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## Executive Summary

### Teen Assessment Project

### Raymond School District

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Concerns about local youth issues prompted the Raymond School District to adopt the University of New Hampshire Teen Assessment Project (TAP) Survey for administration in the Iber Holmes Gove Middle School and the Raymond High School. The goal of TAP is to provide communities with local research-based information that can help them better support local teens and their families. Survey results provide a vehicle for youth, parent, school, and community education and action; help secure local funding; stimulate program and policy changes; and lead to change in attitudes and behaviors that build protective factors and assets in families, schools and communities.

A local steering committee coordinated the review and administration of a 160-item survey which asked teens about their perceptions of self, family, school, and community; their worries, concerns, and future aspirations; and their activities, both positive and problematic. The survey was administered to 9th through 12th grade students at Raymond High School on January 28, 2002. On February 13, 2002, 7th and 8th grade students at the Iber Holmes Gove Middle School completed the TAP survey. A total of 709 surveys were used for this data analysis. Approximately 78% of the student population in grades 7 through 12 were surveyed. Following are selected local TAP survey results.

#### Family Characteristics

- The TAP survey revealed the most common living situation for local youth is living with two parents (55%). The next most common living situations include living with a single parent (17%) and living in a step-family (20%).
- The majority of youth reported that each of their parents has a high school diploma, Bachelor's Degree, or higher (fathers, 93%; mothers, 94%). Forty percent (40%) of fathers and 41% of mothers have a high school diploma and no further degrees. Thirteen percent (13%) of fathers and 17% of mothers have a Bachelor's Degree or higher.

#### Alcohol, Tobacco, and Other Drug Use

The Teen Assessment Project (TAP) survey found that 42% of local youth have not ever used alcohol, 60% have not used tobacco and 60% have not used marijuana.

- Forty-two percent (42%) of students reported that they had not used alcohol. Fifty-eight percent (58%) of all youth have used alcohol at some time (middle school, 37%; high school, 70%). Thirty-one percent (31%) of all youth reported using alcohol once a month or more often (middle school, 12%; high school, 42%) and 12% reported using it weekly or more often (middle school, 3%; high school, 16%).

- Almost three-quarters of the students surveyed (71%) reported that they had not engaged in binge drinking (“5 or more alcoholic drinks at one time”) within the past month. Sixteen percent (16%) of all middle high school youth and 36% of all high school youth reported binge drinking at least once in the past month with 40% of all seniors reporting binge drinking in the last month. Thirty-four percent (34%) of youth feel that binge drinking once or twice each weekend carries “no risk” or “slight risk” (middle school, 29%; high school, 36%).
- Sixty percent (60%) of students surveyed reported that they had not used smoking tobacco. Forty percent (40%) of all youth have smoked tobacco at some time (middle school, 25%; high school, 49%). Eighteen percent (18%) reported smoking monthly or more often (middle school, 7%; high school, 24%) and 15% reported weekly or more often use (middle school, 4%; high school, 21%).
- Sixty percent (60%) of all youth indicated that they had not used marijuana. Forty percent (40%) of students surveyed have used marijuana at some time (middle school, 21%; high school, 51%). Twenty-two percent (22%) reported monthly or more often use of marijuana (middle school, 10%; high school, 28%) and 14% reported weekly or more often use (middle school, 5%; high school, 19%).
- Sixty-eight percent (68%) of all youth believe it is either “easy” or “very easy” to get alcohol (middle school, 53%; high school, 76%). Fifty-five percent (55%) believe it is “easy” or “very easy” to get marijuana (middle school, 32%; high school, 68%).
- Eighty-eight percent (88%) of students surveyed reported that they had not used inhalants. Twelve percent (12%) of all youth have used inhalants at some time (middle school, 10%; high school, 14%). Two percent (2%) of all youth have used inhalants monthly or more often (middle school, 1%; high school, 2%). Thirty-nine percent (39%) of local youth feel that trying inhalants once or twice carries “no risk” or “slight risk” (middle school, 37%; high school, 39%). Thirty-three percent (33%) of students surveyed thought that trying inhalants once or twice carries “great risk” (middle school, 33%; high school, 32%).
- Eighty-seven percent (87%) of all youth indicated that they had not used Ecstasy. Thirteen percent (13%) of students surveyed have used Ecstasy at some time in the past (middle school, 6%; high school, 17%). Two percent (2%) of all youth have used Ecstasy monthly or more often (middle school, 1%; high school, 3%) and 1% reported weekly or more often use (middle school, 0%; high school, 1%). Forty-one (41%) percent of students surveyed thought that trying Ecstasy once or twice had “great risk” (middle school, 39%; high school, 43%); while seventy-two percent (72%) of the students thought taking Ecstasy regularly carried “great risk” (middle school, 67%; high school, 75%).

These emerging dependencies put youth at risk of delayed emotional and intellectual growth; developing problems with schools, friends and families; incurring ill health and reduced longevity; accidents; suicide; and unwanted pregnancies (Pedersen & Skrondal, 1996; Pfeifer, Schector, & Yoast, 1987; Small, Silverberg, & Kerns, 1993).

