

TITLE: Climate Change and Youth Mental Health in Oregon

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STUDENT SUBMISSION: No

TOPIC/TARGET AUDIENCE: Climate change and mental health, youth engagement; public health professionals, general

ABSTRACT: In March 2020, the Governor directed the Oregon Health Authority to study the effects of climate change on youth mental health. In response to the Governor's directive, OHA partnered with the University of Oregon Suicide Prevention Lab in conducting a study that included focus groups, interviews with key experts, and learning from youth story circles. OHA worked with youth advisors to engage with youth more broadly about the study, provide feedback on the findings, and to collaborate on sharing personal stories. For the study, youth were asked about how they felt about climate change and what gives them hope. We heard from youth that they are experiencing feelings of fear and worry about the implications of climate change on their futures and many felt that their concerns are dismissed by adults. They also talked about how the inaction of people in power leave them feeling a heavy burden and responsibility to fix the climate crisis. Youth identified social connection, culture, and taking climate action with other youth as giving them hope and resilience. The study points to the need for collaboration across mental health, public health and the environmental sectors to engage and share power with youth on climate change and mental health policy-making and projects.

OBJECTIVE(S): Identify the three main pathways by which climate change adversely affects mental health. Describe the unique ways in which youth's mental health is affected by climate change. Discuss strategies for supporting youth wellbeing and resilience in the face of climate change.
