



Handbook for Conducting Youth Risk Behavior Surveys **2013**

National Center for HIV/AIDS, Viral Hepatitis, STD, and TB Prevention
Division of Adolescent and School Health



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Introduction

This handbook is designed for cooperative agreement program directors in state, local, and territorial agencies and tribal governments, as well as others who plan and conduct Youth Risk Behavior Surveys as part of cooperative agreement activities with the Division of Adolescent School Health (DASH), Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC).

Chapters 1–8 provide guidelines for conducting Youth Risk Behavior Surveys (YRBS), including planning; modifying questionnaires; obtaining clearance; sampling schools and classes; obtaining parental permission; administering surveys; preparing data for analysis; and reporting survey results. The appendices contain the 2013 Youth Risk Behavior Survey high school and middle school questionnaires, optional questions, an item rationale, a bibliography, letters of support, YRBS questions and answers for schools, step-by-step instructions for selecting classes, YRBS clearance strategies, *Parental Permission and the Youth Risk Behavior Survey (YRBS)*, and the Survey Technical Assistance Website User Guide.

Survey and sampling experts are available from Westat in Rockville, Maryland, through DASH. Westat can provide technical support and consultation on survey-related topics at no cost to your program. Additional technical assistance can be obtained by contacting your CDC Project Officer or the School-Based Surveillance Branch of DASH.

Please direct comments or suggestions regarding this handbook to:

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Preface

The YRBS was developed by DASH at CDC, in collaboration with more than 800 representatives from state and local agencies and other federal agencies. It was developed to monitor priority health risk behaviors that contribute to the leading causes of mortality, morbidity, and social problems among youth and adults in the United States. These behaviors fall into six categories:

- Behaviors that result in unintentional injuries and violence,
- Tobacco use,
- Alcohol and other drug use,
- Sexual behaviors that result in HIV infection, other sexually transmitted diseases (STDs), and unintended pregnancies,
- Unhealthy dietary behaviors, and
- Physical inactivity.

In addition, the YRBS measures the prevalence of obesity and asthma.

The YRBS was designed to measure health risk behaviors primarily among high school students. However, other youth, including middle school students, also have been surveyed using YRBS questionnaires designed specifically for those populations.

In the United States, 72% of all deaths among youth and young adults aged 10–24 years result from four causes: motor vehicle crashes (26%), other unintentional injuries (17%), homicide (16%), and suicide (13%).¹ Substantial morbidity and social problems also result from the estimated 410,000 births,² 517,174 cases of chlamydia, gonorrhea, and syphilis,³ and 2,036 cases of human immunodeficiency virus⁴ reported in 2009 among youth aged 15–19 years. A limited number of behaviors usually established during youth contribute substantially to these causes of mortality and morbidity. These behaviors include carrying a weapon, physical fighting, attempted suicide, drinking while operating a motor vehicle, lack of seatbelt use, lack of helmet use while riding a bicycle, and unprotected sexual intercourse that results in HIV infection, other STDs, and unintended pregnancies.

¹ CDC, NCHS. Mortality Data File for 2008 with all state identifiers [CD-ROM]. 2011.

² CDC. Vital signs: teen pregnancy — United States, 1991 – 2009. *MMWR* 2011; 60(No 13):414-420.

³ CDC, National Center for HIV, STD and TB Prevention (NCHSTP), Division of STD/HIV Prevention, Sexually Transmitted Disease Morbidity for selected STDs by age, race/ethnicity, and gender 1996-2009, CDC WONDER On-line Database, June 2011. Accessed at <http://wonder.cdc.gov/std-std-race-age.html> on January 5, 2012 10:20:50 AM.

⁴ CDC. HIV surveillance report, 2009; vol. 21. Available at <http://www.cdc.gov/hiv/topics/surveillance/resources/reports/>. Published February 2011. Accessed November 28, 2011.

Among adults aged 25 and over, 57% of all deaths in the United States result from cardiovascular disease (34%) and cancer (23%).⁵ A limited number of behaviors, often established during youth, contribute to these health problems, which generally do not result in mortality and morbidity until adulthood. These behaviors include the use of tobacco, unhealthy dietary behaviors, and physical inactivity.

To determine the level of risk among adolescents, these priority health risk behaviors must be measured directly. Measuring only relevant knowledge, attitudes, beliefs, intentions, or other determinants of health risk behaviors will not provide an accurate description of the level of risk because the relationship between these factors and the priority health risk behaviors is often weak, unproven, and varies by subgroup. For example, though most people *know* that smoking causes lung cancer, many people continue to smoke.

Asking students about a priority health risk behavior will not encourage them to participate in the behavior. The causes and determinants of health risk behaviors are very complex. Students are exposed regularly to information about tobacco, alcohol, drug use, violence, and sexuality through the media, their parents, friends, and community organizations. There is no evidence to suggest responding to a small number of questions on any of these topics causes significant changes in behavior—either good or bad.

Because suicide is the fourth leading cause of death among adolescents, it is particularly important to ask questions about suicide-related behaviors. Suicide questions have been asked in previous school-based surveys of adolescents and since 1991 as part of the YRBS, and no evidence links these surveys to subsequent suicide attempts among respondents. Some agencies provide respondents with a toll-free hotline number to call after completing the survey.

The YRBS questions were developed by health experts in their respective fields, with national health objectives in mind. Extensive focus group and field test work was conducted on the questionnaire. A review of student responses led to recommendations for improving the wording of questions, setting recall periods, and identifying response options. Whenever possible, questions were selected that had been used successfully in other school-based surveys of high school students. Evidence from previous surveys indicates that high school students can understand and appropriately respond to the questions. Appendix A contains the standard high school and middle school 2013 YRBS questionnaires, as well as the 2013 National YRBS questionnaire. The public health rationale for including each question is in Appendix B.

CDC also has conducted several psychometric and methods studies of the YRBS questionnaire, including studies assessing the test-retest reliability of the YRBS questions. The reliability studies demonstrated

⁵ CDC, NCHS. Mortality Data File for 2008 with all state identifiers [CD-ROM]. 2011.

that most items have substantial reliability. The reliability studies and other methods studies conducted by DASH are described in articles listed in Appendix C.

Research indicates sensitive data may be gathered as reliably from adolescents as from adults. However, to obtain truthful answers, students must perceive the survey as important and know that procedures have been developed to protect their privacy and allow for anonymous participation. The field testing used to identify appropriate questions and responses also identified survey conditions that would encourage honest responses.

The YRBS may not be the only survey your health or education agency or tribal government is undertaking. CDC recommends that DASH-funded sites conduct a YRBS in every odd-numbered spring (i.e., 2011, 2013, etc.). If a state plans to conduct both a YRBS and a Youth Tobacco Survey (YTS), CDC recommends developing survey schedules and samples that minimize the burden placed on schools. Both the Office on Smoking and Health (OSH) and DASH at CDC will work with the state health and education agencies to develop a survey implementation plan to meet the needs of both state agencies. CDC also will work with communities funded through the Communities Putting Prevention to Work (CPPW) grant to coordinate their surveys with those already planned for their jurisdictions.

The YRBS questionnaire first was used during spring 1991 by 26 states, 2 territories, and 11 local agencies. In 2011, 47 states, 5 territories, 2 tribal governments, the District of Columbia, and 21 local agencies conducted a YRBS, and 43 states, 5 territories, 2 tribal governments, the District of Columbia, and 20 local agencies obtained weighted data that could be generalized to high school students in their jurisdictions.

YRBS results are being used by state and local agencies to:

- Create awareness of the extent to which youth practice health risk behaviors;
- Develop programs that address health risk behaviors practiced by youth in their jurisdictions and set program goals;
- Focus school health education teacher training and instructional programs;
- Support health-related policies and legislation;
- Seek funding for school health programs; and
- Garner support for future surveys.

1. Planning Your Youth Risk Behavior Survey



To conduct a successful survey, careful advance planning is essential.

Conducting the Youth Risk Behavior Survey (YRBS) on a regular basis will yield valuable information about priority health risk behaviors among youth in your jurisdiction. Many steps are involved, and several can be very time-consuming. Start planning now and establish a comprehensive plan that allows sufficient time for each major activity and identifies key roles and responsibilities.

If your state, district, community, territory, or tribal government has conducted a YRBS in previous years, the experience gained in that process should be incorporated into your plan for this year's survey. Expand and refine your plan each time you conduct a YRBS.

This chapter describes the following steps for planning your YRBS:

- Identify who will coordinate the YRBS;
- Review previous survey procedures;
- Determine if you want to combine your YRBS with other surveys;
- Decide if you want to hire a contractor;
- Determine if you will conduct a middle school YRBS; and
- Establish a survey schedule and procedures.



Identify who will coordinate the YRBS.

It is important to identify a person as the Survey Coordinator. The Survey Coordinator is responsible for overall management of the YRBS and is a liaison to other agencies, Westat, CDC, and to the survey contractor, if one is used. The Survey Coordinator determines the purposes for conducting the survey relevant to your jurisdiction, secures state- or district-level clearances, updates the sampling frame, develops and implements a plan to obtain school-level clearances, coordinates development of the questionnaire, identifies and trains survey administrators, monitors data collection, assembles completed questionnaires, and prepares reports.



Review previous survey procedures.

Any previous student survey experience will provide excellent guidance during your YRBS planning process. For example, consider the following questions:

- Did you find good ways of gaining support and clearance for the survey? (See Chapter 3.)
- Did you use active or passive parental permission? (See Chapter 5.)
- Do you wish to use the same survey administrators? Do any changes need to be made in training survey administrators? (See Chapter 6.)
- Did you have an overall response rate of at least 60%?¹ How many school refusals were there? What percentage of students

¹ The YRBS Overall Response Rate (RR) = School RR*Student RR, where
School RR = number of participating schools/number of eligible sampled schools;
Student RR = number of usable questionnaires/number of eligible students sampled in participating schools.

did not participate? How can you improve school and student response rates?

- Were the data weighted? If not, what were the reasons and possible remedies?
- How have results from previous surveys been used?

Review notes made during the previous experiences. This may identify what changes need to be made by refreshing your memory of any obstacles faced or plans that worked well. If changes are needed, determine what those changes are and when they need to be implemented during the planning process.



Determine if you want to combine your YRBS with other surveys.

Some states coordinate the YRBS with other state and local surveys, such as the Youth Tobacco Survey (YTS). Coordination can occur during questionnaire modification, sample selection, and/or scheduling.

The YRBS questionnaire may be used as is or modified to satisfy the data collection needs of many federal, state, and local programs. For example, in past years, many sites added questions to their YRBS questionnaire to generate data for the Safe and Drug-Free Schools and Communities Act program. Addressing the data needs of multiple programs by adding questions to the YRBS questionnaire may help reduce the number of surveys schools are asked to conduct.

Coordination also can occur as part of sampling. This is often done to coordinate YRBS and YTS samples. Two sampling methods are recommended to reduce the number of schools and students asked to participate in multiple surveys: multiple-class and multiple-school sampling. With multiple-class sampling, multiple surveys are conducted in the same sample of schools at the same time. The number of classes needed for one survey are multiplied by the number of surveys, and then the classes are randomly assigned to one of the surveys. This approach requires close coordination among those conducting the multiple surveys and agreement on the timing of survey administration. It often works best in jurisdictions with relatively small numbers of schools and well-established surveys because the schools are essentially being asked to participate in a single survey with multiple questionnaires.

For the multiple-school sampling method, the number of schools that would be sampled for one survey is multiplied by the number of surveys that are being coordinated. Schools are then randomly assigned to one of the surveys. This approach allows survey administration to occur at a different time for each survey and does not require the survey coordinators to work closely together once the sample is selected. This often works best in jurisdictions with relatively large numbers of schools and for surveys that may not be well established, since the success of one survey is unrelated to the success of another survey. Westat and CDC will assist with selecting the best sampling method for all surveys involved.

Adjustment of survey administration schedules also may help with coordination. The YRBS is usually conducted during the spring semester of an odd-numbered year. This means there are three other semesters in any two-year cycle when a YRBS is not being conducted. These

semesters can be used by other surveys for their survey administration without burdening the same school more than once in the same semester.

Coordinating with other surveys requires additional planning to determine what resources are available and who will contribute what labor. Meet with staff in your own agency and other interested agencies to coordinate staff, time, and other resources. Depending on the type of coordination, you may need to start early in the planning process. Additionally, order copies of this Handbook to share with staff from the other surveys. The Handbook can be ordered from the Survey TA website at <http://www.surveyta.org> or you can request a copy from your Westat Operations Specialist. Careful planning will result in a successful, collaborative survey with useful results for many programs. CDC, Westat, and project staff in education and health agencies that have successfully coordinated surveys are available to provide assistance.

Regardless of which type of coordination you use, coordinating efforts has the following definite advantages:

- Reduces burden on schools, classes, and students;
- Helps overcome some resistance by administrators and is a selling point to teachers, parents, and the community; and
- Allows the workload as well as the results to be shared by multiple programs.



Decide if you want to hire a contractor.

Some agencies use a survey contractor to conduct all or part of the YRBS. You can find contractors in local colleges and universities, private consulting companies, and independent agencies. The contract should include a list of the specific activities to be accomplished, a timeline for accomplishing those activities, reports and documentation that must be delivered, the names and backgrounds of persons who will work on the contract, and the cost of the contract. Do not ask the contractor to provide services that CDC or Westat can provide at no cost (e.g., selecting samples, scanning questionnaires). Duplicating these services through your contractor will add unnecessary time and expense to your project. Even after the contract is established, the survey remains the responsibility of your state, district, community, territory, or tribal government. **The Survey Coordinator should monitor the work of the contractor closely.**

CDC and Westat will provide technical assistance to whomever you designate to conduct your YRBS. You can help your contractor by sharing all materials related to the YRBS that you receive from CDC and Westat. At your request, CDC and Westat will provide additional copies directly to your contractor. Exhibit 1-1 on pages 1-6 and 1-7 illustrates how survey activities can be divided between your staff and a contractor. Contact your CDC Project Officer to help answer questions about hiring a contractor.



NOTE: Guidelines or policies probably exist within your state, local, or territorial agency or tribal government for securing the services of a contractor. The contracting process may take from 30 to 60 days or more to complete. Be sure to allow enough time to establish the contract and begin the survey process on schedule. If the contract is not in place, you will be expected to complete the required tasks until the contractor is hired. Do NOT delay the start of the YRBS due to contract delays.



Determine if you will conduct a middle school YRBS.

While it is not required, some sites conduct a YRBS among middle school students. In 2011, 16 states, the District of Columbia, 3 territories, 1 tribal government, and 13 local agencies conducted a middle school YRBS. A middle school YRBS is generally conducted among students in grades 6 through 8, but may be limited to grades 7 and 8. A copy of the standard middle school YRBS questionnaire for 2013 can be found in Appendix A.

The first consideration when deciding if you will conduct a middle school YRBS is to determine if you have sufficient resources to conduct this survey along with your high school YRBS. If your resources, especially staffing, are limited, you should not administer a middle school YRBS. The second consideration is how you will use the data. You should not spend time and money on a survey without having an identified need and plan for the results. If you determine you have the resources and a need, contact CDC and Westat. CDC and Westat will assist you in planning the survey, selecting a sample, providing answer sheets, and scanning answer sheets. CDC also will produce a separate middle school YRBS report for your agency. Please keep in mind that a middle school YRBS is an optional activity.



Establish a survey schedule and procedures.

To help establish a realistic timeline for conducting the YRBS, identify the specific activities that must be accomplished. Exhibit 1-2 on pages 1-8 to 1-14 provides a list and chart of activities, the approximate time each takes to accomplish, and the month each activity should be started. The activities and timeline list and chart contain the same information and were created with two assumptions:

- Survey administration will start in early January; and
- The completed documentation forms and scan able booklets or answer sheets will be submitted to Westat in May.

Many tasks in the timeline overlap. In most instances, multiple activities need to be attended to during the same time period. For example, in October, modified questionnaires are printed, clearance packages are created, and parent permission forms are created. The activities and timeline should be modified to fit your program, resources, and proposed survey start date. If you plan to start after January, or if you have limited resources, you will need to adjust the activity start dates and time to complete the activity.

If you have conducted a YRBS before, use that experience to guide your scheduling decisions. Identify activities that may need more (or less) time than has been allocated previously. Chapters 2 through 8 in this Handbook provide information about how to accomplish each activity.

Once your list of activities and timeline have been established, decide how each activity will be conducted and who will be responsible for it. Create a planning worksheet to keep track. We have included an example of a planning worksheet in Exhibit 1-3 on pages 1-15 through 1-17. Schedule a meeting with your staff, persons from the evaluation or research unit of your agency, people from cooperating agencies, and any contractor staff who will be involved. If possible, include people who have assisted with the survey in prior years because their experience will be valuable in the planning process. This meeting should be scheduled early in the school year — preferably no later than September.

Exhibit 1-1
Example of How YRBS Activities Can Be Divided Between a State, Local, or Territorial Agency or Tribal Government and a Survey Contractor

Activity	State/Local Agency	Contractor
Coordination	One person should be designated to coordinate the YRBS for your agency.	One person from the contractor's office should be designated as the primary contact person for working with your agency and CDC and Westat.
Survey Plan	Review and revise the survey plan. Provide contractor with revisions.	Prepare a draft survey plan and timeline of activities in cooperation with agency staff. Incorporate revisions into the plan.
Clearance	Secure state-level support and district-level clearance.	Assist the agency staff in preparing documents for clearance presentations.
Sampling	Update the sampling frame from Westat. Review and revise the sampling plan. Provide contractor with revisions. Provide a plan for securing clearance at the school level. Assist contractor with contacting schools.	Prepare a sampling plan for discussion with agency staff. Incorporate revisions into the plan and submit plan to Westat for sample selection.* Contact schools to enlist their participation in the survey.
Questionnaire	Identify the specific questions that will be used. Provide scannable questionnaire booklets, or a PDF of the questionnaire with answer sheets.*	Prepare packets of questionnaires and/or answer sheets for each participating school.

*CDC and Westat provide technical assistance to help you accomplish this activity at no cost to your program.

Exhibit 1-1 (Continued)
Example of How YRBS Activities Can Be Divided Between a State, Local, or Territorial Agency or Tribal Government and a Survey Contractor

Data Collection	<p>Identify possible survey administrators.</p> <p>Monitor survey administration.</p>	<p>Prepare written instructions or training agenda for survey administrators.</p> <p>Administer surveys according to prepared schedule.</p> <p>Document participation of schools, classes, and students using the form and tracking spreadsheet created by Westat.</p> <p>Monitor return of questionnaires or answer sheets using the tracking form and submit form to YRBS coordinator and Westat every 2 weeks.</p>
Data Analysis	<p>Scan questionnaires or answer sheets.*</p> <p>Analyze data.*</p>	<p>Prepare questionnaires or answer sheets for scanning.</p> <p>Conduct special analyses after CDC-conducted analyses have been completed.</p>
Report Preparation	<p>Review and revise drafts of final report.</p>	<p>Prepare drafts of final report.</p> <p>Incorporate revisions into final report.</p>

*CDC and Westat provide technical assistance to help you accomplish this activity at no cost to your program.

