

Schools FAQ

Ohio Healthy Youth Environment Survey

What is the Ohio Healthy Youth Environment Survey?

The Ohio Healthy Youth Environment Survey (OHYES) collects anonymous information from students in 7th through 12th grade about health-related attitudes and behaviors, including: unintentional injuries and violence, mental health, school safety and physical fighting, tobacco and other substance use, physical activity and nutrition, sexual behaviors, basic demographic information such as age, and risk and protective factors.

Why is the survey conducted?

The survey is used to identify and monitor factors that affect the health of youth in Ohio. Similar school-based youth surveys have been conducted across the country. These survey results can indicate changes in children's health behaviors over time and in turn schools can use the results to identify important areas of need.

Who sponsors the survey?

Ohio Mental Health and Addiction Services (OHMHAS); the Superintendent of Public Instruction (OSPI); the Department of Health (DOH); the Department of Education (ODE).

Who supports the survey?

More than 5 state and local health and education agencies and 5 federal agencies helped to develop the survey. The OHYES is supported by all who are interested in the health of our Ohio youth. For a list of survey committee member and partner agencies refer to our website.

Which schools are eligible to participate?

All Ohio schools with students in grades 7 - 12 are eligible to participate -- excluding detention facilities.

Does my school have to participate?

School and individual student participation in the survey is voluntary.

How can I find out which schools have registered to participate in the OHYES this year?

You can visit the OHYES website to check school registration status.

Who benefits? Why should my school participate?

Everyone benefits. This survey provides important information about students in Ohio and can be used to guide school policy and programs. Each school district will receive a summary of its results (provided that student anonymity is protected). Statewide results are also included for comparison.

Funding agencies at the state and federal levels support schools in improving the behavioral health of their students. These resources are limited and districts can use the results of this survey to provide evidence of need. In addition, yearly surveys will allow schools and districts to track outcomes for groups of students. This will provide tangible evidence of which programs work and which don't. Given the scarcity of time and resources, this survey can help focus efforts on things that work.

The survey also provides useful data to state agencies, county prevention coordinators, community mobilization coalitions, community public health and safety networks, and others so they can support students and school programs.

Are my students required to participate?

No. Parents may choose not to have their child participate in the survey by returning the parent form. Students can choose at any point not to complete the survey or not to answer specific questions while doing the survey. Survey coordinators are provided with instructions on how to communicate this choice to students so that they are comfortable whether they choose to participate or not to participate. Coordinators will need to plan and provide for alternative activities for students that do not participate.



Is parental consent required for the OHYES?

Ohio law requires informed parental consent for surveying youth in schools. This requirement is met when parents are informed that their student has been asked to participate in a survey and given the option to opt the child out of participation. OHYES prefers to use this process, commonly known as "passive consent," because it helps to minimize administrative burden on the schools, maintains student confidentiality, and increases response rates. The parent letter is available in our downloads page.

How is the survey coordinated at each school?

Each participating school has a designated survey coordinator and a backup coordinator. These coordinators help organize local survey efforts. These persons have additional information about the survey, including administration instructions.

Why do you have different questionnaires?

The questionnaire for grades 7- 12 contains a core set of about identical items. For the public schools the decision will be made to include questions about sexual orientation, activity and abuse, at the district level. For schools not under a school district the decision to include these questions will be determined at the school level.

How long does the survey take?

One class period. This time includes providing instructions to the students, administering the surveys to the students, and completing the surveys. There are no physical tests, specimens or examinations involved in this study.

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

No. Students do not provide any personal identifying information. Teachers follow protocols, similar to testing, to protect confidentiality while the survey is being completed, such as not walking around the classroom and looking over the shoulder.

Are sensitive questions asked?

Yes. The survey includes questions related to unintentional and intentional injuries; physical activity and dietary behaviors; alcohol, tobacco, and other drug use; and related risk and protective factors. Unless questions in these topic areas are asked honestly and straight forwardly, we cannot know the degree to which Ohio's youth engage in these health risk behaviors.

An expanded version of the survey is included with questions about sexual behavior, one question about sexual orientation, and two questions about sexual abuse. Schools, however, can opt to administer a version of the survey that does not include these questions.

Student participation is completely voluntary and anonymous. We have designed the administration procedures to protect student privacy and anonymity. We do not ask students for their names or identification numbers. Parents can ask that their child not take the survey.

Why does the OHYES ask about sensitive topics?

All survey topics are chosen for their value in supporting resources and education that prevents unhealthy behaviors and promotes healthy behaviors. Students who complete the survey are instructed beforehand that their answers are completely anonymous and that they may skip any questions they do not feel comfortable answering.

Does answering the survey influence students to try unhealthy behaviors?

Absolutely no research supports any connection between completing a health behavior survey and trying an unhealthy behavior. This lack of connection holds true even if a student takes the survey more than once. You may be reassured to know that many unhealthy behaviors among young people – including sexual behaviors, tobacco use, and some forms of violence – have declined since 1991, at the same time that youth survey activities have increased nationwide.

Will students answer the questions truthfully?

Research examining respondent responses indicates that when informed of the importance of the survey and that their responses are completely anonymous, students give accurate data. We also use internal reliability checks to help identify individual surveys that obviously have been answered carelessly. We do not include these in the results. In addition, students always have the option of not answering questions they do not feel comfortable responding to.

When will you conduct the survey? When can we see results?

We will administer the online survey yearly. We will offer the survey during the weekdays of October 1st–November 20th, 2015. We will make the results available in mid-March 2016.

How can I use the survey results?

Information from the Ohio Healthy Youth Environment Survey can meet a variety of needs at the school, community, and state levels. The survey identifies the prevalence of various health risk behaviors. This information can inform resource and policy decisions, such as how to target interventions. Those who receive the survey results may choose to share them with other community organizations.

We will repeat key items yearly so local administrators can identify trends or changes in the patterns of behavior over time. Many of these key items are asked in similar surveys in other states. The state-level data will place Ohio's results in context with results from other states and national results. Legitimate researchers and educational and health officials will have access to the data.

Note: The administration procedures are designed to protect student privacy and anonymity. Students are not asked for their names or identification numbers. No one will have access to identifiable student data. Results can be used to support the need for resources, to enhance well-being as well as to evaluate current or prospective programs.

How does the OHYES 2015 compare to past surveys?

The OHYES 2015 is similar to many surveys conducted around the country. For example, the Ohio Youth Risk Behavior Survey (YRBS) is part of a national effort conducted every 2 years in a sample of high schools across the state. While Ohio has participated in the YRBS since 1993, district leaders have been unhappy that it does not provide them the detailed, actionable data they need for their schools and students. In response to districts' and schools' asking for data specific to them, the three collaborating agencies (Education, Health and Mental Health and Addiction Services) have joined forces to provide this survey.

Can I review the survey?

Yes, in addition to an electronic version, a copy of the survey will be made available to school staff and parents in the office of each school.

Who should I contact if my student needs help?

The following links will take you to some of the services offered in the state of Ohio regarding health aid.

Addiction: <https://prod.ada.ohio.gov/directory/>

Mental Health: <http://mha.ohio.gov/Default.aspx?tabid=666>

Behavior: <http://www.oacbha.org/>

Gambling: 1-800-589-9966

National Suicide Preventive: 1-800-273-8255

If I have any further questions, who can I contact?

If you have any further questions, please feel free to contact us through our page.

