



## Colorado 2009 State Sample Healthy Kids Colorado Survey FAQ's

### **What is HKCS?**

The Healthy Kids Colorado Survey focuses on priority health-related behaviors that are often established during childhood and adolescence and that contribute to the leading causes of death, disability, and social problems among youth and adults in the United States. The state sample survey is a nationwide survey administered by the Centers for Disease Control once every two years to measure the prevalence of these priority health-related behaviors among high school students.

### **Why is the HKCS administered?**

Data collected from the HKCS will:

- Monitor how the priority health-related behaviors among middle and high school students increase, decrease, or remain the same over time
- Improve school health education policies and programs
- Provide national and other state comparisons on priority risk behaviors

### **How will the participation in this survey effort be helpful to my school?**

Schools will have the option to either conduct a free full census of all students in the school and get a school level report or receive monetary compensation for their participation.

Data from the HKCS can be utilized to:

- *Create* school health teams in every school building
- *Coordinate* prevention messages
- *Provide data* to support funding requests
- *Implement* district wellness policies
- *Enforce* tobacco-free and drug-free school policies

### **There are too many academic benchmarks that our district/school must meet and we do not have time for these types of surveys. Can we opt out?**

We realize the pressure of many schools to reserve the time necessary to meet academic benchmarks. Therefore, we only survey a sample of students and work with the schools throughout the fall semester to plan an administration that has the least disruption on academic time. The school chooses the administration date and period to be surveyed. Your participation in this survey will allow Colorado to go after funding that may be passed down to individual schools. We can only achieve this with the high levels of participation and support from school administration. Additionally, studies show that healthy students perform better both in the classroom and on standardized tests. HKCS data can help schools understand and promote healthy attitudes and behaviors among students, which leads to better overall academic achievement.

### **Are the students' confidentiality protected?**

Yes! Students are asked not to put any identifying information on the surveys. Furthermore, the results will be sealed before being returned to us to prevent tampering. All data will be aggregated across all students who participate and no individual's data will be released.

**How much will the surveying cost?**

The surveying will be done at no cost to you! You can even survey your entire school and receive a report for free.

**How long does the survey take?**

One class period is needed to administer the surveys; including distribution of the surveys, providing directions to the students, and completion of the surveys. The process typically takes 40-50 minutes.

**How many classes/students will be selected?**

From your school, we will randomly select only 4-8 classes (depending on the size of the school) from one class period to complete the survey; the surveys can easily be completed in one class period. We use your class schedule to pick these classrooms from one class period or required subject. We can use a study hall or homeroom class period if that class period is long enough (at least 40 minutes).

**How will classes at my school be selected? Can I pick the classrooms?**

To ensure that we get a good representation of students across the state, we must randomly select the classes that will participate. School officials cannot choose the selected classes from their schools, however, OMNI will work with the school to help minimize the disruption to normal academic proceedings.

**Can answering these questions cause students to engage in the behavior?**

A common concern is whether youth who are exposed to survey questions that ask about health-related behaviors, such as drug use or sexual behavior, show increases in these behaviors. There is absolutely no research evidence that completing surveys that include sensitive questions impacts behavior among young people. Researchers have explored this topic across a variety of behaviors, such as sexual behavior, drug use, and suicide ideation, and have not found any evidence that questionnaire completion affects behavior or experimentation. This holds true even when there is repeated administration of the questionnaire. Additionally, trend data shows that the prevalence of many health-related behaviors (including sexual behaviors, tobacco use, and many violence-related behaviors) has declined since 1991, even though many students nationwide have taken surveys about health-related behaviors.

**Can I obtain a copy of the Survey?**

Yes. We would be happy to send you a sample survey, either electronically or via mail or you can visit our website: [http://www.omni.org/survey\\_state.aspx](http://www.omni.org/survey_state.aspx) .

**What about parental permission?**

There are no requirements from the Colorado Department of Education about parental permission; schools should follow their own rules and are responsible for making sure students do not complete surveys if they do not have permission. If your school or district does not require that you use active consent (parents have to give their students permission to participate) then it is recommended that you use passive consent (parents have to opt their students out of the sample). We have examples of both passive and active parent permission forms on our website: [http://www.omni.org/survey\\_state.aspx](http://www.omni.org/survey_state.aspx) .

**I participated in the state sample before. Why is my district selected again?**

The Center for Disease Control and Prevention selects random schools to participate in the HKCS every two years. Unfortunately, we do not have control over the schools that are or are not selected. Previous

selection cannot exclude a school from being selected again to ensure that a valid set of schools is selected.

### **What types of questions are included in the HKCS?**

The Healthy Kids Colorado Survey focuses on priority health-related behaviors that are often established during childhood and adolescence and that contribute to the leading causes of death, disability, and social problems among youth and adults in the United States.

Specifically, the questions pertaining to unintentional injuries and violence, tobacco use, alcohol and other drug use, sexual behavior, nutrition, physical activity, and other health-related topics. All of the questions in the survey are related to the national health objectives for 2010, as set by the CDC.

### **Why does the survey ask about sexual behavior?**

Questions pertaining to sexual behavior measure the prevalence of sexual activity, number of sexual partners, age at first intercourse, alcohol and other drug use related to sexual activity, condom use, contraceptive use, and whether high school students received HIV prevention education. Early initiation of sexual intercourse is associated with having a greater number of lifetime sexual partners. In addition, adolescents who initiate sexual intercourse early are less likely to use contraception and are at higher risk for pregnancy. Each year there are an estimated 9.1 million cases of sexually transmitted diseases among persons aged 15-24 years.

Students are informed that their answers are completely anonymous and that they can skip any questions they do not feel comfortable answering.

### **Why are the questions worded in the way they are?**

The structure and wording of the questions are based on extensively researched methodologies that allow the data to be collected in a meaningful and valid manner. For example, the items are constructed so as to reduce the potential of response distortion and social desirability that can occur when posing questions in sensitive subject areas. For example, some questions related to substance abuse are phrased in the following manner: "During the last 30 days, how many times did you ...." This question allows for a response to be recorded without making the respondent feel that his or her answer may be undesirable or negative. It is also important to note that the response option "0 Times" is available on all questions of this nature.

### **Our district is already participating in other survey efforts. Do we have to do this one?**

While many other survey efforts provide local data, the HKCS will allow the state of Colorado to collect enough data to compare information to other state and national data. The HKCS is Colorado's version of the Youth Risk Behavior Survey, a national surveillance effort from CDC to monitor health-related behavior in the nation's young people.

In order to collect representative state level data regarding the health of our students, high participation levels must be reached---a level that was achieved in 2005 for the first time in 10 years! The valuable state level data from the 2005 statewide survey effort has provided information to inform state policy and program decisions that affect funding, policies, and legislation for schools. In 2007, we were unable to obtain a state sample. Without high participation among schools in 2009, state-level data will soon be outdated.