Exhibit 1-2
Youth Risk Behavior Survey — Activities and Recommended Timeline

Chapter	Activity/Task	Time to Allow	When to Begin
	Planning the Survey		
1	Review previous survey procedures.	1-2 weeks	July
1	Determine if you want to combine your YRBS with other surveys.	1-2 weeks	July
1	Decide if you want to hire a contractor.	1-2 weeks	July
1	Determine if you will conduct a middle school YRBS.	1-2 weeks	July
1	Establish a survey schedule and procedures.	1-2 weeks	August
	Modifying Questionnaires		
2	Decide if you need to modify the standard questionnaire.	1-2 weeks	August
2	Send modified questionnaire to Westat for processing and CDC review.	1-3 weeks	September
2	Print your modified questionnaire.	1-3 weeks	October
	Obtaining Clearance		
3	Obtain cooperative agreement materials review panel approval.	1-3 weeks	September
3	Prepare clearance package.	1-2 weeks	October
3	Obtain SEA or tribal government support letters (if necessary.)	3-6 weeks	October
3	Obtain district-level clearances.	4-6 weeks	November
3	Contact schools.	3-6 weeks	November
3	Follow up on refusals.	3-6 weeks	January
	Selecting a Sample		
4	Obtain and update school sampling frame.	1-2 weeks	August
4	Determine characteristics of sample.	1-2 weeks	August

Exhibit 1-2 (Continued)
Youth Risk Behavior Survey — Activities and Recommended Timeline

Chapter	Activity/Task	Time to Allow	When to Begin
4	Send sampling frame to Westat to draw and verify sample.	3-4 weeks	September
4	Obtain classroom lists.	2-3 weeks	November
4	Select classes.	2-3 weeks	December
4	Enter selected class information into the YRBS Tracking Form.	1-2 weeks	December
Contacting Parents			
5	Select type of contact.	1-2 weeks	August
5	Draft parent permission forms.	1-2 weeks	October
5	Distribute parent permission forms.	6-8 weeks	January
5	Monitor permission form return.	8-12 weeks	January
Administering Surveys			
6	Establish survey administration procedures.	2-3 weeks	August
6	Plan and design survey administrator training.	2-4 weeks	November
6	Establish survey administration dates.	1 week	December
6	Assign school and class IDs.	1 week	December
6	Select survey administrators.	1-3 weeks	November
6	Order scannable questionnaire booklets or answer sheets from Westat.	1 weeks	November
6	Assemble questionnaires and answer sheets.	1-2 weeks	December
6	Train survey administrators.	1 day	January
6	Distribute survey materials to administrators and schools.	1-2 weeks	January

Exhibit 1-2 (Continued)
Youth Risk Behavior Survey — Activities and Recommended Timeline

Chapter	Activity/Task	Time to Allow	When to Begin
6	Administer YRBS.	8-10 weeks	January
6	Update YRBS Tracking Form and submit to Westat every other week.	8-10 weeks	January
6	Fill out documentation forms.	8-10 weeks	January
6	Follow up with non-responding schools.	8-12 weeks	February
6	Close data collection.	1 week	May
Preparing Data for Analysis			
7	Review incoming answer sheets.	6-12 weeks	February
7	Gather documentation.	4-12 weeks	February
7	Prepare questionnaires or answer sheets for scanning.	4-12 weeks	February
7	Send questionnaires or answer sheets for scanning and documentation to Westat.	1 week	May
Preparing the Report			
8	Plan your report.	2-4 weeks	June
8	Develop timeline for written report.	1-2 weeks	July
8	Review CDC package for key results.	2-3 weeks	August
8	Prepare additional graphs.	2 weeks	September
8	Submit report for review.	4-5 weeks	September
8	Finalize and disseminate report.	4-5 weeks	October
8	Develop oral report presentation.	3 weeks	October

Exhibit 1-2 (Continued)
Youth Risk Behavior Survey — Activities and Recommended Timeline

Activity/Task	2012								2013							
	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct
Planning the Survey																
Review previous survey procedures.																
Determine if you want to combine your YRBS with other surveys.																
Decide if you want to hire a contractor.																
Determine if you will conduct a middle school YRBS.																
Establish a survey schedule and procedures.																
Modifying Questionnaires																
Decide if you need to modify the standard questionnaire.																
Send modified questionnaire to Westat for processing and CDC review.																
Print your modified questionnaire.																
Obtaining Clearance																
Obtain cooperative agreement materials review panel approval.																
Prepare clearance package.																
Obtain SEA or tribal government clearance (if necessary.)																
Obtain district-level clearances.																
Contact schools.																

Exhibit 1-2 (Continued)
Youth Risk Behavior Survey — Activities and Recommended Timeline

Activity/Task	2012								2013							
	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct
Follow up on refusals.																
Selecting a Sample																
Obtain and update school sampling frame.																
Determine characteristics of sample.																
Send sampling frame to Westat to draw and verify sample.																
Obtain classroom lists.																
Select classes.																
Enter selected class information into the YRBS Tracking Form.																
Contacting Parents																
Select type of contact.																
Draft parent permission forms.																
Distribute parent permission forms.																
Monitor permission form return.																
Administering Surveys																
Establish survey administration procedures.																
Plan and design administrator training.																
Establish survey administration dates.																

Exhibit 1-2 (Continued)
Youth Risk Behavior Survey — Activities and Recommended Timeline

Activity/Task	2012								2013							
	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct
Assign school and class IDs.																
Select survey administrators.																
Order scannable questionnaire booklets or answer sheets from Westat.																
Assemble questionnaires and answer sheets.																
Train survey administrators.																
Distribute survey materials to administrators and schools.																
Administer YRBS.																
Update YRBS Tracking Form and submit to Westat every other week.																
Fill out documentation forms.																
Follow up with non-responding schools.																
Close data collection.																
Preparing Data for Analysis																
Review incoming answer sheets.																
Gather documentation.																
Prepare survey forms for scanning.																
Send forms for scanning and documentation to Westat.																

Exhibit 1-2 (Continued)
Youth Risk Behavior Survey — Activities and Recommended Timeline

Activity/Task	2012								2013							
	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct
Preparing the Report																
Plan your report.																
Develop timeline for written report.																
Review CDC package for key results.																
Prepare additional graphs.																
Submit report for review.																
Finalize and disseminate report.																
Develop oral report presentation.																

**Exhibit 1-3
Planning Worksheet**

Task	Suggested Start Date	Planned Start Date	End Date	Person in Charge	Others Involved	Date Completed
Task #1: Planning the Survey						
Review previous survey procedures						
Determine if you want to combine your YRBS with other surveys						
Decide if you want to hire a contractor						
Determine if you will conduct a middle school YRBS						
Establish a survey schedule and procedures						
Task #2: Modifying Questionnaires						
Decide if you need to modify the standard questionnaire						
Send modified questionnaire to Westat for processing and CDC review						
Print your modified questionnaire						
Task #3: Obtaining Clearance						
Obtain cooperative agreement materials review panel approval						
Prepare clearance package						
Obtain SEA or tribal government clearance (if necessary)						
Obtain district-level clearances						
Contact schools						
Follow-up on refusals						

**Exhibit 1-3 (Continued)
Planning Worksheet**

Task	Suggested Start Date	Planned Start Date	End Date	Person in Charge	Others Involved	Date Completed
Task #4: Selecting a Sample						
Obtain and update school sampling frame						
Determine characteristics of sample						
Send sampling frame to Westat to draw and verify sample						
Obtain classroom lists						
Select classes						
Enter selected class information into the YRBS Tracking Form						
Task #5: Contacting Parents						
Select type of contact						
Draft parent permission forms						
Distribute parent permission forms						
Monitor permission form return						
Task #6: Administering Surveys						
Establish survey administration procedures						
Plan and design administrator training						
Establish survey administration dates						
Assign school and class IDs						
Select survey administrators						
Order scannable questionnaire booklets or answer sheets from Westat						
Assemble questionnaires and answer sheets						
Train survey administrators						
Distribute survey materials to administrators and schools						

**Exhibit 1-3 (Continued)
Planning Worksheet**

Task	Suggested Start Date	Planned Start Date	End Date	Person in Charge	Others Involved	Date Completed
Task #6: Administering Surveys (continued)						
Administer YRBS						
Update YRBS Tracking Form and submit to Westat every other week.						
Fill out documentation forms						
Follow up with non-responding schools						
Close data collection						
Task #7: Preparing Data for Analysis						
Review incoming answer sheets						
Gather documentation						
Prepare survey forms for scanning						
Send forms for scanning and documentation to Westat						
Task #8: Preparing the Report						
Plan your report						
Develop timeline for written report						
Review CDC package for key results						
Prepare additional graphs						
Submit report for review						
Finalize and disseminate report						
Develop oral report presentation						

2. Modifying Questionnaires



Modifying the YRBS questionnaire to meet your agency's needs.

The standard YRBS questionnaire can be modified to meet your agency's needs by adding questions, deleting questions, or changing questions. One of the most common reasons for modifying the YRBS questionnaire is to reduce burden on schools by combining data collection efforts.

This chapter describes how to:

- Determine if you need to modify the standard YRBS questionnaire;
- Determine which modifications need to be made;
- Modify the high school questionnaire following established guidelines; and
- Modify the middle school questionnaire following established guidelines.



Determine if you need to modify the standard YRBS questionnaire.

Modifying the questionnaire is optional. While the majority of YRBS sites modify the standard YRBS questionnaire, some sites choose to field the standard questionnaire. Using the standard questionnaire is less expensive and less time-consuming. You will be supplied with questionnaire booklets, eliminating the cost for printing questionnaires. Also, the modification step can be removed from the planning process.

Resources and time are not the only considerations. If you are combining the YRBS with another survey, you may need to add, change, or replace questions to meet the needs of the other survey. In addition, your jurisdiction may have specific interests that are not addressed by the standard questions. Addressing them may require adding questions or adding topics.

If you modify the standard YRBS questionnaire, Westat will not provide questionnaire booklets. Westat will supply an electronic version of the questionnaire in portable document format (PDF). You will be responsible for making the copies of the questionnaire that will be handed out to the students; Westat will send computer-scannable answer sheets for each student to you.



Determine which modifications need to be made.

Once you have determined the standard YRBS questionnaire must be modified to meet the needs of your jurisdiction, you will have to decide on the type of modification required to meet those needs. Adding questions is the most common type of modification. However, you need to assess each standard question and decide if it should be deleted or changed to meet your needs.

Adding Questions: When deciding whether or not to add specific questions to the standard YRBS questionnaire, consider the following:

- Do you need to add questions to a topic already measured by the standard YRBS questionnaire? For example, most of the drug questions focus on lifetime use. You may need to assess current use of a particular drug in addition to lifetime use.
- Do you need data on a topic not measured by the standard questionnaire? For example, sites have added questions to their YRBS questionnaire to assess oral health, which is not a topic included on the standard YRBS questionnaire.
- Do you need to continue measuring a behavior over time? There are changes made every cycle to the standard questionnaire, including the deletion of questions. If a question that has been deleted from the standard questionnaire continues to be important in your jurisdiction, you will need to add that question.
- Do you need to add questions that pertain to other federal programs? Adding questions to meet the data requirements of other state and local programs can be an efficient way to reduce burden on the schools and satisfy multiple data needs with the same survey.
- Do you have a clear understanding of how you will use the results? Try to avoid adding questions without a plan for how the data will be used to improve policies and practices for youth. It is inappropriate to add questions simply because it would be “nice to know.”
- Is there an alternative data source for the information? The YRBS is useful for measuring many health risk behaviors and other topics relevant to youth. However, it is not necessarily the best data source for everything that your agency might want to know about youth. For example, data on pregnancy rates and sexually transmitted disease (STD) rates are best measured through the public health surveillance systems for those health outcomes. Also, constructs that can only be measured with long multi-item scales and question formats that violate YRBS question guidelines will not work in your YRBS questionnaire.

Deleting Questions: If you delete questions from the standard questionnaire, there are some ramifications to consider:

- You will not be able to compare results with other sites. One of the strengths of being part of the Youth Risk Behavior Surveillance System (YRBSS) is the ability to compare your results to national results and to those from other sites. It can be very compelling to decision-makers to see how their jurisdiction compares to other jurisdictions and to the situation nationwide.
- Trends will be interrupted. Another strength of the YRBSS is the ability to track behaviors over a long period of time. If a question is deleted, the trend line will be interrupted.
- You may lose results for more than the single question deleted. Sometimes questions are used to calculate more than one variable or are used together to calculate

variables. If you delete a standard question used in more than one result, you will lose all results that depend on that question. Exhibit 2-1, pages 2-8 to 2-11, lists the standard questions and the results that will be lost if the question is deleted.

Changing Questions: Any change to a standard question, including punctuation changes or rearranging the order of the response options, makes it no longer a standard question. It is considered the same as deleting the standard question. Please note that it is very easy to make a question “different,” but often very difficult to make a question “better.” Consider the ramifications listed above for deleting a question before you change a standard question.



Modify the high school questionnaire following established guidelines.

If you decide to **add questions**, Appendix A provides a list of optional questions for the high school YRBS that can be added to the standard questionnaire. You are not required to use the questions on the optional question list, but there are benefits to choosing a question from this list:

- The questions have been formatted to be consistent with the standard YRBS questions.
- The questionnaire approval process will take less time.
- Other sites use these questions, providing an opportunity for comparing results.

If the optional question list does not have a question that provides you with the information you need, you may develop new questions to add to your YRBS questionnaire. Please use the following guidelines **when you develop new questions** for your YRBS questionnaire:

- The reading level should be at or below the 8th grade level;
- Each question is limited to eight mutually exclusive response options.
- A “mark all that apply” format cannot be used. Only the race question allows multiple responses.
- A “grid” format cannot be used.
- A “fill in the blank” format cannot be used.
- Skip patterns cannot be used. The reasons include:
 - Skip patterns can be confusing, causing students to lose their place on the questionnaire booklet or answer sheet and to make errors recording their answers.
 - Students are less concerned about confidentiality when there are no skip patterns and everyone is asked to answer all questions, thus finishing the questionnaire at about the same time.

- Students will read what they are asked to skip anyway—there is probably no better way to ensure that than to tell them not to!

There also are guidelines to use if you choose to modify the standard high school questionnaire by **deleting or changing questions** as well:

- A **minimum of 58** (or 2/3 of the 86) questions from the standard **high school YRBS** questionnaire must remain unchanged.
- The seven demographic questions—age, sex, grade, ethnicity, race, height, and weight—must be included on the high school questionnaire.
- The race question may be modified based on your site's demographics, but the remaining six demographic questions cannot be changed.
- The ethnicity and race questions must be questions 4 and 5.
- The height and weight questions must be questions 6 and 7.

After you have modified your questionnaire, the total number of questions cannot exceed 99.

Westat will provide a finalized version of your questionnaire as a PDF and scannable answer sheets to you at no cost to your program **only** if you follow these guidelines. Also, if you do not follow these guidelines, Westat will not be able to scan your answer sheets. To ensure your modified questionnaire meets the guidelines and specifications, use the checklist in Exhibit 2-2 on page 2-12.

Once you have decided which modifications you need to make to your questionnaire, CDC and Westat will work with you to ensure that your questions meet all of the guidelines. E-mail the draft questionnaire to Westat for initial processing. Westat will forward the draft to CDC for review. CDC may contact you during this review process with suggested changes and questions. Please plan this review time into your survey schedule. Once the questionnaire is received at Westat, it will take 5 or fewer working days to finalize your questionnaire if you only delete standard questions, and up to 15 working days to finalize your questionnaire if you have added new questions not on the optional question list.



NOTE: Do **NOT** field a questionnaire other than the one finalized by CDC and created by Westat. CDC uses the finalized version of the questionnaire to set up the processing system. If a questionnaire other than the finalized version is fielded, your data could be processed and reported incorrectly, or not at all. At the very least, data processing will be severely delayed. Please let Westat and CDC know if you need to make changes to any finalized



Modify the middle school questionnaire following established guidelines.

questionnaire **before** using it in the field so that we can make the appropriate adjustments.

Your agency may elect to conduct a middle school survey. If you do, it is important to start with the standard middle school questionnaire found in Appendix A of this handbook. The standard middle school YRBS questionnaire is written at a 6th-grade reading level or below and the questions are worded so as to be understood by a majority of students in grades 6 through 8. The length of the questionnaire also has been shortened to 50 questions. Middle school students and high school students are not given the same English, math, or social studies tests and they should not be given the same YRBS questionnaire. Keeping the reading level lower and the questionnaire length shorter ensures that middle school students are able to comprehend and complete the survey in a high quality manner. Given the low prevalence of most risk behaviors among middle school students, most questions use the timeframe “ever” and the response options are primarily “yes/no” to make the questions easier to answer.

As with the standard high school questionnaire, the standard middle school questionnaire may be used as is, or it may be modified by adding, deleting, or changing items to meet site-specific needs.

If you decide to add questions, you may use questions from the optional question list (Appendix A) or create your own. Although created for the high school questionnaire, the questions on the optional question list can be easily modified to fit the middle school questionnaire. CDC will work with you to modify the questions. If you are modifying the standard middle school YRBS questionnaire, in addition to the general considerations for adding or deleting questions, you will need to keep the following in mind:

- Need for data on a certain topic. Some risk behaviors maybe of more concern at the middle school level than the high school level.
- Prevalence of the behavior among middle school students. As mentioned above, the prevalence of most behaviors will be lower among middle school students. Add questions that ask about lifetime behavior and that are relevant to middle school students.
- Complexity of the question and/or response options. In addition to keeping the reading level low, use yes/no response options instead of questions with more complicated response options.
- Effect on the overall length of the questionnaire. Middle school students read and comprehend more slowly than high school students and should be given a shorter questionnaire.

Two-thirds of the questions (or **34** of the 50 questions) from the standard **middle school** questionnaire must remain unchanged. If you modify the standard middle school YRBS questionnaire, CDC and Westat will review your draft questionnaire and provide comments, using the same guidelines and procedures described above for modifying the standard high school questionnaire.

Regardless of whether you use the standard middle school questionnaire or modify the standard middle school questionnaire, Westat will provide your agency with a PDF version of the questionnaire and scannable answer sheets. Your agency is responsible for making enough copies of the questionnaire so that each student has his or her own copy. Questionnaire booklets are not available for the standard middle school questionnaire.



NOTE: Height and weight are not included on the standard middle school YRBS questionnaire and CDC does **not** recommend adding the height and weight questions to the middle school YRBS questionnaire.

Studies have shown that among middle school students, self-reported height and weight consistently underestimates the prevalence of overweight. For example, Kolbo and colleagues¹ compared Mississippi's 2003 YRBS middle school data to directly measured height and weight data collected among students in a representative sample of Mississippi middle schools during the same timeframe. Estimates of the prevalence of overweight were consistently higher among the schools in which students' height and weight were measured compared to those in which students self-reported their height and weight. In another study, Morrissey and colleagues² measured the height and weight of a subsample of 8th grade students participating in North Carolina's YRBS. Mean self-reported weight was significantly lower than mean measured weight, and mean self-reported body mass index (BMI) was significantly lower than mean measured BMI. This self-report bias is less of a problem among high school students. A literature review that examined the correlation between self-reported and measured height, weight, and BMI found higher correlations for high school age adolescents than for middle school age youth.³

CDC has similar concerns about the ability of middle school students to respond to dietary behavior questions. As a result, these questions also are excluded from the standard middle school questionnaire.

¹Kolbo J.R., Penman, A.D., Meyer, M.K., et al. (2006). Prevalence of overweight among elementary and middle school students in Mississippi compared with prevalence data from the Youth Risk Behavior Surveillance System. *Preventing Chronic Disease*; 3(3):1-10.

²Morrissey, S.L., Whetstone, L.M., Cummings, D.M., et al. (2006). Comparison of self-reported and measured height and weight in eighth-grade students. *Journal of School Health*; 76(10):512-515.

