in the last 12 months, and close to half (45%) of lifetime smokers had smoked in the past 30 days.

Students who had smoked cigarettes on 20 or more of the last 30 days comprised 1.7% of all students. Those who smoked 11 or more cigarettes in the past 30 days represented 1.1% of students. Also, 22.2% of current or 30-day smokers smoked cigarettes on 20+ of the past 30 days, and 14.3% of current smokers smoked 11 or more cigarettes in the past 30 days.

Smokeless Tobacco (Chewing Tobacco, Snuff, Plug, Dipping Tobacco):

Six percent of Knox County students have ever used smokeless tobacco. While 3.6% of students had used smokeless tobacco in the last 12 months, 2.7% of students had used it in the past 30 days. Thus, 57.7% of lifetime users had used smokeless tobacco in the last 12 months, while 44.3% of lifetime users had used smokeless tobacco in the past 30 days.

Students who had used smokeless tobacco on 20 or more of the last 30 days comprised 0.7% of all students. Around 25.0% of current or 30-day smokeless tobacco users used it on 20+ of the past 30 days.

Alcoholic Beverages (Beer, Wine, Wine Coolers or Liquor):

Around one-quarter (24.5%) of these middle school students, ranging in age from 11 to 15 years, had drunk alcoholic beverages more than a few sips at least once in their lifetimes. Fully 16.5% had drunk alcohol in the past 12 months, and 10.9% had done so in the past 30 days. Thus, given that students had ever used alcohol, 64.8% of them had drunk alcohol in the past 12 months, and 42.3% had drunk alcohol in the past 30 days.

Students who had used alcohol on 20 or more of the last 30 days comprised 0.6% of all students, and 5.3% of current drinkers. Students who reported daily alcohol consumption over the past 30 days represented 0.3% of all students. Daily drinkers made up 2.6% of current (30-day) drinkers among these students, and nearly half (48%) of students who reported drinking on 20 or more of the last 30 days drank alcohol daily.

Among these middle school students, 1.3% drank 5 or more drinks of alcohol per day on their drinking days. These “binge drinkers” are 12.8% of current drinkers (last 30 days). Less than 1% (0.6%) of students reported drinking 5 or more drinks on 20 or more of the past 30 days. Finally 0.3% of students overall reported drinking 5 or more drinks of alcohol daily in the past 30 days.

In answer to the question, “Have you **ever** gotten drunk or felt very high or intoxicated from drinking alcohol?”, 8% of all students said that they had gotten drunk. This number represents 32.4% of lifetime drinkers.

Marijuana (Pot, Grass, Hash, etc.) Use:

About 8.4% of middle school students in Knox County had ever used marijuana, while 5.9% had used marijuana in the past 12 months, and 4.5% in the past 30 days. While 67.8% of lifetime marijuana users used marijuana in the past 12 months, more than half (51.6%) of lifetime users had used marijuana in the past 30 days.

Students who had used marijuana on 20 or more of the last 30 days comprised 0.9% of all students, and students who reported daily marijuana use over the past 30 days

represented 0.7% of all students. However, among current marijuana users (30-day users), 19.6% used on 20 or more of the past 30 days and 16.7% of current users reported daily marijuana use.

Percentage of Students Reporting Illegal Drug Use by Type of Drug and Lifetime, Recent or Current Use	% Yes, Ever	% Yes, in the Last 12 Months	% Yes, in the Last 30 Days
a. Cocaine or crack	2.8	2.0	1.4
b. Substances you "sniff": paint thinners, glue, gasoline, white-out, butane, aerosol sprays, etc.	7.1	5.7	4.6
c. LSD (acid) or other hallucinogens such as peyote, jimson weed, mushrooms, PCP (angel dust), etc.	4.2	3.3	2.7
d. Other illegal drugs such as ecstasy, ice (crystal meth), heroin (smack, horse, skag), etc.	3.2	2.6	2.0

It is very clear that inhalants are one drug of choice for these youth, since of the 7% of students who report lifetime use of inhalants to get high, 79.7% had used inhalants in the last 12 months, and 64.2% had used them in the last 30 days. Cocaine, on the other hand, was less likely to involve sustained use, since of the lifetime users of cocaine or crack among these middle school students, 72.3% had used cocaine in the last 12 months, and 50.4% in the last 30 days. For other illegal drugs and for hallucinogens such as LSD, the percentages of ever users who used in the last 12 months are 80.6% and 77.7%, respectively, while the proportions of ever users who used in the last 30 days are 63.1% for LSD and other hallucinogens, and 61.9% for other illegal drugs. About 0.6-0.8% of Knox County students reported use of one or more of these illegal drugs daily in the last 30 days.

OVERALL ATOD, AOD AND DRUG USE PREVALENCE:

ATOD: Overall, more than one-third (34.1%) of middle schools students in Knox County reported using alcohol, tobacco or other drugs (ATOD) in their lifetimes, while 25.6% reported 12-month use, and 19.5%, 30-day use of one or more substances (excluding caffeine and prescription drugs).

Given lifetime use, 71% had used ATOD in 12 months, and 52.3% in 30 days. Of 12-month users, 73.7% were 30-day users, suggesting that when youth begin their drug use careers, relatively few stop soon.

AOD: Excluding tobacco and looking only at the prevalence of use of alcohol and other drugs (save caffeine and prescription drugs), the lifetime prevalence of alcohol and other drug (AOD) use among these middle school students is 29.4%, the 12-month prevalence,

21.5%, and the 30-day prevalence, 16.2%. Here again, given lifetime use, 70% had used AOD in 12 months, and 51.1% in 30 days. Of 12-month users, 73% were 30-day users.

Drugs: Considering drugs only, 13.5% of middle school students had ever used one or more illegal drugs (excluding alcohol, tobacco or prescription drugs as well as caffeine). This compares to a 12-month drug use prevalence rate of 10.5%, and a 30-day prevalence rate of 8.7%. About 75.3% of lifetime drug users used drugs in the past 12 months, while 61.5% of lifetime drug users used drugs in the last 30 days. Among 12-month drug users, 81.7% were current or 30-day users.

AVERAGE AGE AT FIRST USE OF AOD:

Average Age at First Use by Type of Drug:	**Average Age of First Use (in Years)**
a. smoked cigarettes	10.0
b. used smokeless tobacco	10.0
c. drank alcoholic beverages	10.4
d. began drinking alcoholic beverages regularly, that is at least once or twice a month	11.2
e. got drunk or felt very high or intoxicated from drinking alcohol	11.5
f. used marijuana/pot	11.1
g. used cocaine or crack	10.9
h. used substances you “sniff”	10.6
I. used LSD (acid) or other hallucinogens	10.7
j. used other illegal drugs such as ecstasy, Ice (crystal meth), heroin, etc.	10.9

Cigarette smoking and using smokeless tobacco are the earliest onset substance use, beginning, on average, in these middle school students at age 10, followed by drinking alcohol at age 10.4 years. Inhalant use was reported as initiated at the average age of 10.6 years among these students. The onset of LSD/hallucinogen use was reported at age 10.7, while cocaine use and the use of other illegal drugs, such as ecstasy, crystal meth and heroin was reported first at age 10.9 years. Marijuana use and regular alcohol consumption (at least once or twice a month), started at 11.1 and 11.2 years, respectively. Getting drunk or intoxicated was reported at first onset at age 11.5 years, the latest of all AOD use practices identified.

Prescription Drug Abuse:

Prescription drug abuse is defined as having taken any prescription drugs or "pills" just to get high or for non-medical purposes, on one's own, without a doctor's prescription. About 4.6% of students reported prescription drug abuse in their lifetimes; 3.3% reported it in the past 12 months, and 2% in the past 30 days. Among lifetime prescription drug abusers, 67.7% had abused such drugs in the past 12 months, and 41.6% did so in the past 30 days.

SELF-REPORTED SUBSTANCE ABUSE/ADDICTION:

Answering "yes" to the question of lifetime or current addiction to or dependence on one or more drugs serves as a proxy measure of these youth's need for alcohol and other drug treatment[1]. The following table shows the extent of self-reported addiction among these students by type of drug and by lifetime or current prevalence.

Percentage of Students Ever or Now Addicted to Alcohol or Other Drugs by Type of Drug	% Ever Addicted	% Now Addicted
a. Tobacco/nicotine	3.7	2.5
b. Alcohol (beer, wine or liquor)	2.7	2.0
c. Marijuana/pot	2.3	1.7
d. Cocaine or crack	0.6	0.3
e. Hallucinogens like LSD or PCP or ecstasy	1.1	0.8
f. Coffee/cola/caffeine	19.0	14.8
g. A prescription drug or "pill"	2.4	1.4
h. Other drugs or substances	1.6	1.1

Based on lifetime prevalence of self-reported addiction to a drug or substance, caffeine/cola/coffee is the most prevalent drug, addicting about 1 in 5 students, followed, at a much lower level, at about 4%, by tobacco/nicotine, and about 3% by alcohol. Addiction to a prescription drug or "pill" was reported by around 2% of students, as was addition to marijuana and addiction to other drugs or substances by 1.6%. About 1% of students reported addiction to hallucinogens like LSD and 0.6% to cocaine or crack.

[1]The question contained in its wording a brief definition of addiction: "Do you think you have **EVER** been hooked on or addicted to any of the following substances (for example, did you try to quit or use less and had trouble doing so)? "

Current addiction as self-reported by these students again showed caffeine as the number one drug of addiction, by far, at 15%, followed by tobacco/nicotine, at 2.5%, and alcohol at 2%. Marijuana addiction was reported by 1.7% of students, while prescription drugs or pills, other drugs or substances, hallucinogens and cocaine or crack were reported as current sources of addiction by decreasing percentages of youth, ranging from 1.4% down to 0.3%.

The percentage of lifetime addicted users who are currently addicted suggests some of the power of these drugs over these very young users. The highest percentage of ever addicted students are currently addicted to hallucinogens (76.5%), followed closely by caffeine, alcohol and marijuana at 76.3%, 73.8% and 73.1%, respectively. Slightly lower rates of ever to current addicted students are observed for tobacco/nicotine (66.7%). Other drugs or substances, and prescription drugs or "pills" had ever-to-current addiction ratios of 64.5%, and 59.5%, respectively. The drug type least likely to be still addicting youth who reported ever being addicted to them are cocaine/crack, at 43.3% of students ever addicted to them now addicted to them.

COMMUNITY INFLUENCES ON STUDENTS' AOD RISK:

Questions about students' communities and the areas around where they lived were expected to shed some light on risk and protective factors for alcohol and other drug use among middle school students.

Attitudes to Neighborhood:

Only 13.3% of students said they did not feel safe in their neighborhood, or the area around where they live, while the remainder or 86.7% did feel safe. Around 15.5% of students said they did not like their neighborhood, with 84.5% feeling the opposite. While 20.6% of these youth would like to get out of their neighborhood, 79.4% would not. About 41.6% of students report that their neighbors notice when they are doing a good job and let them know about it, while for 71.9% and 66.6% of students respectively, there are lots of adults in their neighborhood they could talk to about something important or there are people in their neighborhood who encourage them to do their best.

Neighborhood Description:

When asked how well each of the following characteristics describe their neighborhood, or the area around where they live, students were most likely to report fights and crime and/or drug selling as characterizing their neighborhoods very well or somewhat well, with less emphasis on empty or abandoned buildings or lots of graffiti.

Percentage of Students Describing Their Neighborhood in Terms of the Following:	% Very Well	% Somewhat Well	% Not Well	% Not at All
a. Crime and/or drug selling	**6.6**	6.4	9.0	**78.0**
b. Fights	**7.0**	9.4	12.0	**71.6**
c. Lots of empty or abandoned buildings	**4.6**	3.5	7.8	**84.1**
d. Lots of graffiti	**4.8**	2.6	7.1	**85.4**

About 71.6% of students reported that their neighborhoods were not at all characterized by fights, and around 78% not at all characterized by crime and/or drug selling. On the other hand, close to 84.1% of students reported no empty or abandoned buildings, and 85.4% reported no profuse graffiti at all in their neighborhoods.

Adults Using Alcohol and Drugs in the Neighborhood:

In the last 12 months, 15.8% of these middle school students from Knox County reported that they personally knew one or more adults who had used marijuana/pot, cocaine/crack or other illegal drugs. About 10.4% reported knowing at least one adult who had sold or dealt drugs in the last 12 months. Around 10.8% of students had known adults who carried handguns or other weapons not for hunting or sport, and a slightly higher percentage (11.9%) had known adults who had done other things that could get them in trouble with the police - stealing, selling stolen goods, mugging, or assaulting others. Finally, about 1 out of 4 (26.1%) of youth had known at least one adult who had gotten drunk or high in the last 12 months. Thus, drunkenness was by far the most commonly reported practice observed by these students among the adults in their neighborhoods.

When asked how many adults they knew personally who had engaged in these practices in the past 12 months, 6.3% of students cited 5 or more adults who had gotten drunk or high, while 3.9% knew 5 or more adults who had used marijuana/pot, cocaine/crack or other illegal drugs. About 2% knew five or more adults who had carried handguns or weapons (2%), sold or dealt drugs (2.2%), or done other things that could have gotten them in trouble with the police (2.3%).

Participation in Leisure Time Activities as Protective of AOD Use and Abuse:

The availability and participation in activities that are seen as protective of alcohol and other drug use and abuse in youth is reported on here.

Percentage of Students Participating in the Following Activities:	% Yes	% No	% Not Available in Their Community
a. Sports teams	**74.7**	21.9	3.4
b. Scouting	**33.4**	61.1	5.5
c. Boys and girls clubs	**31.1**	61.9	7.0
d. 4-H clubs	**25.8**	66.2	8.0
e. Service clubs (such as Junior Sertoma, Rainbow, etc.)	**22.1**	65.4	12.5
f. Church youth groups	**69.2**	28.0	2.7
g. Music/art/drama clubs	**47.3**	47.4	5.4
h. Other after school clubs	**54.0**	42.0	4.0

The leisure-time activity reported by most students was participation in sports teams at about 75%, followed by church youth groups at 69%. Moderately popular are other after school clubs and music/art/drama clubs, at about 54% and 47%, respectively. Also moderately popular where available were scouting and boys and girls clubs (33% and 31%, respectively). Least popular were 4-H clubs (at almost 26%), followed by service clubs (22.4%). Least available activities in these communities were service clubs.

Parental Guidance and Support:

Finally, parental guidance and support were assessed by a series of questions, such as "Do your parents want you to call if you are going to be late getting home?" To this question, 80.4% of students responded positively, and 19.6%, negatively. The question, "Does your family have clear rules about alcohol and drug use?" brought responses of 75.3%, "yes", and 24.7%, "no". The extent to which families fight is measured by answers to whether people in students' family often insult or yell at each other, reported by 24.7% of students, compared to 75.3% who say "no". About 20% of students reported that people in their family have serious arguments, while 80% do not report this.

Answers to two hypothetical questions are also revealing of the extent of parental guidance and concern as perceived by these youth. First, 66.5% of students said that if they drank some beer, wine, or hard liquor (for example, vodka, whiskey, or gin) without

their parents' permission, they would be caught by their parents, while 76.4% said that if they carried a handgun without their parents' permission, they would be caught by their parents.

POSITIVE PARENTAL ATTITUDES AND PRACTICES:

The frequency with which parents include youth in family decisions and praise and reward them is thought to be associated with protection against alcohol and other drug abuse. For these youth, parental guidance and support appears relatively high.

Percentage of Students Reporting Frequency of Parents:	**% Never/ Rarely**	**% Sometimes**	**% Often/Almost Always**
a. giving them lots of chances to do fun things with them	10.5	33.7	**55.8**
b. asking them what they think before most family decisions affecting the students are made	17.9	38.9	**43.2**
c. noticing when they are doing a good job and letting them know about it	10.9	24.7	**64.4**
d. telling the students they are proud of them for something they have done	9.1	20.3	**70.6**

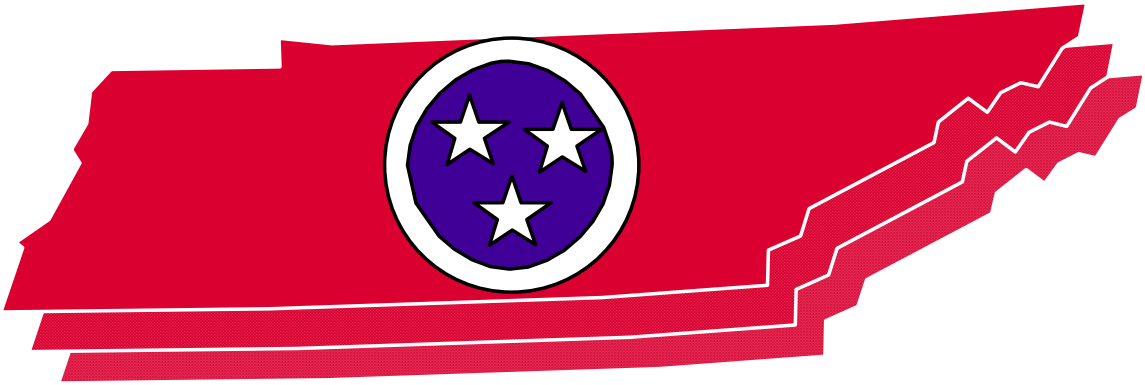
The most commonly reported supportive practice of parents toward these middle school students among the items measured is telling the students they are proud of their accomplishments, at 71% of students reporting parents as often or almost always doing so. This is followed by parents' noticing a good job and letting students know it (around 64%), and giving students lots of chances to do fun things with parents (about 56%). Least likely to occur often or almost always is parents' asking students what they think before family decisions affecting them are made, at 43% often or almost always doing so.

Finally, 93.2% of students say that their parents ask if they have gotten their homework done, while 6.8% do not. In 89.6% of cases, when students are not at home, one of their parents knows where they are and who they are with, while 10.4% do not. The great majority of students reported that their parents would know if they did not come home on time, at 89.1%, compared to 10.9% whose parents would not know. While 84.4% of students could ask their parents for help if they had a personal problem, 15.6% could not do so. Students were more likely to report that they often share their thoughts and feelings with their mothers (73.8%), compared to their fathers (56.2%).

TENNESSEE MIDDLE SCHOOL HEALTH SURVEY, 2001-2002

A SUMMARY OF FINDINGS FROM THE TENNESSEE MIDDLE SCHOOL HEALTH SURVEY

HAMILTON COUNTY



TENNESSEE DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH

AND THE

COMMUNITY HEALTH RESEARCH GROUP

THE UNIVERSITY OF TENNESSEE, KNOXVILLE

June 2003

TENNESSEE MIDDLE SCHOOL SURVEY RESULTS:
HAMILTON COUNTY

SOCIODEMOGRAPHIC CHARACTERISTICS:

Gender: A total of 3,373 students in randomly sampled middle schools grades 6-8 in Hamilton County completed surveys. They were split evenly by gender, with 50.2% being female and 49.8% male.

Grade: The split was approximately even by grade, 33.1% of the students sampled were in 6th grade, 34.3% in 7th grade and 32.6% in 8th grade.

Age: In terms of age, 20.9% of students were 11 years of age or younger, while 31.6% were age 12; 31.8% were age13; 12.5% were age 14; and 3.1% were 15 years of age or older.

Race/Ethnicity: While 62% of students were white, 33.5% were black and 4.6% were of other racial/ethnic groups.

Hispanic Origin: A total of 4.9% of students were of Hispanic origin.

OTHER BACKGROUND CHARACTERISTICS:

Two-Parent Family: While 60.9% of students in the study lived in two-parent families, 39.1% lived in families of other compositions.

Non-English Spoken At Home: While fully 96.5% of students reported that English was the language used most often in the home, 1.1% reported that language to be Spanish and another 2.4% reported another language as the language most often spoken at home.

Rural/Urban Residence: While 81.3% of Hamilton County middle school students lived in a city, town or suburb, i.e., an urban area, the remaining 15.4% lived in rural areas. Of all students, 18.7% lived in the country, although not on a farm, and 3.3% lived on farms.

Proxy Measures of Poverty: In answer to the question, “Do you live in public housing?”, more than one-quarter (26.9%) of students did not know the answer, while 15% reported that they did live in public housing, and another 58.1% that they did not live in public housing. This measure was to be used as one indicator of poverty along with whether the family was on any form of public assistance. That question was phrased: “Does your family receive any form of public assistance, such as food stamps or other forms of welfare (such as Families First, WIC, TennCare/Medicaid, etc.)?” Again, more than one-quarter (26.9%) of the students did not know. Still 24.6% reported that their families did receive public assistance, while 48.5% did not. Combining these two measures produces a revalence estimate of middle school students in poverty of 34.2% in the county as a whole.

Mobility/Migration: Only 26.4% of students had not changed homes since kindergarten, while 30.5% had changed homes 1-2 times; 23.9% had changed homes 3-4 times; and 19.2% had changed homes 5 times or more since kindergarten (10.1% had done so 5-6 times, and 9.1%, 7 times or more).

The Importance of Religion or Spirituality in Students' Families: Only 13.5% of Hamilton County middle school students reported that religion or spirituality was either not very important (9.3%) or not at all important (4.2%) in their families. For more than half (53.5%) of these students, religion or spirituality was very important, while for 33%, it was somewhat important.

The Importance of Religion or Spirituality in Students' Own Lives: For 13% of Hamilton County middle school students, religion or spirituality was either not very important (8.4%) or not at all important (4.6%) in their own lives, while for 30.3%, it was somewhat important, and for more than half (56.7%), it was very important.

Attendance at Religious Services: Asked how often they attend religious services or activities, 14.9% of students said they never did, while less than once a month was the response chosen by another 12.6%. Attendance at religious services or activities occupied 20.6% of students 1-2 times a month, although not every week, while another 51.9% of students attended religious services once a week or more.

SCHOOL EXPERIENCE:

Grades Last Year: Getting mostly A's as grades in the last school year was reported by 26.8% of students, while mostly B's were reported by 35.5%, and mostly C's by 24.8%. Only 12.9% of students reported either mostly D's (8.2%) or mostly F's (4.7%).

A series of questions were asked concerning how often youth had certain experiences in school - whether rarely or never, sometimes or often or almost always. Categories are collapsed here into "often/almost always", and the residual which is "rarely, never or sometimes" in relation to students reporting those problems or experiences.

Percentage of Students Reporting that in the Past School Year They:	% Never/Rarely/ Sometimes	% Often/Almost Always
a. feel physically safe or safe from violence at school	**55.4%**	44.6%
b. try to do your best work in school	**27.9%**	72.1%
c. find most of your courses interesting to you	**80.9%**	19.1%
d. find the school work too hard to understand	90.6%	**9.4%**
e. fool around in class	89.2%	**10.8%**

Percentage of Students Reporting that in the Past School Year They:	% Never/Rarely/ Sometimes	% Often/Almost Always
f. fail to complete or turn in your assignments	92.5%	**7.5%**
g. get sent to the office or have to stay after school because you misbehaved	95.6%	**4.4%**
h. skip a day of school or part of a day (without permission)	97.3%	**2.7%**
i. get better grades than most of the students in your class	**80.2%**	19.8%
j. feel bullied by other kids at school	91.6%	**8.4%**
k. feel bored in school	72.7%	**27.3%**
l. hate being in school	78.7%	**21.3%**
m. think the things you are learning in school are going to be important for your later life	**47.5%**	52.5%

These attitudes among others studied in this survey are seen as protective or detrimental to efforts to prevent or reduce alcohol and other drug (AOD) use, abuse, problems or dependence among these youth. Results suggest that negative attitudes to school such as feeling bored in school and hating being in school were reported often or almost always by the most students at about 27% and 21%, respectively, while fooling around in class often or almost always was reported by 11%. Finding school work too hard to understand, failing to complete or turn in assignments, getting punished for misbehaving, or skipping school were reported often or almost always by close to 9%, 7.5%, more than 4% and 3% of students, respectively.

Considerably less than half of students felt often or almost always safe at school (45%), with over 8% reporting being often or almost always bullied at school. Other common negative orientations to school were never, rarely or sometimes finding courses interesting, reported by 81% of students, yet with about 80% of students reporting never, rarely, or sometimes getting better grades than most other students. About twenty-eight percent of students reported never, rarely or sometimes trying to do their best work in school, and a little less than half (47.5%) reported not often thinking that what was learned in school was going to be important later in life.

Missing School: A fairly high percentage of youth (39.4%) missed school at least one time in the past 30 days because of illness or injury, while 7% missed school because of skipping or cutting classes, and 33.6% missed school for other reasons.

