Healthy Youth Survey Underway in Washington Schools

Local News

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Are Washington teens using alcohol and tobacco, and if so, how often? Are kids getting more exercise than two years ago, or are they watching more TV and spending more time online? These are some of the questions state and local agencies hope to answer with this year’s Healthy Youth Survey.

This week, thousands of students are taking the survey all around the state. It’s administered to 6th, 8th, 10th, and 12th graders in Washington every two years. The anonymous survey aims to track behaviors that can impact kids’ health. It includes questions on a variety of topics including tobacco, alcohol and drug use, diet and exercise, and bullying.

“Habits people develop when they’re young often stay with them for a lifetime, so it’s important for us to understand what kids are up to in our state,” said Secretary of Health Mary Selecky. “If we know about the health choices kids are making, we can get a sense of which prevention programs are working, and which issues need more attention.”

Nearly 300,000 youth in more than 1,000 public schools around the state are taking the survey this week. Individual answers are confidential; no names or personal identifiers are collected. In the months after the survey, the answers are tallied and the information is compared to the results from past surveys to look for trends.

Survey results should be available by spring 2013. Health officials, educators, and others will use the information to get a sense of the current health behavior issues impacting kids in our state to gauge how youth programs are working and to inform programs and policies affecting youth.The survey is a joint effort of the state Department of Health, the Department of Social and Health Services, the Department of Commerce, the Liquor Control Board, and the Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction.The Department of Health website (www.doh.wa.gov) is your source for a healthy dose of information. Also, find us on Facebook and follow us on Twitter.