



DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA  
 OFFICE OF THE STATE SUPERINTENDENT OF  
**EDUCATION**

Spring 2019

Dear Parent or Guardian,

During the spring of the 2018-19 school year, the Office of the State Superintendent of Education (OSSE), in partnership with public and public charter schools through the District of Columbia, will be administering the Youth Risk Behavior Survey (YRBS). Should you wish that your child not complete the survey, please complete the bottom portion of this letter and return to school.

The YRBS is a tool designed to monitor health risk behaviors that contribute to the leading causes of mortality, morbidity and social problems among youth and adults in the US. The priority health-risk behaviors include: unintentional injuries and violence, sexual behaviors, alcohol and other drug use, tobacco use, unhealthy dietary behaviors, and inadequate physical activity. The data collection also monitors two health outcomes: obesity and asthma. Through the collection of reported data, the YRBS allows for local, national and, at times, international attention on trends in youth sexual behavior within the US, including critical health events and progress over time.

Information is enclosed and can be found at: <http://www.cdc.gov/HealthyYouth/yrbs/index.htm>

The YRBS is structured in a questionnaire format that is administered to students in middle and high schools, during one 45-minute class period. Surveys will be anonymous so students should feel free to answer all questions to the best of their ability and with fully anonymity. As the survey is voluntary, students will not be penalized for not completing the survey; however, due to the importance of the survey, student participation is strongly encouraged.

**If your child plans to take the survey, no further action is needed. If you do NOT wish your child to take the YRBS, please fill out the section below, sign, and return to your child's school main office within three days of receipt.** If you have any questions, please feel free to ask your child's teachers or principal(s). You can also contact Aimee McLaughlin at (202) 741-6481 or [Aimee.McLaughlin@dc.gov](mailto:Aimee.McLaughlin@dc.gov).

Sincerely,

Dr. Heidi Schumacher, MD  
 Assistant State Superintendent of Education

**STUDENT'S NAME:** \_\_\_\_\_

School: \_\_\_\_\_ Grade: \_\_\_\_\_

I have read this form and know what the survey is about.

**[ ] NO, my child may not take this survey.**

Parent/Guardian signature: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

## Youth Risk Behavior Survey Fact Sheet

**Q. Why is the survey being done?**

**A.** The YRBS is a tool designed to monitor health risk behaviors that contribute to the leading causes of mortality, morbidity and social problems among youth and adults in the US. The priority health-risk behaviors include: unintentional injuries and violence, sexual behaviors, alcohol and other drug use, tobacco use, unhealthy dietary behaviors, and inadequate physical activity. The YRBS data collection also monitors two health outcomes: obesity and asthma. Through the collection of reported data, the YRBS allows for local, national and, at times, international attention on trends in youth sexual behavior within the United States, including critical health events and progress over time.

**Q. Are health related sensitive questions asked?**

**A.** Yes. Some questions are sensitive; however, all answers will remain anonymous. Obesity, nutrition, mental health, HIV/AIDS infection, and other sexually transmitted infections (STIs) are major health problems. Sexual intercourse and intravenous drug use are behaviors that increase the risk of contracting HIV and STIs. The only way to learn if youth are at risk is to ask questions about these behaviors. Attempted suicide, tobacco use, alcohol and other drug use, and weapon-carrying also may be sensitive topics. Questions are written in a direct but sensitive way.

**Q. Will students' names be used or linked to the surveys?**

**A.** No. Surveys are anonymous. The survey has been designed to protect your child's privacy. No names or personally identifiable information will be obtained during the administration of the survey.

**Q. Do students take the survey more than once to see how their behaviors change?**

**A.** No. As students are not identified on the survey, their individual change in health behavior cannot be measured.

**Q. How was my child picked to be in the survey?**

**A.** Your child was chosen due to the grade level he/she is currently in. The survey is administered in all public middle and high schools throughout the District of Columbia.

**Q. How long does it take to fill out the survey?**

**A.** The survey is intended to be completed during one class period (approximately 45 minutes).

**Q. May I see the questions my student will be asked?**

**A.** Yes, a copy of the survey will be at your child's school by February 2019. In addition, previous surveys can be found online here: <http://osse.dc.gov/service/youth-risk-behavior-survey>

**Q. What if my child or I would like to learn more about resources for youth around these topics?**

**A.** After taking the Youth Risk Behavior Survey, every child that participates will receive a resource sheet that lists school personnel, city agencies, and community based organizations that can provide information and support to both youth and their caregivers. A copy of this resource sheet will be at your child's school for your review as well.

**Q. How will the information from the surveys be used?**

**A.** Data collected from the survey responses will be analyzed and used to set policy priorities and direct funding locally and nationally. Results from previous years YRBS surveys can be viewed in the at OSSE's website: [www.osse.dc.gov](http://www.osse.dc.gov). Nationally, the combined information will be used by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and when 2019 data is released can be seen at [www.cdc.gov/HealthyYouth/index.htm](http://www.cdc.gov/HealthyYouth/index.htm).