Opportunities for Participation:

The following results were obtained when students were asked, whether, in their middle school, they had certain opportunities for participation in activities. The purpose was to tap students' attitudes to the school experience in general.

Percentage of Students Reporting Certain Attitudes to School	% NO	% YES
a. In your middle school, do you have chances to be part of class discussions and activities?	**8.9**	91.1
b. do your teachers notice when you are doing a good job and let you know about it?	**24.1**	75.9
c. do you have lots of chances to get involved in school activities outside of class?	**28.7**	71.3
d. do students in your school have chances to talk to teachers one-on-one?	**19.2**	80.8
e. does your school let your parents know when you have done something well?	**49.8**	50.2

Here, only about 9% of students reported feeling as though they did not have chances to participate in class, and 19% reported no chances to talk to teachers one-on-one. Around 1 in 4 students reported teachers not noticing and informing them when they were doing good work, and 29%reported that they do not have lots of chances to get involved in extra-classroom activities at school. Finally, about half of students said that their schools did not let their parents know when they had performed well.

HEALTH AND WELL-BEING OF MIDDLE SCHOOL STUDENTS IN HAMILTON COUNTY:

Health Status: Overall, 14.2% of students reported that in general their health was either fair (12.6%) or poor (1.6%), while 23.2% reported good health, 28.7% very good health, and 33.9%, excellent health.

Disability Status: In answer to the question, "Do you now have any physical health problems or disabling conditions that keep you from doing normal activities?", 87% of students said "no", while 13% reported some disability.

Hyperactivity: In answer to the question, "Are you currently taking prescription drugs or "pills" for hyperactivity (ADD or ADHD) such as Ritalin?", 9.7% of middle school students said "yes", and 90.3% said "no".

Receipt of any Treatment or Counseling Outside School: Lifetime prevalence of receipt of treatment for an emotional or mental health problem outside school was 12.7%. The prevalence of treatment for an alcohol problem was 2.9%; and for a drug problem, it was 3.2%. Receipt of treatment for either an alcohol or another drug problem was reported by 4.2% of middle school students in Hamilton County in 2001.

Attendance at Self-Help or 12-Step Support Group Meetings: Attendance at such self-help or 12-step meetings as Alateen, Al-Anon, Children of Alcoholics (COA), Alcoholics Anonymous (AA), Narcotics Anonymous (NA), Cocaine Anonymous (CA) was reported by 4.5% of students, while the remaining students or 95.5% had not done so.

Utilization of Emergency and Hospital Services:

Emergency Department Services: In the 12 months prior to the survey, 16.3% of students reported having been taken to an emergency room for an illness, and 25%, for an injury. Overall, 35% of students had been taken to an ED for either an illness or an injury in the past 12 months.

Hospital Admissions: In the last 12 months, 6.5% of middle school students had stayed at least one night in a hospital for an illness while 7.3% had stayed at least one night for an injury. Either illness- or injury-related hospital admissions were reported by 21.1% of students.

Depression and Suicide Attempts:

Indicators of potential depression and low self-esteem such as thinking that life is not worth it sometimes or that one is no good at all are relatively common among these Hamilton County middle school students. These two feelings were reported by 27.8% and 21.8% of students, respectively.

More specific questions about depression were asked, such as “How often do you feel very depressed, that is, very “blue” or unhappy?” While 36.2% of students reported never or rarely feeling very depressed, 51.2% reported that they sometimes felt this way, and 12.6% reported often or almost always feeling very depressed.

While 18.2% of middle school students reported ever feeling so desperate that they considered suicide, 8.2% reported ever attempting suicide. Those young suicide attempters represent 43% of students considering suicide.

Finally, 3.6% of students said they had ever gone to a hospital or gotten medical treatment because of a suicide attempt. This represents around 43.4% of those students attempting suicide.

Life Stressors: These students have already experienced a variety of life stresses such as relocations and related changes. Questions about their lifetime experience of selected stressors elicited interesting responses, reported below.

First, in answer to questions concerning whether these youth had experienced a move in the last 12 months, 27.6% of youth reported moving to a different home in the last 12 months, while 35.4% reported starting at a new school in the same period[1].

In answer to the question of lifetime stressors experienced, the percentages of students reporting each type of life change is presented below:

Percentage of Students Reporting Life Stressors by Type of Stressor in Their Lifetimes	% Yes	% No
a. had a death in the family	**87.0**	13.0
b. parents (guardians) divorced	**36.9**	63.1
c. family had financial problems	**36.5**	63.5
d. anyone in the family been arrested	**46.9**	53.1
e. new sister or brother born	**32.3**	67.7
f. had a serious illness or injury in your immediate family	**56.5**	43.5
g. had your own serious illness or injury	**36.1**	63.9
h. experienced another very stressful event	**49.3**	50.7

To the extent that these students between the ages of 11 and 15 for the most part have already experienced some major life crises, their coping skills and responses to stressors are of major interest and concern especially as they may protect against or increase the risk of alcohol and other drug use and associated problems.

Particularly prevalent was death in the family experienced by close to 90% of children, followed by serious illness or injury of a family member, and other stressful events, reported by 57% and 49%, respectively. For around 47% of students, family arrests were reported, and by around 36%, parental divorce, family financial problems, own serious illness or injury. Least prevalent among stressors for these youth was the birth of a sibling at 32%.

[1]Metropolitanization and consolidation of schools in this county may explain inconsistent percentages here.

FRIENDS/PEER INFLUENCES ON YOUTH BEHAVIOR:

Best Friends' Practices:

When asked about their four best friends (the friends they feel closest to) and whether in the past 12 months any of those best friends had engaged in alcohol or other drug use, a range of from a low of 5% to a high of about 14% of students reported that they did not know.

Percentage of Students with Any Best Friends, who, in the Past 12 Months, Did the Following:	**% Yes**	**% No**	**% Don't Know**
a. smoked cigarettes	**24.1**	63.0	12.9
b. drunk alcoholic beverages -- beer, wine, or hard liquor (for example, vodka, whiskey, or gin)	**22.9**	63.3	13.9
c. used marijuana/pot	**15.1**	73.8	11.1
d. taken "pills" to get high or for non-medical reasons	**10.9**	77.9	11.2
e. used LSD, cocaine, amphetamines/speed, or another illegal drug	**6.8**	82.7	10.6
f. been suspended from school	**37.7**	55.7	6.6
g. carried a handgun or other weapon like a knife (other than for hunting or sport)	**12.5**	79.6	7.9
h. taken a handgun to school	**2.1**	92.1	5.8
i. sold "pills" or illegal drugs	**7.5**	84.4	8.1
j. stolen or tried to steal a motor vehicle such as a car or a motorcycle	**6.1**	86.1	7.8
k. been arrested	**13.5**	79.0	7.4
l. dropped out of school	**6.3**	88.3	5.4
m. been members of a gang	**11.8**	77.9	10.3

Most frequently reported behaviors among best friends were being suspended from school (38%), and smoking cigarettes or drinking alcohol at little less than one quarter of students each. These were followed by using marijuana (15%), being arrested (13.5%), carrying a weapon (12.5%), being gang members (at about 12%). Taking pills to get high was reported among best friends by about 11% of students. Selling pills or illegal drugs was

reported by 7.5% of students in relation to their best friends. On the other hand, taking a handgun to school was the least common practice reported for best friends at 2.1%, followed by dropping out of school, stealing or trying to steal a motor vehicle, and using illegal drugs, which were reported for their best friends by about 6-7% of these youth.

Perceptions of Being Cool:

To elicit attitudes to the acceptability with peers of alcohol and other drug use, a series of questions was asked about how "cool" certain practices are perceived to be by middle school students, with the following results:

Percentage of Students Reporting the Chances They Would be Seen as Cool if They:	**% No or Very Little Chance**	**% Some Chance**	**% Pretty Good or Very Good Chance**
a. smoked cigarettes	79.5	13.9	**6.6**
b. began drinking alcoholic beverages regularly, that is, at least once or twice a month	80.7	12.4	**6.9**
c. smoked marijuana	80.2	11.5	**8.4**
d. carried a handgun	87.3	7.3	**5.4**

Clearly, behavior associated with the most "cool" perception is smoking marijuana, while the least "cool" is carrying a handgun. Regular alcohol use and smoking cigarettes were perceived as about equally "cool" and intermediate to the other two behaviors.

PERCEIVED RISK AND AVAILABILITY OF AOD:

The University of Michigan Monitoring the Future surveys of high school and middle school youth have found that the combination of perceived risk of harm and availability of substances together account for higher consumption of substances among the youth studied. The Hamilton County students' responses to these questions are provided below:

Perceived Risk of Substance Use:

How much students think people risk harming themselves (physically or in other ways) if they engage in each of the following practices involving AOD use gives a clear indication of students' assessment of relative risk of harm.

Percentage of Students Perceiving People's Risk of Harm from AOD Use:	% No Risk	% Slight Risk	% Moderate Risk	% Great Risk
a. smoke one or more packs of cigarettes per day	14.3	11.1	22.0	**52.6**
b. use smokeless tobacco	16.8	21.9	30.7	**30.7**
c. try marijuana once or twice	20.5	22.7	20.4	**36.3**
d. smoke marijuana regularly (at least once or twice a month)	17.2	13.8	20.4	**48.7**
e. drink any alcoholic beverages (beer, wine, liquor)	17.1	24.6	27.4	**30.9**
f. take one or two drinks of an alcoholic beverage nearly every day	18.0	17.9	23.9	**40.2**

Clearly, the most risk of physical or other harm is perceived by these middle school students from smoking one or more packs of cigarettes a day or smoking marijuana regularly (about 53% and 49% reporting great risk, respectively), while the lowest perceived risk is assessed for drinking any alcohol or using smokeless tobacco (about 31% great risk each), followed by trying marijuana once or twice (36% great risk). Intermediate risks of harm are attributed to taking one or two drinks of alcoholic beverages nearly every day, at 40% of students assessing great risk of harm to this practice.

Perceived Ease of Access to AOD:

Like perceived harmfulness or risk of harm from drugs, including alcohol, perceived ease of access to or availability of drugs serves as an important predictor of risk of AOD use and problems related to it.

Percentage of Students Reporting Relative Ease of Access to Drugs by Type - Q: How easy do you think it would be for you to get each of the following types of drugs if you wanted some?	% Very or Somewhat Easy	% Very or Somewhat Hard
a. Cigarettes	**49.0**	51.0
b. Smokeless tobacco	**35.9**	64.1
c. Alcohol (beer, wine or hard liquor)	**43.2**	56.8
d. Marijuana/pot	**28.6**	71.4

Percentage of Students Reporting Relative Ease of Access to Drugs by Type - Q: How easy do you think it would be for you to get each of the following types of drugs if you wanted some?	% Very or Somewhat Easy	% Very or Somewhat Hard
e. Drugs like cocaine/crack, LSD (acid), heroin, etc.	**20.0**	80.0
f. "Pills" like uppers/speed, downers, painkillers, tranquilizers	**30.2**	69.8
g. Something to sniff like glue or gasoline	**54.5**	45.5

The easiest substances for middle school students to access appear to be inhalants and cigarettes, followed by alcohol and smokeless tobacco. Pills like uppers, downers, etc. and marijuana were seen as moderately easy to obtain, with illicit drugs like cocaine, hallucinogens, and heroin, for example, as the hardest to access in these students' opinions.

Ease of Access to a Gun:

In answer to the question, "If you wanted to get a gun, how easy would it be for you to get one?", 17.6% of middle school students said it would be very easy, and another 11.6% said somewhat easy, for a total of 29.2% reporting easy access to guns. The remaining 70.8% of students reported access to guns to be hard - either somewhat hard, at 16.6%, or very hard, at 54.2%.

Perceived Wrongness of Certain Personal Choices and Practices:

In answer to the question concerning how wrong one thinks it is for someone the student's age to use certain substances and engage in certain risky practices, the following were the results:

Percentage of Students Perceiving it Wrong to:	% Very Wrong	% Somewhat Wrong	% Not Very Wrong	% Not Wrong at All
a. drink beer, wine, or hard liquor (for example, vodka, whiskey, or gin) regularly (at least once or twice a month)	**73.9**	16.0	6.0	4.2
b. smoke cigarettes	**74.8**	14.6	5.9	4.6
c. smoke marijuana/pot	**83.6**	7.6	3.7	5.1
d. use LSD, cocaine, amphetamines/ speed or another illegal drug	**90.7**	4.5	2.1	2.6

Percentage of Students Perceiving it Wrong to:	% Very Wrong	% Somewhat Wrong	% Not Very Wrong	% Not Wrong at All
e. steal anything worth more than $5	**69.8**	21.5	5.4	3.4
f. take a handgun or other weapon to school	**92.3**	4.3	1.1	2.3
g. pick a fight with someone	**51.0**	32.0	10.8	6.3
h. stay away from school all day when your parents think you are at school (skip school)	**72.4**	19.2	5.0	3.4
i. attack someone with the idea of seriously hurting them	**84.5**	9.5	3.2	2.8
j. beat up people if they start a fight	**51.9**	21.8	10.5	15.8

The practices perceived as most wrong, with the highest percentage of students reporting them as very wrong, were taking a handgun or weapon to school (92% reported this as very wrong) or using illegal drugs like LSD, cocaine or speed (91% very wrong). Attacking someone with the idea of hurting them or smoking pot/marijuana (at about 84% each) were less likely to be judged as very wrong. Even less likely to be seen as very wrong were smoking cigarettes, drinking alcohol regularly, skipping school, or stealing anything worth more than $5, were reported as being very wrong by 75%, 74%, 72% and 70% of students, respectively. Picking a fight with someone or beating up people if they start a fight were seen as very wrong by a little more than half (about 51-52%) of students. This suggests that picking fights or beating people up in fights, which are types of violent behavior, are less likely to be judged as very wrong by students themselves than is drug use - whether using alcohol, smoking cigarettes or using illegal drugs.

Students' Perceptions of How Wrong Parents Would Think Certain Behaviors:

Similar questions to those above were asked of students concerning parental views of how wrong certain practices are; the results follow:

Percentage of Students Reporting the Degree to which Their Parents Would Think it Wrong for Them to:	% Very Wrong	% Somewhat Wrong	% Not Very Wrong	% Not Wrong at All
a. drink beer, wine, or hard liquor (for example, vodka, whiskey, or gin) regularly (at least once or twice a month)	**87.0**	6.3	3.0	3.7
b. smoke cigarettes	**87.9**	5.9	2.4	3.8
c. smoke marijuana/pot	**92.7**	2.5	1.3	3.5
d. steal anything worth more than $5.00	**89.8**	5.7	1.5	3.0
e. draw graffiti, write things, or draw pictures on buildings or other property (without the owner's permission)	**89.5**	5.6	1.9	2.9
f. pick a fight with someone	**77.5**	13.9	4.4	4.2

Smoking marijuana ranks first in the percentage of students who think their parents would assess the practice as very wrong, at about 93%, followed by stealing anything worth more than $5 (90%), and drawing graffiti and related activities (90%). Slightly less wrong in student-assessed parental judgment are smoking cigarettes and drinking alcohol regularly, which each drew responses of "very wrong" from about 87-88% of students. Consistent with earlier results, picking a fight with someone was seen as least likely to be seen as wrong for students to do by their parents, with about 78% of students assessing that behavior as very wrong from a parental viewpoint.

Students' Perceptions of How Wrong Adults in Their Neighborhood Think Certain Behaviors Are:

In parallel with the questions asked of the students themselves and their parents reported above, students were asked to assess how wrong most adults in their neighborhood, or the area around where they live, would think it is for kids their age to use alcohol and other drugs and engage in risky or illegal behaviors. The results are striking in comparison with those for the students and their parents.

Percentage of Students Reporting How Wrong Adults in their Neighborhood Think it is for Middle School Age Kids:	% Very Wrong	% Somewhat Wrong	% Not Very Wrong	% Not Wrong At All
a. to use marijuana	87.8	5.3	**3.0**	**3.8**
b. to drink alcohol	80.3	10.5	**4.5**	**4.7**
c. to smoke cigarettes	76.7	11.5	**6.0**	**5.8**

These students perceive that adults in their neighborhood, like their parents, think that use of marijuana is very wrong, followed by drinking alcohol and smoking cigarettes, with 88%, 80% and 77% of students reporting these behaviors as very wrong for kids their age to indulge in, according to adults in their neighborhood. On the other hand, about 6%, 5% and 4% of students, respectively, think adults in their neighborhood see nothing wrong in kids their age smoking cigarettes, drinking alcohol or using marijuana, in that order.

STUDENTS' LIFE PROBLEMS AND HIGH RISK PRACTICES:

Asked whether they had ever participated in several problematic behaviors, such as gang membership, suspension from school or violence-related behavior, the following results were observed for all middle school students surveyed in Hamilton County. Nearly 10% (9.7%) reported that they had belonged to a gang, while 7.5% reported having been arrested at least once in their lifetimes. Suspension from school was reported by nearly 1 in 3 (31.2%) students. Certain practices related to violence or risk of violence were reported as follows: 5.8% of students had carried a handgun other than for hunting or sport, while 13.7% had attacked someone with the idea of seriously hurting them.

The results for students' exposure to and participation in risky and violent behaviors in the past 12 months, overall and in school, are reported below.

Percentage of Students who Reported in the Past 12 Months that They Had....	%Yes, Overall	% Yes, at School
a. gotten into a physical fight	34.8	12.6
b. taken part in a gang fight where a group of your friends was against another group	9.9	3.4
c. been injured in a fight	11.2	3.5
d. been physically abused or assaulted	10.7	3.9
e. stolen "pills" or prescription drugs including from home	4.7	1.3
f. stolen illegal drugs	4.2	1.3

Percentage of Students who Reported in the Past 12 Months that They Had....	%Yes, Overall	% Yes, at School
g. bought “pills” or an illegal drug	5.7	2.4
h. been offered or given “pills” or an illegal drug	16.7	6.1

These results suggest that getting into physical fights is very frequent behavior in these middle school students, with about 35% reporting fighting in the past 12 months and with about 36% of those fights occurring at school. Being offered or given pills or illicit drugs is next most frequent among these students, at close to 17% reporting this experience, with about 36.5% of such contacts occurring at school. Less frequently reported were being injured in a fight, mor than 11% of students - with about 31% of those injuries occurring at school. Being physically abused or assaulted was also reported by about 11% of students, with 36% occurring at school. Participation in gang fights was reported by nearly 10% of youth. About 34% of these gang fights reportedly occurred at school. Buying pills or an illegal drug, stealing pills or prescription drugs including from home, and stealing illegal drugs were reported by nearly 6%, 4.7% and 4.2% of students, respectively. In over one-third of cases of buying pills or illegal drugs, this occurred at school, while in 29-30% of cases where drugs were stolen - whether pills/prescription drugs or illegal drugs - the stealing was reported to have occurred at school.

Other High Risk Behaviors in the Past 12 Months:

In Hamilton County, 19.5% of students reported that they had been suspended from school one or more times in the last 12 months. Substantially lower percentages of students reported serious criminal behavior - thus, 3.5% reported that they had stolen or tried to steal a motor vehicle, such as a car or a motorcycle, while 6.2% reported that they had been arrested at least once in the last 12 months.

Violent behavior was reported by 10.2% of students who said that they had attacked someone (physically) with the idea of seriously hurting them in the last 12 months. Overall, 8.9% of students had carried a weapon (such as a handgun, knife or club) other than for hunting or sport, and 1.8% had taken a weapon such as a gun to school at least once in the period in question.

In terms of alcohol and other drug use, 7.4% of these Hamilton County middle school students had been drunk or high at school, and 1.5% reported this had occurred 20 times or more in the last 12 months. More than four percent (4.4%) of these youth reported that they had sold “pills” or illegal drugs in the past 12 months, and 2.9% of students overall reported that they had sold “pills” or illegal drugs at school.

Attitudes to Risky and Illegal Practices:

Tapping dimensions of impulsivity and rebelliousness, as well as other negative attitudes, these students' responses indicate that impulsivity is very characteristic of these young people. Nearly half (47%) report that they often do things without thinking of consequences. Overall, 26% think it is not important to think before they act, and 22% have to have everything right away. Measures of rebelliousness and testing limits - liking to see how much they can get away with, reported by 20.5% of students, ignoring rules that get in the way (20.9%), and doing the opposite of what people tell them just to provoke a reaction (19.1%) - are also relatively commonly reported by these students. The two depression-related questions above are discussed in an earlier section. Thinking it is OK to cheat at school was reported by around 12.6% of students.

Percentage of Students Whose Attitudes Put Them at High Risk and Therefore Who	**% Yes**	**% No**
a. think it is okay to cheat at school	**12.6**	87.4
b. like to see how much you can get away with	**20.5**	79.5
c. sometimes think that life is not worth it	**27.8**	72.2
d. think you are no good at all	**21.8**	78.2
e. ignore rules that get in your way	**20.9**	79.1
f. often do things without thinking what will happen	**46.9**	53.1
g. have to have everything right away	**21.6**	78.4
h. think it is important to think before you act	74.1	**25.9**
i. do the opposite of what people tell you, just to get them mad	**19.1**	80.9

Other Risk Taking:

Students who say that they often or almost always have done what feels good no matter what or have done something dangerous because someone dared them to do it represent 15.1% and 6.4% of students, respectively. Those students who conversely report that they never or rarely have done what feels good no matter what or done something dangerous on a dare comprise 45.1% and 72.7% of students, overall.

FAMILIAL AND PEER ALCOHOL OR DRUG PROBLEMS:

Familial Alcohol or Drug Abuse:

Fully 26.9% of students reported that someone in their family has had a severe alcohol or drug problem.

Parental AOD Use: Answering the question, "Do you think one or both of your parents (stepparents or guardians) is drinking too much or has a problem with alcohol?", 11.7% of students said "Yes". Close to 8% (7.6%) of students said that they think one or both of their parents is using or abusing drugs other than alcohol. A total of 14.6% of students think that one or both of their parents is using or abusing alcohol or has a problem with it.

Siblings' AOD Use: Asked about alcohol and other drug use and high risk practices in their siblings, 11% of students had no brothers or sisters. However, for continuity and consistency of denominators, the following percentages are reported for all students.

Percentage of Students Reporting that One or More of Their Brothers or Sisters	% of All Students
a. drinks beer, wine, or hard liquor (for example, vodka, whiskey or gin)	16.4
b. smokes marijuana	9.4
c. smokes cigarettes	19.4
d. has taken a handgun to school	2.0
e. has been suspended or expelled from school	21.0

Suspension from school is most frequently reported for sibling drug use by these students at about 21%, followed by cigarette smoking and alcohol use at around 19% and 16% respectively. Marijuana use was reported for 9.4% of students' siblings. Handguns at school was least common at 2%.

Close Friends' Alcohol or Drug Problems: About 7.2% of students reported that they think that one or more of their close friends is drinking too much or has a problem with alcohol, and 11.1% said that they think that one or more of the close friends is using or abusing drugs other than alcohol.

STUDENT'S OWN ALCOHOL/DRUG USE:

While this was mainly a prevention survey, it is clear that many of these middle school students have already begun their alcohol and other drug use careers so that primary prevention, delaying onset of the initiation of first use of alcohol or other drugs, is for many an inappropriate strategy. Secondary prevention, reducing the use of alcohol or other

drugs, mitigating the occurrence of negative and dangerous consequences, and breaking the dependence cycle early is more relevant. In some cases tertiary prevention or actual treatment is indicated, particularly in students who self-report addiction or dependence.

Cigarette Smoking:

More than 1 in 4 (26.4%) students have ever smoked cigarettes. Fully 18.5% of students had smoked cigarettes in the last 12 months, and 13.3% of students had smoked in the past 30 days. Thus, 68.4% of lifetime smokers had smoked in the last 12 months, and close to half (49%) of lifetime smokers had smoked in the past 30 days.

Students who had smoked cigarettes on 20 or more of the last 30 days comprised 3.6% of all students. Those who smoked 11 or more cigarettes in the past 30 days represented 2.1% of students. Also, 27.5% of current or 30-day smokers smoked cigarettes on 20+ of the past 30 days, and 16.5% of current smokers smoked 11 or more cigarettes in the past 30 days.

Smokeless Tobacco (Chewing Tobacco, Snuff, Plug, Dipping Tobacco):

More than 1 in 10 (11.9%) students have ever used smokeless tobacco. Fully 8.2% of students had used smokeless tobacco in the last 12 months, and 5.9% of students had used it in the past 30 days. Thus, 66.1% of lifetime users had used smokeless tobacco in the last 12 months, while 47.3% of lifetime users had used smokeless tobacco in the past 30 days.

