

The Oregon Child Abuse Prevalence Study (OCAPS)

Including Information from the Lane County High School Pilot - February 2019

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The UO Center for the Prevention of Abuse and Neglect (CPAN) spent two years researching how other states and countries measure child abuse rates, developing an Oregon measure and piloting it in Lane County schools. This occurred because of support from ***The Ford Family Foundation and Meyer Memorial Trust***. Both foundations backed this study because of their commitment to good data and because of the ultimate plan to make OCAPS a public-private partnership. In 2017, legislators advised CPAN to pilot OCAPS to make sure it worked, that students were not harmed but supported, and that the data would be valuable.

This report briefly summarizes the findings of the 2018 OCAPS High School Pilot.

OCAPS, a 167-question survey for students 16 years and older, measures social support, physical abuse, sexual abuse, emotional abuse, neglect, child exposure to domestic violence, adverse childhood experiences (ACEs), dating violence, weapons exposure, and school and health outcomes. The survey is sensitive and extensive. Students use a security screen-protected I-Pad and finish the survey in an average of 24 minutes.

OCAPS Addresses the Following Questions, Among Many Others

- How do child abuse and neglect prevalence rates compare to child welfare report rates statewide?
- How many Oregon children experience physical abuse, sexual abuse, emotional neglect and/or witness or hear intimate partner violence?
- How does child abuse impact health among Oregon children? How does this vary for children in the foster care system and by income, gender, race, and Oregon region?
- How does child abuse impact school attendance, grades and behavioral choices?
- What impact do intervention (e.g. Oregon's Early Learning System) and prevention efforts (e.g. Healthy Families Oregon) have on child abuse rates over time and across generations?

Overview

216 youth from 12 classrooms in six schools and five Lane County districts participated in the 2018 OCAPS pilot. We¹ took many steps to create a trauma-informed, safe, and validating experience for students:

1. The development of a well-written questionnaire to be conducted in a safe environment
2. School-specific preparation, including in-person meetings, development of a parental notification plan, student support plan, and school-specific resource list for students
3. Trauma-informed survey implementation with researchers and student support team (students can say no or stop and delete responses at any time) in place the on survey day and a support plan in place for the following weeks

¹ Among CPAN lead researchers, we have 30+ years of survivor support, advocacy, high school prevention implementation, counseling and state and federal abuse prevention policy development (e.g. Phyllis Barkhurst, Co-Founder, Oregon Attorney General's Sexual Assault Task Force) and 15+ years of survey research experience with adult survivors of abuse (e.g. Todahl, Walters, & Olson, 2017).

Note: In the pilot, fewer than 3% of parents/guardians opted students out and fewer than 5% of students opted themselves out.

A SAMPLE OF PRELIMINARY FINDINGS

Most students expressed strong support for the study. In post-survey feedback sessions and in anonymous open-ended questions on the iPad, students overwhelmingly encouraged our team to conduct the study statewide. Many students felt validated, urged us to share the findings widely, and appreciated that people were working to draw attention to child abuse.



Pilot Study Participants

- 45% identified as male, 52% as female, and 3% as gender non-binary
- 19% were age 16, 53% were 17, and 28% were 18 or older
- Most identified as white (67%); 19% identified as mixed race, and 9% as Latino
- 50% received free/reduced lunch
- 13% (n=27) of participants had ever been in foster care

Social Support, Connection and Household Climate

- Nearly 92% of student participants reported feeling safe in their neighborhood
- 65% agreed that they received the emotional support that they need from their family
- 53% reported they never or rarely feel tense or stressed out at home
- 85% believed that they are well taken care of when they are sick or injured
- 74% believed that they sometimes or often receive the comfort they need when they are upset

Among those who had an abuse experience, 47% had never talked with anyone about their experience.

Sexual Abuse

In the OCAPS pilot, 29% of students identified at least one sexual abuse experience, much higher than DHS report rates. Participants with three or more sexual abuse experience types were 2.1 times more likely to be persistently sad or hopeless than all other student participants.

Physical Abuse

Among all participants, 52% personally experienced at least one type of physical abuse by an adult, and many experienced multiple forms of physical abuse. Additionally, 39% experienced four or more types of physical abuse; this number was 56% for participants who ever lived in foster care. Overall rates of physical abuse reported by students in this pilot significantly exceed rates previously reported.

NEXT STEPS

The statewide study (planned for 2019-2021 pending legislative funding support), will include at least 1,500 students randomly selected and stratified and will closely represent Oregon youth. With that sample we will be able to share with policymakers and all Oregonians more complete, valid and reliable information. Our goal is to collect this information routinely (every 3-5 years) in order to track trends and changes over time.

"I feel like child abuse and neglect shouldn't be taken lightly. Since we're giving you the information, I think it would be very useful if you used it to your max potential, and do as much as you can with the information as you possibly can, in every way that you can." - Student Participant

For an electronic copy of this handout or the full report, please visit: bit.ly/about-ocaps.

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