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**New statewide survey shows one out of three Alaska teens uses tobacco, e-cigarettes**  
*DHSS Commissioner Davidson will talk about teen health at school wellness event today*

ANCHORAGE — A 2015 statewide survey of almost 1,500 Alaska high school students revealed that one out of three teenagers currently smokes cigarettes or cigars, or uses smokeless tobacco or e-cigarettes. Nearly one out of five students reported using e-cigarettes during the past month.

Alaska Department of Health and Social Services Commissioner Valerie Davidson will talk about the new concern of e-cigarette impacts on teen health during the opening address of the School Health and Wellness Institute at 9:45 a.m. Monday, Oct. 26, at the Hotel Captain Cook in Anchorage. Also, this is the first time the department has been able to share information about youth e-cigarette use because 2015 was the first time the Youth Risk Behavior Survey, also called YRBS, asked Alaska teens about e-cigarette use. The anonymous, voluntary survey is conducted with parental consent every other year in high schools across Alaska to study health and social risks reported by Alaska teenagers.

“These numbers are alarming,” said Commissioner Davidson. “We were making progress, but when a third of our high school students now report using tobacco or e-cigarettes, we need to increase our partnerships with schools and local leaders. We need to make sure that Alaskans of all ages know the health risks of using tobacco products and e-cigarettes.”

From 1995 through 2013, there was a significant decline in the percentage of Alaska teens who said they were current smokers (37 percent in 1995 to 11 percent in 2013) or used smokeless tobacco products (16 percent in 1995 to 9 percent in 2013). The state has seen no additional progress since 2013.

The 2015 YRBS data showed the following about tobacco and nicotine products:

- 11 percent of Alaska high school students are current smokers (smoked at least once in the past 30 days);
- 21 percent of high school students say they currently use either combustible tobacco products, including cigarettes and cigars, or smokeless tobacco;
- About 18 percent of teens report current use of e-cigarettes;
- More boys (36 percent) than girls (25 percent) report using tobacco and/or e-cigarette products; and
- A significant disparity remains for smoking by race; about 20 percent of Alaska Native teens report current smoking, while only 7 percent of white teens report current smoking.

Alaska's [Tobacco Prevention and Control Program](#) within DHSS will be giving a special session about e-cigarettes at 3:15 p.m. Tuesday at the School Health and Wellness Institute, which continues through Wednesday, Oct. 28. The institute centers on the theme "Healthy Students, Successful Students" and will focus on many health and school-related issues. On Tuesday at 9:45 a.m., Commissioner Mike Hanley from the Department of Education and Early Development will introduce a panel of professionals to discuss the new Alaska Safe Children's Act (Erin's Law) that helps school staff and children recognize and report sexual abuse. Other sessions at the institute will focus on preventing suicide, improving physical activity, reducing cyberbullying and promoting Internet safety, learning how the legalization of marijuana may affect Alaska's youth, and more. To learn more about the institute, visit <http://www.akshwi.com/>.

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