Students who had used smokeless tobacco on 20 or more of the last 30 days comprised 2% of all students. Around 34.7% of current or 30-day smokeless tobacco users used it on 20+ of the past 30 days.

Alcoholic Beverages (Beer, Wine, Wine Coolers or Liquor):

More than one-third (37.3%) of these middle school students, ranging in age from 11 to 15 years, had drunk alcoholic beverages more than a few sips at least once in their lifetimes. Fully 25.2% had drunk alcohol in the past 12 months, and 17.4% had done so in the past 30 days. Thus, given that students had ever used alcohol, 64.6% of them had drunk alcohol in the past 12 months, and 44.4% had drunk alcohol in the past 30 days.

Students who had used alcohol on 20 or more of the last 30 days comprised 1.5% of all students, and 8.7% of current drinkers. Students who reported daily alcohol consumption over the past 30 days represented 0.8% of all students. Daily drinkers made up 4.7% of current (30-day) drinkers among these students, and more than half (53.6%) of students who reported drinking on 20 or more of the last 30 days drank alcohol daily.

Among these middle school students, 3.3% drank 5 or more drinks of alcohol per day on their drinking days. These “binge drinkers” are 19.4% of current drinkers (last 30 days).

More than 1% (1.2%) of students reported drinking 5 or more drinks on 20 or more of the past 30 days. Again, as a percentage of students drinking on 20 or more days in the last 30, those who drank 5 or more drinks represent 81.1%. These "binge" drinkers comprise 7.1% of students who drank any alcohol in the past 30 days. Finally 0.7% of students overall reported drinking 5 or more drinks of alcohol daily in the past 30 days. They comprise 91.9% of daily drinkers, and 4.3% of current or 30-day drinkers.

In answer to the question, "Have you **ever** gotten drunk or felt very high or intoxicated from drinking alcohol?", 15.2% of all students said that they had gotten drunk. This number represents 39.9% of lifetime drinkers.

Marijuana (Pot, Grass, Hash, etc.) Use:

About 16% (15.8%) of middle school students in Hamilton County had ever used marijuana, while 12.1% had used marijuana in the past 12 months, and 8.9% in the past 30 days. While 73.8% of lifetime marijuana users used marijuana in the past 12 months, more than half (53.5%) of lifetime users had used marijuana in the past 30 days.

Students who had used marijuana on 20 or more of the last 30 days comprised 2% of all students, and students who reported daily marijuana use over the past 30 days represented 1% of all students. However, among current marijuana users (30-day users), 22.2% used on 20 or more of the past 30 days and 11.6% of current users reported daily marijuana use.

Percentage of Students Reporting Illegal Drug Use by Type of Drug and Lifetime, Recent or Current Use	**% Yes, Ever**	**% Yes, in the Last 12 Months**	**% Yes, in the Last 30 Days**
a. Cocaine or crack	5.0	3.6	2.9
b. Substances you "sniff": paint thinners, glue, gasoline, white-out, butane, aerosol sprays, etc.	9.4	7.7	6.6
c. LSD (acid) or other hallucinogens such as peyote, jimson weed, mushrooms, PCP (angel dust), etc.	7.7	5.9	4.8
d. Other illegal drugs such as ecstasy, ice (crystal meth), heroin (smack, horse, skag), etc.	5.4	4.6	4.0

It is very clear that inhalants are one drug of choice for these youth, since of the 9.4% of students who report lifetime use of inhalants to get high, 81.7% had used inhalants in the last 12 months, and 69.8% had used them in the last 30 days. Cocaine, on the other hand, was less likely to involve sustained use, since of the lifetime users of cocaine or crack at 5% among these middle school students, 71.4% had used cocaine in the last 12 months, and 57.7% in the last 30 days. For other illegal drugs and for hallucinogens such as LSD, the percentages of ever users who used in the last 12 months are 85.4% and 76.6%,

respectively, while the proportions of ever users who used in the last 30 days are 62.1% for LSD and other hallucinogens, and 71.1% for other illegal drugs. About 1.1% to 1.4% of Hamilton County students reported use of one or more of these illegal drugs daily in the last 30 days.

OVERALL ATOD, AOD AND DRUG USE PREVALENCE:

ATOD: Overall, nearly half or 47.7% of middle schools students in Hamilton County reported using alcohol, tobacco or other drugs (ATOD) in their lifetimes, while 36.7% reported 12-month use, and 29.1%, 30-day use of one or more substances (excluding caffeine and prescription drugs).

Given lifetime use, 72.1% had used ATOD in 12 months, and 54.9% in 30 days. Of 12-month users, 76.1% were 30-day users, suggesting that when youth begin their drug use careers, relatively few stop soon.

AOD: Excluding tobacco and looking only at the prevalence of use of alcohol and other drugs (save caffeine and prescription drugs), the lifetime prevalence of alcohol and other drug (AOD) use among these middle school students is 42.3%, the 12-month prevalence, 31.4%, and the 30-day prevalence, 24.1%. Here again, given lifetime use, 69.3% had used AOD in 12 months, and 51.5% in 30 days. Of 12-month users, 74.3% were 30-day users.

Drugs: Considering drugs only, 21.3% of middle school students had ever used one or more illegal drugs (excluding alcohol, tobacco or prescription drugs as well as caffeine). This compares to a 12-month drug use prevalence rate of 17.1%, and a 30-day prevalence rate of 14%. About 77.6% of lifetime drug users used drugs in the past 12 months. Around 62.3% of lifetime drug users used drugs in the last 30 days. Among 12-month drug users, 80.3% were current or 30-day users.

AVERAGE AGE AT FIRST USE OF AOD:

Average Age at First Use by Type of Drug:	**Average Age of First Use (in Years)**
a. smoked cigarettes	10.1
b. used smokeless tobacco	10.2
c. drank alcoholic beverages	10.2
d. began drinking alcoholic beverages regularly, that is at least once or twice a month	11.3
e. got drunk or felt very high or intoxicated from drinking alcohol	11.5
f. used marijuana/pot	11.4

Average Age at First Use by Type of Drug:	Average Age of First Use (in Years)
g. used cocaine or crack	11.3
h. used substances you "sniff"	10.7
i. used LSD (acid) or other hallucinogens	11.1
j. used other illegal drugs such as ecstasy, Ice (crystal meth), heroin, etc.	11.4

Cigarette smoking is the earliest onset substance use, beginning, on average, in these middle school students at age 10.1, followed by using smokeless tobacco and drinking alcohol at age 10.2 years, each. Inhalant use was reported as initiated at the average age of 10.7 years among these students. The onset of LSD and other hallucinogens was at age 11.1, followed by regular alcohol consumption (at least once or twice a month), and cocaine at 11.3 years. The use of other illegal drugs such as ecstasy, crystal meth and heroin, began at age 11.4, on average. Getting drunk or intoxicated, reported at first onset at age 11.5 years, was the latest of all AOD use practices identified.

Prescription Drug Abuse:

Prescription drug abuse is defined as having taken any prescription drugs or "pills" just to get high or for non-medical purposes, on one's own, without a doctor's prescription. More than 8% (8.3%) of students reported prescription drug abuse in their lifetimes; 6.3% reported it in the past 12 months, and 4% in the past 30 days. Among lifetime prescription drug abusers, 73.1% had abused such drugs in the past 12 months, and 45.7% did so in the past 30 days.

SELF-REPORTED SUBSTANCE ABUSE/ADDICTION:

Answering "yes" to the question of lifetime or current addiction to or dependence on one or more drugs serves as a proxy measure of these youth's need for alcohol and other drug treatment[2]. The following table shows the extent of self-reported addiction among these students by type of drug and by lifetime or current prevalence.

[2]The question contained in its wording a brief definition of addiction: "Do you think you have **EVER** been hooked on or addicted to any of the following substances (for example, did you try to quit or use less and had trouble doing so)? "

Percentage of Students Ever or Now Addicted to Alcohol or Other Drugs by Type of Drug	% Ever Addicted	% Now Addicted
a. Tobacco/nicotine	7.5	5.8
b. Alcohol (beer, wine or liquor)	5.2	3.7
c. Marijuana/pot	4.6	3.9
d. Cocaine or crack	1.5	1.0
e. Hallucinogens like LSD or PCP or ecstasy	1.6	1.4
f. Coffee/cola/caffeine	24.4	20.3
g. A prescription drug or "pill"	3.9	2.5
h. Other drugs or substances	3.2	2.1

Based on lifetime prevalence of self-reported addiction to a drug or substance, caffeine/cola/coffee is the most prevalent drug, addicting about 1 in 4 students, followed, at a much lower level, at 7.5%, by tobacco/nicotine, and by alcohol (5.2%) and marijuana (4.6%). Addiction to a prescription drug or "pill" was reported by 3.9% of students, and addiction to other drugs or substances by 3.2%. About 1.6% of students reported addiction either to hallucinogens like LSD or to cocaine or crack.

Current addiction as self-reported by these students again showed caffeine as the number one drug of addiction, by far, at 20%, followed by tobacco/nicotine, at 5.8%, marijuana at 3.9% and alcohol at 3.7%. Prescription drugs or pills, other drugs or substances, hallucinogens and cocaine or crack were reported as current sources of addiction by decreasing percentages of youth, ranging from close to 2.5% down to 1%.

The percentage of lifetime addicted users who are currently addicted suggests some of the power of these drugs over these very young users. The highest percentage of ever addicted students are currently addicted to LSD or hallucinogens (85%), followed closely by marijuana and caffeine/cola/coffee. Slightly lower rates of ever to current addicted students are observed for tobacco/nicotine and alcohol. Other drugs or substances had an ever-to-current addiction ratio of 63.8%. The drug type least likely to be still addicting youth who reported ever being addicted to them are prescription drugs or "pills," and cocaine or crack, at 62.7% and 62.5% of students ever addicted to them now addicted to them.

COMMUNITY INFLUENCES ON STUDENTS' AOD RISK:

Questions about students' communities and the areas around where they lived were expected to shed some light on risk and protective factors for alcohol and other drug use among middle school students.

Attitudes to Neighborhood:

Only 16.8% of students said they did not feel safe in their neighborhood, or the area around where they live, while the remainder or 83.2% did feel safe. Around 21.6% of students said they did not like their neighborhood, with 78.4% feeling the opposite. About 29.1% of these youth would like to get out of their neighborhood, compared to the 70.9% who would not. About 36.6% of students report that their neighbors notice when they are doing a good job and let them know about it, while for 65.1% and 61.9% of students respectively, there are lots of adults in their neighborhood they could talk to about something important or there are people in their neighborhood who encourage them to do their best.

Neighborhood Description:

When asked how well each of the following characteristics describe their neighborhood, or the area around where they live, students were most likely to report fights and crime and/or drug selling as characterizing their neighborhoods very well or somewhat well, with less emphasis on empty or abandoned buildings or lots of graffiti.

Percentage of Students Describing Their Neighborhood in Terms of the Following:	**% Very Well**	**% Somewhat Well**	**% Not Well**	**% Not at All**
a. Crime and/or drug selling	**9.3**	8.8	11.0	**70.9**
b. Fights	**13.4**	11.5	12.9	**62.2**
c. Lots of empty or abandoned buildings	**5.6**	4.4	10.7	**79.2**
d. Lots of graffiti	**7.3**	3.9	8.4	**80.4**

Only about 62% of students reported that their neighborhoods were not at all characterized by fights, and around 71% not at all characterized by crime and/or drug selling. On the other hand, close to 79% of students reported no empty or abandoned buildings, and 80% reported no profuse graffiti at all in their neighborhoods.

Adults Using Alcohol and Drugs in the Neighborhood:

In the last 12 months, 25.4% of these middle school students from Hamilton County reported that they personally knew one or more adults who had used marijuana/pot, cocaine/crack or other illegal drugs. About 20.2% reported knowing at least one adult who had sold or dealt drugs in the last 12 months. Around 21.2% of students had known adults who carried handguns or other weapons not for hunting or sport, and about the same percentage (21.9%) had known adults who had done other things that could get them in trouble with the police - stealing, selling stolen goods, mugging, or assaulting others.

Finally, about 2 out of 5 (38.2%) of youth had known at least one adult who had gotten drunk or high in the last 12 months. Thus, drunkenness was by far the most commonly reported practice observed by these students among the adults in their neighborhoods.

When asked how many adults they knew personally who had engaged in these practices in the past 12 months, 14.1% of students cited 5 or more adults who had gotten drunk or high, while 9% knew 5 or more adults who had used marijuana/pot, cocaine/crack or other illegal drugs. About 6% knew five or more adults who had carried handguns or weapons (5.3%), sold or dealt drugs (6.3%), or done other things that could have gotten them in trouble with the police (6.6%).

Participation in Leisure Time Activities as Protective of AOD Use and Abuse:

The availability and participation in activities that are seen as protective of alcohol and other drug use and abuse in youth is reported on here.

Percentage of Students Participating in the Following Activities:	**% Yes**	**% No**	**% Not Available in Their Community**
a. Sports teams	**71.8**	22.3	6.0
b. Scouting	**25.7**	63.9	10.3
c. Boys and girls clubs	**31.1**	58.4	10.5
d. 4-H clubs	**21.0**	62.6	16.4
e. Service clubs (such as Junior Sertoma, Rainbow, etc.)	**18.3**	63.1	18.6
f. Church youth groups	**67.1**	28.8	4.1
g. Music/art/drama clubs	**43.7**	46.1	10.1
h. Other after school clubs	**46.6**	46.4	7.0

The leisure-time activity reported by most students was participation in sports teams at about 72%, followed by church youth groups at 67%. Moderately popular are music/art/drama clubs and other after school clubs, at about 44% and 47% respectively. Also moderately popular where available are boys and girls clubs (around 31%). Least popular were service clubs (at about 18%), followed by scouting (at 26%). Least available activities in these communities were service clubs, and 4-H clubs.

Parental Guidance and Support:

Finally, parental guidance and support were assessed by a series of questions, such as "Do your parents want you to call if you are going to be late getting home?" To this question, 80.1% of students responded positively, and 19.9%, negatively. The question, "Does your family have clear rules about alcohol and drug use?" brought responses of 74.7%, "yes", and 25.3%, "no". The extent to which families fight is measured by answers to whether people in students' family often insult or yell at each other, reported by 34.2% of students, compared to 65.8% who say "no". About 28.1% of students reported that people in their family have serious arguments, while 71.9% do not report this.

Answers to two hypothetical questions are also revealing of the extent of parental guidance and concern as perceived by these youth. First, 60.9% of students said that if they drank some beer, wine, or hard liquor (for example, vodka, whiskey, or gin) without their parents' permission, they would be caught by their parents, while 71.9% said that if they carried a handgun without their parents' permission, they would be caught by their parents.

POSITIVE PARENTAL ATTITUDES AND PRACTICES:

The frequency with which parents include youth in family decisions and praise and reward them is thought to be associated with protection against alcohol and other drug abuse. For these youth, parental guidance and support appears relatively high.

Percentage of Students Reporting Frequency of Parents:	**% Never/ Rarely**	**% Sometimes**	**% Often/Almost Always**
a. giving them lots of chances to do fun things with them	13.6	36.3	**50.2**
b. asking them what they think before most family decisions affecting the students are made	23.0	40.0	**37.0**
c. noticing when they are doing a good job and letting them know about it	14.2	28.8	**57.0**
d. telling the students they are proud of them for something they have done	11.5	24.6	**63.9**

The most commonly reported supportive practice of parents toward these middle school students among the items measured is telling the students they are proud of their accomplishments, at 64% of students reporting parents as often or almost always doing so. This is followed by parents' noticing a good job and letting students know it (around 57%), and giving students lots of chances to do fun things with parents (about 50%).

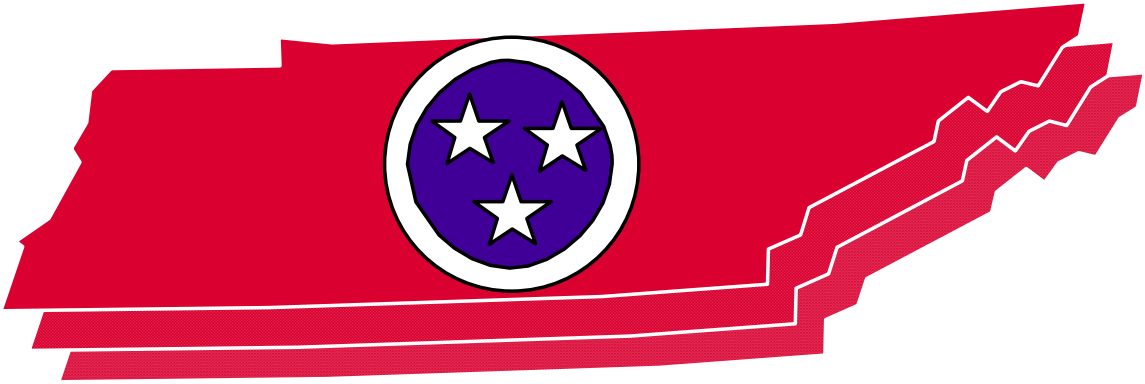
Least likely to occur often or almost always is parents' asking students what they think before family decisions affecting them are made, at 37% often or almost always doing so.

Finally, 91.9% of students say that their parents ask if they have gotten their homework done, while 8.1% do not. In 86.4% of cases, when students are not at home, one of their parents knows where they are and who they are with, while 13.6% do not. The great majority of students reported that their parents would know if they did not come home on time, at 86.2%, compared to 13.8% whose parents would not know. About 80.7% of students could ask their parents for help if they had a personal problem, compared to 19.3% who could not do so. Students were more likely to report that they often share their thoughts and feelings with their mothers (68.5%), compared to their fathers (48.6%).

TENNESSEE MIDDLE SCHOOL HEALTH SURVEY, 2001-2002

A SUMMARY OF FINDINGS FROM THE TENNESSEE MIDDLE SCHOOL HEALTH SURVEY

MADISON COUNTY



TENNESSEE DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH

AND THE

COMMUNITY HEALTH RESEARCH GROUP

THE UNIVERSITY OF TENNESSEE, KNOXVILLE

June 2003

TENNESSEE MIDDLE SCHOOL SURVEY RESULTS:
MADISON COUNTY

SOCIODEMOGRAPHIC CHARACTERISTICS:

Gender: A total of 2,819 students in randomly sampled middle schools grades 6-8 in Madison County completed surveys. They were split evenly by gender, with 49.7% being female and 50.3% male.

Grade: By grade, 34.2% of the students sampled were in 6th grade, 35.3% were in 7th grade and 30.5%, in 8th grade.

Age: In terms of age, 10.7% of students were 11 years of age or younger, while 30% were age 12; 33.1% were age13; 21.8% were age 14; and 4.4% were 15 years of age or older.

Race/Ethnicity: While 44% of students were white, 53.1% were black and 2.9% were of other racial/ethnic groups.

Hispanic Origin: A total of 5.8% of students in Madison County were of Hispanic origin.

OTHER BACKGROUND CHARACTERISTICS:

Two-Parent Family: Fifty-eight percent of students in the study lived in two-parent families, while 42% lived in families of other compositions.

Non-English Spoken At Home: While fully 97.9% of students reported that English was the language used most often in the home, 1.5% reported that language to be Spanish and another 0.6% reported another language as the language most often spoken at home.

Rural/Urban Residence: While 71.7% of these middle school students lived in a city, town or suburb, i.e., an urban area, the remaining 28.3% lived in rural areas. Of all students, 25.8% lived in the country, although not on a farm, and 2.5% lived on farms.

Proxy Measures of Poverty: In answer to the question, “Do you live in public housing?”, 30.9% of students did not know the answer, while 13.9% reported that they did live in public housing, and another 55.2% that they did not live in public housing. This measure was to be used as one indicator of poverty along with whether the family was on any form of public assistance. That question was phrased: “Does your family receive any form of public assistance, such as food stamps or other forms of welfare (such as Families First, WIC, TennCare/Medicaid, etc.)?” While 23% of the students did not know, 25.4% reported that their families did receive public assistance, and 51.7% did not. Combining these two measures produces a prevalence estimate of middle school students in poverty of 33.5% in the county as a whole.

Mobility/Migration: Only 24.7% of students had not changed homes since kindergarten, while 31.6% had changed homes 1-2 times; 23.2% had changed homes 3-4 times; and 20.5% had changed homes 5 times or more since kindergarten (11.6% had done so 5-6 times, and 8.9%, 7 times or more).

The Importance of Religion or Spirituality in Students' Families: Only 12.2% of Madison County middle school students reported that religion or spirituality was either not very important (8.1%) or not at all important (4.1%) in their families, For more than half (57%) of these students, religion or spirituality was very important, while for 30.8%, it was somewhat important.

The Importance of Religion or Spirituality in Students' Own Lives: For 13% of Madison County middle school students, religion or spirituality was either not very important (8.2%) or not at all important (4.8%) in their own lives, while for 31.9%, it was somewhat important, and for more than half (55%), it was very important.

Attendance at Religious Services: Asked how often they attend religious services or activities, 12.9% of students said they never did, while less than once a month was the response chosen by another 10.3%. Attendance at religious services or activities occupied 19.7% of students 1-2 times a month, although not every week, while another 57.1% of students attended religious services once a week or more.

SCHOOL EXPERIENCE:

Grades Last Year: Getting mostly A's as grades in the last school year was reported by 20.9% of students, while mostly B's were reported by 37.1%, and mostly C's by 34.9%. Only 7.1% of students reported either mostly D's (5.1%) or mostly F's (2%).

A series of questions were asked concerning how often youth had certain experiences in school – whether rarely or never, sometimes or often or almost always. Categories are collapsed here into "often/almost always", and the residual which is "rarely, never or sometimes" in relation to students reporting those problems or experiences.

Percentage of Students Reporting that in the Past School Year They:	% Never/Rarely/ Sometimes	% Often/Almost Always
a. feel physically safe or safe from violence at school	**58.5%**	41.5%
b. try to do your best work in school	**32.3%**	67.7%
c. find most of your courses interesting to you	**82.0%**	18.0%
d. find the school work too hard to understand	91.5%	**8.5%**
e. fool around in class	87.7%	**12.3%**
f. fail to complete or turn in your assignments	93.1%	**6.9%**
g. get sent to the office or have to stay after school because you misbehaved	95.1%	**4.9%**
h. skip a day of school or part of a day (without permission)	97.4%	**2.6%**
i. get better grades than most of the students in your class	**80.5%**	19.5%
j. feel bullied by other kids at school	91.2%	**8.8%**
k. feel bored in school	67.0%	**33.0%**
l. hate being in school	74.4%	**25.6%**
m. think the things you are learning in school are going to be important for your later life	**43.9%**	56.1%

These attitudes among others studied in this survey are seen as protective or detrimental to efforts to prevent or reduce alcohol and other drug (AOD) use, abuse, problems or dependence among these youth. Results suggest that negative attitudes to school such as feeling bored in school and hating being in school were reported often or almost always by the most students at about 33% and 26%, respectively, while fooling around in class often or almost always was reported by 12%. Finding school work too hard to understand, failing to complete or turn in assignments, getting punished for misbehaving, or skipping school were reported often or almost always by 8.5%, about 7%, nearly 5% and 2.6% of students, respectively.

Only about 41.5% of students felt often or almost always safe at school, with close to 9% (8.8%) reporting being often or almost always bullied at school. Other common negative orientations to school were never, rarely or sometimes finding courses interesting, reported by 82% of students, with 80.5% of students reporting never, rarely, or sometimes getting better grades than most other students. About 32% of students reported never, rarely or

sometimes trying to do their best work in school, and 44% reported not often thinking that what was learned in school was going to be important later in life.

Missing School: A fairly high percentage of youth (53.2%) missed school at least one time in the past 30 days because of illness or injury, while 9.5% missed school because of skipping or cutting classes, and 39.1% missed school for other reasons.

Opportunities for Participation:

The following results were obtained when students were asked, whether, in their middle school, they had certain opportunities for participation in activities. The purpose was to tap students' attitudes to the school experience in general.

Percentage of Students Reporting Certain Attitudes to School	% NO	% YES
a. In your middle school, do you have chances to be part of class discussions and activities?	**9.4**	90.6
b. do your teachers notice when you are doing a good job and let you know about it?	**25.1**	74.9
c. do you have lots of chances to get involved in school activities outside of class?	**32.7**	67.3
d. do students in your school have chances to talk to teachers one-on-one?	**21.1**	78.9
e. does your school let your parents know when you have done something well?	**55.7**	44.3

Here, less than 1 in 10 students reported feeling as though they did not have chances to participate in class, and a little more than 1 in 5 reported no chances to talk to teachers one-on-one. About 1 in 4 students reported teachers not noticing and informing them when they were doing good work, and 1 in 3 reported that they do not have lots of chances to get involved in extra-classroom activities at school. Finally, close to 3 in 5 students said that their schools did not let their parents know when they had performed well.

