YES’ Response to the 2018 Healthy Youth Survey

In 2019, the Lake Washington School District released their 2018 Healthy Youth Survey (HYS) data, a joint effort between the state’s Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction, the Department of Health and other agencies. The data shows a significant increase in suicidality, particularly among eighth and tenth graders, and a vaping increase of “epidemic” proportions. It echoes the trends we are seeing at YES.

“YES has to be in a continuous change process to respond to the needs we see in our community. All of the changes and investments the organization makes come directly in response to the needs represented in this survey, and the specific issues of our community,” said David Downing, YES Chief Operating Officer.

**ADDRESSING SUICIDE CONCERNS**

In Washington State, suicide is currently the leading cause of death for teens ages 15-19. The HYS data shows a considerable spike over the past two years in the rates of students who have considered suicide and in those who have made a suicide plan. According to 2018 HYS data, 20% of seniors in the Lake Washington School District have considered suicide.

This increase in suicidality and other serious mental health issues means that our organization has had to respond immediately, and provide a high level of support. Over the past two years, YES has implemented Open Access, our same-day mental health and substance use assessments conducted by dually-certified Master’s level therapists. It provides youth with quicker access to needed behavioral health services.

In addition, we have increased the hours of YES Behavioral Health Support Specialists staffing schools in the Lake Washington and Bellevue School Districts. The increase will enable YES counselors to develop closer relationships with the student body and school staff. More counselors are also able to provide suicide risk assessments in the schools, providing an immediate response to critical situations.

** ADDRESSING VAPING TRENDS**

The 2018 HYS data clearly shows that while traditional cigarette use is down among teens, the “vaping epidemic has reversed decades of progress reducing youth nicotine use.” Just in the past two years, the use of e-cigarettes has increased by 20-30% among seniors in the Lake Washington School District.

While more youth are vaping, their knowledge of the content of vaping products and the risks of vaping remains low. According to the HYS data, only about a third of tenth graders think vaping is harmful. At YES we know that vaping can be a precursor to youth experimenting with other substances in order to cope with daily struggles, so it is important for us to respond with urgency.

YES implements our Nicotine Diversion Program in partnership with the Lake Washington School District and with funding from CVS Health. The updated program addresses the rise in vaping, and helps educate youth about the risks of vaping and nicotine. Learn more about the program on the next page.

**WORKING TOGETHER**

“The best hope for the community to improve is through collective impact work. No one entity or organization will be able to change the challenges our community faces. We need to do it together,” said David Downing, YES’ COO.

There are many resources available to help empower members of our community around mental health and substance use issues among teens. Learn how to connect teens to community resources through YES’ Youth Mental Health First Aid Training. In addition, you can learn how to increase protective factors in your own family and in our community through YES’ community education events. Visit our website at www.youtheastsideservices.org/get-involved/ for other opportunities to get more involved.

**WHAT WE DO**

Youth Eastside Services (YES) is the leading youth-serving behavioral health agency in East King County for children and youth from birth to age 22, and their families. We provide evidence-based mental health counseling, substance use and co-occurring disorders counseling and treatment, early childhood behavioral health services, psychiatric services, and education and prevention programs. No matter what your financial situation is, you can receive help at YES. We accept most insurance plans, Medicaid, and offer a sliding fee scale.
YES’ Nicotine Diversion Program Fights Teen Vaping

Vaping and the use of e-cigarettes is very prevalent among young people, while the dangers of vaping are little understood. Because of this, YES partners with the Lake Washington School District to implement a Nicotine Diversion program. The program is part of YES’ school-based substance use treatment services and consists of an evidence-based assessment, brief intervention, and ongoing support. The program is in 28 elementary, middle, and high schools. All counselors who facilitate the program are Substance Use Disorder Professionals (SUDP), and many are dually-certified as licensed mental health therapists. YES’ SUDP therapists, in conjunction with the youth we serve, developed the curriculum, which provides youth with facts about the risks of vaping and nicotine consumption. Most youth are referred to the program through a school administrator as part of a disciplinary action, but a parent or friend can also refer a student, or they can refer themselves. After youth are referred, they complete a short assessment to help counselors get a sense of the extent of their use of e-cigarettes or other vaping products and gauge their desire to quit.

The sessions are one hour each and are held over two days. Sessions provide youth with information about what chemicals are found in vape “juice”/JUUL pods, the short and long-term health effects of using an e-cigarette, and provide resources to support youth in reducing their use or quitting altogether.

“From my experience working with youth, they don’t often know much about what it is they’re using. There’s a lot of misinformation out there that is important for us to correct.”

Andrea Frost, YES Prevention Intervention Specialist at Redmond High School

Facilitators focus on why tobacco companies target youth, by involving the students in group activities. They also present a bag full of day-to-day items that represent the chemicals found in e-cigarettes, to give students a better idea of what they are putting in their bodies. At the end, students complete a project in which they create a public service announcement that is targeted towards prevention among 11-14 year olds.