³ Sherry, B., Jefferds, M.E., Grummer-Strawn, L.M. (2007). Accuracy of adolescent self-report of height and weight in assessing overweight status. *Archives of Pediatrics and Adolescent Medicine*; 161(12):1154-1161.



NOTE: The scannable answer sheets Westat provides for the middle school questionnaires do not contain height and weight grids. Be careful not to mix them with the high school scannable answer sheets that contain height and weight grids. To help differentiate between the two types of answer sheets, they are different colors. The **middle school** answer sheets (**without height and weight**) are **blue**; the answer sheets for modified **high school** questionnaires (**with height and weight**) are **orange**.

Exhibit 2-1

If you delete this standard question...	You will lose these variables...
Q33. During the past 30 days, on how many days did you smoke cigarettes?	Current cigarette use Smoked >10 cigarettes per day past 30 days Bought cigarettes at a store or gas station Tried to quit smoking cigarettes Frequent cigarette use (smoked on 20 or more of past 30 days) Current tobacco use
Q39. During the past 30 days, on how many days did you use chewing tobacco, snuff, or dip , such as Redman, Levi Garrett, Beechnut, Skoal, Skoal Bandits, or Copenhagen?	Current smokeless tobacco use Current tobacco use
Q40. During the past 30 days, on how many days did you smoke cigars, cigarillos, or little cigars ?	Current cigar use Current tobacco use
Q43. During the past 30 days, on how many days did you have at least one drink of alcohol?	Current alcohol use Someone gave alcohol to me past 30 days
Q62. During the past 3 months, with how many people did you have sexual intercourse?	Currently sexually active Alcohol or drug use before last sexual intercourse Condom use at last sexual intercourse Birth control pill use before last sexual intercourse Long acting, reversible contraception (LARC) use before last sexual intercourse Birth control pill use or LARC use before last sexual intercourse “Dual use” during last sexual intercourse (condom use plus birth control pill use, LARC use, or other highly effective methods)

Exhibit 2-1 (Continued)

If you delete this standard question...	You will lose these variables...
Q64. The last time you had sexual intercourse, did you or your partner use a condom?	Condom use at last sexual intercourse “Dual use” during last sexual intercourse (condom use plus birth control pill use, LARC use, or other highly effective methods)
Q65. The last time you had sexual intercourse, what one method did you or your partner use to prevent pregnancy ?	Birth control pill use before last sexual intercourse LARC use before last sexual intercourse Birth control pill use or LARC use before last sexual intercourse “Dual use” during last sexual intercourse (condom use plus birth control pill use, LARC use, or other highly effective methods)
Q71. During the past 7 days, how many times did you drink 100% fruit juices such as orange juice, apple juice, or grape juice?	Did not eat fruit or drink 100% fruit juices Ate fruit or drank 100% fruit juices ≥ 1 times per day Ate fruit or drank 100% fruit juices ≥ 2 times per day Ate fruit or drank 100% fruit juices ≥ 3 times per day
Q72. During the past 7 days, how many times did you eat fruit ?	Did not eat fruit or drink 100% fruit juices Ate fruit or drank 100% fruit juices ≥ 1 times per day Ate fruit or drank 100% fruit juices ≥ 2 times per day Ate fruit or drank 100% fruit juices ≥ 3 times per day
Q73. During the past 7 days, how many times did you eat green salad ?	Did not eat vegetables Ate vegetables ≥ 1 times per day Ate vegetables ≥ 2 times per day Ate vegetables ≥ 3 times per day

Exhibit 2-1 (Continued)

If you delete this standard question...	You will lose these variables...
Q74. During the past 7 days, how many times did you eat potatoes ?	Did not eat vegetables Ate vegetables ≥ 1 times per day Ate vegetables ≥ 2 times per day Ate vegetables ≥ 3 times per day
Q75. During the past 7 days, how many times did you eat carrots ?	Did not eat vegetables Ate vegetables ≥ 1 times per day Ate vegetables ≥ 2 times per day Ate vegetables ≥ 3 times per day
Q76. During the past 7 days, how many times did you eat other vegetables ?	Did not eat vegetables Ate vegetables ≥ 1 times per day Ate vegetables ≥ 2 times per day Ate vegetables ≥ 3 times per day
Q77. During the past 7 days, how many times did you drink a can, bottle, or glass of soda or pop , such as Coke, Pepsi, or Sprite?	Did not drink soda or pop Drank soda or pop ≥ 1 times per day Drank soda or pop ≥ 2 times per day Drank soda or pop ≥ 3 times per day
Q78. During the past 7 days, how many glasses of milk did you drink?	Did not drink milk Drank ≥ 1 glasses per day of milk Drank ≥ 2 glasses per day of milk Drank ≥ 3 glasses per day of milk
Q79. During the past 7 days, on how many days did you eat breakfast ?	Ate breakfast on none of the past 7 days Ate breakfast on all of the past 7 days

Exhibit 2-1 (Continued)

If you delete this standard question...	You will lose these variables...
Q80. During the past 7 days, on how many days were you physically active for a total of at least 60 minutes per day ?	<p>Did not participate in at least 60 minutes of physical activity on any day</p> <p>Were physically active for a total of at least 60 minutes per day on five or more of the past 7 days</p> <p>Were physically active for a total of at least 60 minutes per day on all of the past 7 days</p>
Q83. In an average week when you are in school, on how many days do you go to physical education (PE) classes?	<p>Attended physical education (PE) classes on ≥ 1 days in an average week when they were in school</p> <p>Attended physical education (PE) classes daily in an average week when they were in school</p>

Exhibit 2-2
Checklist for Modifying the Standard YRBS Questionnaire

- Two-thirds of the standard questions (58 for high school and 34 for middle school) were used unchanged.
- Each question has no more than eight mutually exclusive response options.
- No “mark all that apply” formats were used (except in the race question).
- A “grid” format was not used.
- A “fill in the blank” format was not used.
- Skip patterns were not used.
- The ethnicity and race questions were included as questions 4 and 5.
- For the high school questionnaire, height and weight questions were included as questions 6 and 7.
- The total number of questions did not exceed 99.

3. Obtaining Clearance



Become familiar with the required clearance process plus the approval procedures required at the local level.

Most agencies have established a clearance process for surveys administered to students. These clearance activities may include completion of special forms and preparation of materials for presentations to administrators and review panels. In other agencies, only a few key approvals may be required. Approvals from state, district, and school administrators may be required before clearance is considered final. Consequently, the planning process should allow time to accommodate these steps in getting clearance to conduct your survey.

This chapter describes how to:

- Determine the levels of clearance needed;
- Prepare and collect materials for your clearance package;
- Contact the districts and schools; and
- Get the districts and schools to say “Yes” to the YRBS.

A summary of successful clearance strategies is provided as well.



Determine the levels of clearance needed.

The approvals and levels of clearance required to conduct your YRBS will vary by agency (education or health) and by whether you are at the state level, or working in a school district, territory, or tribal government. The first step is to identify what is required by your agency. You may need to obtain agency-level approvals before moving to the next level. These approvals include, but are not limited to:

- **Institutional Review Board (IRB)** approval. The state and local YRBSs are not considered research by CDC and do not require IRB approval by CDC, but some state and local agencies require IRB approval for their YRBS. You will need to confirm what is required within your agency. If your agency has a “burden budget,” determine how the YRBS can be included in it. If you are using a contractor to conduct the survey, you may need approval from the contracting organization’s IRB as well.
- **Cooperative agreement materials review panel** approval. If you receive HIV prevention funds from CDC, this approval is required by the cooperative agreement and provides an opportunity to analyze the materials and presentation format that will be used later to seek other approvals. Demonstration of support for the YRBS from the cooperative agreement materials review panel also may help persuade other officials to provide their support.

Next, understand the clearance process at the state, district, and school levels. Become familiar with persons responsible for providing support or granting approval at each level. Find out exactly how many people or committees must give approval and what written materials or special forms are required for each.

State level

If you are doing a state-level survey, follow the requirements, if any, from your state education or health agency for conducting student surveys in your state. Obtain a letter of support from the superintendent in your state education agency and/or from the state health officer. This letter may help persuade districts and schools to participate and should be included in the clearance package sent to the districts and schools.

District level

Once state-level support has been obtained, school districts with sampled schools may be contacted. Create a clearance package to send to each district with schools in the sample. The clearance package should include the letter from the state superintendent or state health officer supporting the survey, a copy of the questionnaire, and information demonstrating the purpose and importance of the survey, such as fact sheets and examples of how the data have been used. Indicate that you will call in a few days to obtain the name and contact information of the person designated as the contact. The district contact is often the district health education coordinator or director of research.

School level

Sampled schools may be contacted after district-level clearance has been obtained. Usually the contact person in the schools will be the principal, a guidance counselor, or a health education coordinator. This individual should receive a clearance package similar to the one sent to the district, with an indication that the district has granted permission to contact the school. If the district provides a letter of support, include this with the clearance package.

Remember that at all clearance levels, obtaining clearance to conduct the YRBS can benefit your school health programs and activities by:

- Increasing awareness of your school health programs and activities,
- Providing opportunities for coordination and collaboration with other official agencies, and
- Providing opportunities for gaining and demonstrating the support of national, state, and local organizations.

**Prepare and collect materials for your clearance package.**

Create a clearance package that can be used at all levels of the clearance process. The materials in the clearance package should explain the survey and the uses for the results, and demonstrate support for the survey. These materials include:

- The rationale and purpose of the survey,
- Your 2013 YRBS questionnaire,
- Item rationale for the 2013 YRBS questionnaire (Appendix B),

- Publications reporting results of previous surveys (see bibliography in Appendix C),
- Examples of how YRBS data are used to improve school health programs and support school health policies, with any specific to your state or district highlighted,
- Letters of support from other agencies and national-, state-, and local-level organizations (Appendix D contains letters from national-level organizations), and
- The number of states and districts that conducted similar surveys in the past (Table 3-1 on page 3-8).

As you move through the process, you will add to the clearance package materials collected at the previous clearance level and specific for the current clearance level.

- An invitation to the district or school to participate (Exhibits 3-1 and 3-2),
- Letters of support from the state superintendent and/or state health officer and the district superintendent if the packet is for a school, and
- YRBS Questions and Answers for Schools (Appendix E).

Development or modification of these materials will take time. In particular, letters of support from other agencies and organizations should be requested as early as possible. Involving these groups in the survey planning process and offering to share the survey results with them will foster their support. Several national organizations have provided letters in support of the YRBS that you may use in your clearance package (Appendix D). State and local affiliates of these organizations, as well as other agencies in your state or district, also may be willing to provide letters of support or help encourage school administrators, parents, or community members to support your YRBS.

In addition to being used to obtain state-, district-, and school-level clearance, the clearance package also can be used for making presentations, developing survey-related correspondence, and soliciting additional support. For example, you may be asked to make presentations about the survey to persons or groups responsible for granting approvals or to other organizations engaged in school health programs and activities in your state or district. These presentations can be used to describe your school health programs and activities, the purpose of the YRBS, and the survey administration procedures you have established. These presentations can generate more support for the YRBS and school health programs and activities and initiate coordination of activities with other partner organizations.



Contact districts and schools.

After the clearance packages have been sent, you need to follow up with a telephone call to each district and school. At the district level, schedule a telephone conversation with the contact person to review the purpose of the survey and the content of the questionnaire, address questions and concerns, and obtain an indication of support for the YRBS. The goal of this telephone call should be to enlist district-level support for your survey and recognition of the benefits that can be gained by participation. Stress the importance of each district's participation. As part of this process, establish procedures for contacting schools. Once verbal approval is granted, request a formal letter of support. This formal letter of support should be added to the clearance package sent to the schools.

At the school level, a telephone call should be made to review the purpose of the YRBS and the content of the questionnaire, obtain agreement to participate, and determine minimally disruptive procedures and schedules for survey administration. Discuss with the school the procedures that have been established or that will be implemented to ensure school confidentiality and student anonymity.

Before you make the calls, there are some things you should do in preparation:

1. **Set up a call tracking system.** Recognize you may need to speak with multiple people at the district and school levels to schedule survey administration. Set up a recruitment tracking system or log sheet to keep track of every call you make, to whom you spoke, and the outcome of the call (e.g., contact identified, school scheduled).
2. Be prepared to **address concerns about the YRBS.** While you cannot anticipate every concern a district or school may express, some of the most common are:
 - **Can the students or school be identified?**

Emphasize that procedures have been established to ensure **school confidentiality** and protect **student anonymity**. Because no identifiers will be linked to the data, results from an individual student, class, or school **cannot** be reported.
 - **When the results are reported, how do we know our district or state will not look bad?**

Clarify that YRBS results reflect the combined impact of media, families, community organizations, and peers, as well as schools, on student behaviors. Emphasize that results will be used not to place blame on schools, but rather to identify specific needs school health programs and community programs collectively can address.

- **Are there questions that may be sensitive?**

Discuss the potentially controversial nature of the YRBS. Do not attempt to hide sensitive questions or draw unnecessary attention to them. Simply asking questions about health risk behaviors does not encourage students to engage in those behaviors. Students are influenced constantly by many sources, including family, friends, and the media. Emphasize that results from YRBS questions can provide the best estimates of the percentage of students at risk for important health problems.

- **How do I know the results will be useful?**

Describe the success of other state and local agencies. Similar student surveys have been conducted by state and local agencies since 1991. The number of state and local agencies that have conducted student surveys each year is listed in Table 3-1 on page 3-8. Use your state's or city's previous YRBS (if applicable) or national data to strengthen your argument. Share CDC articles and publications about how YRBS data have been used to improve school health programs and policies (Appendix C).

Do not begin your calls assuming that you are persuading people who do not want to do the survey. Instead, you are trying to provide people with the right information, in the right form, from the right source, to reach the right decision. With the right information, most districts and schools will agree to participate.



Get the districts and schools to say “Yes” to the YRBS.

The ultimate goal of the clearance process is to get districts and schools to agree to participate in the YRBS. Most of the time, the districts and schools will agree to participate without much need for encouragement. However, occasionally districts and schools will not be interested in participating. For these districts and schools, the initial goal is to keep them from immediately saying “No,” so you will have the opportunity to work further with them.

District superintendents and school principals may provide a variety of reasons the YRBS cannot be administered. Most reasons you will hear for saying “No” fit into one of two categories: **philosophical** or **logistical**. Philosophical reasons are based on beliefs or values, whereas logistical reasons focus on the survey's interference with the schedule or operation of the school.

- Examples of **philosophical** reasons include:
 - “If you ask kids about it, they will do it.”
 - “I do not believe kids will tell the truth, so there is no reason to do the survey.”

- Examples of **logistical** reasons include:
 - “There are too many surveys.”
 - “Our school calendar is really full.”

Identify which of the two categories the reason falls into, then use basic negotiation skills to address the concern appropriately, and, if necessary, leave the door open for further discussion.

Listen actively. Stay calm and listen to what your contacts are saying without interrupting. Be sure you fully understand what their concern is before beginning to discuss it. Sometimes it is not the obvious reason.

Diffuse. Acknowledge their concerns and agree when possible. Speak with confidence and professionalism.

Reframe. Provide options that will address their concerns, but still give you the opportunity to administer the YRBS properly in the district or school. Examples of reframing include offering to use active parental permission, being willing to meet with parent groups, explaining why you know the survey is credible, and offering to send a survey administrator to their school.

Leave the door open. Be willing to provide the superintendents or principals time to think about it. They may not be able to provide an immediate answer and may say “No” if pressured. Schedule future meetings with them, provide your contact information so you can be reached with any questions, and stay professional and positive.

Appendix F (YRBS Clearance Strategies: Addressing Concerns Raised by School Administrators) and Exhibits 3-3 on pages 3-12 to 3-13 are resources you can use during the clearance process. Appendix F has been created to prepare you to respond to the most common concerns about participation in the YRBS. The concerns are separated by category – philosophical and logistical. Find the concern you are hearing and then practice the responses provided in the “You say this...” section until you are comfortable with them. Appendix F was not designed for sharing with school officials, but as a tool to help you respond more confidently.

A philosophical reason often used when saying “No” is that students do not tell the truth, so there is no reason to collect the data. Exhibit 3-3 provides evidence that students answer the YRBS questions truthfully. Become familiar with this material also, because at some point in your clearance process this issue probably will be raised. Role playing with others is the best way to practice.



Summary of successful clearance strategies

It is very important to implement successful clearance strategies. Strategies should include the following:

- **Start early.** You may need to follow different approval procedures in different districts or schools. The entire clearance process may take 6 months or longer. Do not assume the process will go quickly.
- **Develop and maintain relationships.** Relationships are usually built over time. If you do not know anyone in the district or school, the relationship will need to be established by providing accurate and responsive information to the contact. Be organized and prepared to answer any questions they have about the YRBS. If you already have relationships with contacts in the districts or schools, start with them. Even if they are not the decision-makers, they may be helpful when approaching those who will make the decision and may be willing to advocate for the YRBS.
- **Do not assume a “No” when contacting districts and schools.** Most districts and schools say “Yes.”
- **Recognize the two primary types of reasons districts and schools use when saying “No.”** Learn skills for keeping the door open and practice addressing the reasons they may use for saying no.
- **Explore alternative strategies.** If your clearance process hits a snag, seek assistance from supporters within your agency and from other organizations or official agencies.

Table 3-1
Quantity and Quality of State, Territory, and Local
Youth Risk Behavior Surveys

Year	State		Territory		Local		Tribal Governments	
	Number of Surveys	% Weighted*	Number of Surveys	% Weighted*	Number of Surveys	% Weighted*	Number of Surveys	% Weighted*
1991	26	35	2	50	11	64	--	--
1993	40	55	2	100	14	64	--	--
1995	39	56	5	60	17	71	--	--
1997	38	63	5	80	17	88	--	--
1999	41	54	4	50	17	82	--	--
2001	37	60	7	29	19	74	--	--
2003	43	74	5	80	22	91	--	--
2005	44	91	4	75	23	91	--	--
2007	44	89	5	100	22	100	--	--
2009	47	89	4	75	23	91	2	50
2011	47	92	5	100	22	96	2	100

*Weighted results from a sample are generalizable to the overall population. An overall response rate of 60% and proper documentation are required for the results to be weighted.

Exhibit 3-1 Sample Invitation Letter to District Superintendent

Date

Name

District Name

Address

Address

Dear Superintendent X:

I am writing to inform you that [#] school(s) in your district [is/are] among the [##] schools randomly selected across the [jurisdiction] to participate in the 2013 Youth Risk Behavior Survey (YRBS), sponsored by the [agency name]. The YRBS is a survey of students in grades 9 through 12 that assesses priority health-risk behaviors, including (1) behaviors that result in unintentional injuries and violence; (2) tobacco use; (3) alcohol and other drug use; (4) sexual behaviors that contribute to HIV infection, other sexually transmitted diseases, and unintended pregnancies; (5) unhealthy dietary behaviors; and (6) physical inactivity. The YRBS was designed in cooperation with federal agencies and numerous state and local departments of education and health and is conducted biennially in odd-numbered years.

The selected school(s) in your district is/are:

Data collection will occur during January through April 2013. Questionnaires will be administered during one normal class period. The [agency name] respects the educational mission of schools; for that reason, only a small number of classes in each school are chosen randomly to participate. Survey administration procedures are designed to protect student privacy and allow for anonymous participation. Counties, cities, school districts, schools, and students will not be identified in any published reports.

[IF INCENTIVES ARE USED.] As a symbol of appreciation for contributing their time and support, the CDC will provide each participating school with a monetary incentive. One option is to use these funds for prevention curriculum and educational materials. However, no restrictions will be placed on how schools can use these funds. Schools also will receive a copy of the published results report and a variety of educational materials related to the health of young people.

