

YOUTH RISK BEHAVIOR SURVEY: Commonly Asked Questions

WHAT IS THE YOUTH RISK BEHAVIOR SURVEY (YRBS)?

The YRBS is a nationwide survey developed and conducted by the Centers for Disease Control (CDC) in conjunction with state, tribal, and local education and health agencies.

In New Hampshire, the YRBS is jointly administered by the NH Department of Education and the NH Department of Health and Human Services in participating NH high schools. While communities throughout NH have expressed the need to learn more about their middle school aged children, at this time, the State of New Hampshire does not have dedicated resources to provide the implementation, analysis, and report creation for the CDC's Middle School YRBS. School districts, alone or in collaboration with community coalitions, health departments, or other organizations, can choose to fund and implement the YRBS in middle school.

WHAT GRADES ARE INCLUDED?

The high school YRBS includes grades 9-12. The middle school YRBS includes grades 6-8. The high school and middle school surveys differ in some questions and the way that the survey questions are written. The questions have been tested and validated for the specific age group.

WHAT IS THE FOCUS OF THE YRBS?

The YRBS focuses on priority health risk behaviors established during youth that result in the most significant mortality and morbidity during both youth and adulthood. These include:

- mental health indicators;
- behaviors that result in unintentional injuries and violence;
- tobacco, alcohol and other drug use;
- sexual behaviors that contribute to sexually transmitted diseases (STDs) and unintended pregnancies (*asked in high school survey only*); and
- dietary behaviors; and physical activity.

ARE SENSITIVE QUESTIONS ASKED?

Questions regarding mental health, attempted suicide, tobacco, alcohol, and other drug use, bullying, and other violence may be considered sensitive. The questions are asked directly and the YRBS is administered under conditions that are designed to protect student anonymity. If students are not comfortable answering a question, they may leave it blank. In addition, students are made aware that there is staff available if they would like to talk to a trusted adult after the survey.

HOW IS YRBS DATA KEPT CONFIDENTIAL?

Survey procedures have been designed to protect the privacy of students. Participation is anonymous and voluntary. No names or other types of personally identifying information are collected. The survey environment is set up so that students sit as far apart as possible throughout the classroom and cannot view each other's responses. Neither survey administrators nor classroom teachers wander around the classroom while students are taking the survey.

WHAT IS THE PROCESS FOR ADMINISTERING THE YRBS?

- Schools must provide notification a minimum of ten days prior to when the NH YRBS will be administered.
- The YRBS questions are available in advance for anyone to review. (The [current version](#) of the YRBS surveys are available on the CDC website and each school district will make the survey available.)
- Families can have their child not participate in the YRBS using the “opt out” form.
- Students can also “opt out” on their own at the beginning of the survey. They can also skip questions or stop taking the survey at any time without penalty.

WHAT IS YRBS DATA USED FOR?

The data collected is used by schools and communities to:

- understand the risk and health behaviors of area youth,
- design programs or policies that reduce risky behaviors and promote healthy ones,
- determine whether health and behavior outcomes among youth are improving or deteriorating,
- evaluate the impact of broad school and community interventions at national, state and local levels, and
- monitor progress toward achieving Healthy People objectives and other program indicators.

Data collected from the YRBS is important because it promotes community awareness and engagement; encourages state and federal policy development; identifies gaps in health services or areas of need; and has been essential in bringing resources and funding to New Hampshire communities.

IS YRBS DATA VALID & RELIABLE?

Research indicates that this age-appropriate and validated survey is reliable. Data of this nature may be gathered as credibly from adolescents as from adults. Internal reliability checks help identify the small percentage of students who falsify their answers.