



# MEDIA RELEASE

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## KCHD releases Youth Risk Behavior Survey

*Report outlines health risk behaviors among high school students*

*Knoxville, Tenn.* —Today the Knox County Health Department (KCHD) released the 2017 Knox County Youth Risk Behavior Survey (YRBS), which is designed to track behaviors that contribute to the leading causes of death and disability among high school youth. Conducted in concert with the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and the Tennessee Department of Education, the survey focuses on issues such as self-harm and violence, tobacco use, alcohol and other drug use, and weight control and diet. Knox County is among a small number of counties and municipalities who conduct their own YRBS.

“To effectively respond to the health needs of our community, we must have a deep understanding of the challenges we face,” KCHD Director Dr. Martha Buchanan said. “This report helps us and our partners discover important patterns and health trends among our high school students, which is crucial in not only improving child health but also the health of the larger community because so many of these behaviors are established during our formative years.”

Several of the findings included in the analysis reflect improving outcomes, such as long-term declines in cigarette smoking, texting while driving and television watching on school nights. However, several of the findings are concerning, especially regarding feelings of sadness or hopelessness, thoughts of suicide, and misuse of prescription pain medication.

“In order to better understand and address the health concerns affecting our students, we must have reliable information to assess critical risk behaviors,” Knox County Schools Superintendent Bob Thomas said. “This data serves as a tool to help us determine the resources our students and families need. We appreciate the Health Department and Metro Drug Coalition for their partnership in this important effort.”

The 2017 Knox County YRBS was administered jointly with the Tennessee YRBS and used the same questionnaire. Questions were selected by the Tennessee Department of Education. The survey was administered in March 2017 in all Knox County Schools high schools with a representative sample of ninth through 12<sup>th</sup> grade students. The Knox County report is the result of a joint effort by KCHD and Knox County Schools with support from the Metro Drug Coalition. The 2018 Knox County YRBS will be based on input from middle school students; these two age groups are assessed in alternate years. The YRBS is designed to assist local agencies in planning and policy formation to improve overall health in the county, especially the health of adolescents. [Click here to access a PDF of the YRBS.](#)

### **About Knox County Health Department:**

The Knox County Health Department (KCHD) is a governmental agency dedicated to making every person a healthy person. KCHD conducts disease surveillance, prevention and control; emergency preparedness; nutrition and physical activity promotion; tobacco use prevention and control; health equity promotion; adult and child immunizations; and much more. KCHD’s mission is to encourage, promote and assure the development of an active, healthy community through innovative public health practices. For more information, visit [www.knoxcounty.org/health](http://www.knoxcounty.org/health).

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