The Nicotine Diversion Program is made possible through a generous grant of $20,000 from CVS Health. CVS Health helps ensure that as a community, we can provide all young people with the services they need to thrive.

CVS Health

Andrea Frost, Organizer of YES’ Nicotine Diversion Program

Andrea Frost first got the counseling bug when she worked for Washington Special Olympics while attending college. “Supporting young people in different facets opened my eyes to new possibilities,” she says. Andrea has been a part of the YES team for more than 18 years and remains passionate in her constant support of youth.

Andrea is a Substance Use Disorder Counselor and facilitates UPROADS, YES’ pro-social sober support group for teens struggling with substance use, and YES’ Alcohol Drug Education and Community Outreach at Bellevue Boys & Girls Club Teen Center. She presents to community members about teens and substance use and oversees YES’ Nicotine Diversion Program. Andrea also works at Redmond High School as a Prevention Intervention Specialist providing on-site counseling and referrals for students.

“It really is amazing to see young people gain positive support from all the diverse programs YES has to offer.”

Recently Andrea had the pleasure of meeting YES’ new Early Childhood Behavioral Health counselor Maria Cortez, who recognized Andrea from a substance use class she took in high school 13 years ago.

“Andrea was a counselor for a girl’s group that I attended when I was in junior high school. The group allowed me to feel validated and heard, and I think about it often now that I’m in a similar role. I’m glad I crossed paths with Andrea to let her know the impact she, and the group, made in my life,” said Maria.
SAVE THE DATE

2020 Invest in Youth Breakfast
Wednesday, March 18, 2020
Meydenbauer Convention Center, Bellevue

It's never too early to make plans to join us at YES' most anticipated event of the year, our Invest in Youth Breakfast on March 18, 2020. Hear from clients who have overcome significant challenges, enjoy a catered breakfast, and be inspired by our keynote speaker Kevin Hines. Kevin is a best-selling author, global public speaker, and award-winning documentary filmmaker who in the year 2000, attempted to take his life by jumping off the Golden Gate Bridge. He will share his story of hope, healing, and recovery.

For more information about the breakfast, go to: www.youtheastsidesservices.org/breakfast/

YOUTH AND FAMILY COUNSELING
Keth Explores Deeper Issues through Art and Counseling

Keth, who prefers the pronouns they/them, was always naturally artistic. “One day I just picked up a pencil, and just kept holding it,” so it wasn’t difficult for their counselor, Noble, to suggest Keth enter YES’ Poster Exhibition for Mental Health Awareness.

Due to bullying and abuse, Keth developed PTSD symptoms and sought out YES’ school-based counseling services when they were in eighth grade. Keth’s in-school counselor suggested they check out BGLAD, YES’ LGBTQ+ support group, to help them find a sense of belonging. Now, six years later, Keth has been the longest-attending participant.

“At first it was really awkward, but I quickly warmed up. Everyone there is your friend. BGLAD helped me reach out and open up to others,” Keth said.

Keth continued with Youth & Family Mental Health Counseling at YES to help work through some family challenges and gender identity questions. Keth says that YES “helps me a lot when it comes to just living.”

Now as a high school graduate, Keth is looking forward to attending Evergreen College this fall and pursuing their passion for comic book art. They hope to create narratives that promote social justice and empower minorities of all genders, races, religions, and sexual orientations, letting them know they are not alone.
CHAMPIONS FOR YOUTH

David and Cathy Habib

David and Cathy Habib are formidable champions for youth and families in East King County. As YES partners, they’ve generously invested both their time and financial resources because they believe all families should have access to behavioral health services.

“What’s important to know is that schools can’t do it alone. Youth are struggling with anxiety and depression, parenting is a constant challenge...Where do parents in this community usually turn? It’s YES!” said Cathy, explaining why she and David enthusiastically support YES youth and families.

Cathy is well known for her central role at Eastside Pathways, a collective impact partnership that YES staff and board members have participated in since its launch in 2011.

“Through the collaborative partnership, we are trying to make big systemic change that will produce better results in school and life for kids across the Eastside,” explained YES COO David Downing. “Cathy has been there since the beginning and we will only achieve our goals if we are all as persistent as Cathy.”

David Habib has also spent a significant amount of time behind the scenes, volunteering his time to help build YES’ first custom software package—a multi-year project.

“We were fortunate to have David’s technical expertise at a critical time in our adoption of technology at YES,” said CEO Patti Skelton-McGougan. “By donating his time and expertise on software development, David helped us keep resources flowing to kids coming through the door. It was a priceless contribution.”

At YES, we are honored to have such engaged, committed partners by our side as we seek to provide a lifeline to children, youth and families. Please join us in thanking Cathy and David for their ongoing dedication to our community!