HEALTH AND WELL-BEING OF MIDDLE SCHOOL STUDENTS IN MADISON COUNTY:

Health Status: Overall, 14.7% of students reported that in general their health was either fair (13.6%) or poor (1.1%), while 23.9% reported good health, 28.9% very good health, and 32.5%, excellent health.

Disability Status: In answer to the question, "Do you now have any physical health problems or disabling conditions that keep you from doing normal activities?", 86% of students said "no", while 14% reported some disability.

Hyperactivity: In answer to the question, "Are you currently taking prescription drugs or "pills" for hyperactivity (ADD or ADHD) such as Ritalin?", 8.5% of middle school students said "yes", and 91.5% said "no".

Receipt of any Treatment or Counseling Outside School: Lifetime prevalence of receipt of treatment for an emotional or mental health problem outside school was 13.3%. The prevalence of treatment for an alcohol problem was 2.4%; and for a drug problem, it was 3.1%. Receipt of treatment for either an alcohol or another drug problem was reported by 3.9% of middle school students in Madison County in 2001.

Attendance at Self-Help or 12-Step Support Group Meetings: Attendance at such self-help or 12-step meetings as Alateen, Al-Anon, Children of Alcoholics (COA), Alcoholics Anonymous (AA), Narcotics Anonymous (NA), Cocaine Anonymous (CA) was reported by 4% of students, while the remaining students or 96% had not done so.

Utilization of Emergency and Hospital Services:

Emergency Department Services: In the 12 months prior to the survey, 21.4% of students reported having been taken to an emergency room for an illness, and 22%, for an injury. An overall total of more than one-third (36.2%) of students had been taken to an ED for either an illness or an injury in the past 12 months.

Hospital Admissions: In the last 12 months, 6% of middle school students had stayed at least one night in a hospital for an illness while 5.4% had stayed at least one night for an injury. Either illness- or injury-related hospital admissions were reported by nearly 1 in 10 (9.9%) students.

Depression and Suicide Attempts:

Indicators of potential depression and low self-esteem such as thinking that life is not worth it sometimes or that one is no good at all are relatively common among these Madison County middle school students. These two feelings were reported by 30.3% and 20.6% of students, respectively.

More specific questions about depression were asked, such as "How often do you feel very depressed, that is, very "blue" or unhappy?" While 37.5% of students reported never or rarely feeling very depressed, 50.3% reported that they sometimes felt this way, and 12.1% reported often or almost always feeling very depressed.

About 19% (18.8%) of middle school students reported ever feeling so desperate that they considered suicide, and 8.5% reported ever attempting suicide. Those young suicide attempters represent 43.5% of students considering suicide.

Finally, 3% of students said they had ever gone to a hospital or gotten medical treatment because of a suicide attempt. This represents around 35.1% of those students attempting suicide.

Life Stressors: These students have already experienced a variety of life stresses such as relocations and related changes. Questions about their lifetime experience of selected stressors elicited interesting responses, reported below.

First, in answer to questions concerning whether these youth had experienced a move in the last 12 months, 28.9% of youth reported moving to a different home in the last 12 months, while 27.5% reported starting at a new school in the same period.

In answer to the question of lifetime stressors experienced, the percentages of students reporting each type of life change is presented below:

Percentage of Students Reporting Life Stressors by Type of Stressor in Their Lifetimes	**% Yes**	**% No**
a. had a death in the family	**89.7**	10.3
b. parents (guardians) divorced	**36.5**	63.5
c. family had financial problems	**34.3**	65.7
d. anyone in the family been arrested	**51.3**	48.7
e. new sister or brother born	**32.4**	67.6
f. had a serious illness or injury in your immediate family	**54.3**	45.7
g. had your own serious illness or injury	**35.1**	64.9
h. experienced another very stressful event	**46.1**	53.9

To the extent that these students between the ages of 11 and 15 for the most part have already experienced some major life crises, their coping skills and responses to stressors are of major interest and concern especially as they may protect against or increase the risk of alcohol and other drug use and associated problems.

Particularly prevalent was death in the family experienced by close to 90% of children, followed by serious illness or injury of a family member, and family arrests, reported by more than half. For around 46% of ,other stressful events were reported, and by around

one-third or more, divorce, own serious illness or injury, family financial problems and the birth of a sibling were reported in decreasing order of frequency.

FRIENDS/PEER INFLUENCES ON YOUTH BEHAVIOR:

Best Friends' Practices:

When asked about their four best friends (the friends they feel closest to) and whether in the past 12 months any of those best friends had engaged in alcohol or other drug use, a range of from a low of about 5% to a high of over 17% of students reported that they did not know.

Percentage of Students with Any Best Friends, who, in the Past 12 Months, Did the Following:	**% Yes**	**% No**	**% Don't Know**
a. smoked cigarettes	**26.6**	55.9	17.5
b. drunk alcoholic beverages -- beer, wine, or hard liquor (for example, vodka, whiskey, or gin)	**26.0**	57.6	16.5
c. used marijuana/pot	**15.4**	71.5	13.1
d. taken "pills" to get high or for non-medical reasons	**6.6**	79.5	13.9
e. used LSD, cocaine, amphetamines/speed, or another illegal drug	**5.8**	81.4	12.8
f. been suspended from school	**36.9**	55.9	7.2
g. carried a handgun or other weapon like a knife (other than for hunting or sport)	**12.9**	77.8	9.3
h. taken a handgun to school	**1.9**	91.8	6.3
i. sold "pills" or illegal drugs	**6.7**	83.6	9.6
j. stolen or tried to steal a motor vehicle such as a car or a motorcycle	**6.0**	84.9	9.1
k. been arrested	**12.0**	79.9	8.1
l. dropped out of school	**4.0**	90.9	5.2
m. been members of a gang	**11.3**	77.2	11.5

Most frequently reported behaviors among best friends were being suspended from school (37%), and smoking cigarettes or drinking alcohol at about 26%of students each. These

were followed by using marijuana (15%), carrying a weapon (13%), and being arrested and being gang members at about 12% and 11%, respectively. Taking pills to get high at selling pills or illegal drugs were reported by 6.6% and 6.7%, respectively, of students in relation to their best friends. On the other hand, taking a handgun to school was the least common practice reported for best friends at only around 2%, followed by dropping out of school, stealing or trying to steal a motor vehicle, and using illegal drugs, which were reported for their best friends by 4%, 6% and 5.8%, respectively, of these youth.

Perceptions of Being Cool:

To elicit attitudes to the acceptability with peers of alcohol and other drug use, a series of questions was asked about how "cool" certain practices are perceived to be by middle school students, with the following results:

Percentage of Students Reporting the Chances They Would be Seen as Cool if They:	**% No or Very Little Chance**	**% Some Chance**	**% Pretty Good or Very Good Chance**
a. smoked cigarettes	75.1	17.8	**7.1**
b. began drinking alcoholic beverages regularly, that is, at least once or twice a month	75.2	16.9	**7.9**
c. smoked marijuana	76.1	13.0	**10.9**
d. carried a handgun	83.7	9.4	**6.9**

Clearly, behavior associated with the most "cool" perception is smoking marijuana, while regular alcohol use, smoking cigarettes and carrying a handgun were perceived as about equally "cool".

PERCEIVED RISK AND AVAILABILITY OF AOD:

The University of Michigan Monitoring the Future surveys of high school and middle school youth have found that the combination of perceived risk of harm and availability of substances together account for higher consumption of substances among the youth studied. The Madison County students' responses to these questions are provided below:

Perceived Risk of Substance Use:

How much students think people risk harming themselves (physically or in other ways) if they engage in each of the following practices involving AOD use gives a clear indication of students' assessment of relative risk of harm.

Percentage of Students Perceiving People's Risk of Harm from AOD Use:	% No Risk	% Slight Risk	% Moderate Risk	% Great Risk
a. smoke one or more packs of cigarettes per day	12.2	11.5	22.6	**53.8**
b. use smokeless tobacco	16.0	22.9	31.8	**29.3**
c. try marijuana once or twice	17.8	23.2	22.4	**36.6**
d. smoke marijuana regularly (at least once or twice a month)	15.6	14.4	21.3	**48.7**
e. drink any alcoholic beverages (beer, wine, liquor)	15.8	24.8	29.6	**29.8**
f. take one or two drinks of an alcoholic beverage nearly every day	16.2	16.3	25.0	**42.5**

Clearly, the most risk of physical or other harm is perceived by these middle school students from smoking one or more packs of cigarettes a day or smoking marijuana regularly (about 54% and 49% reporting great risk, respectively), while the lowest perceived risk is assessed for drinking any alcohol or using smokeless tobacco (about 29-30% great risk each), followed by trying marijuana once or twice (37% great risk). Intermediate risks of harm are attributed to taking one or two drinks of alcoholic beverages nearly every day, at 42.5% of students assessing great risk of harm to this practice.

Perceived Ease of Access to AOD:

Like perceived harmfulness or risk of harm from drugs, including alcohol, perceived ease of access to or availability of drugs serves as an important predictor of risk of AOD use and problems related to it.

Percentage of Students Reporting Relative Ease of Access to Drugs by Type – Q: How easy do you think it would be for you to get each of the following types of drugs if you wanted some?	% Very or Somewhat Easy	% Very or Somewhat Hard
a. Cigarettes	**53.4**	46.6
b. Smokeless tobacco	**34.8**	65.2
c. Alcohol (beer, wine or hard liquor)	**46.7**	53.3
d. Marijuana/pot	**29.6**	70.4

Percentage of Students Reporting Relative Ease of Access to Drugs by Type – Q: How easy do you think it would be for you to get each of the following types of drugs if you wanted some?	% Very or Somewhat Easy	% Very or Somewhat Hard
e. Drugs like cocaine/crack, LSD (acid), heroin, etc.	**18.6**	81.4
f. "Pills" like uppers/speed, downers, painkillers, tranquilizers	**27.0**	73.0
g. Something to sniff like glue or gasoline	**53.5**	48.5

The easiest substances for middle school students to access appear to be inhalants and cigarettes, followed by alcohol and smokeless tobacco. Marijuana and pills like uppers, downers, etc. were seen as moderately easy to obtain, with illicit drugs like cocaine, hallucinogens, and heroin, for example, as the hardest to access in these students' opinions.

Ease of Access to a Gun:

In answer to the question, "If you wanted to get a gun, how easy would it be for you to get one?", 20.4% of middle school students said it would be very easy, and another 14% said somewhat easy, for a total of 34.4% reporting easy access to guns. The remaining 65.6% of students reported access to guns to be hard – either somewhat hard, at 15.1%, or very hard, at 50.5%.

Perceived Wrongness of Certain Personal Choices and Practices:

In answer to the question concerning how wrong one thinks it is for someone the student's age to use certain substances and engage in certain risky practices, the following were the results:

Percentage of Students Perceiving it Wrong to:	% Very Wrong	% Somewhat Wrong	% Not Very Wrong	% Not Wrong at All
a. drink beer, wine, or hard liquor (for example, vodka, whiskey, or gin) regularly (at least once or twice a month)	**71.8**	17.0	7.4	3.9
b. smoke cigarettes	**70.3**	18.2	7.0	4.4
c. smoke marijuana/pot	**82.1**	9.2	4.0	4.7
d. use LSD, cocaine, amphetamines/ speed or another illegal drug	**89.3**	6.1	1.7	2.9
e. steal anything worth more than $5	**68.3**	22.5	5.1	4.1
f. take a handgun or other weapon to school	**91.3**	4.6	1.6	2.6
g. pick a fight with someone	**46.8**	34.1	12.9	6.2
h. stay away from school all day when your parents think you are at school (skip school)	**69.3**	21.2	5.6	4.0
i. attack someone with the idea of seriously hurting them	**81.2**	12.7	3.1	3.1
j. beat up people if they start a fight	**46.5**	23.3	12.0	18.2

The practices perceived as most wrong, with the highest percentage of students reporting them as very wrong, were taking a handgun or weapon to school (91.3% reported this as very wrong) or using illegal drugs like LSD, cocaine or speed (89.3% very wrong). Smoking pot/marijuana or attacking someone with the idea of hurting them (at about 82% and 81%, respectively) were less likely to be judged as very wrong. Even less likely to be seen as very wrong were smoking cigarettes, drinking alcohol regularly, stealing anything worth more than $5, or skipping school, each of which was reported by about 68-72% of students as being very wrong. Picking a fight with someone or beating up people if they start a fight were seen as very wrong by a little less than half (about 47%) of students. This suggests that picking fights or beating people up in fights, which are types of violent behavior, are less likely to be judged as very wrong by students themselves than is drug use – whether using alcohol, smoking cigarettes or using illegal drugs.

Students' Perceptions of How Wrong Parents Would Think Certain Behaviors:

Similar questions to those above were asked of students concerning parental views of how wrong certain practices are; the results follow:

Percentage of Students Reporting the Degree to which Their Parents Would Think it Wrong for Them to:	% Very Wrong	% Somewhat Wrong	% Not Very Wrong	% Not Wrong at All
a. drink beer, wine, or hard liquor (for example, vodka, whiskey, or gin) regularly (at least once or twice a month)	**87.0**	6.1	3.4	3.5
b. smoke cigarettes	**86.9**	7.1	2.5	3.5
c. smoke marijuana/pot	**92.6**	3.1	1.6	2.7
d. steal anything worth more than $5.00	**90.2**	5.6	1.4	2.8
e. draw graffiti, write things, or draw pictures on buildings or other property (without the owner's permission)	**89.8**	5.1	2.0	3.1
f. pick a fight with someone	**75.3**	15.7	4.9	4.1

Smoking marijuana ranks first in the percentage of students who think their parents would assess the practice as very wrong, at about 93%, followed by stealing anything worth more than $5 (90%), and drawing graffiti and related activities (about 90%). Slightly less wrong in student-assessed parental judgment are smoking cigarettes and drinking alcohol regularly, which each drew responses of "very wrong" from about 87% of students. Consistent with earlier results, picking a fight with someone was seen as least likely to be seen as wrong for students to do by their parents, with about 75% of students assessing that behavior as very wrong from a parental viewpoint.

Students' Perceptions of How Wrong Adults in Their Neighborhood Think Certain Behaviors Are:

In parallel with the questions asked of the students themselves and their parents reported above, students were asked to assess how wrong most adults in their neighborhood, or the area around where they live, would think it is for kids their age to use alcohol and other drugs and engage in risky or illegal behaviors. The results are striking in comparison with those for the students and their parents.

Percentage of Students Reporting How Wrong Adults in their Neighborhood Think it is for Middle School Age Kids:	% Very Wrong	% Somewhat Wrong	% Not Very Wrong	% Not Wrong At All
a. to use marijuana	86.3	5.5	**2.8**	**5.4**
b. to drink alcohol	79.0	10.2	**4.8**	**5.9**
c. to smoke cigarettes	75.0	12.6	**5.4**	**7.0**

These students perceive that adults in their neighborhood, like their parents, think that use of marijuana is very wrong, followed by drinking alcohol and smoking cigarettes, with 86%, 79% and 75% of students reporting these behaviors as very wrong for kids their age to indulge in, according to adults in their neighborhood. On the other hand, about 7%, 6% and 5% of students, respectively, think adults in their neighborhood see nothing wrong in kids their age smoking cigarettes, drinking alcohol or using marijuana, in that order.

STUDENTS' LIFE PROBLEMS AND HIGH RISK PRACTICES:

Asked whether they had ever participated in several problematic behaviors, such as gang membership, suspension from school or violence-related behavior, the following results were observed for all middle school students surveyed in Madison County. Over 8% (8.2%) reported that they had belonged to a gang, while 7.6% reported having been arrested at least once in their lifetimes. Suspension from school was reported by over 1 in 4 (27.4%) students. Certain practices related to violence or risk of violence were reported as follows: 6.5% of students had carried a handgun other than for hunting or sport, while 18.0% had attacked someone with the idea of seriously hurting them.

The results for students' exposure to and participation in risky and violent behaviors in the past 12 months, overall and in school, are reported below.

Percentage of Students who Reported in the Past 12 Months that They Had....	**%Yes, Overall**	**% Yes, at School**
a. gotten into a physical fight	40.4	17.0
b. taken part in a gang fight where a group of your friends was against another group	9.5	2.6
c. been injured in a fight	9.1	2.9
d. been physically abused or assaulted	9.3	3.8
e. stolen "pills" or prescription drugs including from home	3.2	1.1
f. stolen illegal drugs	3.4	0.9
g. bought "pills" or an illegal drug	4.9	1.5
h. been offered or given "pills" or an illegal drug	15.6	3.8

These results suggest that getting into physical fights is very frequent behavior in these middle school students, with more than 2 in 5 reporting fighting (40.4%) in the past 12 months and with more than 42% of those fights occurring at school. Being offered or given pills or illicit drugs is next most frequent among these students, at close to 16% reporting this experience, with about 24% of such contacts occurring at school. Less frequently

reported were participation in gang fights, at about 1 in 10 students – with about 27% of those injuries occurring at school. Being physically abused or assaulted was reported by about 9% of students, with nearly 40% occurring at school. Being injured in a fight was reported by over 9% of youth. About 31% of these injuries in fights reportedly occurred at school. Buying pills or an illegal drug, stealing pills or prescription drugs including from home, and stealing illegal drugs were reported by nearly 5%, 3.2% and 3.4% of students, respectively. In over 30% of cases of buying pills or illegal drugs, this occurred at school; in 33% of cases where prescription drugs were stolen and in 25% of cases where illegal drugs were stolen, the stealing was reported to have occurred at school.

Other High Risk Behaviors in the Past 12 Months:

Overall, 18.7% of students reported that they had been suspended from school one or more times in the last 12 months. Substantially lower percentages of students reported serious criminal behavior – thus, 8.3% reported that they had stolen or tried to steal a motor vehicle, such as a car or a motorcycle, while 11.1% reported that they had been arrested at least once in the last 12 months.

Violent behavior was reported by 13.6% of students who said that they had attacked someone (physically) with the idea of seriously hurting them in the last 12 months. Overall, 9.4% of students had carried a weapon (such as a handgun, knife or club) other than for hunting or sport, and 2.5% had taken a weapon such as a gun to school at least once in the period in question.

In terms of alcohol and other drug use, 8.3% of these Madison County middle school students had been drunk or high at school, and 1.2% reported this had occurred 20 times or more in the last 12 months. More than 3% (3.8%) of these youth reported that they had sold “pills” or illegal drugs in the past 12 months, and 2.3% of students overall reported that they had sold “pills” or illegal drugs at school.

Attitudes to Risky and Illegal Practices:

Tapping dimensions of impulsivity and rebelliousness, as well as other negative attitudes, these students’ responses indicate that impulsivity is very characteristic of these young people. Nearly half report that they often do things without thinking of consequences. Overall, 25.2% think it is not important to think before they act, and almost 22% have to have everything right away. Measures of rebelliousness and testing limits - liking to see how much they can get away with, reported by almost 25% of students, ignoring rules that get in the way (about 25.2%), and doing the opposite of what people tell them just to provoke a reaction (20%) - are also relatively commonly reported by these students. The two depression-related questions above are discussed in an earlier section. Thinking it is OK to cheat at school was reported by around 17% of students.

Percentage of Students Whose Attitudes Put Them at High Risk and Therefore Who	% Yes	% No
a. think it is okay to cheat at school	**16.7**	83.3
b. like to see how much you can get away with	**24.6**	75.4
c. sometimes think that life is not worth it	**30.3**	69.7
d. think you are no good at all	**20.6**	79.4
e. ignore rules that get in your way	**25.2**	74.8
f. often do things without thinking what will happen	**49.8**	50.2
g. have to have everything right away	**21.7**	78.3
h. think it is important to think before you act	74.8	**25.2**
i. do the opposite of what people tell you, just to get them mad	**20.0**	80.0

Other Risk Taking:

Students who say that they often or almost always have done what feels good no matter what or have done something dangerous because someone dared them to do it represent 15% and 6% of students, respectively. Those students who conversely report that they never or rarely have done what feels good no matter what or done something dangerous on a dare comprise 41.8% and 72.2% of students, overall.

FAMILIAL AND PEER ALCOHOL OR DRUG PROBLEMS:

Familial Alcohol or Drug Abuse:

Fully 33.4% percent of students reported that someone in their family has had a severe alcohol or drug problem.

Parental AOD Use: Answering the question, “Do you think one or both of your parents (stepparents or guardians) is drinking too much or has a problem with alcohol?”, 12.9% of students said “Yes”. Close to 8% (7.8%) of students said that they think one or both of their parents is using or abusing drugs other than alcohol. A total of about 16% (16.4%) of students think that one or both of their parents is using or abusing drugs or has a problem with alcohol.

Siblings’ AOD Use: Asked about alcohol and other drug use and high risk practices in their siblings, 9% of students had no brothers or sisters. However, for continuity and consistency of denominators, the following percentages are reported for all students.

Percentage of Students Reporting that One or More of Their Brothers or Sisters	% of All Students
a. drinks beer, wine, or hard liquor (for example, vodka, whiskey or gin)	18.9
b. smokes marijuana	10.8
c. smokes cigarettes	22.9
d. has taken a handgun to school	2.1
e. has been suspended or expelled from school	19.4

Cigarette smoking is most frequently reported for sibling drug use by these students at about 23%, followed by suspension from school and alcohol use at around 19% each. Marijuana use was reported for nearly 11% of students' siblings. Handguns at school was least common at about 2%.

Close Friends' Alcohol or Drug Problems: About 7.3% of students reported that they think that one or more of their close friends is drinking too much or has a problem with alcohol, and 9.1% said that they think that one or more of the close friends is using or abusing drugs other than alcohol.

STUDENT'S OWN ALCOHOL/DRUG USE:

While this was mainly a prevention survey, it is clear that many of these middle school students have already begun their alcohol and other drug use careers so that primary prevention, delaying onset of the initiation of first use of alcohol or other drugs, is for many an inappropriate strategy. Secondary prevention, reducing the use of alcohol or other drugs, mitigating the occurrence of negative and dangerous consequences, and breaking the dependence cycle early is more relevant. In some cases tertiary prevention or actual treatment is indicated, particularly in students who self-report addiction or dependence.

Cigarette Smoking:

More than 1 in 3 (34.4%) students have ever smoked cigarettes. Fully 23.4% of students had smoked cigarettes in the last 12 months, and 15.5% of students had smoked in the past 30 days. Thus, about two-thirds of lifetime smokers had smoked in the last 12 months, and close to half (44%) of lifetime smokers had smoked in the past 30 days.

Students who had smoked cigarettes on 20 or more of the last 30 days comprised 3% of all students. Those who smoked 11 or more cigarettes in the past 30 days represented 1.4% of students. Also, 20.3% of current or 30-day smokers smoked cigarettes on 20+ of the past 30 days, and 8.7% of current smokers smoked 11 or more cigarettes in the past 30 days.

Smokeless Tobacco (Chewing Tobacco, Snuff, Plug, Dipping Tobacco):

More than 1 in 10 (10.5%) students have ever used smokeless tobacco. Fully 6.9% of students had used smokeless tobacco in the last 12 months, and 4.5% of students had used it in the past 30 days. Thus, 63.8% of lifetime users had used smokeless tobacco in the last 12 months, while 40.4% of lifetime users had used smokeless tobacco in the past 30 days.

Students who had used smokeless tobacco on 20 or more of the last 30 days comprised 0.9% of all students. Around 21% of current or 30-day smokeless tobacco users used it on 20+ of the past 30 days.

Alcoholic Beverages (Beer, Wine, Wine Coolers or Liquor):

More than 2 in 5 (42.3%) of these middle school students, ranging in age from 11 to 15 years, had drunk alcoholic beverages more than a few sips at least once in their lifetimes. Fully 29.2% had drunk alcohol in the past 12 months, and 20.8% had done so in the past 30 days. Thus, given that students had ever used alcohol, 67.2% of them had drunk alcohol in the past 12 months, and 47.6% had drunk alcohol in the past 30 days.

Students who had used alcohol on 20 or more of the last 30 days comprised 1.0% of all students, and 5.6% of current drinkers. Students who reported daily alcohol consumption over the past 30 days represented 0.3% of all students. Daily drinkers made up 1.1% of current (30-day) drinkers among these students, and 20% of students who reported drinking on 20 or more of the last 30 days drank alcohol daily.