## **Sexuality Issues**

- Sixty-five percent (65%) of all students surveyed reported that they had not had sexual intercourse. Overall, 35% of youth reported that they have had sexual intercourse (middle school, 15%; high school, 46%). Sixty-five percent (65%) of 12th graders have had sexual intercourse (males, 63%; females, 67%). Fifty-seven percent (57%) of sexually active teens “always” use some form of birth control (middle school, 49%; high school, 65%). Sixteen percent (16%) of sexually active youth “never” or “rarely” do (male, 16%; female, 16%).
- Many youth do not talk with their parents about sexuality issues. Within the past year, 58% either “never” or “rarely” talked to their mothers and 74% “never” or “rarely” talked with their fathers about whether or not it is okay to have sex. Even fewer teens had birth control discussions with their parents in the past year, with 68% who either “never” or “rarely” talked to their mothers and 83% who “never” or “rarely” talked with their fathers about the issue.

## **Physical and Mental Health Issues**

- The top five worries of local youth are: getting good grades at school (58%); getting along with parents at home (48%); how they look (42%); how well parents get along with each other (39%); and that they are too fat or too thin (26%).
- Overall, 66% of local teens reported feeling sad or depressed at some time during the past month (males, 54%; females, 78%). Seventeen percent (17%) of youth reported having serious thoughts of suicide during the past month (males, 12%; females, 21%). Seventeen percent (17%) of all youth had made plans at some time to kill themselves (males, 13%; females, 21%) and 12% reported that they had actually attempted suicide at some time in the past (males, 11%; females, 18%).

## **Personal Safety and Violence**

- Eighty-eight percent (88%) of youth reported feeling safe at school. Some students reported feeling unsafe in the locker rooms (middle school, 5%; high school, 3%), in the hallways (middle school, 3%; high school, 2%), and in more than one place (middle school, 5%; high school 2%).
- Sixty-five percent (65%) have never been a victim of sexual harassment. Twenty-two percent (22%) of males and 48% of females have been sexually harassed by other students. Nine percent (9%) of males and 22% of females have been made to do something sexual by another student. Six percent (6%) of all youth reported that they had made someone do something sexual that was not wanted (males, 8%; females, 4%).
- Seven percent (7%) of local youth reported having been sexually abused by an adult. Five percent (5%) of students surveyed reported that they had been sexually abused in the past; 2% indicated that they were currently being sexually abused.
- Eight percent (8%) of youth reported carrying a weapon onto school property in the past month (middle school, 7%; high school, 8%; males, 12%; females, 3%).

### **Parent-Teen Relations**

- The majority of youth reported that their parents were there when they needed them (mothers, 78%; fathers, 61%) and that parents “often” or “very often” cared about them (mothers, 91%; fathers, 81%). Eighty-five percent (85%) reported that their parents were interested in what they learn and how they are doing in school (middle school, 86%; high school, 78%).
- Many local youth reported they had not had a good talk with either parent about whether it is okay to have sex, about using birth control, about AIDS or STDs, about the risks of drinking and using drugs, or about personal problems. Parents were more likely to talk with the teens about job or educational plans. However, parent impact was evident as parental monitoring, parental consequences, and parental values were all found to be related to teen behaviors of smoking, drinking alcohol, and sexual activity.

### **Student Time Use**

- At the level of 5 hours or more per week local youth spent their time watching TV (58%), cruising/hanging out (45%), and at home with no adults present (42%).
- Forty percent (40%) of students reported participating with an organized youth sports program or a school athletic team (middle school, 52%; high school, 33%)

### **Perceptions of School and Community**

- Thirty-seven percent (37%) of local youth felt they were getting a good, high quality education (middle school, 38%; high school, 37%). Forty-eight percent (48%) indicated they enjoyed going to school (middle school, 48%; high school, 48%). Thirty-seven percent (37%) felt school rules were enforced fairly (middle school, 37%; high school, 36%).
- Eight percent (8%) strongly agreed or agreed that they would drop out of school before completing high school (middle school, 7%; high school, 9%).
- Forty-four percent (44%) of high school students plan to go to a 4-year college or university after high school.
- Almost two-thirds of the students (64%) reported that they often think about doing things so people “can have things better in the future” (males, 60%; females, 68%).
- Thirty-three percent (33%) of local youth “agreed” or “strongly agreed” that they could count on the police for help if they were having a problem and needed help (middle school, 40%; high school, 29%).

### **In Closing**

Youth today face many challenges as they grow and develop. The Teen Assessment Project (TAP) provides information that empowers youth, parents, neighborhoods, schools, youth-serving organizations, agencies, the spiritual community, law enforcement, and community leaders to work together to develop and implement strategies addressing concerns identified. TAP can serve as a vehicle for youth, parent, school and community education and action. In addition, it sets a baseline from which to evaluate the impact of local efforts to encourage positive youth development in families, schools, and communities.