



# Residents Learn How to Save Lives

Roughly 30 Bedford residents attended a free suicide prevention workshop sponsored by Bedford Board of Health (BoH) in collaboration with Bedford Youth and Family Services (YFS) this past week. The workshop was titled “Question, Persuade, Refer (QPR)” and was offered by Jon Mattleman, a certified QPR trainer and former Needham Youth Services Director. This workshop was the second offering by the town focused on preventing suicide, the first offering being last September’s event called “Talk Saves Lives” and facilitated by the American Foundation for Suicide Prevention. Both BoH and YFS have been concerned about the increased signs of stress and depression in Bedford, which replicate those in surrounding communities and the nation, and are committed to offering solutions and hope wherever possible. Educating citizens to ask, listen, and intervene where concerns or ideation may exist is one such way.

Mattleman shared myths and data about suicide. Participants learned that suicide can be prevented, that people send warning signals to those closest to them, and that anyone can intervene and save a life. Most suicidal people talk about their plans ahead of time so the person closest to them is most likely to prevent a person dying. Mattleman shared the staggering numbers of annual deaths by suicide both nationally - over 40,000 - and in Massachusetts – 600. Massachusetts has one of the lowest suicide rates due to our comprehensive gun control practices, and those states with fewer firearm restrictions have much higher rates.

Mattleman discussed the Massachusetts Youth Risk Behavior Survey (YRBS) data from 2017 related to bullying, depression, self-injury, and suicidal ideation and compared that to the 2018 Bedford YRBS data which has just been released and is posted on [www.bedfordma.gov/youth](http://www.bedfordma.gov/youth) under “Youth Risk Behavior Survey.” Bedford’s rates of bullying and cyberbullying at both the middle school and high school are comparable to the state rates and between 15% and 20%. Our rates of depression, self-injury, and ideation are a bit lower but still of concern. Rates of reported depression are 15% at JGMS (82 students) and 28% at BHS (182 students). Students who considered suicide numbered 60 at JGMS and 98 at BHS, who made a plan 33 at JGMS and 85 at BHS, and who actually attempted were 5 at JGMS and 20 at BHS. The group was forced to think about our community’s response to those numbers were they to reflect an illness or sports injury or physical contagion as compared to depression and suicide. Mattleman discussed his history dealing with youth suicides in Needham and how fortunate Bedford has been to date compared to surrounding communities.

Participants at the training reviewed situational clues that might predispose a person to consider suicide, like loss of a relationship or job, serious illness, death of a loved one, as well as tips for questioning, persuading, and referring people who might be at risk. Key takeaways for several participants were listening techniques designed to elicit conversation with someone struggling with suicidal ideation like “tell me more” and persuading techniques involving asking if they would go get help if the listener went along.

Mattleman’s presentation was just two days before the US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention announced that death by suicide increased 3.7 % in 2017 and it rounds out the top 10 leading causes of death in the US. Again in 2017, death by suicide along with the other top 9 causes, contribute to a decline in overall US life expectancy. Health Director Heidi Porter said, “these results are unsettling, but we recognize that local attention needs to be brought to this and other important health promotion and disease prevention topics. BoH and YFS view our role as providers of prevention resources, training and health promotion programming and strive to be responsive to the community’s needs.”

Materials from Mattleman’s presentation can be viewed under the programs tab on the BoH website at [www.bedfordma.gov/health](http://www.bedfordma.gov/health) The American Foundation for Suicide Prevention website at [www.afsp.org](http://www.afsp.org) offers a wealth of information and resources

For questions or more information about local resources contact Board of Health at 781-275-6507 or Youth and Family Services at 781-275-7727.

*Submitted by YFS Director Sue Baldauf & Health Director Heidi Porter*



## E-Cigarettes & Vaping - What Parents Need to Know

Massachusetts Attorney General Maura Healy reported in June that over the last few years, e-cigarette use has increased 900% among high school students in the United States. In 2015, almost 50% of Massachusetts high school students reported having used e-cigarettes at least once. Based on recent reports, usage rates have only increased since then.

As many of you may know, electronic cigarettes are battery powered devices that heat liquid into a vapor. While electronic cigarettes come in varying shapes and sizes, the popular JUUL devices have a sleek, modern design that resembles a USB flash drive. The liquid in vaping devices often contains nicotine, a highly addictive substance as you all know and that can lead to serious health consequences for young people whose brains and bodies are still developing. Vaping one pod is equivalent to 200 puffs or one whole pack of traditional combustible cigarettes. The liquids may also contain other unhealthy chemicals and compounds, including carcinogens.

