



## Cigarette Smoking Among Youth:

### United States, Maryland, and MD PMHS

In the most recent issue of the Data Shorts (#3), the increased prevalence of cigarette smoking among adults with mental illness and those with co-occurring mental health and substance abuse disorders<sup>1</sup> was discussed. Both groups in the Public Mental Health System (PMHS) smoke at higher rates than the general population. Since approximately 90% of adult smokers began smoking by age 18<sup>2</sup>, the aim of this Data Short is to examine the prevalence of smoking among youth under age 18 in Maryland's PMHS.

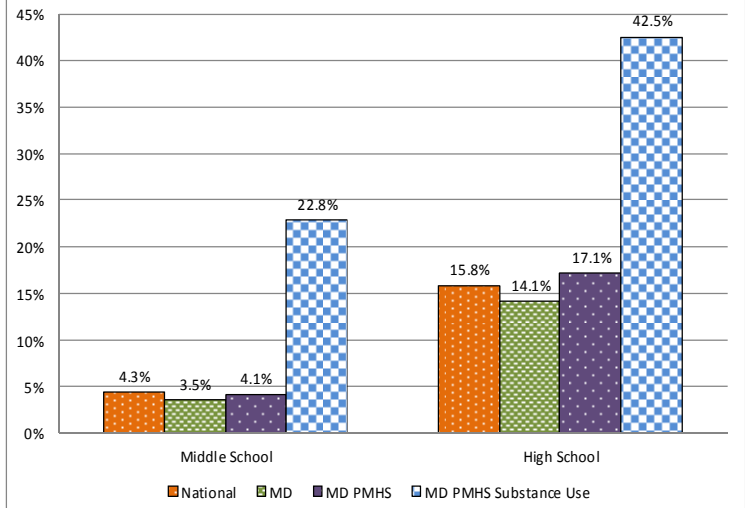
Smoking prevalence estimates come from the National Youth Tobacco Survey<sup>3</sup> (NYTS) and the state version, the Maryland Youth Tobacco Survey<sup>4</sup> (MYTS). Both of these are school-based surveys that focus on smoking behavior and risk and protective factors. Within the PMHS, the Outcomes Measurement System (OMS) provides data on both cigarette smoking and substance use issues. The OMS Child and Adolescent (C&A) Questionnaire uses the CRAFFT<sup>4</sup> Screening Tool to assess substance use behaviors.

This Data Short analysis compares youth smoking prevalence in the nation, Maryland, and the MD PMHS. Youth in the MD PMHS responding "Yes" to at least one of the CRAFFT items are included in the "MD PMHS Substance Use" group. Since older youth are at greater risk for smoking, data are analyzed separately for middle school (ages 12-14) and high school (ages 15-17) aged youth.

For the survey population, Maryland's results are similar to national results. Within the PMHS population as a whole, OMS results are very similar to the Maryland survey results. Among Maryland public middle school students, 3.5% smoke cigarettes compared with 4.1% of youth in the PMHS; 14.1% of Maryland high school students smoke compared with 17.1% in the PMHS.

The results for PMHS youth in the substance use group are, however, striking and alarming. Among middle school age students, those in the PMHS substance use group are more than five times more

**Youth Smoking Prevalence, 2011**



likely to be smokers than in the national survey, 22.8% compared to 4.3% respectively. For high school students, nearly half of the PMHS substance use group reported smoking compared with only 15.8% of the national survey population.

There is one caveat regarding these results. The NYTS and MYTS are both administered only in school settings. In contrast, PMHS data include all youth receiving outpatient mental health treatment services, regardless of their school status. It is therefore possible, especially for high school aged youth, that the national and Maryland prevalence estimates may underestimate smoking prevalence, as these data do not include youth who have dropped out of school and cigarette smoking may be more prevalent among that group.

Since many youth receiving services in the PMHS smoke at very high rates, prevention and cessation activities are essential. Both the Campaign for Tobacco-Free Kids and the American Legacy Foundation's Truth campaign provide helpful resources about youth smoking and policy and prevention efforts.

1. Maryland Department of Health and Mental Hygiene, Mental Hygiene Administration, Data Shorts, Volume 1, Issue 3.
2. US Department of Health and Human Services. Preventing tobacco use among youth and young adults. Atlanta, GA: US Department of Health and Human Services, CDC; 2012.
3. [http://www.cdc.gov/tobacco/data\\_statistics/surveys/nyts/](http://www.cdc.gov/tobacco/data_statistics/surveys/nyts/)
4. <http://www.ceasar-boston.org/clinicians/crafft.php>
5. <http://www.basissurvey.org/pdf/Basis-24ProductSheet.pdf>