Among these middle school students, 2.6% drank 5 or more drinks of alcohol per day on their drinking days. These “binge drinkers” are 13.3% of current drinkers (last 30 days). Less than 1% (0.7%) of students reported drinking 5 or more drinks on 20 or more of the past 30 days. Again, as a percentage of students drinking on 20 or more days in the last 30, those who drank 5 or more drinks represent 60%. These “binge” drinkers comprise 3.3% of students who drank any alcohol in the past 30 days. Finally 0.4% of students overall reported drinking 5 or more drinks of alcohol daily in the past 30 days. They comprise 2.2% of current or 30-day drinkers.

In answer to the question, “Have you **ever** gotten drunk or felt very high or intoxicated from drinking alcohol?”, 16% of all students said that they had gotten drunk. This number represents 37% of lifetime drinkers.

Marijuana (Pot, Grass, Hash, etc.) Use:

Over 18% (18.2%) of middle school students in Madison County had ever used marijuana, 12.3% had used marijuana in the past 12 months, and 9.2% in the past 30 days. While

66.2% of lifetime marijuana users used marijuana in the past 12 months, nearly half (48.6%) of lifetime users had used marijuana in the past 30 days.

Students who had used marijuana on 20 or more of the last 30 days comprised 1.5% of all students, and students who reported daily marijuana use over the past 30 days represented 1% of all students. However, among current marijuana users (30-day users), 16.7% used on 20 or more of the past 30 days and 11.1% of current users reported daily marijuana use.

Percentage of Students Reporting Illegal Drug Use by Type of Drug and Lifetime, Recent or Current Use	**% Yes, Ever**	**% Yes, in the Last 12 Months**	**% Yes, in the Last 30 Days**
a. Cocaine or crack	4.0	3.2	2.3
b. Substances you "sniff": paint thinners, glue, gasoline, white-out, butane, aerosol sprays, etc.	9.6	7.7	6.0
c. LSD (acid) or other hallucinogens such as peyote, jimson weed, mushrooms, PCP (angel dust), etc.	6.6	5.5	4.1
d. Other illegal drugs such as ecstasy, ice (crystal meth), heroin (smack, horse, skag), etc.	5.2	4.5	3.9

It is very clear that inhalants are one drug of choice for these youth, since of the 9.6% of students who report lifetime use of inhalants to get high, 81% had used inhalants in the last 12 months, and 61.9% had used them in the last 30 days. Cocaine, on the other hand, was less likely to involve sustained use, since of the lifetime users of cocaine or crack among these middle school students, 82.4% had used cocaine in the last 12 months, and 58.8% in the last 30 days. For other illegal drugs and for hallucinogens such as LSD, the percentages of ever users who used in the last 12 months are 87% and 82.2%, respectively, while the proportions of ever users who used in the last 30 days are 62.1% for LSD and other hallucinogens, and 73.9% for other illegal drugs. About 0.9% to 1.1% of Madison County students reported use of one or more of these illegal drugs daily in the last 30 days.

OVERALL ATOD, AOD AND DRUG USE PREVALENCE:

ATOD: Overall, over half or 55.4% of middle schools students in Madison County reported using alcohol, tobacco or other drugs (ATOD) in their lifetimes, while 43% reported 12-month use, and 33.9%, 30-day use of one or more substances (excluding caffeine and prescription drugs).

Given lifetime use, 73.6% had used ATOD in 12 months, and 56.2% in 30 days. Of 12 month users, 76.3% were 30-day users, suggesting that when youth begin their drug use careers, relatively few stop soon.

AOD: Excluding tobacco and looking only at the prevalence of use of alcohol and other drugs (save caffeine and prescription drugs), the lifetime prevalence of alcohol and other drug (AOD) use among these middle school students is 48.8%, the 12-month prevalence, 36.4%, and the 30-day prevalence, 28.3%. Here again, given lifetime use, 71.1% had used AOD in 12 months, and 54.4% in 30 days. Of 12-month users, 76.6% were 30-day users.

Drugs: Considering drugs only, 25% of middle school students had ever used one or more illegal drugs (excluding alcohol, tobacco or prescription drugs as well as caffeine). This compares to a 12-month drug use prevalence rate of 18.4%, and a 30-day prevalence rate of 14.6%. About 72.3% of lifetime drug users used drugs in the past 12 months. Fifty-six percent of lifetime drug users used drugs in the last 30 days. Among 12-month drug users, 78.1% were current or 30-day users.

AVERAGE AGE AT FIRST USE OF AOD:

Average Age at First Use by Type of Drug:	**Average Age of First Use (in Years)**
a. smoked cigarettes	10.2
b. used smokeless tobacco	10.8
c. drank alcoholic beverages	10.3
d. began drinking alcoholic beverages regularly, that is at least once or twice a month	11.3
e. got drunk or felt very high or intoxicated from drinking alcohol	11.5
f. used marijuana/pot	11.6
g. used cocaine or crack	11.3
h. used substances you “sniff”	10.9
i. used LSD (acid) or other hallucinogens	11.3
j. used other illegal drugs such as ecstasy, Ice (crystal meth), heroin, etc.	11.6

Cigarette smoking is the earliest onset substance use, beginning, on average, in these middle school students at age 10.2, followed by drinking alcohol at age 10.3 years. Using smokeless tobacco was reported as initiated at the average age of 10.8 years, followed by use of inhalant at 10.9 years. The onset of cocaine use was reported at age 11.3, as was the use of LSD and other hallucinogens, and regular alcohol consumption (at least once or twice a month), and getting drunk or intoxicated from alcohol use, at 11.5 years. The

use of marijuana/pot and other illegal drugs such as ecstasy, crystal meth and heroin, began at age 11.6, on average, the latest of all AOD use practices identified.

Prescription Drug Abuse:

Prescription drug abuse is defined as having taken any prescription drugs or "pills" just to get high or for non-medical purposes, on one's own, without a doctor's prescription. More than 6% (6.2%) of students reported prescription drug abuse in their lifetimes; 4.2% reported it in the past 12 months, and 2.5% in the past 30 days. Among lifetime prescription drug abusers, 65.4% had abused such drugs in the past 12 months, and 38.5% did so in the past 30 days.

SELF-REPORTED SUBSTANCE ABUSE/ADDICTION:

Answering "yes" to the question of lifetime or current addiction to or dependence on one or more drugs serves as a proxy measure of these youth's need for alcohol and other drug treatment.[1] The following table shows the extent of self-reported addiction among these students by type of drug and by lifetime or current prevalence.

Percentage of Students Ever or Now Addicted to Alcohol or Other Drugs by Type of Drug	% Ever Addicted	% Now Addicted
a. Tobacco/nicotine	6.7	4.6
b. Alcohol (beer, wine or liquor)	5.7	4.0
c. Marijuana/pot	3.8	3.4
d. Cocaine or crack	1.0	0.6
e. Hallucinogens like LSD or PCP or ecstasy	1.3	0.9
f. Coffee/cola/caffeine	23.5	18.2
g. A prescription drug or "pill"	3.0	1.6
h. Other drugs or substances	2.3	1.3

Based on lifetime prevalence of self-reported addiction to a drug or substance, caffeine/cola/coffee is the most prevalent drug, addicting almost 1 in 4 students, followed, at a much lower level, at about 7%, by tobacco/nicotine, and about 4-6%, by alcohol and marijuana. Addiction to a prescription drug or "pill" was reported by 3% of students, and

[1]The question contained in its wording a brief definition of addiction: "Do you think you have **EVER** been hooked on or addicted to any of the following substances (for example, did you try to quit or use less and had trouble doing so)? "

addiction to other drugs or substances by around 2%. About 1% of students reported addiction either to hallucinogens like LSD or to cocaine or crack.

Current addiction as self-reported by these students again showed caffeine as the number one drug of addiction, by far, at 18.2%, followed by tobacco/nicotine, at close to 5%, and alcohol at 4%. Marijuana addiction was reported by more than 3% of students, while prescription drugs or pills, other drugs or substances, hallucinogens and cocaine or crack were reported as current sources of addiction by decreasing percentages of youth, ranging from close to 2% (1.6%) down to 0.6%.

The percentage of lifetime addicted users who are currently addicted suggests some of the power of these drugs over these very young users. The highest percentage of ever addicted students are currently addicted to marijuana (87.5%), followed by caffeine/cola/coffee (75.5%). Slightly lower rates of ever to current addicted students are observed for cocaine or crack (75%), and alcohol (70.8%). Tobacco/nicotine, and prescription drugs or "pills," had ever-to-current addiction ratios of 66.7%, 65.5% and 58.3%, respectively. The drug types least likely to be still addicting youth who reported ever being addicted to them are other durgs or substances at 50% of students ever addicted to them now addicted to them.

COMMUNITY INFLUENCES ON STUDENTS' AOD RISK:

Questions about students' communities and the areas around where they lived were expected to shed some light on risk and protective factors for alcohol and other drug use among middle school students.

Attitudes to Neighborhood:

Only 14.7% of students said they did not feel safe in their neighborhood, or the area around where they live, while the remainder or 85.3% did feel safe. Almost 23% of students said they did not like their neighborhood, with fully 77% feeling the opposite. Thirty percent of these youth would like to get out of their neighborhood, compared to the nearly 70% who would not. About 33% of students report that their neighbors notice when they are doing a good job and let them know about it, while for 59.6% and 57.7% of students respectively, there are lots of adults in their neighborhood they could talk to about something important or there are people in their neighborhood who encourage them to do their best.

Neighborhood Description:

When asked how well each of the following characteristics describe their neighborhood, or the area around where they live, students were most likely to report fights and crime and/or drug selling as characterizing their neighborhoods very well or somewhat well, with less emphasis on empty or abandoned buildings or lots of graffiti.

Percentage of Students Describing Their Neighborhood in Terms of the Following:	% Very Well	% Somewhat Well	% Not Well	% Not at All
a. Crime and/or drug selling	**8.5**	8.3	10.2	**72.9**
b. Fights	**12.7**	13.2	12.3	**61.8**
c. Lots of empty or abandoned buildings	**6.0**	4.7	9.6	**79.7**
d. Lots of graffiti	**5.1**	2.9	7.6	**84.4**

Only about 61.8% of students reported that their neighborhoods were not at all characterized by fights, and around 73% not at all characterized by crime and/or drug selling. On the other hand, close to 80% of students reported no empty or abandoned buildings, and over 84% reported no profuse graffiti at all in their neighborhoods.

Adults Using Alcohol and Drugs in the Neighborhood:

In the last 12 months, 26.3% of these middle school students from Madison County reported that they personally knew one or more adults who had used marijuana/pot, cocaine/crack or other illegal drugs. About 21% reported knowing at least one adult who had sold or dealt drugs in the last 12 months. Around 24.3% of students had known adults who carried handguns or other weapons not for hunting or sport, and about the same percentage (22.7%) had known adults who had done other things that could get them in trouble with the police - stealing, selling stolen goods, mugging, or assaulting others. Finally, over 2 in 5 (42.4%) of youth had known at least one adult who had gotten drunk or high in the last 12 months. Thus, drunkenness was by far the most commonly reported practice observed by these students among the adults in their neighborhoods.

When asked how many adults they knew personally who had engaged in these practices in the past 12 months, 15.8% of students cited 5 or more adults who had gotten drunk or high, while 9.1% knew 5 or more adults who had used marijuana/pot, cocaine/crack or other illegal drugs. About 6% knew five or more adults who had carried handguns or weapons (6%), sold or dealt drugs (6.2%), or done other things that could have gotten them in trouble with the police (6.3%).

Participation in Leisure Time Activities as Protective of AOD Use and Abuse:

The availability and participation in activities that are seen as protective of alcohol and other drug use and abuse in youth is reported on here.

Percentage of Students Participating in the Following Activities:	% Yes	% No	% Not Available in Their Community
a. Sports teams	**72.8**	21.1	6.1
b. Scouting	**24.3**	65.5	10.1
c. Boys and girls clubs	**40.7**	50.8	8.5
d. 4-H clubs	**44.9**	47.6	7.5
e. Service clubs (such as Junior Sertoma, Rainbow, etc.)	**17.8**	63.4	18.8
f. Church youth groups	**70.1**	26.1	3.8
g. Music/art/drama clubs	**51.1**	39.8	9.1
h. Other after school clubs	**46.7**	45.5	7.8

The leisure-time activity reported by most students was participation in sports teams at almost 73%, followed by church youth groups at 70.1%. Moderately popular are music/art/drama clubs, other after school clubs, and boys and girls clubs at about 51%, 47% and 41%, respectively. Also moderately popular where available are 4-H clubs (around 45%). Least popular were service clubs (at about 18%), followed by scouting and (at 24%). Least available activities in these communities were service clubs, scouting and music/art/drama clubs.

Parental Guidance and Support:

Finally, parental guidance and support were assessed by a series of questions, such as "Do your parents want you to call if you are going to be late getting home?" To this question, 79% of students responded positively, and 21%, negatively. The question, "Does your family have clear rules about alcohol and drug use?" brought responses of 71.1%, "yes", and 28.9%, "no". The extent to which families fight is measured by answers to whether people in students' family often insult or yell at each other, reported by 34.7% of students, compared to 65.3% who say "no". About 28% (28.2%) of students reported that people in their family have serious arguments, while 71.8% do not report this.

Answers to two hypothetical questions are also revealing of the extent of parental guidance and concern as perceived by these youth. First, 55.6% of students said that if they drank some beer, wine, or hard liquor (for example, vodka, whiskey, or gin) without their parents' permission, they would be caught by their parents, while 69% said that if they carried a handgun without their parents' permission, they would be caught by their parents.

POSITIVE PARENTAL ATTITUDES AND PRACTICES:

The frequency with which parents include youth in family decisions and praise and reward them is thought to be associated with protection against alcohol and other drug abuse. For these youth, parental guidance and support appears relatively high.

Percentage of Students Reporting Frequency of Parents:	**% Never/ Rarely**	**% Sometimes**	**% Often/Almost Always**
a. giving them lots of chances to do fun things with them	15.0	39.2	**45.7**
b. asking them what they think before most family decisions affecting the students are made	25.8	40.6	**33.5**
c. noticing when they are doing a good job and letting them know about it	16.6	31.5	**51.9**
d. telling the students they are proud of them for something they have done	13.6	28.2	**58.2**

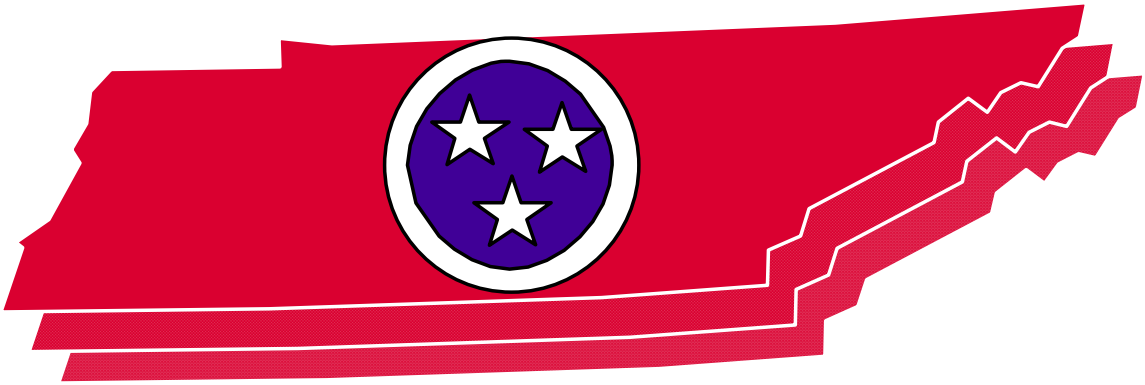
The most commonly reported supportive practice of parents toward these middle school students among the items measured is telling the students they are proud of their accomplishments, at 58.2% of students reporting parents as often or almost always doing so. This is followed by parents' noticing a good job and letting students know it (around 52%), and giving students lots of chances to do fun things with parents (about 46%). Least likely to occur often or almost always is parents' asking students what they think before family decisions affecting them are made, at 33.5% often or almost always doing so.

Finally, 88.3% of students say that their parents ask if they have gotten their homework done, while 11.9% do not. In 84.2% of cases, when students are not at home, one of their parents knows where they are and who they are with, while 15.8% do not. The great majority of students reported that their parents would know if they did not come home on time, at 83.1%, compared to 16.9% whose parents would not know. Almost 77% of students could ask their parents for help if they had a personal problem, compared to 23% who could not do so. Students were more likely to report that they often share their thoughts and feelings with their mothers (64.7%), compared to their fathers (42.8%).

TENNESSEE MIDDLE SCHOOL HEALTH SURVEY, 2001-2002

A SUMMARY OF FINDINGS FROM THE TENNESSEE MIDDLE SCHOOL HEALTH SURVEY

SULLIVAN COUNTY



TENNESSEE DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH

AND THE

COMMUNITY HEALTH RESEARCH GROUP

THE UNIVERSITY OF TENNESSEE, KNOXVILLE

June 2003

TENNESSEE MIDDLE SCHOOL SURVEY RESULTS:
SULLIVAN COUNTY

SOCIODEMOGRAPHIC CHARACTERISTICS:

Gender: A total of 3,541 students in randomly sampled middle schools grades 6-8 in Sullivan County completed surveys. They were split fairly evenly by gender, with 48.3% being female and 51.7% male.

Grade: By grade, 33.2% of the students sampled were in 6th grade, 35.9% in 7th grade and 30.9% in 8th grade.

Age: In terms of age, 8.3% of students were 11 years of age or younger, while 31.2% were age 12; 33.8% were age13; 22.8% were age 14; and 3.9% were 15 years of age or older.

Race/Ethnicity: While 94.2% of students were white, 2.5% were black and 3.4% were of other racial/ethnic groups.

Hispanic Origin: A total of 5.3% of students were of Hispanic origin.

OTHER BACKGROUND CHARACTERISTICS:

Two-Parent Family: While 75.1% of students in the study lived in two-parent families, 24.9% lived in families of other compositions.

Non-English Spoken At Home: While fully 98.4% of students reported that English was the language used most often in the home, 0.7% reported that language to be Spanish and another 0.9% reported another language as the language most often spoken at home.

Rural/Urban Residence: More than two-thirds (69.1%) of middle school students lived in a city, town or suburb, i.e., an urban area, while the remaining 30.9% lived in rural areas. Of all students, 25.4% lived in the country, although not on a farm, and 5.5% lived on farms.

Proxy Measures of Poverty: In answer to the question, “Do you live in public housing?”, close to one-third (31.7%) of students did not know the answer, while 10.1% reported that they did live in public housing, and another 58.2% that they did not live in public housing. This measure was to be used as one indicator of poverty along with whether the family was on any form of public assistance. That question was phrased: “Does your family receive any form of public assistance, such as food stamps or other forms of welfare (such as Families First, WIC, TennCare/Medicaid, etc.)?” Almost one-quarter (23.4%) of the students did not know. Still 18.9% reported that their families did receive public assistance, while 57.6% did not. Combining these two measures produces a prevalence estimate of middle school students in poverty of 25.3% in the county as a whole.

Mobility/Migration: Only 32.7% of students had not changed homes since kindergarten, while 31.7% had changed homes 1-2 times; 19.2% had changed homes 3-4 times; and 16.4% had changed homes 5 times or more since kindergarten (8.9% had done so 5-6 times, and 7.5%, 7 times or more).

The Importance of Religion or Spirituality in Students' Families: Only 12.4% of Sullivan County middle school students reported that religion or spirituality was either not very important (9.9%) or not at all important (2.5%) in their families. For more than half (51.6%) of these students, religion or spirituality was very important, while for 36.0%, it was somewhat important.

The Importance of Religion or Spirituality in Students' Own Lives: For 11.0% of Sullivan County middle school students, religion or spirituality was either not very important (7.5%) or not at all important (3.5%) in their own lives, while for 32.6%, it was somewhat important, and for more than half (56.3%), it was very important.

Attendance at Religious Services: Asked how often they attend religious services or activities, 10.2% of students said they never did, while less than once a month was the response chosen by another 10.5%. Attendance at religious services or activities occupied 19.7% of students 1-2 times a month, although not every week, while another 59.6% of students attended religious services once a week or more.

SCHOOL EXPERIENCE:

Grades Last Year: Getting mostly A's as grades in the last school year was reported by 30.9% of students, while mostly B's were reported by 38.4%, and mostly C's by 22.7%. Only 8.0% of students reported either mostly D's (5.1%) or mostly F's (2.9%).

A series of questions were asked concerning how often youth had certain experiences in school - whether rarely or never, sometimes or often or almost always. Categories are collapsed here into "often/almost always", and the residual which is "rarely, never or sometimes" in relation to students reporting those problems or experiences.

Percentage of Students Reporting that in the Past School Year They:	% Never/Rarely/ Sometimes	% Often/Almost Always
a. feel physically safe or safe from violence at school	**44.6%**	55.4%
b. try to do your best work in school	**30.1%**	69.9%
c. find most of your courses interesting to you	**82.7%**	17.3%
d. find the school work too hard to understand	92.6%	**7.4%**
e. fool around in class	88.2%	**11.8%**

Percentage of Students Reporting that in the Past School Year They:	% Never/Rarely/ Sometimes	% Often/Almost Always
f. fail to complete or turn in your assignments	94.3%	**5.7%**
g. get sent to the office or have to stay after school because you misbehaved	95.9%	**4.1%**
h. skip a day of school or part of a day (without permission)	98.2%	**1.8%**
i. get better grades than most of the students in your class	**80.1%**	19.9%
j. feel bullied by other kids at school	91.7%	**8.3%**
k. feel bored in school	70.8%	**29.2%**
l. hate being in school	77.4%	**22.6%**
m. think the things you are learning in school are going to be important for your later life	**57.1%**	42.9%

These attitudes among others studied in this survey are seen as protective or detrimental to efforts to prevent or reduce alcohol and other drug (AOD) use, abuse, problems or dependence among these youth. Results suggest that negative attitudes to school such as feeling bored in school and hating being in school were reported often or almost always by the most students at about 29% and 23%, respectively, while fooling around in class often or almost always was reported by 12%. Finding school work too hard to understand, failing to complete or turn in assignments, getting punished for misbehaving, or skipping school were reported often or almost always by more than 7%, around 6%, 4% and 1.8% of students, respectively.

Only a little more than half of students felt often or almost always safe at school (55.4%), with over 8% reporting being often or almost always bullied at school. Other common negative orientations to school were never, rarely or sometimes finding courses interesting, reported by 83% of students, with about 80% of students reporting never, rarely, or sometimes getting better grades than most other students. About 30% of students reported never, rarely or sometimes trying to do their best work in school, and more than half (57%) reported not often thinking that what was learned in school was going to be important later in life.

Missing School: A fairly high percentage of youth (45.4%) missed school at least one time in the past 30 days because of illness or injury, while 11.3% missed school because of skipping or cutting classes, and 37.7% missed school for other reasons.

Opportunities for Participation:

The following results were obtained when students were asked, whether, in their middle school, they had certain opportunities for participation in activities. The purpose was to tap students' attitudes to the school experience in general.

Percentage of Students Reporting Certain Attitudes to School	% NO	% YES
a. In your middle school, do you have chances to be part of class discussions and activities?	**8.7**	91.3
b. do your teachers notice when you are doing a good job and let you know about it?	**28.3**	71.7
c. do you have lots of chances to get involved in school activities outside of class?	**31.4**	68.6
d. do students in your school have chances to talk to teachers one-on-one?	**16.5**	83.5
e. does your school let your parents know when you have done something well?	**64.3**	35.7

Here, only about 9% of students reported feeling as though they did not have chances to participate in class, and 16.5% reported no chances to talk to teachers one-on-one. More than 1 in 4 students (28%) reported teachers not noticing and informing them when they were doing good work, and close to 1 in 3 (31%) reported that they do not have lots of chances to get involved in extra-classroom activities at school. Finally, close to 2 in 3 (64%) of students said that their schools did not let their parents know when they had performed well.

HEALTH AND WELL-BEING OF MIDDLE SCHOOL STUDENTS IN SULLIVAN COUNTY:

Health Status: Overall, 12.5% of students reported that in general their health was either fair (11.5%) or poor (1.0%), while 23.4% reported good health, 31.2% very good health, and 32.9%, excellent health.

Disability Status: In answer to the question, "Do you now have any physical health problems or disabling conditions that keep you from doing normal activities?", 89.3% of students said "no", while 10.7% reported some disability.

Hyperactivity: In answer to the question, "Are you currently taking prescription drugs or "pills" for hyperactivity (ADD or ADHD) such as Ritalin?", 7.8% of middle school students said "yes", and 92.2% said "no".

