

# Comparing Health Risk Behaviors of Central Kentucky Middle School Aged Boys with Those of Their State-wide Counterparts: An Ecological Study in the State of Kentucky

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## Abstract

The current study uses baseline data collected in 2017 on participants attending middle schools in Central Kentucky (Fayette, Scott, and Franklin counties) who were administered an abbreviated version of the Youth Risk Behavior Surveillance Survey (YRBSS) and participated in Kentucky State University's Please Call Me Mister Program (PCMMP) compared to results for their counterparts, who were randomly selected state-wide to complete a CDC national youth risk behavior surveillance survey state-wide referred to as the Kentucky Youth Risk Behavior Surveillance Survey (KYRBSS). PCMMP participants who resided in Central Kentucky were significantly more likely to have reported ever riding with a driver who had been drinking alcohol, having a physical fight, and being bullied in school. In addition, PCMMP middle school participants reported significantly higher rates of sexual intercourse, alcohol use, and participation on at least one team in the last 12 months. Conversely, students state-wide reported higher rates of rarely or never wearing a bicycle helmet when bicycling and skateboarding as well as carrying a weapon. The data uncovered in this research offer potential direction for larger studies investigating the causal differences in participation in high-risk behaviors among high school students in Central Kentucky and the state of Kentucky.

Board of KSU. The investigative team met with administrators representing three large school districts in Central Kentucky seeking permission to conduct the study among students on their campuses. After verbal agreement was obtained from the schools' administrators, a memorandum of understanding was signed, granting the study team access to students, faculty, and staff to assist with data collection and survey administration. A contact person/co-ordinator at each school was assigned by the respective administrators to serve as the liaison between the school and the investigative team.

Students were given a consent form to take home to their parents or guardians. Students who returned their signed consent forms were considered eligible for study participation. Inclusion criteria for KSU-PCMMMP participants included enrolment in a school in either district, the ability to speak, read, and write English, and parental permission. Informed consent was required of all participants. Individuals not returning consent forms or whose parents indicated that they did not wish them to participate were deemed ineligible to take part in the study.

With university and school district approval, the study began with the collection of baseline data. Trained research assistants collected baseline surveys by meeting with students in the schools' common areas that were not in use at the time data collection commenced. The importance of the study and the procedures in place to assure confidentiality were explained to students before each data collection period began. Students who did not wish to participate were escorted back to their classrooms by a member of the study team. To obtain the maximum number of student responses, reasonable efforts (at least two attempts within the 2 weeks before the original study date) were made to locate and survey students who were absent during scheduled survey administration days. The data collection team consisted of a

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0.05). KYRBSS and PCMMP respondents reported similar rates of not eating breakfast in the last 7 days (8.4% vs. 7.1%). KYRBSS respondents reported (12.5% vs. 14.5%) less physical activity for at least 60 minutes in 1 day over the last 7 days than their PCMMP counterparts. In addition, KYRBSS respondents reported (24.0%) a lower rate of watching of 3 or more hours of television on school days than their PCMMP counterparts (30.7%). KYRBSS and PCMMP respondents reported (46.2% vs. 44.6%) similar rates of 3 or more hours per day playing video or computer games. The two groups also had similar rates (43% PCMMP vs. 46.1% KYRBSS) of receiving less than 8 hours of sleep on an average school night.

## Discussion and Conclusion

Compared to their and state-wide middle school counterparts, PCMMP participants who resided in Central Kentucky were significantly more likely to report ever riding with a driver who had been drinking alcohol, having a physical fight,

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