West Valley Students Dealing with a Range of Tough Issues Outside the Classroom, Survey Shows

In 2010, West Valley College was one of 13 California Community Colleges to participate in the National College Health Assessment (NCHA), an annual survey of students’ health habits, behaviors, and perceptions.

The findings give a powerful reminder of the issues West Valley College students face outside the classroom that can affect their academic success. From the stresses of the economic crisis to the incidence of drug and alcohol abuse, students encounter a multitude of challenges and impediments to learning and growth.

The NCHA is a nationally recognized research survey that enables colleges to collect data about their students’ health habits and behaviors. Becky Perelli, Director of Student Health Services, provided oversight of survey administration at the college. Working with the Office of Institutional Research, course sections were selected at random and health services interns administered the paper and pencil survey, with a total of 725 students participating (6% of the student population). Nationally, nearly 100,000 student participated in the NCHA this year.

In addition to data on student health, the NCHA inquires about students’ awareness of Student Health Services and the programs and information it provides.

Using the data, Health Services staff are working to identify and prioritize services to help students address stress, mental health and substance abuse issues. Through focused allocation of resources, they are better able to serve students’ health needs and strengthen student learning, retention, and success.

Points of Interest

- 56.2% of WVC students reported that, as a result of the recession, they or members of their household had suffered a negative change in employment status, bankruptcy, foreclosure, credit problems, or other financial difficulty
- 16.3% reported taking prescription painkillers such as Vicodin or OxyContin that were not prescribed to them
- 21.4% reported using marijuana at least 3 times in the last thirty days; 8.9% reported using it daily
- 31.8% reported having had five or more drinks of alcohol at a sitting within the prior two weeks
- 37.6% reported that within the past 12 months they had felt so depressed that it was difficult to function
- 46.8% reported that within the past 12 months they had felt overwhelming anxiety

For more information on the NCHA: [www.acha-ncha.org](http://www.acha-ncha.org)

For information on Student Health Services: [www.westvalley.edu/services/health](http://www.westvalley.edu/services/health)

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