Receipt of any Treatment or Counseling Outside School: Lifetime prevalence of receipt of treatment for an emotional or mental health problem outside school was 12.7%. The prevalence of treatment for an alcohol problem was 1.6%; and for a drug problem, it was 2.4%. Receipt of treatment for either an alcohol or another drug problem was reported by 2.7% of middle school students in Sullivan County in 2001.

Attendance at Self-Help or 12-Step Support Group Meetings: Attendance at such self-help or 12-step meetings as Alateen, Al-Anon, Children of Alcoholics (COA), Alcoholics Anonymous (AA), Narcotics Anonymous (NA), Cocaine Anonymous (CA) was reported by 2.4% of students, while the remaining students or 97.6% had not done so.

Utilization of Emergency and Hospital Services:

Emergency Department Services: In the 12 months prior to the survey, 18.3% of students reported having been taken to an emergency room for an illness, and 26.4%, for an injury. An overall total of over one-third (37.2%) of students had been taken to an ED for either an illness or an injury in the past 12 months.

Hospital Admissions: In the last 12 months, 3.9% of middle school students had stayed at least one night in a hospital for an illness while 4.2% had stayed at least one night for an injury. Either illness- or injury-related hospital admissions were reported by 7% of students.

Depression and Suicide Attempts:

Indicators of potential depression and low self-esteem such as thinking that life is not worth it sometimes or that one is no good at all are relatively common among these Sullivan County middle school students. These two feelings were reported by 29.6% and 23.7% of students, respectively.

More specific questions about depression were asked, such as “How often do you feel very depressed, that is, very “blue” or unhappy?” While 41.7% of students reported never or rarely feeling very depressed, 47.0% reported that they sometimes felt this way, and 11.4% reported often or almost always feeling very depressed.

Overall, 18.1% of middle school students reported ever feeling so desperate that they considered suicide, and 6.3% reported ever attempting suicide. Those young suicide attempters represent 32.9% of students considering suicide.

Finally, 2.0% of students said they had ever gone to a hospital or get medical treatment because of a suicide attempt. This represents around 32.1% of those students attempting suicide.

Life Stressors: These students have already experienced a variety of life stresses such as relocations and related changes. Questions about their lifetime experience of selected stressors elicited interesting responses, reported below.

First, in answer to questions concerning whether these youth had experienced a move in the last 12 months, 21.1% of youth reported moving to a different home in the last 12 months, while 18.6% reported starting at a new school in the same period.

In answer to the question of lifetime stressors experienced, the percentages of students reporting each type of life change is presented below:

Percentage of Students Reporting Life Stressors by Type of Stressor in Their Lifetimes	**% Yes**	**% No**
a. had a death in the family	**88.1**	11.9
b. parents (guardians) divorced	**38.2**	61.8
c. family had financial problems	**34.1**	65.9
d. anyone in the family been arrested	**34.2**	65.8
e. new sister or brother born	**35.0**	65.0
f. had a serious illness or injury in your immediate family	**54.1**	45.9
g. had your own serious illness or injury	**31.9**	68.1
h. experienced another very stressful event	**49.9**	50.1

To the extent that these students between the ages of 11 and 15 for the most part have already experienced some major life crises, their coping skills and responses to stressors are of major interest and concern especially as they may protect against or increase the risk of alcohol and other drug use and associated problems.

Particularly prevalent was death in the family experienced by close to 90% of children, followed by serious illness or injury of a family member, and other stressful events, reported by around half or more of these students. For around 38% of students, parental divorce was reported, and by more than one-third, the birth of a sibling, family financial problems, and family arrests. Least frequently reported among these life stresses was own serious illness or injury at a little less than one-third.

FRIENDS/PEER INFLUENCES ON YOUTH BEHAVIOR:

Best Friends' Practices:

When asked about their four best friends (the friends they feel closest to) and whether in the past 12 months any of those best friends had engaged in alcohol or other drug use, a range of from a low of 4.5% to a high of about 12.7% of students reported that they did not know.

Percentage of Students with Any Best Friends, who, in the Past 12 Months, Did the Following:	**% Yes**	**% No**	**% Don't Know**
a. smoked cigarettes	**25.6**	62.5	11.9
b. drunk alcoholic beverages -- beer, wine, or hard liquor (for example, vodka, whiskey, or gin)	**23.6**	63.7	12.7
c. used marijuana/pot	**15.4**	74.2	10.5
d. taken "pills" to get high or for non-medical reasons	**11.5**	77.6	10.9
e. used LSD, cocaine, amphetamines/speed, or another illegal drug	**5.8**	83.3	11.0
f. been suspended from school	**26.5**	68.0	5.5
g. carried a handgun or other weapon like a knife (other than for hunting or sport)	**10.5**	82.1	7.4
h. taken a handgun to school	**1.3**	94.2	4.5
i. sold "pills" or illegal drugs	**7.1**	85.6	7.3
j. stolen or tried to steal a motor vehicle such as a car or a motorcycle	**4.2**	88.9	6.8
k. been arrested	**7.3**	87.1	5.6
l. dropped out of school	**4.8**	90.5	4.7
m. been members of a gang	**9.0**	83.1	8.0

Most frequently reported behaviors among best friends were being suspended from school (26.5%), and smoking cigarettes or drinking alcohol at about one quarter of students each. These were followed by using marijuana (around 15%), taking pills to get high (11.5%), carrying a weapon (10.5%), being gang members and being arrested at about 9% and 7%, respectively. Selling pills or illegal drugs was reported by about 7% of students in relation

to their best friends. On the other hand, taking a handgun to school was the least common practice reported for best friends at only around 1.3%, followed by using illegal drugs (6%), dropping out of school, and stealing or trying to steal a motor vehicle. These were reported for their best friends by 4-5% of these youth.

Perceptions of Being Cool:

To elicit attitudes to the acceptability with peers of alcohol and other drug use, a series of questions was asked about how "cool" certain practices are perceived to be by middle school students, with the following results:

Percentage of Students Reporting the Chances They Would be Seen as Cool if They:	**% No or Very Little Chance**	**% Some Chance**	**% Pretty Good or Very Good Chance**
a. smoked cigarettes	81.3	13.8	**4.9**
b. began drinking alcoholic beverages regularly, that is, at least once or twice a month	81.4	13.2	**5.4**
c. smoked marijuana	82.7	10.9	**6.5**
d. carried a handgun	90.0	6.6	**3.5**

Clearly, behavior associated with the most "cool" perception is smoking marijuana, while the least "cool" is carrying a handgun. Regular alcohol use is perceived as slightly "cooler" than smoking cigarettes.

PERCEIVED RISK AND AVAILABILITY OF AOD:

The University of Michigan Monitoring the Future surveys of high school and middle school youth have found that the combination of perceived risk of harm and availability of substances together account for higher consumption of substances among the youth studied. The Sullivan County students' responses to these questions are provided below:

Perceived Risk of Substance Use:

How much students think people risk harming themselves (physically or in other ways) if they engage in each of the following practices involving AOD use gives a clear indication of students' assessment of relative risk of harm.

Percentage of Students Perceiving People's Risk of Harm from AOD Use:	% No Risk	% Slight Risk	% Moderate Risk	% Great Risk
a. smoke one or more packs of cigarettes per day	6.1	8.3	25.9	**59.8**
b. use smokeless tobacco	8.0	22.7	36.7	**32.6**
c. try marijuana once or twice	11.8	22.3	23.9	**42.0**
d. smoke marijuana regularly (at least once or twice a month)	8.7	9.5	20.2	**61.5**
e. drink any alcoholic beverages (beer, wine, liquor)	8.9	23.9	33.1	**34.2**
f. take one or two drinks of an alcoholic beverage nearly every day	10.1	17.2	27.8	**44.8**

Clearly, the most risk of physical or other harm is perceived by these middle school students from smoking marijuana regularly or smoking one or more packs of cigarettes a day (about 60-61.5% reporting great risk each), while the lowest perceived risk is assessed for drinking any alcohol or using smokeless tobacco (about 33-34% great risk each). Intermediate risks of harm are attributed to trying marijuana once or twice and taking one or two drinks of alcoholic beverages nearly every day, at 42% and 45% of students assessing great risk of harm to these practices, respectively.

Perceived Ease of Access to AOD:

Like perceived harmfulness or risk of harm from drugs, including alcohol, perceived ease of access to or availability of drugs serves as an important predictor of risk of AOD use and problems related to it.

Percentage of Students Reporting Relative Ease of Access to Drugs by Type - Q: How easy do you think it would be for you to get each of the following types of drugs if you wanted some?	% Very or Somewhat Easy	% Very or Somewhat Hard
a. Cigarettes	**55.1**	44.9
b. Smokeless tobacco	**44.7**	55.3
c. Alcohol (beer, wine or hard liquor)	**46.0**	54.0
d. Marijuana/pot	**29.4**	70.6
e. Drugs like cocaine/crack, LSD (acid), heroin, etc.	**18.8**	81.2
f. "Pills" like uppers/speed, downers, painkillers, tranquilizers	**30.7**	69.3
g. Something to sniff like glue or gasoline	**62.2**	37.8

The easiest substances for middle school students to access appear to be inhalants and cigarettes, followed by alcohol and smokeless tobacco. Pills like uppers, downers, etc., and marijuana were seen as moderately easy to obtain, with illicit drugs like cocaine, hallucinogens, and heroin, for example, as the hardest to access in these students' opinions.

Ease of Access to a Gun:

In answer to the question, "If you wanted to get a gun, how easy would it be for you to get one?", 20.3% of these middle school students said it would be very easy, and another 14.6% said somewhat easy, to access guns. The remaining 65.2% of students reported access to guns to be hard - either somewhat hard, at 18.5%, or very hard, at 46.7%.

Perceived Wrongness of Certain Personal Choices and Practices:

In answer to the question concerning how wrong one thinks it is for someone the student's age to use certain substances and engage in certain risky practices, the following were the results:

Percentage of Students Perceiving it Wrong to:	**% Very Wrong**	**% Somewhat Wrong**	**% Not Very Wrong**	**% Not Wrong at All**
a. drink beer, wine, or hard liquor (for example, vodka, whiskey, or gin) regularly (at least once or twice a month)	**71.8**	18.9	6.2	3.0
b. smoke cigarettes	**72.6**	17.2	6.1	4.1
c. smoke marijuana/pot	**83.9**	9.0	3.4	3.8
d. use LSD, cocaine, amphetamines/ speed or another illegal drug	**91.2**	5.3	1.5	2.0
e. steal anything worth more than $5	**72.7**	20.9	4.3	2.1
f. take a handgun or other weapon to school	**93.9**	3.8	0.9	1.5
g. pick a fight with someone	**44.4**	36.7	13.3	5.6
h. stay away from school all day when your parents think you are at school (skip school)	**72.2**	20.4	4.6	2.8
i. attack someone with the idea of seriously hurting them	**85.1**	10.4	2.4	2.1
j. beat up people if they start a fight	**45.6**	25.7	12.5	16.2

The practices perceived as most wrong, with the highest percentage of students reporting them as very wrong, were taking a handgun or weapon to school (94% reported this as very wrong) or using illegal drugs like LSD, cocaine or speed (91% very wrong). Attacking someone with the idea of hurting them or smoking pot/marijuana (at about 84 - 85% each) were less likely to be judged as very wrong. Even less likely to be seen as very wrong were smoking cigarettes, drinking alcohol regularly, stealing anything worth more than $5, or skipping school, each of which was reported by about 72-73% of students as being very wrong. Picking a fight with someone or beating up people if they start a fight were seen as very wrong by a little less than half (about 44-46%) of students. This suggests that picking fights or beating people up in fights, which are types of violent behavior, are less likely to

be judged as very wrong by students themselves than is drug use - whether using alcohol, smoking cigarettes or using illegal drugs.

Students' Perceptions of How Wrong Parents Would Think Certain Behaviors:

Similar questions to those above were asked of students concerning parental views of how wrong certain practices are; the results follow:

Percentage of Students Reporting the Degree to which Their Parents Would Think it Wrong for Them to:	% Very Wrong	% Somewhat Wrong	% Not Very Wrong	% Not Wrong at All
a. drink beer, wine, or hard liquor (for example, vodka, whiskey, or gin) regularly (at least once or twice a month)	**88.1**	7.3	2.2	2.4
b. smoke cigarettes	**87.2**	8.1	2.3	2.4
c. smoke marijuana/pot	**94.4**	2.6	1.3	1.7
d. steal anything worth more than $5.00	**92.0**	5.4	0.9	1.7
e. draw graffiti, write things, or draw pictures on buildings or other property (without the owner's permission)	**90.9**	5.8	1.4	1.8
f. pick a fight with someone	**75.2**	17.2	4.5	3.0

Smoking marijuana ranks first in the percentage of students who think their parents would assess the practice as very wrong, at about 94%, followed by stealing anything worth more than $5 (92%), and drawing graffiti and related activities (91%). Slightly less wrong in student-assessed parental judgment are drinking alcohol regularly, and smoking cigarettes, which each drew responses of "very wrong" from about 87-88% of students. Consistent with earlier results, picking a fight with someone was seen as least likely to be seen as wrong for students to do by their parents, with about 75% of students assessing that behavior as very wrong from a parental viewpoint.

Students' Perceptions of How Wrong Adults in Their Neighborhood Think Certain Behaviors Are:

In parallel with the questions asked of the students themselves and their parents reported above, students were asked to assess how wrong most adults in their neighborhood, or the area around where they live, would think it is for kids their age to use alcohol and other drugs and engage in risky or illegal behaviors. The results are striking in comparison with those for the students and their parents.

Percentage of Students Reporting How Wrong Adults in their Neighborhood Think it is for Middle School Age Kids:	% Very Wrong	% Somewhat Wrong	% Not Very Wrong	% Not Wrong At All
a. to use marijuana	90.7	4.7	**1.8**	**2.8**
b. to drink alcohol	83.3	9.8	**3.6**	**3.3**
c. to smoke cigarettes	77.4	13.4	**4.8**	**4.5**

These students perceive that adults in their neighborhood, like their parents, think that use of marijuana is very wrong, followed by drinking alcohol and smoking cigarettes, with 91%, 83% and 77% of students reporting these behaviors as very wrong for kids their age to indulge in, according to adults in their neighborhood. On the other hand, about 4.5%, 3.3% and 2.8% of students, respectively, think adults in their neighborhood see nothing wrong in kids their age smoking cigarettes, drinking alcohol or using marijuana, in that order.

STUDENTS' LIFE PROBLEMS AND HIGH RISK PRACTICES:

Asked whether they had ever participated in several problematic behaviors, such as gang membership, suspension from school or violence-related behavior, the following results were observed for middle school students surveyed in Sullivan County. Nearly 6% (5.7%) reported that they had belonged to a gang, while 4.2% reported having been arrested at least once in their lifetimes. Suspension from school was reported by 15% of students. Certain practices related to violence or risk of violence were reported as follows: 4.4% of students had carried a handgun other than for hunting or sport, while 12.2% had attacked someone with the idea of seriously hurting them.

The results for students' exposure to and participation in risky and violent behaviors in the past 12 months, overall and in school, are reported below.

Percentage of Students who Reported in the Past 12 Months that They Had....	%Yes, Overall	% Yes, at School
a. gotten into a physical fight	31.8	13.3
b. taken part in a gang fight where a group of your friends was against another group	6.2	1.8
c. been injured in a fight	8.7	2.6
d. been physically abused or assaulted	8.8	3.9
e. stolen "pills" or prescription drugs including from home	3.1	0.9
f. stolen illegal drugs	2.8	0.7

Percentage of Students who Reported in the Past 12 Months that They Had....	%Yes, Overall	% Yes, at School
g. bought “pills” or an illegal drug	3.9	1.2
h. been offered or given “pills” or an illegal drug	18.1	5.2

These results suggest that getting into physical fights is very frequent behavior in these middle school students, with nearly 1 in 3 reporting fighting in the past 12 months and with about 42% of those fights occurring at school. Being offered or given pills or illicit drugs is next most frequent among these students, at close to 18% reporting this experience, with about 29% of such contacts occurring at school. Less frequently reported were, being physically abused or assaulted, or being injured in a fight, at about 9% of students each. About 30% of those injured in a fight were injured at school, while nearly half (45%) of those physically abused or assaulted were attacked at school. Participation in gang fights was reported by more than 6% of youth. About 30.5% of these gang fights reportedly occurred at school. Buying pills or an illegal drug, stealing pills or prescription drugs including from home, and stealing illegal drugs were reported by 3.9%, 3.1% and 2.8% of students, respectively. In about one-third of cases of buying pills or illegal drugs, this occurred at school, while in 26-27% of cases where drugs were stolen – whether pills/prescription drugs or illegal drugs – the stealing was reported to have occurred at school.

Other High Risk Behaviors in the Past 12 Months:

Overall, 10% of Sullivan County students reported that they had been suspended from school one or more times in the last 12 months. Substantially lower percentages of students reported serious criminal behavior - thus, 1.5% reported that they had stolen or tried to steal a motor vehicle, such as a car or a motorcycle, while 3.1% reported that they had been arrested at least once in the last 12 months.

Violent behavior was reported by 9.4% of students who said that they had attacked someone (physically) with the idea of seriously hurting them in the last 12 months. Overall, 7.1% of students had carried a weapon (such as a handgun, knife or club) other than for hunting or sport, and 1.2% had taken a weapon such as a gun to school at least once in the period in question.

In terms of alcohol and other drug use, 5.8% of these Sullivan County middle school students had been drunk or high at school, and 0.7% reported this had occurred 20 times or more in the last 12 months. About 2.9% of these youth reported that they had sold “pills” or illegal drugs in the past 12 months, and 1.7% of students overall reported that they had sold “pills” or illegal drugs at school.

Attitudes to Risky and Illegal Practices:

Tapping dimensions of impulsivity and rebelliousness, as well as other negative attitudes, these students' responses indicate that impulsivity is very characteristic of these young people. Nearly half (48%) report that they often do things without thinking of consequences. Overall, 23.6% think it is not important to think before they act, and 19% have to have everything right away. Measures of rebelliousness and testing limits - liking to see how much they can get away with, reported by about 23% of students, ignoring rules that get in the way (about 21%), and doing the opposite of what people tell them just to provoke a reaction (17.5%) - are also relatively commonly reported by these students. The two depression-related questions above are discussed in an earlier section. Thinking it is OK to cheat at school was reported by around 15% of students.

Percentage of Students Whose Attitudes Put Them at High Risk and Therefore Who	**% Yes**	**% No**
a. think it is okay to cheat at school	**14.6**	85.4
b. like to see how much you can get away with	**22.9**	77.1
c. sometimes think that life is not worth it	**29.6**	70.4
d. think you are no good at all	**23.7**	76.3
e. ignore rules that get in your way	**20.7**	79.3
f. often do things without thinking what will happen	**48.0**	52.0
g. have to have everything right away	**19.2**	80.8
h. think it is important to think before you act	76.4	**23.6**
i. do the opposite of what people tell you, just to get them mad	**17.5**	82.5

Other Risk Taking:

Students who say that they often or almost always have done what feels good no matter what or have done something dangerous because someone dared them to do it represent 12.5% and 6.0% of students, respectively. Those students who conversely report that they never or rarely have done what feels good no matter what or done something dangerous on a dare comprise 47.5% and 70.4% of students, overall.

FAMILIAL AND PEER ALCOHOL OR DRUG PROBLEMS:

Familial Alcohol or Drug Abuse:

Fully 26.8% of students reported that someone in their family has had a severe alcohol or drug problem.

Parental AOD Use: Answering the question, "Do you think one or both of your parents (stepparents or guardians) is drinking too much or has a problem with alcohol?", 9.5% of students said "Yes". Close to 7% (6.8%) of students said that they think one or both of their parents is using or abusing drugs other than alcohol. A total of 12.5% of students think that one or both of their parents is using or abusing alcohol or has a problem with it.

Siblings' AOD Use: Asked about alcohol and other drug use and high risk practices in their siblings, 11% of students had no brothers or sisters. However, for continuity and consistency of denominators, the following percentages are reported for all students.

Percentage of Students Reporting that One or More of Their Brothers or Sisters	% of All Students
a. drinks beer, wine, or hard liquor (for example, vodka, whiskey or gin)	15.2
b. smokes marijuana	9.0
c. smokes cigarettes	20.6
d. has taken a handgun to school	1.3
e. has been suspended or expelled from school	14.3

Cigarette smoking is most frequently reported for sibling drug use by these students at about 21%, followed by drinking alcohol and suspension from school at around 15% and 14% respectively. Marijuana use was reported for about 9% of students' siblings. Handguns at school was least common at 1.3%.

Close Friends' Alcohol or Drug Problems: About 5.8% of students reported that they think that one or more of their close friends is drinking too much or has a problem with alcohol, and 10.1% said that they think that one or more of the close friends is using or abusing drugs other than alcohol.

STUDENT'S OWN ALCOHOL/DRUG USE:

While this was mainly a prevention survey, it is clear that many of these middle school students have already begun their alcohol and other drug use careers so that primary prevention, delaying onset of the initiation of first use of alcohol or other drugs, is for many an inappropriate strategy. Secondary prevention, reducing the use of alcohol or other drugs, mitigating the occurrence of negative and dangerous consequences, and breaking the dependence cycle early is more relevant. In some cases tertiary prevention or actual treatment is indicated, particularly in students who self-report addiction or dependence.

Cigarette Smoking:

More than 1 in 4 (27.7%) students have ever smoked cigarettes. Fully 18.3% of students had smoked cigarettes in the last 12 months, and 12.4% of students had smoked in the past 30 days. Thus, about two-thirds (65.4%) of lifetime smokers had smoked in the last 12 months, and 44% of lifetime smokers had smoked in the past 30 days.

Students who had smoked cigarettes on 20 or more of the last 30 days comprised 3.2% of all students. Those who smoked 11 or more cigarettes in the past 30 days represented 1.7% of students. Also, 25.2% of current or 30-day smokers smoked cigarettes on 20+ of the past 30 days, and 13.9% of current smokers smoked 11 or more cigarettes in the past 30 days.

Smokeless Tobacco (Chewing Tobacco, Snuff, Plug, Dipping Tobacco):

Close to 15% (14.5%) of students have ever used smokeless tobacco. Fully 8.7% of students had used smokeless tobacco in the last 12 months, and 5.6% of students had used it in the past 30 days. Thus, 58.5% of lifetime users had used smokeless tobacco in the last 12 months, while 37.8% of lifetime users had used smokeless tobacco in the past 30 days.

Students who had used smokeless tobacco on 20 or more of the last 30 days comprised 1.4% of all students. Around 23.5% of current or 30-day smokeless tobacco users used it on 20+ of the past 30 days.

Alcoholic Beverages (Beer, Wine, Wine Coolers or Liquor):

More than one-third (34.5%) of these middle school students, ranging in age from 11 to 15 years, had drunk alcoholic beverages more than a few sips at least once in their lifetimes. While 23.2% had drunk alcohol in the past 12 months, 15.1% had done so in the past 30 days. Thus, given that students had ever used alcohol, 66.1% of them had drunk alcohol in the past 12 months, and 42.7% had drunk alcohol in the past 30 days.

Students who had used alcohol on 20 or more of the last 30 days comprised 0.6% of all students, and 3.7% of current drinkers. Students who reported daily alcohol consumption over the past 30 days represented 0.3% of all students. Daily drinkers made up 2.2% of current (30-day) drinkers among these students, and 60% of students who reported drinking on 20 or more of the last 30 days drank alcohol daily.

Among these middle school students, 3.0% drank 5 or more drinks of alcohol per day on their drinking days. These "binge drinkers" are 20% of current drinkers (last 30 days). Much less than 1% (0.5%) of students reported drinking 5 or more drinks on 20 or more of the past 30 days. Finally 0.3% of students overall reported drinking 5 or more drinks of alcohol daily in the past 30 days.

In answer to the question, "Have you **ever** gotten drunk or felt very high or intoxicated from drinking alcohol?", 12.3% of Sullivan County students said that they had gotten drunk. This number represents 35.4% of lifetime drinkers.

Marijuana (Pot, Grass, Hash, etc.) Use:

About 14.1% of middle school students in Sullivan County had ever used marijuana, while 9.8% had used marijuana in the past 12 months, and 6.3% in the past 30 days. While 67.2% of lifetime marijuana users used marijuana in the past 12 months, 43.4% of lifetime users had used marijuana in the past 30 days.

Students who had used marijuana on 20 or more of the last 30 days comprised 1.2% of all students, and students who reported daily marijuana use over the past 30 days represented 0.8% of all students. However, among current marijuana users (30-day users), 18.9% used on 20 or more of the past 30 days and 11.3% of current users reported daily marijuana use.