Bedford High School has seen this increase grow to epidemic proportions in our teen population locally and is concerned as well. On Back to School Night in October Massachusetts Municipal Association Tobacco Control Director D.J. Wilson spoke to parents about how to keep our kids safe. As Tobacco Control Director, D.J. offers technical and legal assistance to municipalities on all aspects of tobacco control policy. He is also a member of a bi-weekly policy committee at the Massachusetts Tobacco Control Program that deals with changing trends in tobacco control, tobacco industry tactics and how to incorporate the numerous areas of applicable state and federal law into a municipality's tobacco control efforts. D.J. is a member of the Massachusetts Bar and a graduate of New England School of Law and Northeastern University.

This free Workshop was recorded by BTV and can be viewed at the Bedford Youth & Family Services website [www.bedfordma.gov/youth](http://www.bedfordma.gov/youth) under the For Parents section or at this link: <https://www.bedfordma.gov/youth-family/pages/byfs-presents-parent-education-workshops> The For Parents section also features previous parent education workshops and may be of interest to parents new to adolescent issues or desiring additional information. For more information or if you have questions contact BYFS at 781-275-7727 or email [youthandfamily@bedfordma.gov](mailto:youthandfamily@bedfordma.gov)

*Submitted by BYFS Director Sue Baldauf*



### **Are you or your student ready to DASH around town?**

Bedford's 3-year local transportation pilot program, the DASH, is a door-to-door transit service available weekdays from 11AM to 6PM. The DASH expands transportation services for Bedford residents, and students ages 12 and up can ride independently with parental permission. Parents can book trips for kids online at [www.bedforddash.com](http://www.bedforddash.com) or by calling 781-275-DASH. Rides can be booked up to three weeks in advance. After initial registration, parents can give permission for youth to book rides independently if they chose.

The DASH is a 14-passenger, handicapped accessible vehicle, operating between the hours of 11AM and 6PM, Monday through Friday, excluding holidays and weather emergencies. The DASH provides service throughout Bedford as well as to the neighboring towns of Lexington, Billerica, and Burlington. Concord trips are available on Mondays and Tuesdays on a space available basis only. Residents have utilized the DASH for rides to employment, after-school activities, recreation, medical appointments, social visits and more!

Adults ages 18-65 pay \$2 in town and \$4 out-of-town; Medicare Card Holders, Veterans, disabled persons, and seniors ages 65+ pay \$1 in town and \$2 out-of-town. Youth under 18 pay \$1 in town and \$2 out-of-town. Discounted prepaid ticket books are available from the driver.

Since the DASH is a pilot project, service is subject to change over time. Any questions about the DASH please call the dispatcher at 781-275-DASH (3274), visit the FAQ's page at [www.bedforddash.com](http://www.bedforddash.com) or call Bedford's Healthy Communities Coordinator Carla Olson at 781-275-7727 x4330.

*Submitted by BYFS Healthy Communities Coordinator Carla Olson*

### **Watch the Bedford Youth & Family Services website for the 2018 Youth Risk Behavior Survey results release in November!**

The Youth Risk Behavior Survey provides data from our students on their risky behaviors. Last spring, Bedford students in grades 6-12 answered questions about smoking, drinking, sexual behavior, bullying, and other risky behaviors. This data helps inform the health curriculum in our schools and health programs offered in the town.

Our plans for sharing the results are:

- We will announce the release of the results to the community in our Substance Abuse Awareness Month letter
- The results will be posted on our departments' web site
- We will present the results to groups in the community
- We plan to work with students at JGMS & BHS on social marketing projects to get the results out in the schools

For more information contact

Jessica Wildfong, Prevention Services Coordinator at 781- 275-7727 ext. 4331 or email [jessicaw@bedfordma.gov](mailto:jessicaw@bedfordma.gov)

## Are Our Youth Healthy? Check Out the 2018 Youth Risk Behavior Survey Results to Find Out!

The Bedford Youth Risk Behavior Survey was administered to John Glenn Middle School and Bedford High School students in April of 2018. Well, the results are in! Keep reading to get an idea about how Bedford students' lifestyles and behaviors affect their health.

This is a very interesting year with some challenging results and new data points. On a positive note, trend data largely reveal consistency in perceived adult support at the Middle and High School, with rates at or near their highest levels since 2010. There was a decrease in the percent of High School students who perceive themselves as overweight, and overall consistency in physical activity levels at the Middle and High School.

With a main focus on trends, we saw an increase in alcohol, cigarette, and marijuana use. The new electronic tobacco data show that 7% of Middle School students and 28% of High School students reported current use.

