

For Information

DATE: September 11, 2012

REPORT TITLE: **THE 2011 PEEL STUDENT HEALTH SURVEY**FROM: Janette Smith, Commissioner of Health Services
David L. Mowat, MBChB, MPH, FRCPC, Medical Officer of Health**OBJECTIVE**

To provide an overview of the results of the 2011 Peel Student Health Survey.

REPORT HIGHLIGHTS

- In 2011 Peel Public Health administered the Student Health Survey to approximately 8,500 selected students in grades 7 to 12 both at the Peel District School Board and the Dufferin-Peel Catholic District School Board.
- The survey findings were generally similar to estimates of school-aged children reported provincially and nationally.
- Key findings included in the technical report are:
 - Although two-thirds of students in Peel were a healthy weight, 19 per cent of students were classified as overweight and 13 per cent were obese. Males were twice as likely to be obese as females.
 - Among grade 9 students, more than one-third of males and nearly half of females fail to meet current standards of acceptable cardiorespiratory fitness.
 - About one quarter (24 per cent) of all Peel students report binge drinking (consuming five or more drinks in one sitting).
 - 41 per cent of current youth smokers have someone else buy cigarettes for them, or have them given to them by friends and family (35 per cent).

DISCUSSION**1. Background**

Public health units are responsible for the ongoing collection, analysis and reporting of health indicators for priority populations. Understanding health-related issues among the Region of Peel student population is an essential part of this work. To address this requirement, from February to April 2011, Peel Public Health collaborated with both the Peel District School Board and the Dufferin-Peel Catholic District School Boards to administer the Student Health Survey to approximately 8,500 selected students in grades 7 to 12. The findings from this survey have been examined and summarized in a technical report which can be accessed at <http://www.peelregion.ca/health/health-status-report/studenthealth2011/>.

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2. Overview

The survey was completed during class hours by students from 37 elementary schools and 23 secondary schools within randomly selected schools and classes in Peel.

Data collection included the following four components (administered during class hours):

- A self-completed questionnaire;
- Height and weight measurements;
- Oral Health Assessment (Grades 10 and 12 only); and
- Physical Fitness Assessment (Grade 9 only).

The survey questionnaire was composed of 105 questions (grade 7 to 8 survey) and 119 questions (grade 9 to 12 survey). Topics included in the survey and described in the report include:

- Respondent profile,
- Eating habits and body weight,
- Physical activity and sedentary behaviours,
- Tobacco, alcohol, marijuana and other drugs,
- Bullying and safety,
- Mental health and self esteem,
- Relationships and sexual health (grades 9 to 12 only),
- Oral health,
- Injuries, and
- Sun safety.

3. Findings

The report findings included:

- As students transition from elementary school to secondary school, dietary quality declines.
- Although two-thirds of students in Peel were a healthy weight, 19 per cent of students were classified as overweight and 13 per cent were obese. Males were twice as likely to be obese compared to females.
- Peel students report spending a large portion of their day being sedentary. A larger than expected proportion of students exceeded national recommended guidelines that screen time be limited to no more than two hours a day. Hours spent engaging in sedentary behaviors increased on the weekends compared to weekdays. Of concern is the high proportion of students (47.8 per cent) who use computers and cell phones for two or more hours a day during weekdays.
- Among grade 9 students, more than one-third of males and nearly half of females fail to meet current standards of acceptable cardiorespiratory fitness.
- Overall, 41 per cent of current youth smokers have someone else buy cigarettes for them, or have them given to them by friends and family (35 per cent). Half of them report

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buying cigarettes themselves from a retailer. This undermines efforts made in tobacco control to limit the supply of cigarettes to underage youth.

- The lower price of contraband cigarettes makes them especially attractive to youth. In Peel, 24 per cent of current youth smokers reported using contraband cigarettes.
- About one quarter (24 per cent) of the students report binge drinking (consuming five or more drinks in one sitting).
- Overall, 12 per cent of the students reported being a passenger with a driver who had been using marijuana.
- 12 per cent of students in grades 10 and 12 were identified with urgent dental conditions and 11 per cent had untreated dental caries.

4. Next Steps

Issues identified through the Student Health Survey 2011 will be addressed by Peel Public Health, in partnership with the two school boards, using the Healthy Schools Approach. This comprehensive model aims to enhance the health and well-being of Peel's school-aged population by creating policies and programming that promotes healthy behaviors. Some of the results will be incorporated into the Child Health Report, to be released in January 2013.

The implementation of this survey was a significant undertaking for Peel Public Health and could not have been accomplished without the support of both the Peel District School Board and the Dufferin-Peel Catholic District School Board. For ongoing data collection needs, public health staff are investigating other opportunities which will be less onerous for the schools and require fewer public health resources. For example, Peel Public Health have agreed to pay the Centre for Addiction and Mental Health (CAMH) for an over sample of Peel students to participate in the Ontario Student Drug Use and Health Survey. This survey is administered in schools across the province every two years.

5. Implications

The 2011 Peel Student Health Survey is the largest of its kind at the regional level and provides the first comprehensive assessment of the fitness of Peel grade 9 students and oral health of students in grades 10 and 12. This report provides data for our student population which can be used to gauge changes in the health status of Peel's children and youth. It will also be used to support Peel Public Health's 10-Year Strategic Plan tabled with Council in May 2009 and the Region's Term of Council Priorities for supportive environments for healthy weights and for tobacco-free living. Key findings from the report will be incorporated into the Child Health Status Report which will be released in January, 2013.

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CONCLUSION

The 2011 Student Health Survey is a surveillance activity aimed to support public health program planning, delivery and management specific to Peel's school-aged population.

The survey findings were generally similar to estimates of school-aged children reported provincially and nationally. There are a number of key findings for Peel Public Health that are identified in the report which will be used to inform the work outlined in the 10 year strategic plan. Peel Public Health will incorporate these findings into decisions about programs and policies and continue to work in partnership with the Peel District School Board and the Dufferin-Peel Catholic District School Board and other relevant community partners to address these issues.



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