Percentage of Students Reporting Illegal Drug Use by Type of Drug and Lifetime, Recent or Current Use	**% Yes, Ever**	**% Yes, in the Last 12 Months**	**% Yes, in the Last 30 Days**
a. Cocaine or crack	3.5	2.5	1.5
b. Substances you "sniff": paint thinners, glue, gasoline, white-out, butane, aerosol sprays, etc.	9.0	7.1	5.9
c. LSD (acid) or other hallucinogens such as peyote, jimson weed, mushrooms, PCP (angel dust), etc.	5.1	3.8	3.1
d. Other illegal drugs such as ecstasy, ice (crystal meth), heroin (smack, horse, skag), etc.	3.8	2.9	2.3

It is very clear that inhalants are one drug of choice for these youth, since of the 9% of students who report lifetime use of inhalants to get high, 79% had used inhalants in the last

12 months, and 65% had used them in the last 30 days. Cocaine, on the other hand, was less likely to involve sustained use, since of the lifetime users of cocaine or crack among these middle school students, 69% had used cocaine in the last 12 months, and 44% in the last 30 days. For other illegal drugs and for hallucinogens such as LSD, the percentages of ever users who used in the last 12 months are 77% and 74.5%, respectively, while the proportions of ever users who used in the last 30 days are 60% for LSD and other hallucinogens, and 57% for other illegal drugs. About 0.7% to 0.9% of Sullivan County students reported use of one or more of these illegal drugs daily in the last 30 days.

OVERALL ATOD, AOD AND DRUG USE PREVALENCE:

ATOD: Overall, nearly half or 47.6% of middle school students in Sullivan County, reported using alcohol, tobacco or other drugs (ATOD) in their lifetimes, while 35.3% reported 12-month use, and 27.0% reported 30-day use of one or more substances (excluding caffeine and prescription drugs).

Given lifetime use, 71.3% had used ATOD in 12 months, and 53% in 30 days. Of 12-month users, 74.2% were 30-day users, suggesting that when youth begin their drug use careers, relatively few stop soon.

AOD: Excluding tobacco and looking only at the prevalence of use of alcohol and other drugs (save caffeine and prescription drugs), the lifetime prevalence of alcohol and other drug (AOD) use among these middle school students is 40.2%, the 12-month prevalence, 29.3%, and the 30-day prevalence, 21.2%. Here again, given lifetime use, 71% had used AOD in 12 months, and 50% in 30 days. Of 12-month users, 70.4% were 30-day users.

Drugs: Considering drugs only, 19.6% of middle school students had ever used one or more illegal drugs (excluding alcohol, tobacco or prescription drugs as well as caffeine). This compares to a 12-month drug use prevalence rate of 15.3%, and a 30-day prevalence rate of 11.4%. About 76% of lifetime drug users used drugs in the past 12 months. Overall, 56.3% of lifetime drug users used drugs in the last 30 days. Among 12-month drug users, 74% were current or 30-day users.

AVERAGE AGE AT FIRST USE OF AOD:

Average Age at First Use by Type of Drug:	**Average Age of First Use (in Years)**
a. smoked cigarettes	10.1
b. used smokeless tobacco	10.6
c. drank alcoholic beverages	10.8
d. began drinking alcoholic beverages regularly, that is at least once or twice a month	11.7

Average Age at First Use by Type of Drug:	Average Age of First Use (in Years)
e. got drunk or felt very high or intoxicated from drinking alcohol	11.9
f. used marijuana/pot	11.8
g. used cocaine or crack	11.3
h. used substances you "sniff"	11.3
i. used LSD (acid) or other hallucinogens	11.7
j. used other illegal drugs such as ecstasy, Ice (crystal meth), heroin, etc.	11.6

Cigarette smoking is the earliest onset substance use, beginning, on average, in these middle school students at age 10.1, followed by using smokeless tobacco at age 10.6 years and drinking alcohol at age 10.8 years. Inhalant use was reported as initiated at the average age of 11.3 years among these students. The onset of cocaine use was also reported at age 11.3, followed by the use of other illegal drugs such as ecstasy, crystal meth and heroin, which began at age 11.6, on average. Regular alcohol consumption (at least once or twice a month), and the use of LSD or other hallucinogens started at age 11.7, while marijuana use started at age 11.8. Getting drunk or intoxicated was reported at first onset at age 11.9 years, the latest of all AOD use practices identified.

Prescription Drug Abuse:

Prescription drug abuse is defined as having taken any prescription drugs or "pills" just to get high or for non-medical purposes, on one's own, without a doctor's prescription. Nearly 7% (6.7%) of students reported prescription drug abuse in their lifetimes; 4.7% reported it in the past 12 months, and 2.3% in the past 30 days. Among lifetime prescription drug abusers, 69.5% had abused such drugs in the past 12 months, and 33.9% did so in the past 30 days.

SELF-REPORTED SUBSTANCE ABUSE/ADDICTION:

Answering "yes" to the question of lifetime or current addiction to or dependence on one or more drugs serves as a proxy measure of these youth's need for alcohol and other drug

treatment[1]. The following table shows the extent of self-reported addiction among these students by type of drug and by lifetime or current prevalence.

Percentage of Students Ever or Now Addicted to Alcohol or Other Drugs by Type of Drug	% Ever Addicted	% Now Addicted
a. Tobacco/nicotine	8.8	6.2
b. Alcohol (beer, wine or liquor)	3.8	2.9
c. Marijuana/pot	3.9	2.9
d. Cocaine or crack	0.7	0.5
e. Hallucinogens like LSD or PCP or ecstasy	0.9	0.6
f. Coffee/cola/caffeine	26.3	20.6
g. A prescription drug or "pill"	3.4	1.9
h. Other drugs or substances	2.4	1.5

Based on lifetime prevalence of self-reported addiction to a drug or substance, caffeine/cola/coffee is the most prevalent drug, addicting more than 1 in 4 students, followed, at a much lower level, at about 9%, by tobacco/nicotine, and about 3.8-3.9%, by alcohol and marijuana. Addiction to a prescription drug or "pill" was reported by 3.4% of students, and addiction to other drugs or substances by 2.4%. Less than 1% of students reported addiction either to hallucinogens like LSD (0.9%) or to cocaine or crack (0.76%).

Current addiction as self-reported by these students again showed caffeine as the number one drug of addiction, by far, at 21%, followed by tobacco/nicotine, at over 6%. Marijuana and alcohol addiction were reported by 2.9% of students, while prescription drugs or pills, other drugs or substances, hallucinogens and cocaine or crack were reported as current sources of addiction by decreasing percentages of youth, ranging from close to 2% (1.92%) down to 0.5%.

The percentage of lifetime addicted users who are currently addicted suggests some of the power of these drugs over these very young users. The highest percentage of ever addicted students are currently addicted to caffeine (77%), followed closely by alcohol (76%). Slightly lower rates of ever to current addicted students are observed for marijuana (73.5%), and tobacco/nicotine (70.1%). Hallucinogens such as LSD, other drugs or substances, and cocaine or crack had ever-to-current addiction ratios of 62.5%, 62% and

[1]The question contained in its wording a brief definition of addiction: "Do you think you have **EVER** been hooked on or addicted to any of the following substances (for example, did you try to quit or use less and had trouble doing so)? "

67%, respectively. The drug types least likely to be still addicting youth who reported ever being addicted to them are prescription drugs or "pills," at 55.2% of students ever addicted to them now addicted to them.

COMMUNITY INFLUENCES ON STUDENTS' AOD RISK:

Questions about students' communities and the areas around where they lived were expected to shed some light on risk and protective factors for alcohol and other drug use among middle school students.

Attitudes to Neighborhood:

Overall 10.5% of Sullivan County students said they did not feel safe in their neighborhood, or the area around where they live, while the remainder or 89.5% did feel safe. While 17.7% of students said they did not like their neighborhood, fully 82.3% feeling the opposite. Twenty-two percent of these youth would like to get out of their neighborhood, compared to the 78% who would not. About 36.3% of students report that their neighbors notice when they are doing a good job and let them know about it, while for 68.8% and 63.3% of students respectively, there are lots of adults in their neighborhood they could talk to about something important or there are people in their neighborhood who encourage them to do their best.

Neighborhood Description:

When asked how well each of the following characteristics describe their neighborhood, or the area around where they live, students were most likely to report fights and crime and/or drug selling as characterizing their neighborhoods very well or somewhat well, with less emphasis on empty or abandoned buildings or lots of graffiti.

Percentage of Students Describing Their Neighborhood in Terms of the Following:	% Very Well	% Somewhat Well	% Not Well	% Not at All
a. Crime and/or drug selling	**5.2**	7.3	10.4	**77.2**
b. Fights	**6.5**	9.9	13.3	**70.3**
c. Lots of empty or abandoned buildings	**3.5**	3.7	10.1	**82.6**
d. Lots of graffiti	**3.2**	2.7	7.8	**86.3**

Only about 70% of students reported that their neighborhoods were not at all characterized by fights, and around 77% not at all characterized by crime and/or drug selling. On the other hand, close to 83% of students reported no empty or abandoned buildings, and 86% reported no profuse graffiti at all in their neighborhoods.

Adults Using Alcohol and Drugs in the Neighborhood:

In the last 12 months, 22.3% of these middle school students from Sullivan County reported that they personally knew one or more adults who had used marijuana/pot, cocaine/crack or other illegal drugs. About 16.2% reported knowing at least one adult who had sold or dealt drugs in the last 12 months. Around 15.9% of students had known adults who had done other things that could get them in trouble with the police - stealing, selling stolen goods, mugging, or assaulting others, and a similar percentage (14.7%) had known adults who carried handguns or other weapons not for hunting or sport. Finally, about one-third (33.9%) of youth had known at least one adult who had gotten drunk or high in the last 12 months. Thus, drunkenness was by far the most commonly reported practice observed by these students among the adults in their neighborhoods.

When asked how many adults they knew personally who had engaged in these practices in the past 12 months, 10% of students cited 5 or more adults who had gotten drunk or high, while 5.9% knew 5 or more adults who had used marijuana/pot, cocaine/crack or other illegal drugs. From about 2-4% of students, 2.2% knew five or more adults who had carried handguns or weapons, sold or dealt drugs (3.7%), or done other things that could have gotten them in trouble with the police (3.0%).

Participation in Leisure Time Activities as Protective of AOD Use and Abuse:

The availability and participation in activities that are seen as protective of alcohol and other drug use and abuse in youth is reported on here.

Percentage of Students Participating in the Following Activities:	% Yes	% No	% Not Available in Their Community
a. Sports teams	**74.8**	22.7	2.5
b. Scouting	**24.6**	71.2	4.2
c. Boys and girls clubs	**23.1**	71.2	5.7
d. 4-H clubs	**22.0**	67.8	10.2
e. Service clubs (such as Junior Sertoma, Rainbow, etc.)	**12.7**	71.2	16.1
f. Church youth groups	**69.4**	28.9	1.8
g. Music/art/drama clubs	**41.4**	53.0	5.5
h. Other after school clubs	**40.1**	56.1	3.8

The leisure-time activity reported by most students was participation in sports teams at about 75%, followed by church youth groups at 69%. Moderately popular are music/art/drama clubs and other after school clubs, at about 41% and 40% respectively. Also moderately popular where available are scouting (25%), boys and girls clubs (23%), and 4-H clubs (22%). Least popular were service clubs (at about 13%). Least available activities in these communities were service clubs and 4-H clubs.

Parental Guidance and Support:

Finally, parental guidance and support were assessed by a series of questions, such as "Do your parents want you to call if you are going to be late getting home?" To this question, 81.4% of students responded positively, and 18.6%, negatively. The question, "Does your family have clear rules about alcohol and drug use?" brought responses of 74.4%, "yes", and 25.6%, "no". The extent to which families fight is measured by answers to whether people in students' family often insult or yell at each other, reported by 29.7% of students, compared to 70.3% who say "no". About 23.5% of students reported that people in their family have serious arguments, while 76.5% do not report this.

Answers to two hypothetical questions are also revealing of the extent of parental guidance and concern as perceived by these youth. First, 60.8% of students said that if they drank some beer, wine, or hard liquor (for example, vodka, whiskey, or gin) without their parents' permission, they would be caught by their parents, while 73.7% said that if they carried a handgun without their parents' permission, they would be caught by their parents.

POSITIVE PARENTAL ATTITUDES AND PRACTICES:

The frequency with which parents include youth in family decisions and praise and reward them is thought to be associated with protection against alcohol and other drug abuse. For these youth, parental guidance and support appears relatively high.

Percentage of Students Reporting Frequency of Parents:	**% Never/ Rarely**	**% Sometimes**	**% Often/Almost Always**
a. giving them lots of chances to do fun things with them	11.0	36.3	**52.7**
b. asking them what they think before most family decisions affecting the students are made	21.4	40.9	**37.7**
c. noticing when they are doing a good job and letting them know about it	12.9	30.6	**56.5**
d. telling the students they are proud of them for something they have done	10.5	26.5	**62.9**

The most commonly reported supportive practice of parents toward these middle school students among the items measured is telling the students they are proud of their accomplishments, at 63% of students reporting parents as often or almost always doing so. This is followed by parents' noticing a good job and letting students know it (around 56.5%), and giving students lots of chances to do fun things with parents (about 53%). Least likely to occur often or almost always is parents' asking students what they think before family decisions affecting them are made, at 38% often or almost always doing so.

Finally, 88.0% of students say that their parents ask if they have gotten their homework done, while 12.0% do not. In 88.5% of cases, when students are not at home, one of their parents knows where they are and who they are with, while 11.5% do not. The great majority of students reported that their parents would know if they did not come home on time, at 87.8%, compared to 12.3% whose parents would not know. About 80.7% of students could ask their parents for help if they had a personal problem, compared to 19.3% who could not do so. Students were more likely to report that they often share their thoughts and feelings with their mothers (67%), compared to their fathers (51.5%).

APPENDIX I

TENNESSEE MIDDLE SCHOOL HEALTH SURVEY, 2001-2002

OMB. No. 0930-0213
Expires 06/30/2003

TENNESSEE MIDDLE SCHOOL HEALTH SURVEY, 2001-2002

We need your help! Your answers to these questions will help us understand more about the issues you face as a middle school student, particularly issues such as tobacco, alcohol, drugs, and other health-related factors in your life. The survey is being done by all students in 6th through 8th grades in your school and other schools throughout Tennessee, and we need you to be part of that group.

This is not a test. The questions simply ask for your experiences and opinions in a number of areas. It is important that you answer each question as thoughtfully and honestly as you can. If you do not always find an answer which fits exactly, use the one that comes closest.

This study is completely voluntary. If there is any question that you do not want to answer or you think that your parents would not want you to answer for any reason, just leave it blank and continue.

THIS QUESTIONNAIRE CONTAINS NOTHING WHICH IDENTIFIES YOU. NO ONE WILL EVER KNOW WHO FILLS OUT ANY QUESTIONNAIRE. All of your answers will be kept secret and confidential and will never be seen by anyone at your school. You will not be asked for your name. PLEASE DO NOT WRITE YOUR NAME IN THE BOOKLET.

After you finish, close your booklet, and follow the teacher's instructions. All survey results will be reported together – never for individuals or classrooms.

Other students have said that they have found these questions interesting, and that they enjoyed answering them. We hope you will too.

Be sure to read the instructions on the next page before you begin to answer. Thank you very much for being an important part of this project.

PLEASE FOLLOW TEACHER'S INSTRUCTIONS.

DO NOT FOLD, TEAR, OR STAPLE THIS FORM.

Public reporting burden for this collection of information is estimated to average 45 minutes per response, including time for reviewing instructions, and completing and reviewing the questionnaire. Send comments regarding this burden estimate or any other aspect of this collection of information to: SAMHSA Reports Clearance Officer, Room 16-105, 5600 Fishers Lane, Rockville MD 20857. An agency may not conduct or sponsor, and a person is not required to respond to a collection of information unless it displays a currently valid OMB control number. The control number for this project is 0930-0213.

PLEASE DO NOT WRITE IN THIS AREA

SERIAL #

CONFIDENTIAL

PROPERTY OF THE UNIVERSITY OF TENNESSEE

AND THE TENNESSEE DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH

TENNESSEE MIDDLE SCHOOL HEALTH SURVEY, 2001-2002

MARKING INSTRUCTIONS

Please follow these directions carefully:

- Use only a No. 2 pencil and fully darken the circles.
- Do not use felt tip pens or ink that will bleed.
- Darken the circle completely next to the answer you choose.
- Erase cleanly any marks you wish to change.
- Make no other markings or comments on the survey pages, since they interfere with the automatic reading.
- DO NOT write your name anywhere on this booklet.

Correct Mark

Incorrect Marks

PART A. BACKGROUND QUESTIONS

First, what is the date today?

MONTH DAY YEAR

Now, we'll start with some background questions.

1. Are you male or female?

- ◯ Male
- ◯ Female

2. How old are you?

- ◯ 10 or younger
- ◯ 11
- ◯ 12
- ◯ 13
- ◯ 14
- ◯ 15 or older

3. What grade are you in?

- ◯ 6 th
- ◯ 7 th
- ◯ 8 th

4. What do you consider yourself to be?

- ◯ Hispanic or Latino
- ◯ Not Hispanic or Latino

5. Which of the following best describes you? **(MARK ONE OR MORE.)**

- ◯ American Indian/Alaska Native
- ◯ Asian
- ◯ Black/African American
- ◯ Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander
- ◯ White

6. Think of where you live most of the time. Which of the following people live there with you? **(CHOOSE ALL THAT APPLY.)**

- ◯ Mother
- ◯ Foster mother
- ◯ Stepmother
- ◯ Grandmother
- ◯ Aunt
- ◯ Father
- ◯ Foster father
- ◯ Stepfather
- ◯ Grandfather
- ◯ Uncle
- ◯ Other adults
- ◯ Sister(s)
- ◯ Stepsister(s)
- ◯ Brother(s)
- ◯ Stepbrother(s)
- ◯ Other children

7. How many brothers and sisters, including stepbrothers and stepsisters, do you have who are **OLDER** than you?

- ◯ 0
- ◯ 1
- ◯ 2
- ◯ 3
- ◯ 4
- ◯ 5
- ◯ 6 or more

8. How many brothers and sisters, including stepbrothers and stepsisters, do you have who are **YOUNGER** than you?

- ◯ 0
- ◯ 1
- ◯ 2
- ◯ 3
- ◯ 4
- ◯ 5
- ◯ 6 or more

9. What is the language you use most often at home?

- ◯ English
- ◯ Spanish
- ◯ Another language

10. What is the highest level of schooling your **FATHER** completed?

- ◯ Completed grade school or less
- ◯ Some high school
- ◯ Completed high school
- ◯ Some college
- ◯ Completed college
- ◯ Graduate or professional school after college
- ◯ Does not apply
- ◯ Do not know

11. What is the highest level of schooling your **MOTHER** completed?

- ◯ Completed grade school or less
- ◯ Some high school
- ◯ Completed high school
- ◯ Some college
- ◯ Completed college
- ◯ Graduate or professional school after college
- ◯ Does not apply
- ◯ Do not know

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12. What is the zip code where you live? **(WRITE ZIP CODE IN BOXES AND MARK CORRESPONDING CIRCLES BELOW EACH BOX.)**

0	0	0	0	0
1	1	1	1	1
2	2	2	2	2
3	3	3	3	3
4	4	4	4	4
5	5	5	5	5
6	6	6	6	6
7	7	7	7	7
8	8	8	8	8
9	9	9	9	9

13. Where are you living now?

- ◯ On a farm
- ◯ In the country, not on a farm
- ◯ In a city, town or suburb

14. Do you live in public housing?

◯ Yes ◯ No ◯ Don't Know

15. Does your family receive any form of public assistance, such as food stamps or other forms of welfare (Families First, WIC, TennCare/Medicaid, etc.)?

- ◯ Yes
- ◯ No
- ◯ Don't Know

16. How many times have you changed homes **SINCE KINDERGARTEN**?

- ◯ Never
- ◯ 1-2 times
- ◯ 3-4 times
- ◯ 5-6 times
- ◯ 7 or more times

17. How important is religion or spirituality. . . **(MARK ONE CIRCLE FOR EACH LINE.)**

	Very Important	Somewhat Important	Not Very Important	Not at All Important
a. IN YOUR FAMILY?	◯	◯	◯	◯
b. IN YOUR OWN LIFE?	◯	◯	◯	◯

18. How often do you attend religious services or activities?

◯ Never ◯ Less than once a month ◯ 1-2 times a month, not every week ◯ Once a week or more

PART B. SCHOOL EXPERIENCE

These are questions about your school experience.

19. Putting them all together, what were your grades like LAST YEAR? **(MARK ONLY ONE CIRCLE.)**

◯ Mostly F's ◯ Mostly D's ◯ Mostly C's ◯ Mostly B's ◯ Mostly A's

20. Now, thinking back over **THIS PAST YEAR IN SCHOOL**, how often did you . . . **(MARK ONE CIRCLE FOR EACH LINE.)**

	Never/ Rarely	Sometimes	Often/ Almost Always
a. feel physically safe or safe from violence at school?	◯	◯	◯
b. try to do your best work in school?	◯	◯	◯
c. find most of your courses interesting to you?	◯	◯	◯
d. find the school work too hard to understand?	◯	◯	◯
e. fool around in class?	◯	◯	◯
f. fail to complete or turn in your assignments?	◯	◯	◯
g. get sent to the office or have to stay after school because you misbehaved?	◯	◯	◯
h. skip a day of school or part of a day (without permission)?	◯	◯	◯
i. get better grades than most of the students in your class?	◯	◯	◯
j. feel bullied by other kids at school?	◯	◯	◯
k. feel bored in school?	◯	◯	◯
l. hate being in school?	◯	◯	◯
m. think the things you are learning in school are going to be important for your later life?	◯	◯	◯

21. During the **LAST MONTH (OR 30 DAYS)**, how many **WHOLE DAYS** of school have you missed. . . **(MARK ONE CIRCLE FOR EACH LINE.)**

	None	1-2 days	3-5 days	6-10 days	11+ days	Don't Know
a. because of illness or injury?	○	○	○	○	○	○
b. because you skipped or "cut"?	○	○	○	○	○	○
c. for other reasons?	○	○	○	○	○	○

22. IN YOUR MIDDLE SCHOOL: (MARK ONE CIRCLE FOR EACH LINE.)

	Yes	No
a. do you have chances to be part of class discussions and activities?	○	○
b. do your teachers notice when you are doing a good job and let you know about it?	○	○
c. do you have lots of chances to get involved in school activities outside of class?	○	○
d. do students in your school have chances to talk to teachers one-on-one?	○	○
e. does your school let your parents know when you have done something well?	○	○

PART C. HEALTH AND WELL-BEING

These questions are about your health and well-being.

23. In general, how would you say your health is?

○ Excellent ○ Very Good ○ Good
○ Fair ○ Poor

24. Do you now have any physical health problems or disabling conditions that keep you from doing normal activities?

○ Yes ○ No

25. Are you currently taking prescription drugs or "pills" for hyperactivity (ADD or ADHD) such as Ritalin?

○ Yes ○ No

26. Have you **EVER** received any treatment or counseling outside school for. . . **(MARK ONE CIRCLE FOR EACH LINE.)**

	Yes	No
a. an emotional or mental health problem?	○	○
b. an alcohol problem?	○	○
c. a drug problem?	○	○

27. Have you **EVER** attended meetings of any self-help or 12-step support group such as Alateen, Al-Anon, Children of Alcoholics (COA), Alcoholics Anonymous (AA), Narcotics Anonymous (NA), Cocaine Anonymous (CA)?

○ Yes ○ No

28. In the **LAST 12 MONTHS**, have you been taken to an emergency room for. . . **(MARK ONE CIRCLE FOR EACH LINE.)**

	Yes	No
a. an illness?	○	○
b. an injury?	○	○

29. In the **LAST 12 MONTHS**, have you stayed at least one night in a hospital for . . . **(MARK ONE CIRCLE FOR EACH LINE.)**

	Yes	No
a. an illness?	○	○
b. an injury?	○	○

30. In the **LAST 12 MONTHS**, have you . . . **(MARK ONE CIRCLE FOR EACH LINE.)**

	Yes	No
a. moved to a different home?	○	○
b. started at a new school?	○	○

31. Have any of the following **EVER** happened to you . . . **(MARK ONE CIRCLE FOR EACH LINE.)**

	Yes	No
a. had a death in the family	○	○
b. parents (guardians) divorced?	○	○
c. family had financial problems?	○	○
d. anyone in the family been arrested?	○	○
e. new sister or brother born?	○	○
f. had a serious illness or injury in your immediate family?	○	○
g. had your own serious illness or injury?	○	○
h. experienced another very stressful event?	○	○

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PART D. YOUR FRIENDS

These questions are about your friends.