Your support for these surveys will help ensure the voluntary participation of the schools selected in your district. The YRBS has become the primary source of information on the most important health risk behaviors of high school students in this country and is increasingly used by leading educators, public health officials, the media, and others to advocate for and improve school health policies and programs. In addition to this survey, a YRBS is being conducted in other [states, cities, territories, or tribal governments] and nationally. The results can be compared to the results from the other surveys and are used to support the design, implementation, and evaluation of effective prevention and control programs.

Exhibit 3-1 (Continued)
Sample Invitation Letter to District Superintendent

Enclosed are copies of the YRBS questionnaire, sample parental permission forms, a survey fact sheet, letters of support, and the 2011 Youth Risk Behavior Surveillance fact sheet. Within one week, I will contact you to answer any questions you may have and to identify a primary district contact. If you have any immediate questions, please call me at [(###) ###-####]. Your support for this survey will help assess and improve efforts to reduce priority health-risk behaviors among adolescents throughout our [jurisdiction].

Sincerely yours,

Enclosures

Exhibit 3-2 Sample Invitation Letter to School

Date

Name

School Name

Address

Dear Principal X:

I am writing to inform you that your school is among the [##] schools randomly selected across the [jurisdiction] to participate in the 2013 Youth Risk Behavior Survey (YRBS) sponsored by [name of agency]. The YRBS is a survey of students in grades 9 through 12 that assesses priority health-risk behaviors, including (1) behaviors that result in unintentional injuries and violence; (2) tobacco use; (3) alcohol and other drug use; (4) sexual behaviors that contribute to HIV infection, other sexually transmitted diseases, and unintended pregnancies; (5) unhealthy dietary behaviors; and (6) physical inactivity. The YRBS was designed in cooperation with Federal agencies and numerous state and local departments of education and health and is conducted biennially in odd-numbered years.

Data collection will occur during January through April 2013. Questionnaires will be administered during one normal class period. The [agency] respects the educational mission of schools; for that reason, only a small number of classes in each school are selected randomly to participate. Survey administration procedures are designed to protect student privacy and allow for anonymous participation. Counties, cities, school districts, schools, and students will not be identified in any published reports.

[IF INCENTIVES ARE USED.] As a symbol of appreciation for contributing their time and support, the [agency] will provide each participating school with a monetary incentive. One option is to use these funds for prevention curriculum and educational materials. However, no restrictions will be placed on how schools can use these funds. Schools also will receive a copy of the published results report and a variety of educational materials related to the health of young people.

The YRBS has become the primary source of information on the most important health risk behaviors of high school students in this country and is increasingly used by leading educators, public health officials, the media, and others to advocate for and improve school health policies and programs. In addition to this survey, a YRBS is being conducted in other [states, cities, territories, or tribal governments] and nationally. The results from this survey/our survey will be compared to the results from the other surveys and used to support the design, implementation, and evaluation of effective prevention and control programs.

Enclosed are copies of the YRBS questionnaire, sample parental permission forms, a Fact Sheet, letters of support, and the 2011 Youth Risk Behavior Surveillance fact sheet. Within one week, I will contact you to answer any questions you may have and to identify a primary contact at the school. If you have any immediate questions, please call [Coordinator] at [phone number]. Your support for this survey will help assess and improve efforts to reduce priority health-risk behaviors among adolescents throughout our [jurisdiction].

Sincerely yours,

Enclosures

Exhibit 3-3

Do Students Tell the Truth on the Youth Risk Behavior Survey (YRBS)?

While a very small number of students do not answer the YRBS honestly, most students tell the truth. We have confidence in YRBS data for the following reasons:

1. Survey environment.

Survey administration procedures are designed to protect the confidentiality of schools and the anonymity of students.

- Students sit as far apart as possible throughout the classroom and have a piece of paper to cover their responses.
- Neither survey administrators nor classroom teachers wander around the classroom while students are taking the survey.
- Students are told the importance of providing honest answers, no one will know how they respond, and how the data will be used to improve programs and policies for students.
- Make-ups are done only when the privacy of students can be protected.

2. Questionnaire design and content.

The YRBS questionnaire is designed to protect the anonymity of students.

- No names or other types of personally identifying information are ever requested.
- Skip patterns are not used to make sure all students complete the questionnaire in about the same amount of time. If skip patterns were used, some students who engaged in few risk behaviors would complete the questionnaire far faster than those students who engaged in many risk behaviors. All students are expected to answer every question.
- The YRBS questionnaire has about a 8th grade reading level. This helps students accurately comprehend questions and response options. The total number of questions is kept low to help ensure students have an adequate amount of time to respond to every question. Questions are written in a straightforward and direct manner and require only one response.

3. Edit checks.

YRBS data are edited for inconsistent responses.

- More than 100 edit checks are conducted on each YRBS data set to remove inconsistent responses. For example, students who report carrying a weapon on school property also must have reported carrying a weapon anywhere or the responses to these two questions will be deleted. Only a very small percentage of responses to each question are identified as inconsistent and removed from the data sets.
- Though it rarely occurs, questionnaires with only a few valid responses are removed entirely from the data set.

4. Logic within groups of questions.

Questions on similar topics produce logical responses. For example, more students have thought about attempting suicide than have made a plan to attempt suicide. Fewer still have actually attempted suicide, and very few have made an injurious suicide attempt. This logical pattern of responses within groups of questions has occurred since the first surveys were conducted.

Exhibit 3-3 (Continued)
Do Students Tell the Truth on the Youth Risk Behavior Survey (YRBS)?

5. Comparison of YRBS data with data from other surveys.

When YRBS results are compared to results from other national, state, and local surveys on the same topics, the results are generally quite similar, particularly when differences in survey administration, sample selection, and question wording are taken into consideration.

6. Consistency over time.

YRBS results have been fairly consistent since 1991. While the prevalence of some behaviors has increased or decreased significantly over time, most changes have been gradual and in one direction, either up or down, and have not bounced around from year to year.

7. Health outcome data.

YRBS results are consistent with health outcome data. For example, YRBS data from the past decade indicate that the prevalence of sexual experience is decreasing, and the prevalence of condom use is increasing. Until just recently, decreases in teen pregnancies, teen births, and sexually transmitted disease rates among adolescents also were occurring.

8. Subgroup differences.

Subgroup differences are logical and have remained generally constant over time. For example, many behaviors like drug use and sexual experience consistently increase by grade, while others like physical fighting consistently decrease by grade. Other behaviors vary consistently by gender. Males are always far more likely than females to use smokeless tobacco.

9. Psychometric studies.

CDC has conducted a series of psychometric tests to better understand the quality of the questionnaire and the data collected with it. Based on the data available, the YRBSS data appear to be generally reliable and valid.

- When the YRBS questionnaire was developed, psychometric tests were conducted in a cognitive laboratory setting, in focus groups, and in regular classrooms among diverse groups of students.
- In 1992 and 2000, CDC conducted reliability studies to measure the stability of responses during a 2-week interval.
- In 2002, 2004, and 2008, CDC conducted additional methodological studies to examine other factors affecting the reliability and validity of YRBS data.
- Researchers not associated with CDC also have conducted psychometric tests using the YRBS questionnaire and similar questionnaires.

4. Sampling Schools and Classes



A good sample can be generalized to the entire student population from which the sample was drawn.

The quality and usefulness of results from your YRBS depend largely on the procedures used to select and recruit schools and classes for participation in the survey. Because surveying every student in every school is costly, often impossible, and almost always unnecessary, a **sample** should be selected. Standardized sample selection and documentation procedures have been established to ensure YRBS data are of the highest quality, credibility, and usefulness.

This chapter describes what a good sample looks like, the importance of a good sample, and the procedures for selecting your YRBS sample, including how to:

- Create a sampling frame;
- Complete the Sampling Parameter Worksheet;
- Select the classes in which the YRBS is administered;
- Document your sample;
- Complete the State- or Local Level Sample Information Form; and
- Manage overlapping samples.

A **good sample** is scientifically selected, efficient, and well-documented. A **scientific sample** gives each eligible student a known probability of being in the sample. This is called probability sampling. The YRBS uses a two-stage sample design. The first stage of selection is schools. Schools are selected with probability proportional to the number of students in grades 9 through 12. This means that larger schools are more likely to be selected than smaller schools. The sample of schools is selected by statisticians at Westat using software specifically designed for the YRBS.

The second stage of selection is classrooms. Classrooms are selected randomly to ensure that all students have one and only one chance of being selected. You are responsible for selecting the classes using the procedures described later in this chapter and in Appendix G. A scientifically selected sample **cannot** include volunteer schools or classes.

An **efficient sample design** produces results that are more precise than those from other possible samples of the same cost. The more precise your results, the more confidence you can have in them. **An efficient sample design depends on both sample size and selection procedures.** For a given sample size, more precise results are obtained by conducting the survey in a larger number of schools because students within the same school tend to be more similar than students in different schools. A sample that uses large

numbers of students in a few schools tends to reflect the characteristics of those particular schools. Such samples result in relatively less precise estimates. Samples obtained using small numbers of students in many schools reflect the population more accurately. A very large sample is not efficient and not necessary as it will require more documentation and more follow-up, while unnecessarily burdening schools and students for only a slight increase in precision.

A good sample is also **well-documented**. Appropriate documentation is required during school selection, class selection, data collection, and data submission. Westat has created forms for use at each stage (Exhibits 4-2 through 4-5, 6-2, and 7-2 and 7-3). The documentation provides the information needed for data processing and analysis.

A good sample, combined with an **overall response rate¹ of 60% or greater**, is necessary for your YRBS data to be weighted. Weighted data can be generalized to all students in your jurisdiction, compared with results from other jurisdictions or sites, and used for subgroup and trend analyses. Weighted data are powerful. If the overall response rate is < 60%, or the sample was unscientific, inefficient, or poorly documented, your data cannot be weighted. Unweighted data can be used only to describe those students who completed the survey.



Create a sampling frame.

Your YRBS **sampling frame** is developed from the most up-to-date **school file** for your jurisdiction at the time the sample needs to be drawn. The school file contains a list of every school in your jurisdiction that contains grades 9 through 12 among the types of schools eligible for your survey. For example, if you do not want to include alternative high schools, special education schools, or juvenile detention schools, they are considered ineligible for the survey and you need to delete them from the school file. There are two ways to create an updated sampling frame – create your own school file or update a school file provided by Westat.

Create your own school file. If your jurisdiction has an electronic list of schools, you may choose to create your own school file. This school file can usually be requested from an evaluation and research office, a finance office, or an audit department in your education agency. It should include the following:

¹ The YRBS Overall Response Rate (RR) = School RR*Student RR, where
 School RR = number of participating schools/number of eligible sampled schools;
 Student RR = number of usable questionnaires/number of eligible students sampled in participating schools.

- The school name, address, and unique district and school identifiers for each eligible school,
- The grade span of each eligible school that shows the lowest grade and the highest grade in the school (e.g., 0912), and
- The number of students enrolled only in the grades to be included in the survey. For example, if you want to survey students in grades 9 through 12, and an eligible school in your jurisdiction includes grades 7 through 12, include only the number of students enrolled in grades 9 through 12 for that school; do not use the school's total enrollment.

Update the school file provided by Westat. Westat can provide a list of schools in your jurisdiction. If your agency has conducted the YRBS in the past, Westat will provide the school file used previously for creating the sampling frame for your site. If this is your first YRBS, Westat will construct a school file using the most recent Common Core of Data available from the National Center for Education Statistics, U.S. Department of Education.

To create a sampling frame from a Westat-provided school file, review and edit the file to remove schools that have been closed, add new schools that meet the eligibility requirements (grade span and type of school), and update enrollment for the eligible grades. For example, a school may have closed or been converted to an alternative school, and the students moved to neighboring schools. The school should be deleted, and the enrollment for the neighboring schools should be changed to reflect the increased enrollment. Also, school address and school district identification are now required on the sampling frame. Please add this information if it was not previously included.

Once you either update the school file provided by Westat or create your own school file, that file becomes your **sampling frame**. The sampling frame lists the schools from which your school sample will be scientifically selected. For Westat to select your sample, all sampling frames must be submitted to Westat in Microsoft (MS) Excel format. Exhibit 4-1 on page 4-10 is an example of a sampling frame. Sampling frames sent via facsimile (i.e., faxed), or submitted in any other electronic format (e.g., PDFs, ASCII, or MS Word) cannot be used.



Complete the Sampling Parameter Worksheet.

In addition to your sampling frame, you need to provide Westat with a completed **Sampling Parameter Worksheet** (Exhibit 4-2 on page 4-11). The worksheet includes the following information:

- The name of your agency,
- The type of survey (i.e., middle school or high school),

- The number of completed questionnaires desired (see Table 4-1 on page 4-12),
- The type of parental permission required (active or passive), and the permission rate, if known,
- The average daily attendance rate in your jurisdiction,
- The sample allocation. You have two choices:
 - Number of participating schools desired, or
 - All schools, and
- The school response rate.

The **number of completed questionnaires** desired is based on the number of eligible students and the desired level of precision. Not every eligible student is surveyed, so results provide an estimate of the prevalence rather than the actual prevalence of risk behaviors. The level of precision of the estimate is conveyed by providing the survey estimate plus or minus its margin of error. Standard practice indicates that $\pm 5\%$ is sufficient precision for this type of survey.

Table 4-1 on page 4-12 provides estimated sample sizes based on the YRBS sampling design for different sizes of eligible populations and varying levels of precision. If the student enrollment in your state or district falls between two values in the eligible student population column, use the estimated sample size (number of completed questionnaires desired) for the larger value. For example, if you have 76,000 eligible students and you want a $\pm 5\%$ margin of error, your estimated sample size will be 1,508. This is the number of completed questionnaires desired. Enter this number on the line provided in the Sampling Parameter Worksheet.

To account for student nonresponse, the initial sample size must be increased by the percentage of students you expect will not receive parent permission or will be absent. For example, if you need 1,508 students, and you expect an 80% student response rate due to the type of parental permission and average daily attendance rate, you need to sample $1,508/.80 = 1,885$ students. When Westat draws your sample, this adjustment is done automatically using the type of parental permission required and the average daily attendance rate for students.

The type of **parental permission** needed for your survey affects student response rates. See Chapter 5 and Appendix H for a complete discussion on passive and active parental permission. Check the box next to the type of parental permission required for your jurisdiction and provide the anticipated permission rate. If you are unsure of the requirements or the requirement varies within your jurisdiction, contact your Westat statistician. If you

know the permission rate from a previous YRBS, please fill that in next to the selected type of parental permission. If the permission rate is unknown, your Westat statistician will help you determine the appropriate rate.

To estimate the percentage of students who will be absent, obtain the **average daily attendance rate** for students in your eligible population in your jurisdiction. If this is not available, enter the national average of 85% on the line provided.

Your sample can be allocated by the number of participating schools you want in the survey. The **number of schools** selected is dependent on your desired number of participating schools, the estimated school response rate, and resource limitations, including budget, time, and staff. Remember the efficiency of a sample design can be increased by increasing the number of schools selected to participate. Your sample should include at least 25 schools but no more than 100 schools. If you plan to include more than 100 or fewer than 25 schools, contact your Westat statistician. If there are fewer than 50 schools in your jurisdiction with grades 9 through 12, Westat will select **all of your schools**.

The **school response rate** is the percentage of schools selected for your survey that agree to participate. You can estimate this rate based on previous YRBS's or similar surveys conducted in schools in your jurisdiction. Your Westat statistician can provide you with this information.

It is important to provide Westat with the completed copy of the Sampling Parameter Worksheet at the time you send in your electronic sampling frame. Your sample cannot be selected until Westat has both.



Select the classes in which the YRBS is administered.

Westat will use the electronic sampling frame and the completed Sampling Parameter Worksheet you send to draw your sample of schools. Once the sample has been verified, Westat will send to you the list of schools, a tracking form in MS Excel (Exhibit 6-2 on page 6-9), and forms you will use to document your sample. These forms include one School-Level Sample Information Form (Exhibit 4-3) and one Classroom-Level Sample Information Form (Exhibit 4-4) for each sampled school, and the State- or Local-Level Sample Information Form (Exhibit 4-5).

The School-Level Sample Information Form (Exhibit 4-3) is a two-page document used to record school-specific information. On the first page, your agency's name, the school name, and a school ID will already be filled in. You will need to provide the other required information on page 1 – the school's grade span, the participation status, the reason for ineligible status (if applicable), the type of classes used for class selection, and the total number of eligible classes on the class list. In addition, you will see a unique

set of random numbers for that school that you will use for sampling classes. You may track class selection and status using the table on page 2 of the form.

Once the school agrees to participate, you may sample classes. To determine eligible classes, remember that **each student must have one and only one chance for selection**. Good choices for eligible classes are **required** English classes **or** second period classes. If you use required English, do not include elective English classes as a student may be enrolled in both a required class and the elective one. Also, try to avoid classes required in only one or two grades, such as physical education or health education; classes that include only male or female students, such as some physical education classes; and one-semester classes, unless all students are required to take the class during the semester when the YRBS is administered. Second period is a good choice if you want to select from classes held during a given period of the day. Homeroom and first period could eliminate those students who arrive at school late. Third and fourth period classes are acceptable if they are not part of a split-lunch system. Later periods of the day are poor choices as students may leave the building early. You must use only a single type of eligible classes in a given school, but you may choose different types of eligible classes in different schools.

Work with each school to determine the type of class from which to sample and then request a list of those classes for the semester in which the survey will be administered. If you are using a class list from a specific period of the day, review the list to make sure only eligible classes are on the list. Cross out classes that are teacher preparation periods, special education classes, or classes that have zero students enrolled. English as a second language (ESL) classes might or might not be eligible, depending on the English proficiency level of the students. If a class has less than five students, combine it with a bigger class above or below it on the list to protect the privacy of students in the small class. If you are selecting classes from a class list for a required course (e.g., required English), you will need to cross out elective English classes such as Journalism that may have been included on the class list. Contact the school to clarify this class information.

Once the class list is cleaned, **sequentially number all eligible classes** starting at the top of the list. Then, use the random numbers appearing near the bottom of the School-Level Sample Information Form for that school to sample classes from each numbered class list. For example, if the first random number is 2, then the second class on the list is sampled for your YRBS, and the random number 2 becomes the class ID. Record the class ID and teacher name on the second page of the School-Level Sample Information Form. If the second random number is 15, then the 15th class on the list is sampled and you should record appropriate information about this class on the second page of the School-

Level Sample Information Form. This process should be repeated until you reach the end of the class list. The YRBS is administered only to classes sampled in this manner. Failure to sample classes using the random number list negates the benefits of selecting probability samples of schools.



NOTE: If the first random number listed is greater than the number of classes on your class list OR you run out of random numbers on the School-Level Sample Information Form before you reach the end of the class list, please contact your Westat statistician to obtain a new first random number, or additional random numbers. Do not select your own random numbers, or stop sampling classes until you have gotten to the end of your class list.

Sampling classes properly is critical. Upon request, Westat will work with you to verify your class sample in a few schools. If a school uses block scheduling or another type of creative scheduling, please contact Westat for assistance with sampling the classes in this school. Classroom selection with these types of schedules may need to be handled differently to ensure each student has one and only one chance of being sampled.

Do not allow volunteer classes or students to take the survey. Do not allow principals to select classes in any arbitrary way or for convenience. School administrators generally will agree with choices generated through a scientific process once reasons for using those procedures are discussed. School administrators may be happy to have classes selected by someone outside the school who can deflect pressure concerning why certain classes were selected and others were not. Sampled classrooms and the students in those classes cannot be replaced with other classrooms or students.



