



EDUCATION

Dear Parent or Guardian,

During the fall of the 2021-22 school year, the Office of the State Superintendent of Education (OSSE), in partnership with public and public charter schools across the District of Columbia, will be administering the anonymous 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 it to their 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 oral health. 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. Information is enclosed and can be found at: www.cdc.gov/HealthyYouth/yrbs/index.htm.

The YRBS is a web-based survey for students in middle and high school, administered during one 45-minute class period. **The survey is anonymous, so students' responses will never be linked to their individual identity, and individual-level results will never be shared with the school.** With this in mind, students should feel free to answer all questions to the best of their ability and with full anonymity. Due to the importance of the survey, student participation is strongly encouraged. That said, the survey is voluntary, meaning students are not penalized for non-participation; students can skip any questions they do not wish to answer; and they can stop participating at any point without penalty. Please see the fact sheet on page two for additional information about YRBS.

If your child plans to take the survey, no further action is needed. If you do NOT wish for 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 Rebecca Harnik via email at Rebecca.Harnik@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: _____

**District of Columbia Youth Risk Behavior Survey (YRBS)
Fact Sheet**



Why is the DC YRBS being conducted?

The purpose of the DC YRBS is to measure attitudes and health risk behaviors among middle and high school students (grades 6 to 12). Data collected will be compared to results from the national YRBS. Researchers and teachers will use DC YRBS results to design better approaches to help students avoid or stop risky behaviors.



Are sensitive health-related questions asked?

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. 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. The only way to learn if DC youth are at risk is to ask questions about these behaviors.



Will student names be collected or linked in any way to the surveys?

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.



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

No. As students are not identified in the survey, their individual change in health behaviors cannot be measured.



How was my child selected to be in the survey?

Your child was chosen due to their current grade level. The survey is administered in all public and public charter middle and high schools throughout the District of Columbia.



How long does it take to complete the questionnaire? Is there some sort of physical test?

The online survey is intended to be completed in less than one class period (approximately 45 minutes). The survey does not include a physical test or exam.



Can I see the questions my child will be asked?

Yes, a copy of the survey will be at your child's school by late August 2021. In addition, previous surveys can be found online: osse.dc.gov/service/youth-risk-behavior-survey



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

After taking the Youth Risk Behavior Survey, every student 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.



How will the information from the surveys be used?

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 on OSSE's website: osse.dc.gov/service/dc-youth-risk-behavior-survey-yrbs. Nationally, the combined information will be used by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, and when 2021 data are released, they can be seen at www.cdc.gov/HealthyYouth/index.htm