The challenging trends continue with violence and safety, with notable increases in concern for safety in school. Bullying continues to be an issue at the Middle and High School, with consistent increases in the percentage of students who reported being bullied at school. Sexual behavior data show an increase in sexually active High School students and a corresponding decline in the level of condom use. Our mental health data is also of concern, with consistent increases in depression, self-harm, and suicidality among Middle and High School students. We want no students to see self-harm and suicide as a problem solving technique.

### RECOMMENDATIONS

#### Areas of Prevention for Families:

- Parents are the most important influence on their teen when it comes to risky behaviors. It's important to talk often, listen regularly, and communicate clearly that you do not want your teen using alcohol or drugs. Using alcohol or drugs before the brain has fully developed increases your risk for future addiction dramatically.
- Families need to continue to remind kids about NOT drinking or using any substances and driving, or riding with someone who has, and be sure they can call home for a ride no matter what. Research shows that kids who learn the risks of drugs and alcohol from their parents are up to 50% less likely to use than those who do not.
- Parents can help to keep stress levels down by being certain that kids have a balance between activities, school, and unstructured leisure time. A good rule of thumb is involvement in one sport and one kind of other activity at a time.
- Be sure to spend enjoyable time together so that interactions aren't only about school and other "chores." Eat a meal together, watch a television show, go to a movie, read a book they have to read for school, do a project. Stay connected.
- If you are worried about your child's mental health, take advantage of Bedford Youth and Family Services mental health screenings section of their webpage [www.bedfordma.gov/youth](http://www.bedfordma.gov/youth). The screening is anonymous and confidential. After answering a few questions, you will receive customized feedback, educational materials, and treatment resources if necessary.

You can view the full executive summary of the 2018 Bedford Youth Risk Behavior Survey as well as some of the main survey findings related to substance use, violence and safety, and mental and physical health on Bedford Youth and Family Services website [www.bedfordma.gov/youth](http://www.bedfordma.gov/youth) under the Youth Risk Behavior Survey section.

We will be working over the next year to share this information as broadly as possible. We will also be working with youth at both JGMS and BHS to get the results to students in a way that supports their healthy choices.

For more information contact Jessica Wildfong, Prevention Services Coordinator [jessicaw@bedfordma.gov](mailto:jessicaw@bedfordma.gov) or 781-275-7727 ext. 4331.

The cold and flu season is upon us! Please see the following article from the US Food and drug administration regarding the use of Tylenol (acetaminophen) for the treatment of cold and flu symptoms.

## Don't Double Up on Acetaminophen

You have flu symptoms, so you've been getting some relief for the past two days by taking a cough and flu medicine every few hours. Late in the day, you have a headache and you think about grabbing a couple of acetaminophen tablets to treat the pain.

Stop right there.

What you may not realize is that more than 600 medications, both prescription and over-the-counter (OTC), contain the active ingredient acetaminophen to help relieve pain and reduce fever. Taken carefully and correctly, these medicines can be safe and effective. But taking too much acetaminophen can lead to severe liver damage.

Acetaminophen is a common medication for relieving mild to moderate pain from headaches, muscle aches, menstrual periods, colds and sore throats, toothaches, backaches and to reduce fever. It is also used in combination medicines, which have more than one active ingredient to treat more than one symptom.

### 'Tis Cold and Flu Season

The National Institutes of Health (NIH) says that Americans catch one billion colds per year and as many as 20% of Americans get the flu. Moreover, 7 in 10 Americans use OTC medicines to treat cold, cough and flu symptoms.

Fathia Gibril, M.D., M.HSc., a supervisory medical officer at the Food and Drug Administration (FDA), explains that consumers looking for relief from a cold or the flu may not know that acetaminophen comes in combination with many other medications used to treat those symptoms. "So if you're taking more than one medicine at a time," she says, "you may be putting yourself at risk for liver damage."

Symptoms of acetaminophen overdose may take many days to appear, and even when they become apparent, they may mimic flu or cold symptoms. The current maximum recommended adult dose of acetaminophen is 4,000 milligrams per day. To avoid exceeding that dose:

- don't take more than one OTC product containing acetaminophen,
- don't take a prescription and an OTC product containing acetaminophen, and
- don't exceed the recommended dose on any product containing acetaminophen.



"When you're at the store deciding which product to buy, check the 'Drug Facts' label of OTC cold, cough and flu products before using two or more products at the same time," Gibril says. If you're still not sure which to buy, ask the pharmacist for advice.

## Rely on Health Care Experts

Acetaminophen is used in many commonly prescribed medications in combination with pain relievers such as codeine, oxycodone and hydrocodone. As of January 2011, FDA reported that overdoses from prescription medicines containing acetaminophen accounted for nearly half of all cases of acetaminophen-related liver injury in the U.S. When your health care professionals prescribe a drug, be sure to ask if it contains this active ingredient, and also to inform them of all other medicines (prescription and OTC) and supplements you take.