32. Think of your **FOUR** best friends (the friends you feel closest to). In the **PAST 12 MONTHS**, have **ANY** of your best friends . . . **(MARK ONE CIRCLE FOR EACH LINE.)**

	Yes	No	Don't Know
a. smoked cigarettes?	○	○	○
b. drunk alcoholic beverages -- beer, wine, or hard liquor (for example, vodka, whiskey, or gin)?	○	○	○
c. used marijuana/pot?	○	○	○
d. taken "pills" to get high or for non-medical reasons?	○	○	○
e. used LSD, cocaine, amphetamines/speed, or another illegal drug?	○	○	○
f. been suspended from school?	○	○	○
g. carried a handgun or other weapon like a knife (other than for hunting or sport)?	○	○	○
h. taken a handgun to school?	○	○	○
i. sold "pills" or illegal drugs?	○	○	○
j. stolen or tried to steal a motor vehicle such as a car or a motorcycle?	○	○	○
k. been arrested?	○	○	○
l. dropped out of school?	○	○	○
m. been members of a gang?	○	○	○

33. What are the chances you would be seen as cool if you: **(MARK ONE CIRCLE FOR EACH LINE.)**

	No or Very Little Chance	Some Chance	Pretty Good or Very Good Chance
a. smoked cigarettes?	○	○	○
b. began drinking alcoholic beverages regularly, that is, at least once or twice a month?	○	○	○
c. smoked marijuana?	○	○	○
d. carried a handgun?	○	○	○

34. Do you think one or more of your close friends . . . **(MARK ONE CIRCLE FOR EACH LINE.)**

	Yes	No
a. is drinking too much or has a problem with alcohol?	○	○
b. is using or abusing drugs other than alcohol?	○	○

35. How much do you think people risk harming themselves (physically or in other ways) if they: **(MARK ONE CIRCLE FOR EACH LINE.)**

	No Risk	Slight Risk	Moderate Risk	Great Risk
a. smoke one or more packs of cigarettes per day?	○	○	○	○
b. use smokeless tobacco?	○	○	○	○
c. try marijuana once or twice?	○	○	○	○
d. smoke marijuana regularly (at least once or twice a month)?	○	○	○	○
e. drink any alcoholic beverages (beer, wine, liquor)?	○	○	○	○
f. take one or two drinks of an alcoholic beverage nearly every day?	○	○	○	○

36. How wrong do you think it is for someone your age to. . . **(MARK ONE CIRCLE FOR EACH LINE.)**

	Very Wrong	Somewhat Wrong	Not Very Wrong	Not Wrong At All
a. drink beer, wine, or hard liquor (for example, vodka, whiskey, or gin) regularly (at least once or twice a month)?	○	○	○	○
b. smoke cigarettes?	○	○	○	○
c. smoke marijuana/pot?	○	○	○	○
d. use LSD, cocaine, amphetamines/speed or another illegal drug?	○	○	○	○
e. steal anything worth more than $5?	○	○	○	○
f. take a handgun or other weapon to school?	○	○	○	○
g. pick a fight with someone?	○	○	○	○
h. stay away from school all day when your parents think you are at school (skip school)?	○	○	○	○
i. attack someone with the idea of seriously hurting them?	○	○	○	○
j. beat up people if they start a fight?	○	○	○	○

PART E. Tell us a little about yourself now.

37. How old were you the first time you. . .
(MARK ONE CIRCLE FOR EACH LINE.)

	Never Did	10 or Younger	11	12	13	14	15 or older
a. belonged to a gang?	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
b. got suspended from school?	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
c. got arrested?	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
d. carried a handgun (other than for hunting or sport)?	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
e. attacked someone with the idea of seriously hurting them?	○	○	○	○	○	○	○

38. In the **LAST 12 MONTHS**, have you . . .
(MARK ONE CIRCLE FOR EACH LINE.)

	Yes, at School	Yes, Not at School	No
a. gotten into a physical fight?	○	○	○
b. taken part in a gang fight where a group of your friends was against another group?	○	○	○
c. been injured in a fight?	○	○	○
d. been physically abused or assaulted?	○	○	○
e. stolen "pills" or prescription drugs including from home?	○	○	○
f. stolen illegal drugs?	○	○	○
g. bought "pills" or an illegal drug?	○	○	○
h. been offered or given "pills" or an illegal drug?	○	○	○

39. How many times in **THE LAST 12 MONTHS** have you . . .
(MARK ONE CIRCLE FOR EACH LINE.)

	None	1 to 2 Times	3 to 5 Times	6 to 9 Times	10 to 19 Times	20 or More Times
a. been suspended from school?	○	○	○	○	○	○
b. stolen or tried to steal a motor vehicle such as a car or a motorcycle?	○	○	○	○	○	○
c. been arrested?	○	○	○	○	○	○
d. attacked someone (physically) with the idea of seriously hurting them?	○	○	○	○	○	○
e. been drunk or high at school?	○	○	○	○	○	○
f. carried a weapon (such as a handgun, knife or club) other than for hunting or sport?	○	○	○	○	○	○
g. sold "pills" or illegal drugs?	○	○	○	○	○	○
h. taken a weapon such as a gun to school?	○	○	○	○	○	○
i. sold "pills" or illegal drugs at school?	○	○	○	○	○	○

40. Do you . . . **(MARK ONE CIRCLE FOR EACH LINE.)**

	Yes	No
a. think it is okay to cheat at school?	○	○
b. like to see how much you can get away with?	○	○
c. sometimes think that life is not worth it?	○	○
d. think you are no good at all?	○	○
e. ignore rules that get in your way?	○	○
f. often do things without thinking what will happen?	○	○
g. have to have everything right away?	○	○
h. think it is important to think before you act?	○	○
i. do the opposite of what people tell you, just to get them mad?	○	○

41. How often do you feel very depressed, that is, very "blue" or unhappy?

- ◯ Never/Rarely
- ◯ Sometimes
- ◯ Often/Almost Always

42. Have you **EVER** felt so desperate that you considered suicide?

◯ Yes ◯ No

43. Have you **EVER** attempted suicide?

◯ Yes ◯ No

44. Did you **EVER** go to a hospital or get medical treatment because of a suicide attempt?

◯ Yes ◯ No

45. How often have you. . . **(MARK ONE CIRCLE FOR EACH LINE.)**

	Never/ Rarely	Sometimes	Often/Almost Always
a. done what feels good no matter what?	◯	◯	◯
b. done something dangerous because someone dared you to do it?	◯	◯	◯

PART F. ALCOHOL/DRUG USE

These questions are about tobacco, alcohol, and other drug use.

46. Have you smoked cigarettes more than a few puffs . . . **(MARK ONE CIRCLE FOR EACH LINE.)**

	Yes	No
a. **EVER?**	◯	◯
b. IN THE **LAST 12 MONTHS?**	◯	◯
c. IN THE **LAST 30 DAYS?**	◯	◯

47. In the **LAST 30 DAYS**, on how many **DAYS** did you smoke cigarettes?

- ◯ None
- ◯ 1 to 2 days
- ◯ 3 to 5 days
- ◯ 6 to 9 days
- ◯ 10 to 19 days
- ◯ 20 to 29 days
- ◯ Everyday (30 days)

48. In the **LAST 30 DAYS** how many cigarettes did you smoke?
(10 cigarettes = 1/2 pack, 20 cigarettes = 1 pack)

- ◯ None
- ◯ Less than one cigarette a day
- ◯ 1 to 2 cigarettes a day
- ◯ 3 to 5 cigarettes a day
- ◯ 6 to 10 cigarettes a day
- ◯ 11 to 19 cigarettes a day
- ◯ About a pack (20 cigarettes) a day
- ◯ More than a pack a day

49. Have you used smokeless tobacco (chewing tobacco, snuff, plug, dipping tobacco) . . . **(MARK ONE CIRCLE FOR EACH LINE.)**

	Yes	No
a. **EVER?**	◯	◯
b. IN THE **LAST 12 MONTHS?**	◯	◯
c. IN THE **LAST 30 DAYS?**	◯	◯

50. During the **LAST 30 DAYS**, on how many **DAYS** did you use smokeless tobacco?

- ◯ None
- ◯ 1 to 2 days
- ◯ 3 to 5 days
- ◯ 6 to 9 days
- ◯ 10 to 19 days
- ◯ 20 to 29 days
- ◯ Everyday (30 days)

51. Have you had any alcoholic beverages (beer, wine, wine coolers or liquor) to drink - more than just a few sips . . . **(MARK ONE CIRCLE FOR EACH LINE.)**

	Yes	No
a. **EVER?**	◯	◯
b. IN THE **LAST 12 MONTHS?**	◯	◯
c. IN THE **LAST 30 DAYS?**	◯	◯

52. In the **LAST 30 DAYS**, on how many **DAYS** did you drink any alcohol beverages? **(COUNT WEEKENDS, WEEKDAYS, AND WEEK NIGHTS.)**

- ◯ None
- ◯ 1 to 2 days
- ◯ 3 to 5 days
- ◯ 6 to 9 days
- ◯ 10 to 19 days
- ◯ 20 to 29 days
- ◯ Everyday (30 days)

53. In the **LAST 30 DAYS**, on the days you drank alcoholic beverages, about how many **DRINKS** of alcoholic beverages did you have **PER DAY**? (By drink we mean a can of beer, a glass of wine, or a shot of liquor or a mixed drink.)

- ◯ Didn't drink
- ◯ Less than 1 drink
- ◯ 1 drink
- ◯ 2 drinks
- ◯ 3 to 4 drinks
- ◯ 5 to 6 drinks
- ◯ 7 or more drinks

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54. In the **LAST 30 DAYS**, on how many **DAYS** did you have **FIVE OR MORE** alcoholic drinks on one occasion or at one sitting?

- ◯ None
- ◯ 1 to 2 days
- ◯ 3 to 5 days
- ◯ 6 to 9 days
- ◯ 10 to 19 days
- ◯ 20 to 29 days
- ◯ Everyday (30 days)

55. Have you **EVER** gotten drunk or felt very high or intoxicated from drinking alcohol?

- ◯ Yes
- ◯ No

56. Have you used marijuana (pot, grass, hash, etc.) . . . **(MARK ONE CIRCLE FOR EACH LINE.)**

	Yes	No
a. **EVER?**	◯	◯
b. IN THE **LAST 12 MONTHS?**	◯	◯
c. IN THE **LAST 30 DAYS?**	◯	◯

57. In the **LAST 30 DAYS**, on how many **DAYS** have you used marijuana?

- ◯ None
- ◯ 1 to 2 days
- ◯ 3 to 5 days
- ◯ 6 to 9 days
- ◯ 10 to 19 days
- ◯ 20 to 29 days
- ◯ Everyday (30 days)

58. Have you **EVER** used the following drugs? If yes, have you used them in the **LAST 12 MONTHS**? **(MARK ONE CIRCLE FOR EACH LINE.)**

	Yes, In the Last 12 Months	Yes, Not in the Last 12 Months	No
a. Cocaine or crack	◯	◯	◯
b. Substances you "sniff": paint thinners, glue, gasoline, white-out, butane, aerosol sprays, etc.	◯	◯	◯
c. LSD (acid) or other hallucinogens such as peyote, jimson weed, mushrooms, PCP (angel dust), etc.	◯	◯	◯
d. Other illegal drugs such as ecstasy, ice (crystal meth), heroin (smack, horse, skag), etc.	◯	◯	◯

59. In **THE LAST 30 DAYS**, how many **DAYS** have you used the following drugs? **(MARK ONE CIRCLE FOR EACH LINE.)**

	None	1 - 2 Days	3 - 5 Days	6 - 9 Days	10 - 19 Days	20 - 29 Days	Every-day
a. Cocaine or crack	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯
b. Substances you "sniff": paint thinners, glue, gasoline, white-out, butane, aerosol sprays, etc.	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯
c. LSD (acid) or other hallucinogens such as peyote, jimson weed, mushrooms, PCP (angel dust), etc.	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯
d. Other illegal drugs such as ecstasy, ice (crystal meth), heroin (smack, horse, skag), etc.	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯

60. How old were you the first time you .... **(MARK ONE CIRCLE FOR EACH LINE):**

	Never Did	7 or Younger	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15 or Older
a. smoked cigarettes?	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯
b. used smokeless tobacco?	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯
c. drank alcoholic beverages?	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯
d. began drinking alcoholic beverages regularly, that is at least once or twice a month?	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯
e. got drunk or felt very high or intoxicated from drinking alcohol?	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯
f. used marijuana/pot?	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯
g. used cocaine or crack?	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯
h. used substances you "sniff"?	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯
i. used LSD (acid) or other hallucinogens?	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯
j. used other illegal drugs such as ecstasy, Ice (crystal meth), heroin, etc.?	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯

61. Have you taken any prescription drugs or "pills" just to get high or for non-medical purposes, on your own, without a doctor's prescription . . .

	Yes	No
a. **EVER?**	○	○
b. IN THE **LAST 12 MONTHS?**	○	○
c. IN THE **LAST 30 DAYS?**	○	○

62. Do you think you have **EVER** been hooked on or addicted to any of the following substances (for example, did you try to quit or use less and had trouble doing so)? **(MARK ONE CIRCLE FOR EACH SUBSTANCE)**

	Yes	No	Never Used
a. Tobacco/nicotine	○	○	○
b. Alcohol (beer, wine or liquor)	○	○	○
c. Marijuana/pot	○	○	○
d. Cocaine or crack	○	○	○
e. Hallucinogens like LSD or PCP or ecstasy	○	○	○
f. Coffee/cola/caffeine	○	○	○
g. A prescription drug or "pill"	○	○	○
h. Other drugs or substances	○	○	○

63. Do you think you may **NOW** be hooked on or addicted to any of the following substances? **(MARK ONE CIRCLE FOR EACH SUBSTANCE)**

	Yes	No	Never Used
a. Tobacco/nicotine	○	○	○
b. Alcohol (beer, wine or liquor)	○	○	○
c. Marijuana/pot	○	○	○
d. Cocaine or crack	○	○	○
e. Hallucinogens like LSD or PCP or ecstasy	○	○	○
f. Coffee/cola/caffeine	○	○	○
g. A prescription drug or "pill"	○	○	○
h. Other drugs or substances	○	○	○

PART G. COMMUNITY INFLUENCES

Here are some questions about your community and the area around where you live.

64. How easy do you think it would be for you to get each of the following types of drugs if you wanted some? **(MARK ONE CIRCLE FOR EACH LINE.)**

	Very Easy	Somewhat Easy	Somewhat Hard	Very Hard
a. Cigarettes	○	○	○	○
b. Smokeless tobacco	○	○	○	○
c. Alcohol (beer, wine or hard liquor)	○	○	○	○
d. Marijuana/pot	○	○	○	○
e. Drugs like cocaine/crack, LSD (acid), heroin, etc.	○	○	○	○
f. "Pills" like uppers/speed, downers, painkillers, tranquilizers	○	○	○	○
g. Something to sniff like glue or gasoline	○	○	○	○

65. If you wanted to get a gun, how easy would it be for you to get one?

○ Very easy ○ Somewhat easy ○ Somewhat hard ○ Very hard

(MARK ONE CIRCLE FOR EACH LINE.)

	Yes	No
66. Do you feel safe in your neighborhood, or the area around where you live?	○	○
67. Would you like to get out of your neighborhood, or the area around where you live?	○	○
68. Do your neighbors notice when you are doing a good job and let you know about it?	○	○
69. Do you like your neighborhood, or the area around where you live?	○	○
70. Are there lots of adults in your neighborhood, or the area around where you live, you could talk to about something important?	○	○
71. Are there people in your neighborhood, or the area around where you live, who encourage you to do your best?	○	○

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72. How well do each of the following describe your neighborhood, or the area around where you live? **(MARK ONE CIRCLE FOR EACH LINE.)**

	Very Well	Somewhat Well	Not Well	Not at All
a. Crime and/or drug selling	○	○	○	○
b. Fights	○	○	○	○
c. Lots of empty or abandoned buildings	○	○	○	○
d. Lots of graffiti	○	○	○	○

73. About how many adults have you known personally who in the **LAST 12 MONTHS** have. . . **(MARK ONE CIRCLE FOR EACH LINE.)**

	0	1	2	3-4	5+
a. used marijuana/pot, cocaine/crack or other illegal drugs?	○	○	○	○	○
b. sold or dealt drugs?	○	○	○	○	○
c. carried handguns or other weapons not for hunting or sport?	○	○	○	○	○
d. done other things that could get them in trouble with the police - stealing, selling stolen goods, mugging, or assaulting others, etc.?	○	○	○	○	○
e. gotten drunk or high?	○	○	○	○	○

74. How wrong would most adults in your neighborhood, or the area around where you live, think it is for kids your age. . . **(MARK ONE CIRCLE FOR EACH LINE.)**

	Very Wrong	Somewhat Wrong	Not Very Wrong	Not Wrong At All
a. to use marijuana?	○	○	○	○
b. to drink alcohol?	○	○	○	○
c. to smoke cigarettes?	○	○	○	○

75. Which of the following activities for kids your age do you participate in? **(MARK ONE CIRCLE FOR EACH LINE.)**

	Yes	No	Not Available in my Community
a. Sports teams	○	○	○
b. Scouting	○	○	○
c. Boys and girls clubs	○	○	○
d. 4-H clubs	○	○	○
e. Service clubs (such as Junior Sertoma, Rainbow, etc.)	○	○	○
f. Church youth groups	○	○	○
g. Music/art/drama clubs	○	○	○
h. Other after school clubs	○	○	○

PART H. YOUR FAMILY

The next few questions ask about your family. For the following questions, if you consider more than one person your "father" or "mother" (e.g. a stepparent or guardian including foster parent), please answer these questions thinking of the father or mother you currently live with MOST of the time.

76. Do you think one or both of your parents (stepparents or guardians) **(MARK ONE CIRCLE FOR EACH LINE.)** . . . .

	Yes	No
a. is drinking too much or has a problem with alcohol?	○	○
b. is using or abusing drugs other than alcohol?	○	○

77. Do you think one or more of your brothers or sisters: **(MARK ONE CIRCLE FOR EACH LINE.)**

	Yes	No	No Brothers or Sisters
a. drinks beer, wine, or hard liquor (for example, vodka, whiskey or gin)?	○	○	○
b. smokes marijuana?	○	○	○
c. smokes cigarettes?	○	○	○
d. has taken a handgun to school?	○	○	○
e. has been suspended or expelled from school?	○	○	○

78. How wrong do you think your parents (stepparents or guardians) feel it would be for **YOU** to: **(MARK ONE CIRCLE FOR EACH LINE.)**	Very Wrong	Somewhat Wrong	Not Very Wrong	Not Wrong At All
a. drink beer, wine, or hard liquor (for example, vodka, whiskey, or gin) regularly (at least once or twice a month)?	○	○	○	○
b. smoke cigarettes?	○	○	○	○
c. smoke marijuana/pot?	○	○	○	○
d. steal anything worth more than $5.00?	○	○	○	○
e. draw graffiti, write things, or draw pictures on buildings or other property (without the owner's permission)?	○	○	○	○
f. pick a fight with someone?	○	○	○	○

MARK ONE CIRCLE FOR EACH LINE.

	Yes	No
79. Has anyone in your family had a severe alcohol or drug problem?	○	○
80. Do your parents want you to call if you are going to be late getting home?	○	○
81. Does your family have clear rules about alcohol and drug use?	○	○
82. Do people in your family often insult or yell at each other?	○	○
83. Do people in your family have serious arguments?	○	○
84. If you drank some beer, wine, or hard liquor (for example, vodka, whiskey, or gin) without your parents' permission, would you be caught by your parents?	○	○
85. If you carried a handgun without your parents' permission, would you be caught by your parents?	○	○

86. How often do your parents (stepparents or guardians)… **(MARK ONE CIRCLE FOR EACH LINE.)**	Never/ Rarely	Sometimes	Often/Almost Always
a. give you lots of chances to do fun things with them?	○	○	○
b. ask you what you think before most family decisions affecting you are made?	○	○	○
c. notice when you are doing a good job and let you know about it?	○	○	○
d. tell you they are proud of you for something you have done?	○	○	○

MARK ONE CIRCLE FOR EACH LINE.

	Yes	No
87. Do your parents ask if you have gotten your homework done?	○	○
88. If you had a personal problem, could you ask your parents for help?	○	○
89. Would your parents know if you did not come home on time?	○	○
90. When you are not at home, does one of your parents know where you are and who you are with?	○	○
91. Do you often share your thoughts and feelings with your mother?	○	○
92. Do you often share your thoughts and feelings with your father?	○	○

THIS COMPLETES THE SURVEY. THANK YOU FOR YOUR PARTICIPATION IN THIS IMPORTANT STUDY.

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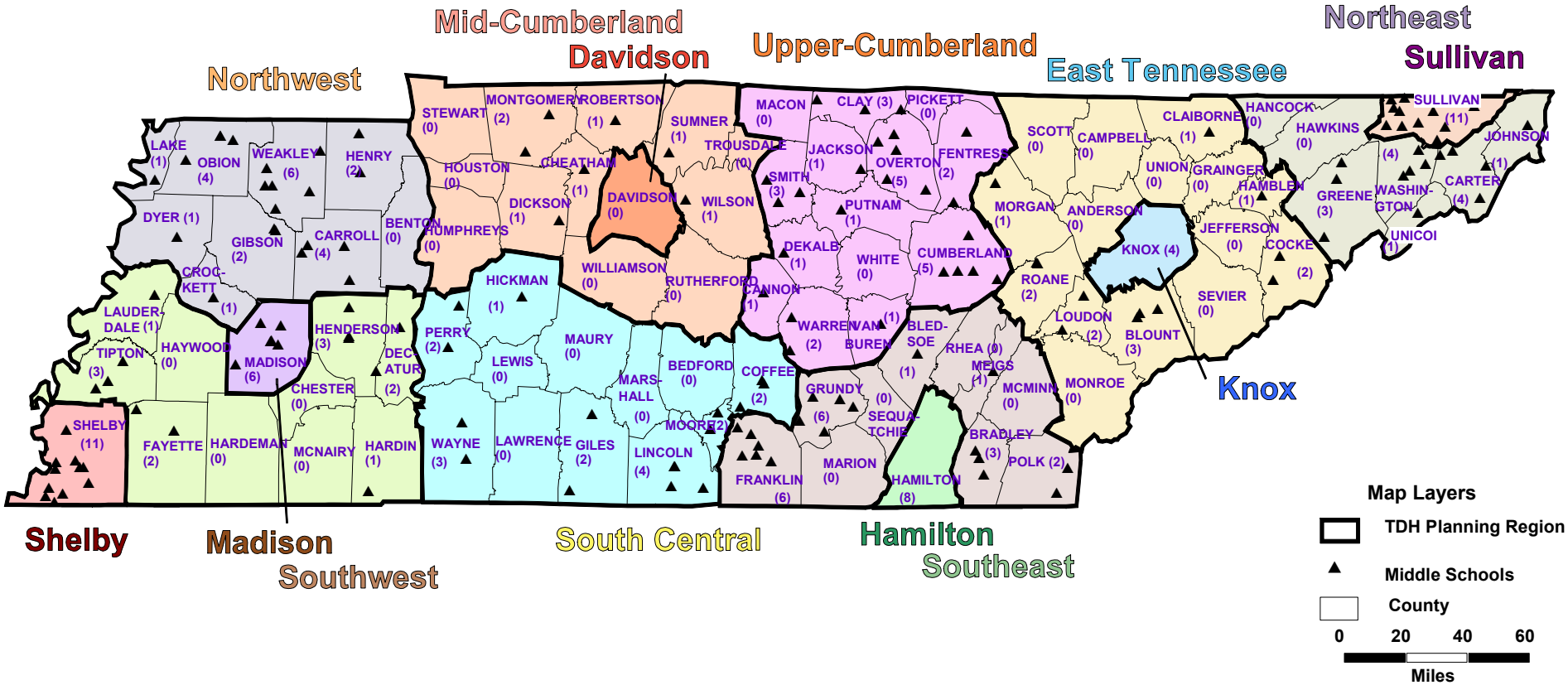
APPENDIX II

TENNESSEE MIDDLE SCHOOL HEALTH SURVEY MAP

Tennessee Middle School Health Survey

Participating Schools – 165 Total