

2010 MetroWest Adolescent Health Survey Highlights on Cyberbullying, School-Bullying, and Help-Seeking Behaviors

EDC has administered the *MetroWest Adolescent Health Survey* (MWAHS) since 2006 to monitor trends in health and risk behaviors among middle and high school adolescents. The survey is funded by the MetroWest Health Foundation, an independent philanthropy providing over \$5 million in annual financial support to address the health needs of twenty-five communities in the MetroWest area of Massachusetts. The MWAHS data is used to inform planning, policy-making, health education, and prevention programming at the local level. Nearly 38,000 students in grades 6-12 in 24 school districts were included in the most recent survey. Below are highlighted findings from an analysis of middle school data from more than 11,500 students in grades 7-8 who took the survey in fall 2010:

- **Cyberbullying and school bullying are prevalent in middle school.** Overall, 17% of middle school youth reported being victims of cyberbullying and 32% of youth reported being victims of school bullying in the past 12 months.
- **Many adolescent bullying victims are not talking to adults about being bullied.** Two-thirds of cyberbullying victims and half of all school bullying victims reported that they did not talk to an adult about being victimized in the past 12 months, either at school or at home.
- **Fewer cyberbullying victims seek help from adults than school bullying victims.** Compared with victims of school bullying, cyberbullying victims are less likely to talk to adults at school about being victimized (15% compared with 31%), and less likely to talk to parents/non-school adults (28% vs. 48%).
- **Girls are more likely than boys to seek adult help.** 36% of girls who were cyberbullied had talked to an adult about being victimized, compared with 22% of boys. 58% of girls who were victims of school bullying had talked to an adult, compared with 48% of boys.
- **Younger bullying victims are more likely to seek help.** For example, 34% of 7th grade cyberbullying victims had talked to an adult about being victimized, compared with 29% of 8th graders. This is notable because cyberbullying is more common among older students in our sample.
- **Help-seeking behavior is less common among youth who report lower school performance (grades) and lower levels of school attachment.**

While the study does not identify predictors of what youth are most likely to be cyberbullies or victims, it does point to the connections between cyberbullying and school climate, and the need for school-based prevention strategies and coordinated parent-school efforts. Additional analyses and discussion on this topic are forthcoming.

Contact: Shari Kessel Schneider, skschneider@edc.org or 617-618-2177