

## **Tobacco use rates among Oklahoma youth remain high**

Nearly one out of every 10 (9.8 percent) Oklahoma middle school students (6<sup>th</sup>– 8<sup>th</sup> grades) use at least one type of tobacco product, according to the 2013 Oklahoma Youth Tobacco Survey (OYTS) results announced today by The Center for the Advancement of Wellness at the Oklahoma State Department of Health. Tobacco product use includes cigarettes, cigars, pipe tobacco, smokeless or spit tobacco, kreteks, and bidis.

Cigarettes are the most widely used tobacco products among Oklahoma youth. The survey found that 4.8 percent of Oklahoma middle school students are current cigarette smokers, significantly higher than the national rate of 2.9 percent. If current trends continue, an estimated 88,000 children living in Oklahoma today will ultimately die prematurely from smoking.

The survey conducted in 2013 was the first time the OYTS measured the use of electronic cigarettes. Among Oklahoma middle school students, 2.6 percent used e-cigarettes, more than double the national rate of 1.1 percent. The effect of e-cigarette use on public health is not yet known. However, a 2014 Surgeon General's report found nicotine use can have adverse effects on adolescent brain development and youth using any product containing nicotine is unsafe.

According to the U.S. Centers for Disease Control, nine out of 10 adult smokers tried their first cigarette by age 18. Fully implementing evidence-based tobacco control programs and policies is instrumental in preventing youth from becoming tobacco's next victims.

"Oklahoma's Youth Tobacco Survey paints a picture of concern," said Dr. Terry Cline, Oklahoma Commissioner of Health. "Data from middle schools indicate students in this important age group are using tobacco products, including smoking cigarettes, at about one and a half times the national rates."

Other key findings from the 2013 OYTS include:

- About five times (26.5 percent) as many middle school students who currently smoke think smoking cigarettes makes young people look cool or fit in compared to middle school students who have never smoked (5.2 percent).
- Among middle school students who have never smoked, 24.1 percent rode in a vehicle with someone who was smoking cigarettes at least one day in the past week.
- Smokeless or spit tobacco products are used by 5.2 percent of Oklahoma middle school students compared to 1.4 percent of middle school students nationwide.

A trend report and several fact sheets on the trends in cigarette initiation, exposure to secondhand tobacco smoke, youth beliefs about tobacco and use of emerging tobacco products such as electronic cigarettes, hookah, and snus from the 2013 OYTS are available. The trend report and fact sheets may be accessed at this link: <http://www.ok.gov/health2/documents/OYTS%202013%20Fact%20Sheets.pdf>

The OYTS is a statewide, randomized survey of public school students administered every two years. Due to the CDC requirement that a response rate of 60 percent be reached, Oklahoma's high school data for 2013 is not weighted. The 2015 OYTS is currently being conducted throughout the state. This comprehensive survey of tobacco use, knowledge and attitudes among Oklahoma youth provides important data for tracking changes and to guide youth tobacco use prevention programs.