Even if you still have fever or pain, it's important not to take more than directed on the prescription or package label, notes FDA supervisory medical officer Sharon Hertz, M.D. But be careful, the word "acetaminophen" is not always spelled out in full on the container's prescription label. Abbreviations such as APAP, Acetaminoph, Acetaminop, Acetamin, or Acetam may be used instead.

When buying OTC products, Hertz suggests you make it a habit of telling the pharmacist what other medications and supplements you're taking and asking if taking acetaminophen in addition is safe.

**Cold And Flu Season Is Here**  
DOUBLE CHECK YOUR MEDICINE LABELS. DON'T DOUBLE UP ON ACETAMINOPHEN.

Americans catch **1 BILLION** colds per year

**7 in 10** Americans use over-the-counter medicines to treat cold and flu symptoms each year

**MORE THAN 600** over-the-counter and prescription medicines contain acetaminophen, including many for cold and flu symptoms

**NEVER TAKE 2** medicines that contain acetaminophen at the same time

CHOOSE ONE

When the medicine is intended for children, the "Directions" section of the Drug Facts label tells you if the medicine is right for your child and how much to give. If a dose for your child's weight or age is not listed on the label and you can't tell how much to give, ask your pharmacist or doctor what to do.

If you're planning to use a medication containing acetaminophen, you should tell your health care professional if you have or have ever had liver disease.

Acetaminophen and alcohol may not be a good mix, either, Hertz says. If you drink three or more alcoholic drinks a day, be sure to talk to your health care professional before you use a medicine containing acetaminophen.



## Make Resolutions to Better Your Mental Health

As we celebrate the beginning of 2019, we inevitably reflect back on the last year, and think about what we want for the upcoming year. It's the perfect time to check in on your mental health, and what you can do this year to set resolutions that will help you care for yourself.

Every person's mental health is different, so your goals will also need to be individual. If you've been struggling with your mental health lately, you might want to set manageable goals like brushing your teeth every day. If things have been going well for you, you might want to set bigger challenges like pushing extra hard in your career, or to hit a personal goal like running a 5K race.

Here are some resolutions that we can all use, no matter where we are with our mental health.

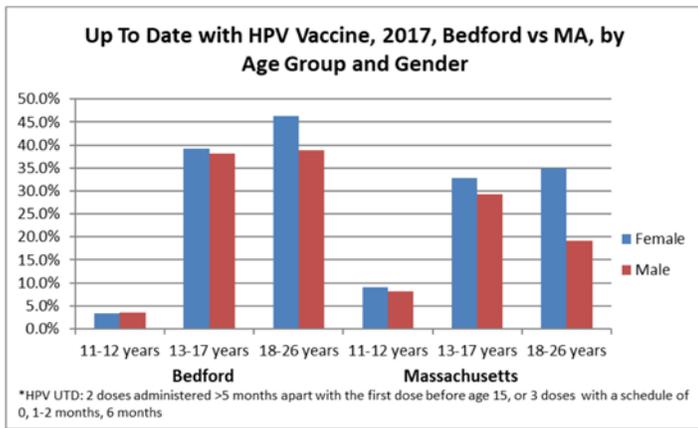
1. **Be kind to yourself.** Whether things have been going well for you or if you've been having a tough time lately, it's important that you treat yourself with the same kindness and encouragement you would extend to a friend. If you wouldn't say it to someone you love, then you shouldn't say it to yourself.
2. **Practice good sleeping habits.** Getting enough sleep can be hard when you're living with a mental health disorder, but studies show the importance of prioritizing sleep for improving mental health symptoms.
3. **Eat healthy and get your body moving.** Many people include losing weight by dieting or hitting the gym on their list of resolutions, but those goals can actually be tough on people's mental health. Instead of putting the focus on the scale, think about how you can include more veggies in your weekly meals, or maybe going for a walk with a friend. This goal is about caring for your body, not pushing yourself to attain a certain look or weight.
4. **Talk more about your mental health.** Being more open about your mental health helps others understand your needs, and allows them to be supportive to you. It also helps to build connections. Your friends and family members may also be struggling, but if one of you doesn't open up the conversation, you may never know.
5. **Help others.** You could take this to mean different things. You might do small random acts of kindness once a month, or put in extra effort to show your loved ones that you appreciate them. It could mean volunteering at a local soup kitchen. Studies show that helping others is good for your mental health – and those around you will appreciate it as well!

