

Key Facts in Rural Health

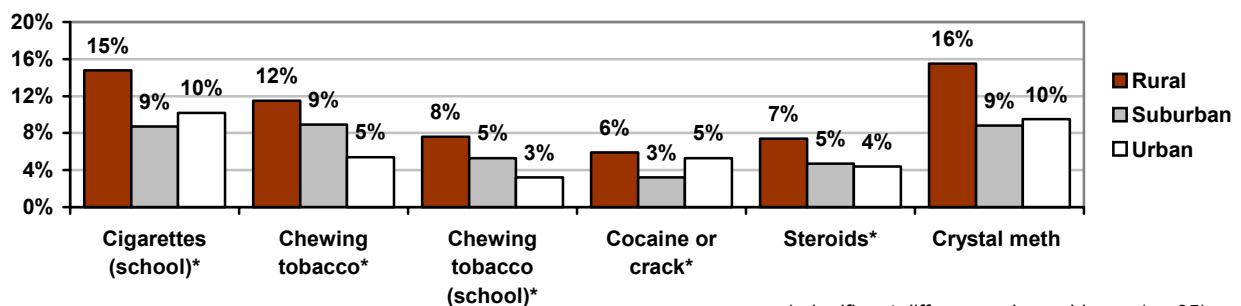
Spring 2005

Violence and Rural Teens:

Teen Violence, Drug Use, and School-Based Prevention Services in Rural America

Exposure to Violence and Drug Use:

- **This study found no evidence to support the common assumption that rural youth are protected from exposure to violence.** Rural teens are equally or more likely than suburban and urban teens to be exposed to violent activities, including weapons carrying, fighting, fear of violence, and suicide behaviors.
- Rural teens are at significantly greater risk of using cigarettes, chewing tobacco, crack/cocaine, and steroids than both suburban and urban teens. Of important note is the high prevalence of “crystal-meth” use among rural teens.



* significant differences by residence ($p < .05$)

Effects of Race and Gender:

- Racial differences for exposure to violence and drug use are negligible among rural teens. This pattern is strikingly different from racial comparisons among urban and suburban teens.
- Among rural teens, girls are more likely than boys to report being coerced into sex and considering, planning, or attempting suicide. Boys are more likely than girls to use weapons, be threatened at school, and engage in fighting behaviors.

School-Based Mental Health Services:

- Rural schools were less likely than urban schools to offer peer counseling and self help services, but just as likely to offer 14 other violence prevention and treatment services.
- Mental health care staff in rural schools are available for fewer hours, have fewer hiring requirements, and receive training for fewer violence and drug use prevention services than their counterparts in urban schools.

School Environment:

- Rural schools were less likely than urban schools to have a council for school health or require student education on the prevention of suicide, violence, and tobacco use.
- In response to student fighting, rural schools were less likely than urban schools to encourage or require participation in a student assistance program.

*** A full copy of the report can be obtained from the SC Rural Health Research Center at rhr.sph.sc.edu. ***



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