

# Alaska Youth Risk Behavior Survey

## Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs) for Parents

The Youth Risk Behavior Survey (YRBS) was established by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and was first implemented in Alaska in 1995. The Alaska YRBS is an **anonymous** and **voluntary** survey of students in grades 9–12 in public schools, including schools that teach students facing higher risks. It is administered throughout the state in odd-numbered years. The survey requires parental consent.

### QUESTIONS ABOUT THE SURVEY

#### **Are students tracked over time for changes in risk behaviors?**

Individual students cannot be tracked. However, we can look at trends over time in populations of students, such as students overall or students in a certain grade level.

#### **How was my student chosen to be in the survey?**

Students are eligible to participate in the survey if they are in a selected class at a selected school. A district may choose a random sample of classes in select schools or may sample all classes in all schools.

#### **Why is the survey done at school and not at home?**

A school-based survey provides a controlled setting under strict standardized guidelines, which is the best way to protect student privacy, ensure anonymity, and collect credible data from students.

#### **Does the YRBS include questions about sensitive topics?**

Questions related to priority health risk behaviors — the most important health risks affecting youth today — may be considered sensitive. Questions are clear and straightforward. Students have the option to skip questions they are uncomfortable answering.

#### **Does asking students survey questions about health risk behaviors increase the likelihood that they will practice those behaviors?**

There is no evidence that asking these questions will lead to an increase in the likelihood that youth will practice risky behaviors. To help solve health problems among youth, we need to understand their unique experiences and perspectives. The YRBS provides an anonymous tool to gather that information.

#### **Do students answer questions truthfully?**

Research has shown that data of this nature gathered from youth are as reliable as when gathered from adults. Data obtained from the YRBS are checked for conflicting and invalid responses, and surveys that are incomplete are discarded. To obtain truthful answers, students must understand the importance of the survey and know procedures are in place to protect their privacy and allow for anonymous participation.

You can help us ensure that your child answers truthfully. Students must understand that the survey is important, their privacy protected, and participation is anonymous.

#### **Is Alaska moving from paper to online surveys, and would online surveys allow anonymous results and protect students' privacy?**

Alaska is considering moving to a web-based survey to improve the efficiency of our survey administration process. We recognize that Alaska schools conduct academic assessments and other surveys online, and youth are more receptive to online platforms. The methods for delivering the YRBS surveys today and in the future will assure responses are anonymous and the resulting information is representative of Alaska's entire youth population.

### FOR ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

Visit the YRBS web site at [yrbs.dhss.alaska.gov](http://yrbs.dhss.alaska.gov), or email the YRBS program at [YRBS@alaska.gov](mailto:YRBS@alaska.gov).

