**2017 PAYS General Overview**

**Victories to Celebrate**



PAYS is recognized as one of the most comprehensive data sets available today. It offers both data that outlines the state’s successes and continued challenges to help guide decision making at all levels. Some positives from the 2017 PAYS include:

* Overall, **83.4**% of students reported that they felt safe in their school.
* **77%** of students reported that they have chances to talk one-on-one with a teacher.
* **92%** of students in all grades reported that their parents knew where they were and who they were with. This increased in all four grades from 2015.
* 12th grade lifetime narcotic use decreased from **12%** in 2015 to **9%** in 2017, though this remains higher than the national average of 6.8%.
* The overall percentage of students reporting it would be easy for them to obtain prescription drugs decreased from **28%** in 2015 to **25%** in 2017. The sharpest decrease was among 12th graders whose rate dropped from **43**% to **38**%.
* **Heroin use remains low for 12th graders – lifetime: 0.5%, 30-day: 0.1%.**

**Youth Mental/Physical Health**

Pennsylvania youth are facing increasing challenges to both their mental and physical health. According to the statewide 2017 Pennsylvania Youth Survey (PAYS) results (a survey administered to over 250,000 youth in the 6th, 8th, 10th, and 12th grades), some of the health issues reported by youth include:

* **38%** of students reported feeling sad or depressed most days, including **44%** of 10th and **41%** of 12th graders.
* **40%** of 12th & **38%** of 10th graders reported that “at times I think I am no good at all”.
* **20%** of 10th and 12th graders reported considering suicide and **12%** attempted to commit suicide.
* **13%** of students worried that food would run out before their family could buy more; **8%** of seniors reported skipping a meal because of family finances.
* **32%** of 10th graders and **28%** of 12th graders reported sexual contact over technology.
* **62%** of students, with a rate of **67%** for 10th and 12th graders, reported being emotionally abused through insults or name-calling.
* **14%** of students, with a rate of **15%** for 8th graders and **17%** for 10th graders, reported self-harm (e.g., cutting, scraping, burning themselves) over the past year.

**School Experience**

All of this data informs how students are faced with a variety of challenges in their lives. As we know, what is going on in a child’s life outside of school impacts how well they are able to learn and succeed when they arrive at the school door each morning. PAYS also provides information about what is going on while they are at school:

* For the third straight year, the rate of students who said that they felt school would be important later in life dropped in all grades; **46%** of seniors agreed with this statement, compared to **80%** of 6th graders.
* Only **34%** of 12th graders and **35%** of 10th graders reported that they enjoyed being in school during the past year. These rates also continued to decrease for the third administration in a row.
* **21%** of students reported being threatened at school over the last year, including **24%** of 8th graders and **22%** of 10th graders.
* **11%** of 6th and 8th graders reported being attacked at school, compared with only **4%** of seniors and **8%** of 10th graders.
* **28%** of students reported having suffered some bullying over the last year; this was highest among 8th graders at **31%.**
* Only **63%** of students reported that adults stop bulling when they see it or are told about it; this ranges from **81%** for 6th graders, **65%** for 8th graders, **56%** for 10th graders, down to only **53%** for 12th graders.

**How Do We Decrease These Youth Problem Behaviors? Risk & Protective Factors**

PAYS also provides information about Risk Factors – conditions that increase the likelihood of youth engaging in problem behaviors. Some of the most prevalent risks include:

* Perceived Risk of Drug Use: **49%** of youth do not view using some drugs as risky.
* Parental Attitudes Favorable to Anti-Social Behaviors: **46%** are apt to model negative behaviors exhibited by their parents.
* Low Commitment to School: **45%** of youth do not feel attached to their school and academic success.

PAYS also provides information about Protective Factors – those people and conditions in a child’s life that can buffer them from risks they face:

* The highest levels of protection are in the Family Domain – Positive attachment to their family (**63%**); Opportunities for prosocial Involvement through family activities (**62%**); and Rewards for engaging in prosocial activities with their family (**61%**).
* In the School Domain, **50%** of students reported having opportunities for prosocial activities and **52%** reported feeling rewarded by engaging in these activities.

Pennsylvania has the opportunity to help our students, their families and their communities by increasing the protections provided to students in ALL domains through increasing partnerships between parents and their schools, as well as implementing early, upstream prevention programs. PCCD’s approach to prevention by using data to choose effective programming can be an essential factor in providing help to our youth so they can succeed in school and in life.