NOTE: There may be instances when a school administrator will only allow classes to be sampled from non-required courses. This will prevent each student from having one and only one chance of being sampled. If you have tried to negotiate for maintaining the scientific process and this is the only option to get the school to participate, you may accept this option. However, this option will decrease, possibly significantly, your student response rate. Contact your Westat statistician for assistance with sampling classes in these situations and make sure to document when this happens on your YRBS Tracking Form (Exhibit 6-2).

For a step-by-step example of selecting classes, please watch the Selecting Classes video, available on the Survey TA website at <http://www.surveyta.org>. Appendix G also provides two step-by-step examples of selecting classes: one using a 2nd period class and one using required English classes.



Document your sample.

Documenting your sample is VERY important. Complete documentation of the sampling process is required to demonstrate that the sample is selected scientifically. If information on the sampling process is not documented properly, your data cannot be weighted, and the survey results cannot be generalized to the entire student population from which your sample was drawn. The School-Level Sample Information Form for each selected school should be filled out at the time of class selection.

In addition to the School-Level Sample Information Form, Westat will send a form called the Classroom-Level Sample Information Form (Exhibit 4-4 on page 4-15). Because the number of classes sampled from each school is not known until you apply the random numbers to the class list, only one Classroom-Level Sample Information Form is sent for each selected school. Your agency's name, the school name, and a school ID will already be filled in. You will need to make enough copies of this form to have one for each class sampled in that school. The class ID is the random number from the School-Level Sample Information Form used to sample the class. You will need to enter that number on the form. The rest of the information needed to complete the Classroom-Level Sample Information Form is collected during survey administration. The survey administrator should confirm the actual class enrollment, find out the predominant grade in the class, and enter the number of students who completed a questionnaire.

You will need to send these completed forms with your completed questionnaire booklets or answer sheets to Westat. This includes a School-Level Sample Information Form for each school and a Classroom-Level Sample Information Form for each class, even those schools or classrooms that did not participate or were considered ineligible. There is a place to document nonparticipation on each form. On the Classroom-Level Sample Information Form, it is important to provide the class enrollment and the predominant grade of students for non-participating classes as well. The enrollment data are used when calculating the student response rate and weighting the data. Chapter 7 – Preparing Data for Analysis provides further details on preparing your documentation and data for shipment to Westat.



NOTE: You are not required to send your numbered class lists from each school to Westat as part of the documentation. However, it is important to keep the numbered class lists until you have received your final report. The statisticians may have questions during the weighting process that require access to this documentation.



Complete the State- or Local-Level Sample Information Form.

The State- or Local-Level Sample Information Form (Exhibit 4-5 on page 4-16) must be completed and submitted to Westat by **April 2, 2013**, if you are doing a spring survey. This form provides information needed to process and analyze your data. Most of this information can be requested from a department in the education agency responsible for keeping track of school enrollments and attendance. Use the most current school enrollment data to complete the form. If you excluded special types of schools from your survey (for example, public alternative schools, special education schools, or juvenile detention schools), you also need to exclude them when completing the State- or Local-Level Sample Information Form. If you modified the race question on your YRBS questionnaire, adjust the race categories on this form to match. If you have questions about completing the State- or Local-Level Sample Information Form, please contact your Westat statistician.



Manage overlapping samples.

If you have schools in your sample that also have been sampled for another YRBS (e.g., the national YRBS or a state or local YRBS), make sure to work out a plan with the other survey's coordinator to administer the survey only once to these schools. Westat will notify you of these overlaps and provide you with the contact information for the other agency's YRBS coordinator. It is important to coordinate with the other agency whether they will administer the survey in your schools or vice versa. Stay in touch with the other agency during the administration process. It is important to be consistent and keep track of these overlapping schools so as not to overburden schools and students and lose data. Accurately documenting which agency will administer the survey in each school and which questionnaire will be used is imperative.

If your questionnaire is different from that of the other agency, you should agree on using only one of the questionnaires in the overlapping school(s). We recommend that you not bring more than one YRBS questionnaire to a school.

Westat and CDC will share the data for overlapping schools as needed during processing, so there is no need for you to do this before you submit your materials to Westat. However, the agreement reached between the agencies (i.e., who is administering the survey and the questionnaire used) **MUST** be communicated to Westat, so that when your data are received, processing can be completed in a timely and accurate manner.

**Exhibit 4-1
Example Sampling Frame**

District ID	Sch District	School ID	School	Street	City	State	Zip	County	Sch Type	GR Span	ENR GR912
10	Lincoln	1012	Lincoln Jr/Sr HS	231 Lincoln Ave	Lincoln	XX	12345	Greenville	Regular Public HS	GR7_12	1368
12	Greenville	1203	Greenville HS	23 Main St	Greenville	XX	12345	Greenville	Regular Public HS	GR9_12	2401
12	Greenville	1204	Main HS	45 Primary Rd	Greenville	XX	12345	Greenville	Regular Public HS	GR9_12	3262
12	Greenville	1208	Mountain HS	6 Mountain Rd	Greenville	XX	12345	Greenville	Regular Public HS	GR9_12	3292
01	Columbus	0112	Columbus HS	123 Main St	Columbus	XX	23456	Monroe	Regular Public HS	GR9_12	1730
01	Columbus	0101	Lincoln HS	23 Lincoln Ave	Columbus	XX	23456	Monroe	Regular Public HS	GR9_12	2241
01	Columbus	0106	Monroe Cnty HS	678 Main St	Columbus	XX	34567	Monroe	Regular Public HS	GR9_12	1941
01	Columbus	0107	Lake HS	99 Lake Rd	Columbus	XX	34567	Monroe	Regular Public HS	GR9_12	2499
01	Columbus	0108	Valley HS	2004 Mountain Rd.	Columbus	XX	34567	Monroe	Regular Public HS	GR9_12	1422
01	Columbus	0109	Ocean View HS	3434 Desert Ave	Columbus	XX	23456	Monroe	Regular Public HS	GR9_12	1180
05	Mega	0501	Mills County HS	888 Main St	Megatrop	XX	45678	Mills	Regular Public HS	GR9_12	2589
05	Mega	0504	Waters HS	445 HWY 609	Megatrop	XX	45678	Mills	Regular Public HS	GR9_12	1991
05	Mega	0505	Jefferson HS	89 Monticello Ln	Megatrop	XX	45678	Mills	Regular Public HS	GR9_12	2520
05	Mega	0506	Lincoln HS	900 Penny Way	Megatrop	XX	56789	Mills	Regular Public HS	GR9_12	988
05	Mega	0510	Smith HS	3452 Jones Ave	Megatrop	XX	56789	Falls	Regular Public HS	GR9_12	2135
05	Mega	0512	Falls County HS	998 Falls Ave	Megatrop	XX	56789	Falls	Regular Public HS	GR9_12	4104
05	Mega	0515	Franklin HS	7789 Silence Way	Megatrop	XX	56789	Falls	Regular Public HS	GR9_12	3223
05	Mega	0516	Lee HS	5009 Arlington Rd	Megatrop	XX	67891	Falls	Regular Public HS	GR9_12	4532
05	Mega	0518	Washington HS	3345 Founders St	Megatrop	XX	67891	Falls	Regular Public HS	GR9_12	2364

Table 4-1
Estimated Sample Sizes
(Number of Completed Questionnaires Desired)

Eligible Student Population	Margin of Error				
	±1%	±2%	±3%	±4%	±5%
10,000	7,935	4,899	2,992	1,936	1,332
20,000	13,153	6,488	3,518	2,144	1,427
30,000	16,845	7,275	3,737	2,223	1,462
40,000	19,596	7,745	3,857	2,265	1,480
50,000	21,725	8,059	3,933	2,291	1,491
60,000	23,421	8,279	3,985	2,309	1,498
70,000	24,804	8,445	4,023	2,321	1,504
80,000	25,953	8,575	4,052	2,331	1,508
90,000	26,924	8,678	4,075	2,339	1,511
100,000	27,754	8,762	4,094	2,345	1,513
200,000	32,226	9,164	4,179	2,373	1,525
300,000	34,055	9,306	4,209	2,382	1,529
400,000	35,050	9,379	4,223	2,387	1,531
500,000	35,675	9,423	4,232	2,390	1,532
1,000,000	36,995	9,513	4,250	2,395	1,534

Exhibit 4-3
School-Level Sample Information Form
Youth Risk Behavior Survey

Page 1 of 2

State or Local Agency:

School:

PCSample ID:

What grades are taught in this school?
(Examples: K-12, 9-12)

School participation status: PARTICIPATING REFUSING INELIGIBLE
(Circle one.) If the school is ineligible, please explain:

If this school refused to participate or is ineligible, you do not need to complete the rest of this form.

Obtain a list of classes in this school to use for sampling. The list of classes must be such that each student in the surveyed grades must be represented on the list ONE AND ONLY ONE time. Suggested classes to use are required English classes or 2nd period classes. Refer to the Handbook for Conducting Youth Risk Behavior Surveys for more information.

Describe the type of classes used for sampling in this school:
(Examples: All required English classes OR all 2nd period classes)

Number the classes on the list beginning with 1. Enter the TOTAL NUMBER of classes on the list:

For each number below, select the corresponding class on your list. Keep selecting classes until you reach the END of your class list. If the first number listed below is greater than the number of classes on your list OR if you run out of numbers before you reach the end of your list of classes, contact Westat at 1-800-937-8287.

###

Please keep your class list until you receive your report from CDC in case there are any questions concerning these classes. If you prefer not to keep this list, you may send it to Westat with these forms.

On the next page is a class tracking form. For each class selected, enter the class ID (use the number above that was used to select the class) and the teacher's name. As you receive completed questionnaires and Classroom-Level Sample Information Forms, put a check mark in the space provided.

Exhibit 4-4
Classroom-Level Sample Information Form
Youth Risk Behavior Survey

NOTE: Make enough copies of this form so there is one for EACH selected class in each school. A Classroom-Level Sample Information Form MUST be completed for each of the classes selected for your survey, whether or not the class participated.

State or Local Agency: _____

School: _____

PCSample ID: _____

Class ID: _____

(Use the random class number shown on the School-Level Sample Information Form.)

How many students in grades 9-12 are ENROLLED in this class? _____

What is the PREDOMINANT GRADE in this class? 9 10 11 12 Other
(circle one)

How many students in this class participated in this survey? _____

If the CLASS did not participate in this survey, please explain:

NOTE: Please send the Classroom-Level Information Form for all sampled classes to Westat when you send the answer sheets or booklets for scanning. If you scan your own answer sheets or booklets, please send the forms with the data.

Exhibit 4-5
State- or Local-Level Sample Information Form
Youth Risk Behavior Survey

Agency: _____

Name of person completing this form: _____

Phone: _____

Email: _____

Number of schools in the most recent school file*: _____

ENROLLMENT in these schools by grade and gender:

GRADE	FEMALES	MALES	TOTAL
9th	_____	_____	_____
10th	_____	_____	_____
11th	_____	_____	_____
12th	_____	_____	_____
TOTAL**	_____	_____	_____

ENROLLMENT in these schools by race/ethnicity:

RACE/ETHNICITY	TOTAL
White	_____
Black or African American	_____
Hispanic or Latino	_____
American Indian or Alaska Native	_____
Asian	_____
Native Hawaiian or other Pacific Islander	_____
Other (specify) _____	_____
TOTAL**	_____

Number of schools selected: _____

Number of schools that participated: _____

*Include the same type of schools (e.g., regular public schools, charter schools) as those on the sampling frame.

**Grand total for grade and gender should be equal to grand total for race/ethnicity.

NOTE: Please send this State- or Local-Level Sample Information Form to Westat by April 2, 2013 for spring 2013 YRBS.

5. Obtaining Parental Permission



Securing parental support is essential.

An important step before administering the YRBS to students is to notify parents about the survey and obtain permission for students to participate.

This chapter describes the:

- Types of parental permission;
- Federal laws and regulations related to active parental permission;
- Process for notifying parents about the survey; and
- Strategies to increase the number of returned active parental permission forms.



Types of parental permission.

Two types of parental permission are used for the YRBS—passive and active.

Passive parental permission means that a student is excluded from the survey when their parent returns a signed form denying permission. If a form is not returned, parental permission to participate in the survey is assumed.

Active parental permission means that a signature is needed from a parent authorizing the student's participation. A student is not allowed to take part in the YRBS unless a parent has returned a signed permission form indicating his/her approval of their child's participation in the survey. Thus, a student whose parent has not approved their child's participation in the survey or a student whose parent has not returned a signed permission form may not participate in the YRBS.

Passive parental permission is easier to use, but it may not satisfy state or local laws or policies. State and local laws and policies determine which type of parental permission is required, and within a state, different types of parental permission may be used.



Federal laws and regulations related to active parental permission.

There are **no federal laws or regulations that require** the use of active parental permission for the YRBS. However, there are two laws and one regulation sometimes mistakenly thought to require active parental permission for the YRBS:

- Protection of Pupil Rights Amendment,
- Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act, and
- Protection of Human Subjects.

The **Protection of Pupil Rights Amendment** (sometimes called the Hatch Amendment, the Grassley Amendment, or the Tiarht Amendment) requires written parental consent when a survey covers certain protected topics (e.g., sexual or illegal behavior), when participation is required of students, and when the survey is funded by the U.S. Department of Education. Although the YRBS does

include questions on sexual behavior and illegal behavior, **students are not required to participate and the YRBS is funded through the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services.** For those reasons, this law does not require active parental permission to administer the YRBS.

Another provision under the **Protection of Pupil Rights Amendment** requires schools receiving funds from the U.S. Department of Education (virtually all public schools) to adopt a policy to protect student privacy. For the YRBS, these policies mean:

1. Parents have the right to inspect the YRBS before it is administered;
2. Parents must be notified before the YRBS is administered; and
3. Parents must be able to “opt the student out” of the YRBS.

The standard YRBS procedures for passive parental permission are consistent with these requirements. Active parental permission is not required.

The **Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA)** addresses the privacy of student records and parents’ access to their child’s records. It also prohibits sharing information found in student records without parental consent, except in situations specified in the law. The YRBS is anonymous and no student records are involved; therefore, FERPA does not apply to the YRBS.

Federal regulations (**Protection of Human Subjects**) governing U.S. Department of Health and Human Services-funded **research** require that such research undergo a review by an Institutional Review Board (IRB). The CDC IRB has determined that a YRBS funded by CDC, and conducted by a state, local, territorial, or tribal entity, is public health practice and not research. For that reason, this regulation does not require active parental permission for the YRBS. However, although CDC does not require IRB approval, your agency, or a school district in which the survey is to be administered, may require IRB approval. That IRB may require active parental permission for the YRBS.



NOTE: The information provided above is not a substitute for legal advice. Always seek the advice of an attorney or other qualified professional with any questions you may have regarding legal matters.

For more information about laws and regulations pertaining to parental permission, see the *Parental Permission and the Youth Risk Behavior Survey YRBS* booklet in Appendix H.

**Process for notifying parents about the survey.**

For both passive and active parental permission, parents must be provided with information about the survey before it is administered. In addition, a copy of the YRBS questionnaire should be available in each participating school for parents to review upon request.

If **passive** parental permission is used, send a permission form to parents describing the survey, how the student's privacy will be protected, the voluntary nature of the survey, and the date of the survey administration. Parents must return a signed parental permission form **only** if they do **not** give permission for the student to participate. Otherwise, permission is assumed.

If **active** parental permission is used, send a permission form to parents describing the survey, how the student's privacy will be protected, the voluntary nature of the survey, and the date of survey administration. Parents must return a signed permission form indicating permission for the student to complete the YRBS before the student may participate.

Note that a parent's permission for his or her child to participate in the YRBS does not override a student's choice to participate. A student must still be permitted to decline participation if he or she wants to.

A generic example of each type of permission form is provided in Exhibits 5-1 and 5-2 on pages 5-5 and 5-6. The forms should be printed on your agency letterhead. Actual permission forms used previously are available from other agencies and CDC.

You may want to attach a copy of the letter of support from the National PTA (Appendix D) or your state or local PTA, and a short Survey Fact Sheet to the permission form. The Survey Fact Sheet in Exhibit 5-3 on page 5-7 may be copied on the back side of the permission form.

Whether active or passive parental permission is used, classroom teachers are generally responsible for handling the permission forms. Obtaining parental permission is a crucial part of the success of the YRBS, and one in which the teacher plays an important role. To inform teachers about the YRBS, ask principals of participating schools to distribute the Survey Fact Sheets to teachers of sampled classes before they are asked to distribute parental permission forms to students.

**Strategies to increase the number of returned active parental permission forms.**

There are pros and cons to using active parental permission. The pros include creating awareness and promoting school health programs; involving parents; ensuring parents have purposefully indicated consent; and placing the burden of the decision to participate on the parent. The cons are that it typically requires more time and resources and may reduce the number of students who participate in the survey because of the difficulty of both getting permission forms home to parents and returned to school. If active permission is used, devise a plan far in advance and consider a variety of strategies, such as those

indicated below, to ensure the highest possible number of permission forms are returned.

Start early to build relationships at the district and school levels. This is best accomplished by marketing the survey in the districts and schools as soon as you are given permission. Identify your contact in each school and work closely with this person. Ask the principal or your school contact person about the best procedures to use at that school to obtain the highest permission form return rate. If active permission is required for other surveys, they will know what process works best for their school. Ask them what has not worked in the past, as well. You may need to tailor what you do based on the individual needs of the district or school.

If your school contact is unable to provide you with the best procedure, start by mailing permission forms to parents using first class mail rather than distributing them to students. This may ensure that a larger proportion of parents will have the opportunity to learn about the YRBS and to grant approval for student participation.

Be sure to include time for follow-up in your schedule. Develop a method for monitoring returned active parental permission forms so parents who have not returned them can be contacted before the survey administration date. Follow-up telephone calls, mail reminders, or even e-mail reminders, if your school uses electronic communication with parents, may be necessary to improve response rates. Some schools may allow you to secure permission orally.

Incentives for students, teachers, or schools may be useful in increasing the proportion of signed active permission forms returned to the school. For example, some schools use **classroom incentives** such as a classroom party or other prizes for the classroom with the highest return rate or for all classrooms in which 90% or more of the parents return permission forms. **It is important to base incentives on returned forms, not on forms returned that grant approval.**

Another helpful strategy is to make sure that permission forms and supporting materials are tailored to the parent population, including an appropriate reading level and language.

Contact CDC or Westat to find out what other agencies have done to increase response rates in schools with active parental permission. A phone call to those agencies might give you new ideas for what strategies to implement.

Exhibit 5-1
Sample Passive Parental Permission Form

Our school is taking part in the 2013 Youth Risk Behavior Survey. This survey is sponsored by [name of agency]. The survey will ask about the health behaviors of 9th through 12th grade students. The survey will ask about nutrition, physical activity, injuries, and tobacco, alcohol, and other drug use. It will also ask about sexual behaviors that cause AIDS, other sexually transmitted diseases, and pregnancy.

Students will be asked to fill out a survey on [date of survey administration]. The survey takes about 35 minutes for the students to complete.

Doing this paper and pencil survey will cause little or no risk to your child. The only potential risk is that some students might find certain questions to be sensitive. The survey has been designed to protect your child's privacy. Students will not put their names on the survey. Also, no school or student will ever be mentioned by name in a report of the results. Your child will get no benefit right away from taking part in the survey. The results of this survey will help your child and other children in the future. We would like all selected students to take part in the survey, but the survey is voluntary. No action will be taken against the school, you, or your child if your child does not take the survey. Students can skip any questions they do not wish to answer. In addition, students may stop taking the survey at any point without penalty. If you would like to see the survey, a copy is available [identify location or name and contact information of whom the parent should call].

