



COLORADO DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION ■ 201 East Colfax Avenue ■ Denver, CO 80203 ■ 303.866.6903 PH ■ 303.866.6785 FAX

COLORADO DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC HEALTH AND ENVIRONMENT ■ 4300 Cherry Creek Drive South ■ Denver, CO 80246 ■ 303.692.2377 PH

www.cde.state.co.us/cdeprevention

Tobacco Use Among Colorado's Youth

The Issue

Tobacco is the drug most commonly used by children and adolescents in the United States. Its use correlates with many of the other risk behaviors of adolescence. In fact, tobacco is the gateway drug to other drugs of abuse such as marijuana and alcohol. Because adolescent risk behaviors are so intertwined, it is important to address the prevention of tobacco use within the context of other risk behaviors.

Preventing tobacco use among youth has emerged as a major focus of tobacco control efforts, because tobacco use and subsequent addiction take root in adolescence. Among adults in the United States who have ever smoked daily, nearly 90 percent tried their first cigarette before age 18 years, and 53 percent became daily smokers before age 18. (Source: www.cdphe.state.co.us/pp/tobacco/youthprograms.htm)

Facts about Youth Tobacco Use in Colorado

Source: 2005 Youth Risk Behavior Survey (YRBS)

- **49%** of high school students reported ever trying cigarette smoking; **12.3%** reported having smoked a whole cigarette before age 13.
- **19%** reported smoking on at least one day in the previous month; **11%** reported smoking cigarettes daily.
- Among students who smoked in the previous month, **10%** reported smoking 10 or more cigarettes on the days they smoke.
- Among students who are current smokers, **52%** have tried to quit smoking in the previous 12 months.
- **9%** of high school students reported using chewing tobacco, snuff, or dip on one or more of the past 30 days.
- **26%** reported having smoked cigarettes or cigars or used chewing tobacco, snuff, or dip on one or more of the past 30 days.

Tobacco Use and Coordinated School Health

Comprehensive health education, school-based health services, counseling services, healthy school environment, and parental and community involvement all work together to address tobacco use prevention and improve educational outcomes for students. Such programs have been proven to improve test performance, attendance and school connectedness.

Schools offering these services report:

- Increased school attendance
- Decreased drop-outs and suspensions
- Higher graduation rates

For more information on the link between health and learning, see the Summary of Selected Evidence-Based Research from "Healthy Kids Learn Better" and "Making the Connection: Health and Student Achievement" at www.cde.state.co.us/cdeprevention/results.htm.

What You Can Do

Use state, local and national youth risk behavior data to make a case for:

- creating a school health team in every school building
- coordinating messages, activities, programs and funding for healthy students and safe schools.
- enforcing tobacco-free and drug-free school policies

Resources

For complete Colorado YRBS data, visit www.cde.state.co.us/cdeprevention/index.htm. For national YRBS data, visit www.cdc.gov/mmwr/PDF/SS/SS5505.pdf.