

Michigan Department
of Community Health



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MDCH and MDE's *Michigan Model for Health*® an Effective Educational Program

Experts believe our young children are engaging in risky behaviors earlier than ever before. A recently state-funded study of more than 2,500 Michigan and Indiana students found that nearly five percent of fourth grade students have smoked cigarettes and nearly seven percent drank more than a few sips of alcohol.

Fortunately, Michigan has a program proven to be effective in combating this serious problem: The *Michigan Model for Health*®.

“We need to begin educating our children about health issues and teaching them essential life skills before high school or even middle school,” said Janet Olszewski, director of the Michigan Department of Community Health (MDCH). “Our children need us to provide quality health education at the youngest ages. We are fortunate to have the Michigan Model for Health, developed right here in our state.”

The *Michigan Model for Health*® is a comprehensive health curriculum for students in grades K-12. The program is taught by teachers who receive training and support from the Comprehensive School Health Coordinators network. The Michigan Model for Health®, also used in 32 other states, uses age-appropriate lessons to provide students with the health knowledge and skills aimed to prevent them from engaging in risky behaviors.

The Michigan Model for Health® targets the most serious health challenges students face, including social and emotional health; nutrition and physical activity; alcohol, tobacco and other drugs; and safety. Over the past 15 years, several studies have shown the effectiveness of

More

the Michigan Model for Health®. These studies, which have been on a smaller scale and of older students, have shown a significant decline in alcohol and other drug use, unhealthy eating, and other risky behaviors by those who received the curriculum.

This year's study represents the first large-scale effort targeted at elementary grades. More than 2,500 students and 300 teachers in grades four and five in more than 50 schools across Michigan and Indiana participated in the study. Funded by the Michigan departments of Community Health and Education, the study was conducted over two years and measured whether the Michigan Model for Health® improves student health knowledge, attitudes and behaviors. Researchers followed the same fourth grade students into their fifth grade year in 2007-08.

To date, findings indicate fourth-graders who received the curriculum showed significant, positive changes compared to students who did not have the curriculum. Specifically, students exposed to the Michigan Model for Health® showed stronger drug and tobacco refusal skills, indicating less use of alcohol and tobacco. In addition, students improved their skills for managing feelings such as anger and stress; enhanced their skills for staying safe on the Internet; and increased both their knowledge and skills related to physical activity and nutrition. In some cases, the knowledge and skills gained were three times greater for students receiving the curriculum as opposed to students who did not receive the curriculum.

“The survey results make the case for comprehensive health education,” said Michigan's State Superintendent of Public Instruction Mike Flanagan. “Implementing the Michigan Model for Health® curriculum at all grade levels assures that Michigan students are receiving health instruction that effectively teaches them how to make healthy choices now and in the future. Health education is a vital component in our quest to help our students become successful in the classroom and healthy, productive adults.”

For more information about the Michigan Model for Health® curriculum and the School Health Coordinator network, go to www.michiganmodel.org

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