Please read the section below and check the box **only if you do not** want your child to take part in the survey. If you check the box "no" below, then sign this form and return it to the school within 3 days. Please see the other side of this form for more facts about the survey. If your child's teacher or principal cannot answer your questions about the survey, please call [name of agency contact] at [phone number]. Thank you.

Student's name: _____ Grade: _____

I have read this form and know what the survey is about.

NO, my child may not take part in this survey.

Parent's signature: _____ Date: _____

Phone number: _____

A copy of this form may be downloaded from the Survey TA website at <http://www.surveyta.org>.

Exhibit 5-2
Sample Active Parental Permission Form

Our school is taking part in the 2013 Youth Risk Behavior Survey. This survey is sponsored by [name of agency]. The survey will ask about the health behaviors of 9th through 12th grade students. The survey will ask about nutrition, physical activity, injuries, and tobacco, alcohol, and other drug use. It will also ask about sexual behaviors that cause AIDS, other sexually transmitted diseases, and pregnancy.

Students will be asked to fill out a survey on [date of survey administration]. The survey takes about 35 minutes for the students to complete.

Doing this paper and pencil survey will cause little or no risk to your child. The only potential risk is that some students might find certain questions to be sensitive. The survey has been designed to protect your child's privacy. Students will not put their names on the survey. Also, no school or student will ever be mentioned by name in a report of the results. Your child will get no benefit right away from taking part in the survey. The results of this survey will help your child and other children in the future. We would like all selected students to take part in the survey, but the survey is voluntary. No action will be taken against the school, you, or your child if your child does not take the survey. Students can skip any questions they do not wish to answer. In addition, students may stop taking the survey at any point without penalty. If you would like to see the survey, a copy is available [identify location or name and contact information of whom the parent should call].

Please read the section below and check one box. Then, sign the form and return it to the school within 3 days. Please see the other side of this form for more facts about the survey. If your child's teacher or principal cannot answer your questions about the survey, please call [name of agency contact] at [phone number]. Thank you.

Student's name: _____ Grade: _____

I have read this form and know what the survey is about.

Check one:

YES, my child may take part in this survey.

NO, my child may not take part in this survey.

Parent's signature: _____ Date: _____

Phone number: _____

A copy of this form may be downloaded from the Survey TA website at <http://www.surveyta.org>.

Exhibit 5-3 Survey Fact Sheet

Q. Why is the survey being done?

A. The [name of agency] will use the survey results to help measure how many youth practice health risk behaviors. The survey results also will be used to create school health programs to help reduce these behaviors.

Q. Are sensitive questions asked?

A. Yes. Some questions are sensitive. AIDS, HIV infection, and other sexually transmitted diseases (STDs) are major health problems. Sexual intercourse and injected drug use are behaviors that increase the risk of getting AIDS. The only way to learn if youth are at risk of getting AIDS is to ask questions about these behaviors. 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.

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

A. No. The survey has been designed to protect your child's privacy. Students do not put their name on the survey.

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

A. No. Each year a new sample of schools and students is picked.

Q. How was my child picked to be in the survey?

A. A class your child is in was selected randomly to participate, and all students in that class are being asked to participate. A total of [__] students in grades 9 through 12 in [__] schools were randomly selected to participate.

Q. How long does it take to fill out the survey? Does the survey include a physical test?

A. One class period is needed to fill out the survey, which has [__] questions. The survey does not include a physical test or exam.

Q. Can I see the questions my student will be asked?

A. Yes, a copy of the survey is at [_____].

Q. Who supports this survey?

A. This survey is supported by many [state or local] organizations interested in the health of youth. [List these organizations] have given letters of support. It is also supported by many national organizations. People from more than 100 state and local health and education agencies and 19 federal agencies helped develop the survey.

A copy of this form may be downloaded from the Survey TA website at <http://www.surveyta.org>.

6. Administering Surveys



Survey administration begins and ends with good recordkeeping.

This chapter focuses on the critical steps in successful survey administration. Survey administration comprises a wide variety of activities, and refers to the overall management of your YRBS and to the data collection procedures involved. Survey administration activities occur before, during, and after data collection.

Survey administration activities are divided into six categories. This chapter describes how to:

- Establish survey administration procedures;
- Select the dates for survey administration;
- Establish a survey tracking system;
- Choose and train survey administrators;
- Assemble and distribute survey materials; and
- Return survey materials.



Establish survey administration procedures.

Establishing standards and procedures that will be used by all survey administrators is crucial. The importance and benefits of setting standards and following prescribed procedures cannot be overstated. Survey administration standards help protect the confidentiality of schools and anonymity of students, improve the quality of data collected, and increase school and student response rates.

Both school administrators and students must feel confident that every reasonable effort has been made to protect their privacy. Consider asking all survey administrators to sign a confidentiality agreement that can be shown to school administrators. This provides the message that the commitment to confidentiality is a serious one and reinforces the survey administrator's obligation to protect student privacy. An example of a confidentiality agreement can be found in Exhibit 6-1 on page 6-8.



Select the dates for survey administration.

The dates selected for survey administration can affect school and student response rates. Remember the following guidelines as you select your survey administration dates:

- Administer the survey as early in the semester as possible to avoid busy school schedules, standardized testing preparation, and decreased attendance, particularly by 12th grade students at the end of the school year;
- Administer the survey over as short a time period as possible, but not necessarily all on the same day;
- Avoid holidays, special conference days, and standardized testing days; and
- Avoid administering the survey on the following days because attendance may be unusually low:
 - The days right before or after spring break;
 - The Friday before a Monday holiday;
 - Any day during the last month of school; and
 - Any Monday or Friday in urban schools.



NOTE: A **make-up session** may be critical to achieve a sufficient student response rate as some students will be absent on even the most carefully selected administration date. Conduct the make-up session using the same survey administration procedures and in a setting that will protect student privacy. Do not conduct the make-up session unless five or more students are present. Update School-Level and Classroom-Level Sample Information Forms (Exhibits 4-3 and 4-4 on pages 4-13 to 4-15) to reflect make-ups, and place the completed questionnaire booklets or answer sheets with other questionnaire booklets or answer sheets from the same school and class.



Establish a survey tracking system.

When Westat selects your sample, you will receive the School- and Classroom-Level Sample Information Forms (Exhibits 4-3 and 4-4) that are used to document your sample. The School-Level Sample Information Forms also can be used to track the progress of your survey. As completed questionnaire booklets or answer sheets and Classroom-Level Sample Information Forms are returned, record the number of completed questionnaires received and whether or not a completed Classroom-Level Sample Information Form was returned on the second (or back) page of the School-Level Sample Information Form. The form allows you to identify which schools and classes have not completed the survey, and it provides information for estimating your student response rate in each school.

In addition, you will be sent an electronic YRBS Tracking Form in MS Excel (Exhibit 6-2 on page 6-9). The first section of the YRBS Tracking Form contains the sampled schools and is pre-filled with the PCSample ID (i.e. School ID), School Name, District Name or ID, and Address at a minimum. Additional columns can be added at your request to reflect school-specific information, as long as it was included on your sampling frame (e.g., principal name or phone number).

The second section of the YRBS Tracking Form is for Scheduling Information. This section tracks the date a school is cleared (i.e., agrees to participate), the scheduled administration date, and the date data collection was completed.

The final two sections of the YRBS Tracking Form – School Information and Student Information – summarize information from the School- and Classroom-Level Sample Information Forms. This information is used to estimate the school, student, and overall response rates.

There are two additional columns in the School Information section that are used to document the type of classes used for sampling. In the column titled “Type of Classes”, enter whether the class schedule used for sampling classes was based on a certain period of the day (e.g., 2nd period) or a specific subject (e.g., English). If a school subject is used, you will need to document whether the subject is required for all students during the semester in which survey administration occurs. For example, if a school only allows you to sample from PE classes and not all students are required to take PE during the semester the survey is administered, enter “PE” in the “Type of Classes” column and enter “No” in the column titled “Required for All Students During This Semester?” If you enter a “No” in this column, be sure to contact

your Westat statistician. As explained in Chapter 4, **if you are not using a particular class period and are using non-required classes for your survey, your student response rate will be decreased.**

The YRBS Tracking Form will automatically calculate **estimated** school, student, and overall response rates as information is entered. Update the tracking form as you receive completed questionnaires or answer sheets and complete the School- and Classroom-Level Sample Information Forms. The YRBS Tracking Form will also calculate an **estimated** student response rate for each school. This will help you determine whether or not make-ups are needed at each school.



NOTE: The response rates calculated using the electronic YRBS Tracking Form are **estimates only**. The **calculations are meant to be a guide** for you during survey administration (e.g., determining when make-ups are needed). The final response rates are determined at Westat only after the data are processed and all documentation is reviewed. The student response rates are the most likely to change, particularly if you must select non-required classes. Your Westat statistician will have to make adjustments for this and the final response rates will decrease. Be sure to aim for well over the required 60% overall response rate¹ to provide room for any possible adjustments.

Using the electronic YRBS Tracking Form and e-mailing it to Westat every two weeks is now required for ALL sites. CDC and Westat want to provide the best technical assistance possible, and in a timely manner. The only way to do this is to know there is a need for the assistance **before** it is too late. The YRBS Tracking Form is a standardized way for Westat to receive regular updates. Westat will contact you only if they have questions about the information on the Tracking Form. This is an efficient way for you to communicate your survey progress to CDC and Westat. However, please continue to call CDC or Westat any time you have a question or need technical assistance.

The YRBS Tracking Form does not take the place of the School- and Classroom- Level Sample Information Forms. You are required to submit those forms, in addition to a final YRBS Tracking Form when you submit your data.

Keep a list of schools and classes with their assigned ID numbers until data analysis is complete, and then destroy the list. This will help maintain the confidentiality of schools and anonymity of students.



Choose and train survey administrators.

Survey administrators have an important role. They should be chosen carefully. Though regular classroom teachers can administer the survey, this is not ideal because students may feel more comfortable and be more likely to provide honest and complete responses if their own teacher is not in the classroom. If the teacher must stay in the classroom, someone else may still be able to administer the survey.

¹ The YRBS Overall Response Rate (School RR*Student RR) must equal 60% for the data to be weighted.
 School RR = # participating schools/# sampled schools; and
 Student RR = # participating students/# sampled students

Persons who may be appropriate survey administrators include:

- Staff from your school health program,
- School administrators,
- School counselors,
- School nurses,
- Teachers' aides,
- Volunteers from the American Cancer Society or a similar organization,
- PTA members,
- Graduate students, and
- Survey contractor staff.

Once the survey administrators are selected, create a mechanism to ensure that they have common information about the YRBS and follow the same survey administration procedures. If at all possible, a training session is the best mechanism for providing this information. Survey administrators can be trained most efficiently at the same time in a central location in your jurisdiction. Hold the training session right before the time when the survey will be administered. A half-day or one-day session will be sufficient.

Prepare a training agenda and relevant materials for the training session. The agenda may include the following topics, depending upon the activities that are required of your survey administrators:

- Overview of your school health program and activities,
- Purpose of the YRBS,
- Importance of following survey administration procedures,
- Confidentiality,
- Scheduling survey administration,
- Presenting and administering the survey to the students,
- Procedure for dealing with students who have difficulty reading to avoid embarrassment and assure privacy,
- Maintaining order in the classroom,
- Documenting school and class participation, and
- Materials needed for survey administration.

Arrange the training agenda so survey administrators can ask questions and complete practice exercises or role-playing activities. Stress the importance of following survey administration procedures and carefully completing all documentation forms.

Additional tips for “Properly Preparing Your Survey Administrators” are provided in Exhibit 6-3 on page 6-10. Exhibit 6-4 on pages 6-11 to 6-13 contains two sample agendas—a basic one for participants and a detailed one for trainers.

If you must use classroom teachers to administer the YRBS, consider training for them as well. Also, to ensure an adequate student response rate, additional steps may be necessary when using classroom teachers to administer the survey. These steps are outlined in Exhibit 6-5 on page 6-14.

A concise Survey Administrator Handbook can be prepared for easy reference in the field. Include a summary of the training session, instructions for survey administrators (Exhibit 6-6 on pages 6-15 and 6-16), a script for survey administrators (Exhibit 6-7 on pages 6-17 and 6-18), the questionnaire booklet or questionnaire and a blank answer sheet, and a copy of all relevant documentation forms.

If a training session for survey administrators cannot be arranged, a detailed set of written instructions, including a Survey Administrator Handbook, should be developed. This can be supplemented by a video-conference or teleconference to reinforce key details. Include the name and telephone number of a contact person in your jurisdiction who can answer questions about any materials that you develop.



Assemble and distribute survey materials.

The Survey Coordinator is responsible for obtaining all supplies needed for the survey and distributing those materials to the survey administrators. For each school surveyed, the survey administrator needs the following items:

- **Instructions for survey administrators.** This form (Exhibit 6-6 on pages 6-15 and 6-16) provides each survey administrator with instructions for activities to do before going into the classroom, while administering the survey, and when returning the completed questionnaire booklets or answer sheets to your agency.
- **Poster listing reminders for students.** This poster should be displayed at the front of the class and contain reminders for the students. Examples of reminders that could be included on the poster are:
 - Use a blank sheet of paper to cover your answers as you work.
 - Do not put your name on the answer sheet or booklet.
 - Put your completed answer sheet or questionnaire booklet into the envelope (or box) when you are finished.
 - Do not talk to others during the survey.
 - Remain seated during the survey.

If a poster is not available, the reminders should be written on the chalk board or white board at the front of the class.

- **Confidentiality agreement.** The survey administrators should bring a copy of the signed Confidentiality Agreement (Exhibit 6-1 on page 6-8) with them to each school. School administrators may want to see this prior to allowing the survey to be administered.
- **Script for survey administrators.** A sample script is provided in Exhibit 6-7 on pages 6-17 and 6-18. The Survey Coordinator should modify the script as appropriate and provide one copy for each survey administrator. The survey

administrator reads the script in each sampled classroom. This helps ensure that the YRBS is administered consistently in every classroom.

- **A list of classes to be surveyed and their location.** The Survey Coordinator provides a list of all sampled classrooms and, when possible, information on the location of each classroom. The survey administrator needs to verify class location with the school contact.
- **Classroom-Level Sample Information Form(s).** This form (Exhibit 4-4 on page 4-15) is used to document information about each sampled classroom. There should be one form for each sampled classroom included with the survey materials. Westat will send one copy for each school. The Survey Coordinator will need to make one copy for each class, and record the class ID on the form before giving the appropriate forms to the survey administrator. The survey administrator records the number of students enrolled in the class, the predominant grade in the class, and how many students participated in the survey. This form is required for **every** sampled class, even if no students participated. If the entire sampled classroom did not participate, the survey administrator should describe the reason they did not participate on this form.
- **Questionnaire booklets or questionnaires and answer sheets.** The Survey Coordinator provides each survey administrator with enough questionnaire booklets or questionnaires and answer sheets for all students. Questionnaire booklets for the standard questionnaire can be ordered in multiples of 50; answer sheets in multiples of 100. Call 1-800-WESTAT7 (1-800-937-8287), and your Westat YRBS operations specialist will assist you. Booklets and answer sheets also may be ordered at the Survey TA website <http://www.surveyta.org>.



NOTE: If your agency is conducting both a high school and a middle school survey, and a school containing grades 7, 8, and 9 has been selected for both surveys, the administrator must have the correct questionnaire and answer sheets for the different grades. The **middle school** questionnaire, **with the appropriate answer sheet**, should be administered to the **7th and 8th grade students**; the **high school** questionnaire booklet or questionnaire, **with the appropriate answer sheet**, should be administered to the **9th grade students**.

- **Blank sheets of paper.** Students can use these to cover their questionnaire booklets or answer sheets while they are completing the YRBS.
- **Number 2 pencils.** Students must use a # 2 pencil when they fill in the questionnaire booklets or answer sheets so the optical scanners can read the answers. If possible, order a sharpened # 2 pencil with eraser for each sampled student. Allow students to keep the pencils after completion of the YRBS.

- **Big boxes or envelopes.** Once all students in a classroom finish the YRBS, the survey administrator should ask students to place their completed YRBS questionnaire booklets or answer sheets in a big box or envelope in the front of the room. This procedure helps protect student privacy and encourages students to answer more truthfully. All completed booklets or answer sheets collected in a big box should be transferred to one big envelope along with the Classroom-Level Sample Information Form. Using the big envelope for each class further ensures confidentiality and helps with keeping the answer sheets and documentation organized.



Return survey materials.

Before returning the survey materials to the Survey Coordinator, the survey administrator should bundle the Classroom-Level Sample Information Form and all the questionnaire booklets or answer sheets for each class together. If the survey administrator was responsible for more than one school, all classroom bundles must be grouped together by school. If the survey administrator cannot hand-deliver the materials to the Survey Coordinator, the bundles may be shipped to the Survey Coordinator. The materials should be placed in pre-addressed, postage-paid envelopes or packages provided by the Survey Coordinator. It is essential to use a **traceable method (e.g., FedEx, UPS, DHL, Express Mail, or Airborne Express)** for returning the materials. **Do NOT use regular mail or inter-office mail.**

Exhibit 6-1
Assurance of Confidentiality of Survey Data

[NAME OF AGENCY] is firmly committed to maintaining the confidentiality of individual respondents' data obtained through surveys.

Procedures for Maintaining Confidentiality

1. All survey administrators shall sign this assurance of confidentiality.
2. All survey administrators shall keep completely confidential the names of respondents, all information or opinions collected, and any information about respondents learned incidentally. Survey administrators shall exercise reasonable caution to prevent access by others to survey data in their possession.

Pledge of Confidentiality

I hereby certify that I have carefully read and will cooperate fully with the above procedures on confidentiality. I will keep completely confidential all information arising from surveys concerning individual respondents to which I gain access. I will not discuss, disclose, disseminate, or provide access to survey data and identifiers. I will devote my best efforts to ensure that there is compliance with the required procedures by personnel whom I supervise. I understand that violation of this pledge is sufficient grounds for disciplinary action. I also understand that violation of the privacy rights of individuals through such unauthorized discussion, disclosure, dissemination, or access may make me subject to criminal or civil penalties. I give my personal pledge that I shall abide by this assurance of confidentiality.

SIGNATURE. I have read this and I agree to the Pledge of Confidentiality.

Survey Administrator Name:

PRINT

SIGNATURE

Date: _____

A copy of this form may be downloaded from the Survey TA website at <http://www.surveyta.org>.

Exhibit 6-3

Properly Preparing YRBS Survey Administrators

A Five-Step Prep

1. Audience

Consider the group you invited and their knowledge about and experience with the YRBS. Based on that information, determine the amount of time needed to meet your training objectives (two hours? four hours? full day?). Send training confirmation (with date, time, place) and agenda prior to the training date.

2. Outcome

Consider the training outcomes. These outcomes will guide the process needed for your participants to reach success. The following are the critical outcomes for *YRBS Administrator Training*:

As a result of this training, participants will:

- Identify the purpose of the Youth Risk Behavior Survey (YRBS),
- Administer surveys in all designated schools and classrooms in a standardized manner, and
- Submit complete and accurate YRBS documentation to the YRBS Coordinator.

3. Content

Content for *YRBS Administrator Training* can be found page 6-4 of this YRBS Handbook.

4. Process

People learn best when they have the opportunity to see, hear, think about, do something with, and integrate the information presented. The human brain responds to novelty, pictures, active learning, questions and problem solving. It is important to provide interactive activities for learners rather than lecture to them. Activities (such as conducting a mock classroom where survey administration takes place) will engage learners and allow them to “see” the process and skills in action.