It can be tough to set New Year's resolutions that you can keep up with, and that benefit your mental health, rather than add pressure and stress to your life. Consider some of these ideas to frame your resolutions this year. And if you are ever not sure about how things are going check out the free mental health screening at [www.bedfordma.gov/youth](http://www.bedfordma.gov/youth) under the screenings section. Happy New Year!

*Submitted by YFS Director Sue Baldauf*

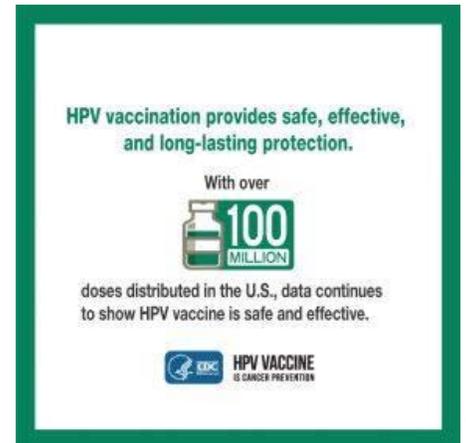
# From the Board of Health

The vaccine technologies of today are fascinating and address many long standing and emerging diseases. Researchers are working on a universal flu vaccine; A vaccine for Ebola was rapidly developed and appears to be effective in reducing the new onset of cases; and, vaccines exist that can help prevent certain types of cancers. To the latter point, that a vaccine can prevent certain types of cancers, it might seem that one would need to have a certain risk profile to receive the vaccine, which is markedly different from the recommendation about most vaccines are indicated for everyone. We know what the routinely indicated vaccines are, they are the routine ones we receive as infants, children, and youth. Interestingly, many parents often forgo having their child or adolescent receive a routinely indicated vaccine that prevents cancer.



Human Papillomavirus (HPV) is a common virus with an estimated 79 million infected Americans (1). Specific strains of HPV increase the risk for certain types of cancers. There are

approximately 42,700 HPV-associated cancers each year in the United States and about 33,700 cancers are attributable to HPV (1). Cervical cancer is the most common HPV-associated cancer among women and oropharyngeal (mouth and throat) cancers are the most common among men (1). Oropharyngeal cancer has surpassed cervical cancer as the most common HPV-associated cancer (1). These numbers are concerning, particularly for a vaccine preventable disease. However, there is hope as the 9-valent HPV vaccine has the potential to prevent 92% of HPV-attributable cancers, which equates to the prevention of 31,000 cancer cases (1). These statistics highlight what is obvious, that HPV attributable cancers are real and that many cases can be prevented by receiving the HPV vaccine. You will see from the graph above that Bedford exceeds state averages of youth receiving the HPV vaccine; however, increasing vaccination rates only helps to reduce cancer cases.



As you work toward getting your child vaccinated, the information provided below can help guide your understanding about the HPV vaccination process:

- The vaccine can be administered as young as 9 years of age and up to 21 (males) or 26 (females) years old;
- If immunizing before 15 years old, two doses should be given;
- If immunizing after 15 years of age, three doses of the vaccine should be given;
- HPV vaccine does not treat or accelerate current HPV infection;
- Contact your child's pediatrician for further guidance, recommendations, and vaccine scheduling (2).

1. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Cancers associated with human papillomavirus, United States—2011-2015 USCS data brief, no. 4. Atlanta, GA: Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. 2018.
2. Cox, Thomas and Palefsky, Joel. Human papillomavirus vaccination. *UpToDate*. [Online] Wolters Kluwer, June 7, 2018. [Cited: October 9, 2018.]

# News from Guidance

## BHS Mid-Term Exams

In January, BHS school adjustment counselor, Charles Alperin will be meeting with all 9th grade health classes to discuss depression, anxiety, and strategies for conquering stress with the upcoming midterm exams.

## Signs of Suicide Prevention Program (SOS)

The Signs of Suicide Prevention Program (SOS) is a universal, school-based depression awareness and suicide prevention program designed for middle-school (ages 11–13) or high-school (ages 13–17) students. The goals are to:

- decrease suicide and suicide attempts by increasing student knowledge and adaptive attitudes about depression,
- encourage personal help-seeking and/or help-seeking on behalf of a friend,
- reduce the stigma of mental illness and acknowledge the importance of seeking help or treatment, and
- engage parents and school staff as partners in prevention through “gatekeeper” education.



At BHS, school adjustment counselors share this information with sophomore students in Health II classes in

## News from Food Services

Looking for locally grown healthy food...<https://drive.google.com/open?id=0B3rvYv4bCsgbTGo4MTA0cUx0S2tfRksxYjI3S0kxZnJqMkVj>

