

MEMORANDUM

TO: Representative Maxine Grad, Chair, House Judiciary Committee:
FROM: Harry Chen, MD, Commissioner 
DATE: April 14, 2016
SUBJECT: Youth Risk Behavior Survey Follow up

It has come to my attention that I misspoke when I tried to describe the questions in the YRBS that measure student's perception of harm from cigarettes, marijuana and alcohol. They are not yes or no questions but allow for an answer that characterizes the risk in the following manner: no risk, slight risk, moderate risk and great risk. Below you will find the results presented in a more granular way. This does not alter my conclusion that we have a considerable challenge with the low perception of harm on the part of students for regular marijuana use.

2015 High School YRBS: Perception of Harm

In 2015, the level of risk students believe <i>people their age</i> would harm themselves (physically or in other ways) if they:	No risk	Slight risk	Moderate risk	Great risk
Smoke one or more packs of cigarettes per day	4	9	22	65*
Have five or more drinks of alcohol once or twice each weekend	5	19	38	38
Use marijuana regularly	20	27*	26	27*

*Since 2013, the perceived risk of harm from smoking a pack or more cigarettes per day and using marijuana regularly significantly changed.

- The percent of student who believed there was a great risk from smoking cigarettes significantly increased from 63% in 2013 to 65% in 2015.



- Having a slight risk of harm from using marijuana regularly increased from 25% in 2013 to 27% in 2015, while risking great harm from using marijuana regularly significantly decreased from 31% in 2013 to 27% in 2015.
- In other words, compared to 2013 students were more likely to believe smoking cigarettes would cause a great risk of harm in 2015. Fewer students in 2015 believed using marijuana regularly would cause a great risk of harm.
- Students were more likely to believe using marijuana regularly would only lead to a slight risk of harm compared to 2013.

Risk of harm from smoking cigarettes		
	2013	2015
No risk	4	4
Slight risk	9	9
Moderate risk	23	22
Great risk	63	65
Risk of harm from binge drinking		
	2013	2015
No risk	6	5
Slight risk	20	19
Moderate risk	36	38
Great risk	38	38
Risk of harm from using marijuana		
	2013	2015
No risk	19	20
Slight risk	25	27
Moderate risk	25	26
Great risk	31	27

Significant change from 2013 to 2015

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