5. Design

Design your training so that participants have time to learn content and practice skills. Build in time to model the skills and give participants the opportunity to practice. Your agenda should include **Openers** (intros, agenda overview, setting the stage), **Body** (overview of YRBS, present the content, model what you want them to do, practice skills, question and answer) and **Closure** (final processing of information, burning issues, next steps, timeline, communication loop). Provide breaks as needed. Follow up with participants post-training to make sure they have what they need and know where to go with questions.

Trainer Tips

Create A Comfortable Environment	AV Tips	Trainer Survival Kit
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Provide comfortable chairs ● Provide tables (given the volume of materials) ● Check lighting and temperature ● Have all materials printed and organized for easy access ● Provide drinks and a snack ● Make sure charts and projected images are visible from each seat 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Post or provide an agenda ● Set up and check AV equipment prior to start time ● For PPT slides and charting, use: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Borders Bullets Icons and Images Photos LARGE PRINT (2" for charts) COLOR! 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Trainer (detailed) agenda ● Markers (use dark colors) ● Tape ● Clock ● Water ● Trainer materials

Exhibit 6-4
Sample Participant Agenda

Successful Administration of the
Youth Risk Behavior Survey

Date • Time
Location

Training Objectives:

As a result of this training, participants will:

- identify the purpose of the Youth Risk Behavior Survey (YRBS),
- administer surveys in all designated schools and classrooms in a standardized manner, and
- submit complete and accurate YRBS documentation to the YRBS Coordinator.

Training Agenda:

8:00 am Registration/Continental Breakfast

8:30 am Gather Together/Setting the Stage

- ✓ Welcome Everyone!
- ✓ Introductions/Warm Up
- ✓ Training Objectives and Agenda Overview

How We Got Here
Overview and Highlights of [State] School Health Program

What is the Youth Risk Behavior Survey?
History and Purpose of the YRBS

My Role as Survey Administrator: Key Components for Success
Materials Checklist
Scheduling Survey Administration
Confidentiality

BREAK & STRETCH

Reconvene/Q&A

Let's Practice!
Step by Step: Administering the Survey to Students

Almost There!
Documenting School and Classroom Participation

Closure
Q&A/Next Steps
Help is on the Way
Evaluation

Noon Adjourn

<p>Good Luck! Please call if you need us. XXX - XXX - XXXX</p>
--

Exhibit 6-4 (Continued)
Sample Participant Agenda

Successful Administration of the YRBS

As a result of this training, participants will:

- Identify the purpose of the Youth Risk Behavior Survey (YRBS),
- Administer surveys in all designated schools and classrooms in a standardized manner, and
- Submit complete and accurate YRBS documentation to the YRBS Coordinator.

	Time	Trainer	Agenda Item	Handbook	Materials	Notes
INTRO	8:00 am	LL	Registration <i>Continental Breakfast/Mix and Mingle</i>		Registration Table Registration List Packets Nametags	Post "parking lot" chart on wall Check room set-up/AV/etc. Organize Training Materials
	8:30 am	RG	Setting the Stage Welcome Warm-up Activity (Getting To Know You/A Risk I Took) Group Norms Agenda Overview		Easel, Chart Paper Markers	Check to make sure everyone has all necessary materials
	9:00 am	BK	How We Got Here? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Overview and Highlights of [State] School Health Program • Snapshot of National YRBS Data 		Program Handouts	Handout - One page overview of State program and summary of National YRBS results
BODY	9:15 am	BK	What is the YRBS? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Overview/Purpose of the YRBS 		PPT Slides PPT Slide Handouts	
	9:30 am	RG	My Role as Survey Administrator <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Materials Checklist • Scheduling Survey Administration • Confidentiality 	6-7		
	10:00 am		Stretch Break			

Exhibit 6-4 (Continued)

	Time	Trainer	Agenda Item	Handbook	Materials	Notes
BODY	10:15 am	RG	<p><i>Reconvene/Q&A</i></p> <p><i>Let's Practice!</i> Administering the Survey to Students</p>			
	11:15 am	BK	<p><i>Almost There!</i> Documenting School and Class Participation</p>			
CLOSURE	11:30 am	BK & RG	<p>Final Q&A (are there parking lot questions?) Next steps Share follow-up plan HELP! Who to contact if problems arise Fill out evaluation/feedback forms</p> <p>Closure</p>		<p>Chart paper & Markers Eval Forms Help Sheets</p>	<p>Check parking lot questions Gather evaluation forms Emphasize where to get help if needed!</p>
	Noon		Adjourn			
	12:15 pm	All	<p>Trainers De-brief/Develop Follow-up Plan and Timeline Develop Follow-up Plan and Check-in</p>		Completed Evaluations	

Exhibit 6-5
Steps to Take When Classroom Teachers Administer the YRBS

Step 1	Ask the principal in the sampled school to appoint a school survey contact who will assist you with the survey logistics. The survey contact can be the principal. If you have a sufficient survey budget, you might offer the survey contact a small cash stipend (e.g., \$100).
Step 2	<p>Meet with the survey contact in person to explain the survey logistics. If a face-to-face meeting is not possible, set up a phone conference. During your meeting or conference call, you want to accomplish the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Explain the purpose of the YRBS. • Discuss how the school will distribute parent permission letters. • Obtain the class list from which you will select your random classes. If you can obtain class schedules from the school’s website or a state or district office, make your random class selections prior to meeting with the school contact. • Review the list of randomly selected classes, including obtaining updated enrollments. If there are significant discrepancies between your list and the school’s current course offerings, obtain from your contact a current class list and re-select your classes. • Schedule the survey administration date, including a specific make-up date. You should maintain a master schedule that reflects all agreed upon administration dates and make-up dates. • Review the survey materials with the survey contact. Make sure you explain the importance of completing the Classroom-Level Sample Information Forms. • Discuss when and how you will retrieve the completed questionnaire booklets or answer sheets or how you want the school to ship them to your location. <p>If you arrange a face-to-face meeting at the school, it may be possible to include the teachers from the randomly selected classrooms in your meeting. This assumes, however, that you have selected the random classes prior to the meeting. Meeting with selected teachers is a good method of obtaining teacher buy-in.</p>
Step 3	Make sure your survey contacts and the teachers of the selected classrooms know how to contact you when questions arise . Share both a telephone number and e-mail address.
Step 4	Set up a schedule for calling each school’s survey contact to determine that the YRBS was administered on the agreed upon dates. If you discover that a school did not do so, re-engage your contact to establish new dates. This step assumes that you have started your survey early enough so there is sufficient time in the school calendar to reschedule data collection.
Step 5	Make sure you follow up with each school to determine when the completed questionnaire booklets or answer sheets will be shipped back to your location . You should be keeping track of completed questionnaires or answer sheets as they are returned to you, as well as reviewing the required survey documentation throughout data collection.

Exhibit 6-6 Instructions for Survey Administrators

Activities to do before you get to the classroom:

1. Make sure appropriate school district and school building personnel (including teachers) are aware you are coming, when you will be there, and with which classes you will be working.
2. Make sure you have the following materials:
 - A copy of the survey administrator confidentiality agreement.
 - A copy of the **Script for Survey Administrators** to be read to sampled students.
 - A poster to be displayed at the front of the class, containing reminders for students. If a poster is not available, the reminders should be written on the chalk board or white board at the front of the class.
 - A list of classes to be surveyed and their locations.
 - A copy of the **Classroom-Level Sample Information Form** for each class.
 - Enough copies of the questionnaire booklets or questionnaires and answer sheets for all sampled students.
 - Enough sheets of paper for students to use to cover their work.
 - Enough #2 pencils for all sampled students. Let the students keep the pencils after they complete the questionnaire, if possible.
 - One large box or envelope in which the students can put their completed questionnaire booklets or answer sheets.
 - An envelope for each sampled class in which completed questionnaire booklets or answer sheets from that class should be placed.
 - A pre-addressed, postage-paid return envelope for shipping all the materials back using a **traceable method** (e.g., UPS or Federal Express).
3. Review the Survey Administrator Handbook.

Administering the survey in the classroom:

4. Record on the **Classroom-Level Sample Information Form** the number of students who are **enrolled** in the class.
5. Take attendance to be sure only the students with parental permission are given a questionnaire.
6. Spread students' desks throughout the classroom to minimize the chance students will see each others' responses.
7. Do not allow students or teachers to wander around the room or talk while others are completing the survey.

Exhibit 6-6 (Continued)
Instructions for Survey Administrators

8. Encourage students to use an extra sheet of paper to cover their responses as they work.
9. Read the directions to the students before they begin. Remind students about the importance of the survey, that completing the survey is voluntary, that their responses are anonymous, and that their grade in the class will not be affected by whether or not they complete the survey.
10. Remind students **not** to place their name or school name on the questionnaire booklet or answer sheet.
11. Allow enough time for students to complete the survey without feeling rushed. About 35 minutes should be sufficient for the students to complete the survey.
12. Make sure that only #2 pencils are used.
13. Do not review the answers to the survey as questionnaire booklets or answer sheets are returned, even if this means accepting incomplete data. Do not even appear to be looking at the booklets or answer sheets. Students must be confident that their privacy will be maintained and their participation will remain anonymous.
14. If absentees will receive the survey at another time, establish procedures to ensure their privacy as well. Make sure their completed questionnaire booklets or answer sheets are placed with others from the same sampled classroom.
15. When all students have returned their questionnaire booklets or answer sheets, record on the **Classroom-Level Sample Information Form** the number of students in the class who have completed the survey. Compare the number of completed questionnaire booklets or answer sheets to the information on the **Classroom-Level Sample Information Form**. Try to resolve any inconsistencies between these numbers.

Returning the questionnaire booklets or answer sheets to the Survey Coordinator at the agency conducting the YRBS:

16. Bundle the **Classroom-Level Sample Information Form** and all the questionnaire booklets or answer sheets for **each** class together. Make sure that all classroom bundles are grouped together by school, if the questionnaire booklets or answer sheets from more than one school are being shipped together. Return them by [DUE DATE] to:

Name, Title
Agency
Address
City, State Zip
Telephone Number

If the survey materials must be returned via mail, please use a traceable method (e.g., UPS or Federal Express).

A copy of this form may be downloaded from the Survey TA website at <http://www.surveyta.org>.

Exhibit 6-7
A Script for Survey Administrators

STEP 1 – VERIFY THAT ALL ASSEMBLED STUDENTS HAVE COMPLETED THE APPROPRIATE PERMISSION FORM PROCESS REQUIRED FOR THIS SCHOOL AND THAT NONPARTICIPATING STUDENTS (IF ANY) HAVE AN ALTERNATE ACTIVITY.

STEP 2 – AFTER STUDENTS ARE SEATED, DISTRIBUTE (OR ASK TEACHERS TO DISTRIBUTE) PENCILS AND BLANK SHEETS OF PAPER. DO NOT DISTRIBUTE QUESTIONNAIRE BOOKLETS OR QUESTIONNAIRES AND ANSWER SHEETS.

STEP 3 – INTRODUCE YOURSELF AND THE SURVEY TO THE CLASS.

Good (morning/afternoon). The [AGENCY] is conducting this student survey. I'd like to thank each of you for participating in the survey.

Participating in this survey is voluntary and your grade in this class will not be affected, whether or not you answer the questions. However, only a limited number of students like you are participating in this survey in schools all over the [jurisdiction]. The answers you give are very important so the results are accurate.

I would like to emphasize that this is not a test of you or this school. To develop better health education programs, educators and health officials must find out if students like you are engaging in risky behaviors. These behaviors may include sexual behaviors that may result in unintended pregnancies and sexually transmitted diseases, including HIV; drug use; alcohol and tobacco use; lack of physical activity; poor nutritional habits; or behaviors that may lead to unintentional injuries or violence.

STEP 4 – DISTRIBUTE QUESTIONNAIRE BOOKLETS OR QUESTIONNAIRES AND ANSWER SHEETS. EMPHASIZE PRIVACY/ANONYMITY.

Throughout the entire survey process, I will maintain strict procedures to protect your privacy and allow for your anonymous participation. Please **do not** write your name on the questionnaire booklet or answer sheet. Your answers are private and we do not want to know your name. Results of this survey will never be reported by name, class, or school. When you finish, cover your questionnaire booklet [answer sheet] with the blank sheet of paper provided.

PAUSE HERE TO ANSWER ANY QUESTIONS...

STEP 5 – INSTRUCT THE CLASS IN FILLING OUT THE QUESTIONNAIRE

Now I would like you to look at the questionnaire booklet [answer sheet]. Please take a moment to read the instructions on the front cover of the questionnaire.

(PAUSE)

Use the # 2 pencil you have been given to fill out the questionnaire booklet [answer sheet]. Do not use a pen or any other pencil. Notice that for each question on the questionnaire, there is a corresponding set of ovals. For each question, choose just one answer that best fits what you know or do, then fill in the corresponding oval on the questionnaire booklet [answer sheet]. If you must change an answer, erase your old answer completely. Besides question 5, only one oval should be filled in for each question.

Please be sure to read every question carefully. When you are finished, look over your questionnaire booklet [answer sheet] to make sure that you have not skipped any questions you wanted to answer. You have the entire class period to complete the survey, which means that the survey will end at approximately _____ (a.m./p.m.). If you finish before that time, use the blank sheet of paper to keep your completed questionnaire

Exhibit 6-7 (Continued)
A Script for Survey Administrators

booklet or answer sheet covered. Then, please stay seated and remain quiet until I ask you to turn it in. Do not talk with other students. When everyone is done, I'll ask you to place your completed questionnaire booklet or answer sheet in this large envelope [box].

It is important that you answer the questions based on what you really know and do. Do not pick a response just because you think that's what someone wants you to say. **Your teacher and I are not allowed to answer any questions. Simply do the best that you can.** Please begin.

STEP 6– AT THE END OF CLASS PERIOD, HAVE STUDENTS PLACE THE COMPLETED QUESTIONNAIRE BOOKLETS OR ANSWER SHEETS IN THE CLASSROOM BOX/ENVELOPE.

STEP 7– THANK PARTICIPANTS.

I would like to thank all of you for participating in the survey. The information you have provided will be used to develop better health education programs for students like yourselves in this [jurisdiction].

STEP 8– THANK THE TEACHER.

7. Preparing Data for Analysis



CDC will conduct data analysis at no cost to your program.

Westat will scan your questionnaire booklets and answer sheets at no cost to your program and send the data to CDC for processing and analysis. As you receive the completed questionnaire booklets or answer sheets and School- and Classroom-Level Sample Information Forms from your survey administrators, you should make sure the documentation is complete and prepare the booklets or answer sheets for scanning.

This chapter describes the procedures for preparing your data to be analyzed, including how to:

- Prepare questionnaire booklets or answer sheets for scanning;
- Create header booklets or header answer sheets;
- Arrange the order of the paperwork and booklets or answer sheets;
- Send your questionnaire booklets or answer sheets for scanning;
- Review your raw data file; and
- Prepare and send your data file to Westat for analysis if you did your own scanning.



Prepare questionnaire booklets or answer sheets for scanning.

Make certain that each questionnaire booklet or answer sheet can be scanned correctly. Review every booklet or answer sheet for the following problems:

Has the questionnaire booklet or answer sheet been completed in ink or with a light pencil?

If ink or a light pencil has been used, color over the selected bubbles using a #2 pencil. It is not necessary to copy the responses to a new questionnaire booklet or answer sheet.

Are there stray marks on the questionnaire booklet or answer sheet?

Erase stray marks, if possible. If they cannot be erased, copy the responses to a new questionnaire booklet or answer sheet. Be careful when copying so errors are not made.

Is the questionnaire booklet or answer sheet folded or rumped?

If the questionnaire booklet or answer sheet cannot be flattened, copy the responses to a new questionnaire booklet or answer sheet. If the black tracking lines along the side are damaged, the scanner will not be able to read the form.

Has the questionnaire booklet or answer sheet been photocopied?

If the questionnaire booklet or answer sheet is a photocopy, the answers need to be copied to a new questionnaire booklet or answer sheet as the scanner can only read special printed ink.



Create header booklets or header answer sheets.

All questionnaire booklets or answer sheets must be bundled by class with a header booklet or header answer sheet (Exhibit 7-1 on pages 7-7 and 7-8) and a Classroom-Level Sample Information Form (Exhibit 4-4 on page 4-15).

If you used scannable questionnaire booklets, make a header booklet for each participating class. Using a blank questionnaire booklet, fill in the oval at the top of the back page indicating that this booklet is a header. Then, fill in the school ID, the class ID, and the corresponding bubbles.

If you used scannable answer sheets, make a header sheet for each participating class. Using a blank answer sheet, fill in option H for question 99. On the back of the answer sheet, fill in the school ID, the class ID, and the corresponding bubbles. Exhibit 7-1 on pages 7-7 and 7-8 is an example of a header sheet.



Arrange the order of the paperwork and booklets or answer sheets.

For each participating **class**, arrange materials in the following order and secure with a rubber band or place in individual envelopes:

- Classroom-Level Sample Information Form (Exhibit 4-4, page 4-15),
- Header booklet or answer sheet with ID box facing down, and
- All booklets or answer sheets with ID box facing down.

For each participating **school**, arrange materials in the following order:

- School-Level Sample Information Form (Exhibit 4-3 on pages 4-13 and 4-14),
- Classroom-Level Sample Information Form (Exhibit 4-4, page 4-15) for all nonparticipating classes; and
- The assembled bundles for each participating class.



Send your questionnaire booklets or answer sheets for scanning.

Once your completed questionnaire booklets or answer sheets have been bundled into school groups, send them to Westat using a **traceable method**.

Westat will scan your questionnaire booklets or answer sheets at no cost to your project. When you send your booklets or answer sheets to Westat for scanning, include the following materials in your package **in addition to your school bundles**:

- A completed copy of the Data Submission Checklist (Exhibit 7-2 on page 7-9).
- A blank copy of your questionnaire (if modified from the standard questionnaire).

- A copy of the State- or Local-Level Sample Information Form (Exhibit 4-5 on page 4-16) you submitted to Westat in April. If you did not submit the form in April, please submit it as soon as possible. Your data cannot be weighted without the information collected by the form.
- If Westat did not draw your sample, a description of the way the schools and classes were selected to participate.
- A list of schools that overlap with another YRBS at the community, district, state, tribal government, or national level; or indicate an overlap on School-Level Sample Information Forms.
- A piece of paper with your name and contact information in case the shipping label on the box is lost or destroyed or the box is too damaged to be delivered.

The package containing your questionnaire booklets or answer sheets and documentation should be sent to:

Survey Technical Assistance Project
Westat
1600 Research Boulevard – TA 2015F
Rockville, MD 20850-3159
Phone: 1-800-937-8287, extension 2932

Send all materials by a **traceable method** (e.g., FedEx, UPS, DHL, Express Mail, or Airborne Express) to minimize the possibility of all your hard work being lost in the mail. **Do not send your materials through the regular mail (USPS).** Please keep a copy of all documentation until you receive a copy of your report from CDC. If you need help shipping your materials, contact Westat or CDC.

Send an e-mail to Westat containing the tracking number(s) for the packages containing your materials and the tracking form you used to monitor survey progress.

For a step-by-step example of preparing your data for delivery to Westat, please watch the Preparing Your Data video that can be found in the resources section on the Survey TA website (<http://www.surveyta.org>).



Review your raw data file.

