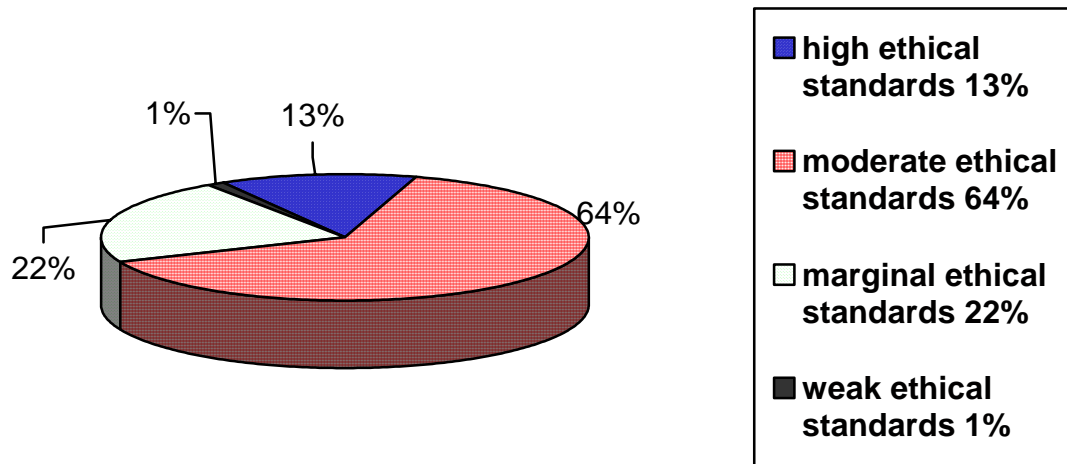


Families Play Key Role in Ethical Development of Teens



Overall Ethical Standard Development of Southwest Wisconsin Teens

A majority of Southwest Wisconsin teens report possessing moderate to high ethical standards. The Southwest Wisconsin Youth Survey combined eight questions into a scale to determine the ethical development of area teens. Questions were related to teen's feelings about themselves, including their values on teen drinking, teen sex, the importance of honesty and whether or not they care about other people's feelings. The presence of these ethical standards promotes positive youth development.

The Southwest Wisconsin Youth Survey (SWYS) survey conducted by 15 school districts in the Cooperative Educational Service Agency (CESA) District 3, the results are being shared by UW-Extension. The school districts of Argyle, Belmont, Benton, Black Hawk, Cassville, Cuba City, Darlington, Fennimore, Iowa-Grant, Ithaca, Lancaster, Platteville, Potosi, River Ridge, and Seneca, surveyed more than 3,700 students in September of 2005. UW-Extension faculty in Crawford, Grant, Lafayette, and Richland counties are involved in processing and presenting the findings. The survey was funded by participating school districts and the Grant County Drug-Free Coalition.

There are differences between males and females and their levels of ethical development. “Eighty-four percent of females report having moderate to high ethical standards while seventy percent of males report the same,” comments Amy Mitchell, Crawford County UW-Extension 4-H Youth Development Agent. “The level of ethical development relates to the degree of love and support a family gives teens.”

“Sixty-four percent of teens who feel that their family gives them love and support, also agree that it is against their values for teens to drink alcohol and 62% agree that it is against their values to have sex as a teen,” says Pamela Hobson, Richland County 4-H Youth Development Agent.

There is more evidence on the role that families play in ethical development of teens. “Eighty-eight percent of teens who agree that their families love and support them report being able to stand up for their beliefs,” says Tom Schmitz, Grant County Youth Development Educator. “On the other hand only 63% of teens who do not agree that their family loves and supports them report being able to stand up for their beliefs.”

“We also found that, 96% of teens with love and support from their families, care about other people’s feelings,” reports Bev Doll, Grant County Family Living Agent. “Of the teens that don’t feel love and support from their families, only 76% care about other people’s feelings.”

If teens believe that it is wrong for them to smoke, drink, or do drugs they are more likely to abstain from the negative behavior. “Ninety-five percent of the teens that believe it is very wrong to smoke, have never smoked a whole cigarette. Eighty-six percent of teens who believe it is very wrong to drink alcohol regularly, have not drank alcohol within the past 30 days,” reports Jessie Potterton, 4-H Youth Development Educator in, Lafayette County.

A full report on the SWYS survey results is due out this spring. Hobson, Schmitz, Doll, Mitchell, and Potterton are also giving community presentations on the data. For more information on the survey contact your local school district, Schmitz and Doll at 608-723-2125, Potterton at 608-776-4820, Mitchell at 608-326-0223, or Hobson at 608-647-6148.