Once your questionnaire booklets or answer sheets are scanned, Westat will e-mail you a file of your unedited data along with a file information sheet containing the layout of the file. You can use any text editor, such as Word Pad, MS Excel, or Notepad, to review this file. Check the school and class IDs to be sure all of your data are contained in the file. **Remember, the file that Westat sends contains unedited and unweighted data that should not be used for analyses.**

You have one week to examine your data file and report any problems to Westat. If Westat does not hear from you within one week, they will send your data and documentation to CDC to begin analysis and report generation. Call Westat before one week is over to expedite the process.



Prepare and send your data file to Westat for analysis if you did your own scanning.

If someone other than Westat scans your questionnaire booklets or answer sheets, the data file submitted to Westat **must** follow all of the specifications included in the Data Documentation Form, Exhibit 7-3 on pages 7-10 and 7-11. Files that do not meet these specifications will be returned to you for reformatting. Not following all specifications exactly will delay the processing of your data.

Data should be left in a raw state after being scanned. That is, no edits should be performed on the data at all. Logical edits, completeness checks, and range edits will be conducted at CDC as part of data processing.

If you used a modified questionnaire, or used a slightly modified version of your own questionnaire in a school, do not crosswalk the scanned data to match the standard YRBS questionnaire or your questionnaire. CDC's data management system will do that during processing.

Please send the **scanned data file and the following materials** to Westat along with the scanned data file:

- A completed copy of the Data Submission Checklist (Exhibit 7-2 on page 7-9),
- A blank copy of your questionnaire (if modified from the standard),
- A State- or Local-Level Sample Information Form (Exhibit 4-5 on page 4-16),
- A School-Level Sample Information Form for each sampled school (Exhibit 4-3 on pages 4-13 and 4-14),
- A Classroom-Level Sample Information Form for each sampled classroom (Exhibit 4-4 on page 4-15),
- If Westat did not draw your sample, a description of the way the schools and classes were selected to participate,
- A list (.xls, .doc, or .txt) of the total number of records associated with each school and class ID combination on the data file (Example: School ID 1, Class 2 has 30 records) to help verify the records you have sent, and
- The Data Documentation Form completed by your agency or the scanning service staff (Exhibit 7-3 on pages 7-10 and 7-11). Data that do not conform to **all** requirements on the Data Documentation Form will not be processed.

The package should be sent to:

Survey Technical Assistance Project
Westat
1600 Research Boulevard — TA 2015F
Rockville, MD 20850-3159
Phone: 1-800-937-8287, extension 2932

Send all materials by a **traceable method** (e.g., FedEx, UPS, Express Mail, DHL, or Airborne Express) to minimize the possibility of all of your efforts being lost in the mail. **Do NOT send your materials through the regular mail (USPS)**. Please keep copies of the data and **all** documentation until you receive a copy of your report from CDC. If you need help shipping your materials, contact Westat or CDC.

Send an e-mail to Westat containing the tracking number(s) for the packages containing your materials and the tracking form you used to monitor survey progress.

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**Exhibit 7-1
Header Sheet**

THIS IS AN EXAMPLE OF A HEADER SHEET.



Exhibit 7-1 (continued)
Header Sheet

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Exhibit 7-2
Data Submission Checklist
Youth Risk Behavior Survey Materials

Agency _____

Name of Person Completing Form _____

Telephone Number (_____) _____ Date _____

E-mail Address _____

- ___ A blank copy of your questionnaire, if modified
- ___ A State- or Local-Level Sample Information Form
- ___ A School-Level Sample Information Form for each sampled school
- ___ A Classroom-Level Sample Information Form for each sampled classroom
- ___ If Westat did not draw your sample, a description of the way schools and classes were selected to participate.

Include the following two items **only** if your questionnaire booklets or answer sheets are **not** scanned by Westat:

- ___ The data on CD-ROM or via e-mail
- ___ The Data Documentation Form completed by your scanning service

A copy of this form may be downloaded from the Survey TA website at <http://www.surveyta.org>.

Exhibit 7-3
Data Documentation Form

Agency: _____

Name of Person Completing This Form: _____

Telephone Number: (____) _____ Date: _____

E-mail Address: _____

File Information:

File Name: _____

Number of Data Records: _____

Data Format Checklist (All items are required):

- The data file is in ASCII (.dat) format. (No spreadsheet, database, or other file formats can be submitted.)
- Only questions that CDC will process are in the file. (Includes standard YRBS questions, approved modified questions, and approved site-added questions.)
- Data are alphabetic and all CAPS (except for height, weight, school code, and class code). If the student selected the first response option, the question is coded as "A." If the second response option was selected, the question is coded as "B," and so on.
- Questions with no answer at all are coded as blanks.
- Questions with invalid data, such as multiple responses or incomplete erasures, are coded as asterisks (*).
- The first 40 columns are blank. (These columns are reserved for other data processing uses at Westat.)
- Data start in column 41 and proceed one column at a time: Q1 in column 41, Q2 in column 42, and so on. All variables are one column wide except for race (Q5), height (Q6), weight (Q7), school code, and class code (see below).

Exhibit 7-3 (Continued)
Data Documentation Form

- Race (Q5) is eight columns wide (even if fewer choices are available on the questionnaire) and starts in column 45. If the student selected the first response option, then the first column of race is “A”; if the student did not select the first option, then the first column is a blank. The second column of race is “B” if the second option was selected and blank if it was not selected, and so on. (Example: The student selected “C” for *Race*. Column 47 would contain “C” and columns 45, 46, and 48-52 should be blanks.)
- Student’s height is three columns wide and starts in column 53. The first column contains feet and the next two columns contain inches. The leading zero in inches is preserved. (Example: The student enters height as 5’4”. Column 53 would contain a “5”; column 54 would contain a “0”; and column 55 would contain a “4.”)
- Student’s weight is three columns wide and starts in column 56. It is right justified and leading zeros are preserved. (Example: The student enters weight as 98 lbs. Column 56 would contain a “0”; column 57 would contain a “9”; and column 58 would contain an “8.”)
- School code is 10 columns wide and starts in column 211. School code is right justified. Leading zeros are not required.
- Class code is three columns wide and starts in column 221. Class code is right justified and leading zeros are not required.

NOTE: If you are scanning a middle school questionnaire that did not include height and weight, columns 53-58 must be left blank in the scanned data file.

8. Reporting Survey Results



Effective reporting of your results can provide many benefits to your program.

Collecting representative data is a critical part of surveillance. Reporting and using the results are important also. Your YRBS results will be of great interest to many people in your jurisdiction. Students, parents, school administrators, policymakers, and the general public will find the results relevant and useful. Effective reporting will enable you to provide a broad audience with factual information on the priority health risk behaviors of students in your jurisdiction. Concrete, data-supported recommendations can be made to education agencies, public health officials, parents, and others who assist in the development of your programs. As a result, you may be able to increase commitments to support and improve your school health programs.

This chapter describes how to:

- Review your report contents;
- Plan your reports;
- Develop effective reports;
- Include data from other sources; and
- Work with the media.



Review your report contents.

Beginning in 2013, all reports produced by CDC will be in electronic format only. The report tables, documentation, and datasets will be made available either through a link on the Survey TA website or on a CD-ROM. This web link or CD-ROM will include the following materials:

- Detail and summary tables for each question by gender, age, grade, and race/ethnicity,
- A summary that provides descriptive information about your YRBS,
- Charts that summarize key findings,
- A bar chart (in MS PowerPoint format) for each question that describes overall results and subgroup breakdowns by gender, grade, and race/ethnicity,
- A description of the sample and weighting procedures, as well as school and student response rates,
- A summary of trends over time if you have more than one year of weighted data,
- A description of data cleaning and editing procedures,
- A document called *Understanding, Analyzing, and Presenting Your YRBS Results* that provides information on how to read the tables and graphs, and
- Files containing your cleaned and edited dataset.

**Plan your reports.**

Before you develop reports, decide which groups you want to address, what you hope to accomplish by sharing the survey results with each group, and what characteristics your reports should have to elicit the optimal response. For each group, consider factors such as existing levels of knowledge, key concerns and issues, and types of presentations that will get that group's attention and are likely to motivate the group to take action. Ideally, you want to generate support for your program at all levels.

Identify your audience. The style, format, and content of each report should be tailored to the specific audience.

Parents may support the general concept of school health programs, but they may be wary of specific instruction that addresses health risk behaviors. Parents may be more supportive if they become aware of the percentage of children who practice health risk behaviors.

Administrators and school board members can use results from your YRBS to guide the policies they develop regarding school health programs.

Teachers may support your programs fully and welcome relevant information to target instruction to their own students. Teachers will benefit from having more details about the prevalence of health risk behaviors among their students.

Other agencies that use your data may become even more supportive if you provide the data they need in a format that works best for them.

Organizations working with youth will be interested in the survey results and your recommendations for improving programs. Like educators, these groups will want details about the prevalence of health risk behaviors among youth.

The **public** will have varying levels of knowledge and concern about health risk behaviors among youth. They will primarily be interested in summaries of data and in your recommendations for improving the effectiveness of school health programs.

The mechanisms you choose for disseminating your results are dependent upon the audiences you want to reach and what impact you want to have. After you have analyzed and interpreted your data, you can target problem areas and develop materials directed at the most appropriate audiences to address those problems.

Determine the most effective mechanism to reach your audience. Not everyone you want to reach will read a detailed report or even an executive summary of your survey results. People often expect to receive the information in summary formats that can be quickly absorbed. **Visual images are more powerful than written text**, and multimedia dissemination has a better chance of reaching and persuading a broad audience. Look carefully at your results and select a few basic findings that will have the most impact. You will need to develop

appropriate materials for disseminating these results to your target audiences. Your agency may have staff that can help you develop any or all of the following reporting mechanisms. Take advantage of their expertise and experience. Consider using all or some of the reporting mechanisms described below.

A **newsletter** is an effective way to communicate information targeted to certain groups of people, such as teachers, principals, or other professional or community groups. Newsletters also are a tool for disseminating information on a continuous or regular basis to these groups. If there is an existing newsletter sent to an audience of interest, ask if you may include your results in a special section of that newsletter.

A single-page **fact sheet** or threefold **brochure** also can contain some information about your school health programs. Be sure to include your project name, address, and telephone number. Fact sheets can be inserted into public mailings to reach a maximum number of people. They also can be easily used to disseminate information widely to other audiences.

Posters are intended to be eye-catching presentations of small amounts of information, usually a single important message that can be absorbed at a glance. Posters can be displayed for specific groups at workshops, conferences, and trainings, or posted in public places such as schools, libraries, community centers, and grocery stores for a wider audience. Your choice of materials and production method for your posters depends upon the number of copies you need, the look you want, and cost limitations. To determine the look your poster should have, consider how it will be displayed. What will make the information stand out from its background and be noticed?

Consider producing a stand-alone **multimedia presentation** that can be loaned to teachers as well as interested parents and citizen groups. Less costly approaches may be a CD-ROM, a PowerPoint presentation, or a DVD. Your local educational television station may be able to help with the video production. Include text interspersed with pictures that focuses on a single survey finding. The supporting narrative should be accompanied by an appealing sound track. If your audience includes youth, select some musical cuts from currently popular tunes. Be sure the selected music is appropriate for your audience.

Teachers appreciate **instructional materials** that include ideas for lesson plans and student activities; lists of available resources; and graphic displays such as bulletin board packages, posters, colorful overheads, slides, and PowerPoint presentations. Survey results can be integrated into these instructional materials and can help improve the quality of school health programs. Consider asking small groups of teachers who have been identified as doing an excellent job of teaching school health education to help develop these materials. Instructional materials assembled and prepared by teachers in your jurisdiction may have a stronger impact than textbook chapters or nationally produced materials alone.

As the Internet continues to grow as a means for disseminating information, creating a **website** with your YRBS data allows interested parties greater access. All agencies have websites, and adding YRBS data to them helps disseminate your data. Possible ideas for placing your YRBS data on the Internet could include fact sheets, a summary of findings, or a full, detailed report on the risk behaviors of students. This site could be linked to instructional guides for teachers and/or resources for parents on health education.

Consider reviewing YRBS websites from other agencies to see how others disseminate their results. An Internet search (e.g., using Google) for “YRBS” will yield a list of many YRBS-related websites.

If the release of information will perform a service for your program or the community, or if getting certain messages across to a wide audience quickly is important, consider developing a **media spot** or **public service announcement (PSA)**. All public television and radio stations are required to broadcast in the public interest. A PSA is an excellent means of disseminating small items of general information or short messages. You may want to create several of these spots built around one significant finding and targeted to different audiences. One PSA designed to generate parent support could be broadcast over educational stations, over radio stations that feature oldies, or near the news hour on network television. Contact your local television and radio stations for information about producing PSAs.

A **press release** is a relatively easy mechanism for disseminating your survey results, although it might not be the most effective. There is always the possibility that a press release will not be used by the media. However, should you decide to use a press release, follow these guidelines:

- Decide who the audience is and write to that level. If technical terms must be used, explain them. Have a lay person, such as a parent, read the release for understandability.
- Time the press release to best increase its use by the media. Mondays, Tuesdays, and weekends are generally slow news days; the likelihood of coverage is greatest on these days.
- Send the release to the right person. A person in each news agency usually is designated to receive information related to specific areas such as education or health.
- The content and format of the press release must be correct. Check with your public relations office to determine the format preferred by media in your area. Call the reporter to let him/her know the press release is coming. Call back to ask if the person has any questions.



Develop effective reports.

Social media have become popular methods for sharing information. CDC posts messages on Facebook and Twitter relevant to current events. If your agency is equipped to use these methods, consider taking advantage of them. For example, posting YRBS results related to nutrition during National Nutrition Month or alcohol results during Alcohol Awareness Month will reach many people not reached by more traditional means.

Preparation of reports on topics that may be controversial are best undertaken with input from key advisors. Your local or state health and education agencies should work together on YRBS reports. Select a step-by-step method, such as the following, that provides opportunities for advisors, staff, and key administrators to reflect upon and discuss the results and their implications.

1. Analyze data and determine key results.
2. Develop an oral presentation for your cooperative agreement review panel and other key advisors. Include handouts of key results.
3. From discussions with the cooperative agreement review panel and key advisors, generate conclusions and recommendations based on the results and determine how and to whom reports should be disseminated.
4. Develop a timeline for completing reports and assign responsibility for tasks.
5. Write reports and prepare additional tables, graphs, and charts.
6. Submit draft reports to your staff, review panel members, and other key advisors for review. This process will ensure that your report can be understood by the general reader and that your staff and advisors are comfortable with the presentation. Also, ask your CDC Project Officer to review the report.
7. Finalize your report.

Regardless of the types of reports you prepare, make them interesting, clear, and concise. Avoid using jargon, abbreviations, or acronyms. Define terms that the average reader might not understand. Anecdotes and stories may help illustrate certain key points or emphasize the importance of some of your results.

Tables, graphs, and charts should be regarded as substitutes or complements to text and will not need to be described in detail. Figures can be used to create interest, attract attention, save space, better convey quantifiable information, and show relationships between results. **Your results will have greater impact if you summarize significant findings in attractive tables, graphs, or charts.**

Pay attention to the visual appeal of written reports. Remember that solid pages of text tend to turn readers off. To avoid this, make use of headings, subheadings, and well-placed tables, charts, or other graphics. Your survey report should be presented in logical order, using active instead of passive verbs. Summarize data in the most complete and efficient manner. Your recommendations should be stated objectively and be based on your results. Suggestions for action also should be based on survey results.

Regardless of how your data are presented, consider addressing these five questions in the report:

1. How widespread is the problem?
2. Are youth at risk?
3. How many youth can your program reach?
4. What has been accomplished?
5. What else needs to be done?



Include data from other sources.

Do not limit the content of your report to just your YRBS results. Many other sources of data can be used to increase the impact of your YRBS results. These include health outcome data from adolescents and health risk behavior data from adults, YRBS data from other jurisdictions, national-level YRBS data, state and national Youth Tobacco Survey (YTS) data, the results of your School Health Profiles, and national data from the School Health Policies and Practices Study (SHPPS).

Health outcome data include information about pregnancies, HIV/AIDS, sexually transmitted diseases, homicides, suicides, and alcohol-related motor vehicle crashes that occur among youth. Health outcome data also may include information about heart disease, cancer, hypertension, and other health problems that occur predominantly among adults, but may be the result of behaviors initiated during youth. These data probably are available from your state or local health department. The item rationale for the 2013 YRBS questionnaire (see Appendix B) provides a good source for current national-level health outcome data.

Another source of health risk behavior data is the Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System (BRFSS), which consists of state-based telephone surveys of representative samples of adults ages 18 or older. These surveys measure many topics similar to the ones addressed in the YRBS. All state health departments conduct Behavioral Risk Factor Surveys. Become familiar with the contact persons in your state health department.

Contact project directors in nearby states to determine what information can be shared. They may be interested in receiving a copy of any reports you prepare, and may be willing to send you copies of their publications. *Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Report (MMWR)* Surveillance Summaries include YRBS data from districts and states, as well as the national survey results. These reports are an excellent source of information to supplement your own survey results.

Examples of the reports, fact sheets, and summary sheets DASH develops to report YRBS survey results are posted on CDC's YRBS website: <http://www.cdc.gov/yrbs>.

DASH also has developed Youth Online, an interactive system that allows comparisons among national, state, territorial, and local YRBS results. Data are available from 1991 to 2011. Youth Online is located at <http://apps.nccd.cdc.gov/youthonline>.



Work with the media.

Public support can strengthen your school health programs and make them more effective. For this reason, you should welcome public and media interest in your survey and results. The media, in particular, can help disseminate important results and recommendations throughout your jurisdiction and can generate broader public understanding of the need for your programs. The key to effective public and media relations is openness and preparedness. Check with your public relations office for advice and guidance specific to your agency, and establish a working relationship with them. Seek their guidance on specific issues and keep them informed of program activities.

When talking with the press, do not appear to dodge questions or withhold critical information. Reporters tend to press harder for information if they feel the people they are interviewing are trying to hide something.

Do not feel obligated to tell a reporter or interested citizen everything about your survey. For example, though you may have promised to keep the names of schools that participated in your survey confidential, a reporter might ask for this information. State laws may determine how you respond. The legal affairs or public relations offices in your agency can give you the best advice. Seek their counsel before releasing any information.

Student anonymity and school confidentiality must be maintained. Discuss with all your staff the importance of maintaining student anonymity as well as school confidentiality. Consider having staff sign a statement acknowledging the importance of the student anonymity and school confidentiality (see Exhibit 6-1 on page 6-8). This precaution will minimize the chance that a staff person is caught off guard in a casual conversation. Violating the trust of schools and students that have participated in the survey could do great damage to future surveys and to your school health programs.

Prepare answers for the kinds of questions people are likely to ask about your YRBS, the results, and your school health programs. Include all the basic journalistic questions (i.e., who, what, why, when, where, and how) and questions about specific results likely to attract media attention. Clear these prepared answers with appropriate administrators and your public affairs office before results are released. Keep your responses to questions as concise as possible. Long, complex responses may not be reported accurately or may be misinterpreted. If a question cannot be answered well without additional information, be sensitive to a reporter's deadline and follow up as soon as possible.

Prepare a statement to read and distribute that highlights your YRBS results and implications of the results for your school health programs. Designate one person, either someone in your office or the public affairs spokesperson for your agency, to field all outside inquiries. Staff should be instructed to refer all public and media queries to this person. Make sure your spokesperson is well acquainted with your YRBS, the results, and how the results will be used, as well as with your school health programs and the political climate in your jurisdiction. The spokesperson should be comfortable speaking in front of others and be able to think quickly when under pressure. Use the release of your survey results to describe and generate support, not only for the survey, but for your entire school health program.