



YOUTH RISK BEHAVIOR SURVEY SURVEILLANCE SYSTEM

FACT SHEET

“Over the years, the YRBSS has proven to be a valuable tool for providing vital information about the behaviors affecting the healthy development and academic attainment of our nation’s youth.”

Historical Background: Before the 1990s, little was known about the prevalence of behaviors practiced by young people that put their health at risk. The Youth Risk Behavior Surveillance System (YRBSS) now provides such information. Developed by CDC in collaboration with federal, state, and private-sector partners, this voluntary system includes a national survey and surveys conducted by state and local education and health agencies.

What is the goal of the Youth Risk Behavior Survey Surveillance System?

The goal is assess trends / co-occurrence of risk behaviors within SFUSD to provide relevant information for program planning.

Today, the health of young people and the adults they will become is critically linked to the health-related behaviors they choose to adopt. A limited number of behaviors contribute markedly to today’s major killers. These behaviors, often established during youth, include:

- Tobacco use
- Unhealthy dietary behaviors
- Inadequate physical activity
- Alcohol and other drug use
- Sexual behaviors that may result in pregnancies, HIV infection, and other sexually transmitted diseases
- Behaviors that may result in violence unintentional injuries, and unintended (motor vehicle crashes).

Among both children and adults, the leading causes of death are closely linked to these behaviors. Among adults, chronic diseases such as cardiovascular disease, cancer, and diabetes are the nation’s leading killers. Practicing healthy behaviors, such as eating low-fat, high-fruit-and-vegetable diets, getting regular physical activity, and refraining from tobacco use, would prevent many premature deaths. Because health-related behaviors are usually established in childhood, positive choices need to be promoted before damaging behaviors are initiated or become ingrained.

What is Youth Risk Behavior Surveillance System? The YRBSS provides vital information on risk behaviors among young people to more effectively target and improve health programs. Its purposes are to determine the prevalence and age of initiation of health risk behaviors, assess trends/co-occurrence of health risk behaviors, and provide comparable national, state, and local data. During the spring semester of odd number year, the YRBS is administered to a random sample of Middle and High School students in grades six through twelve. Parent/guardian consent forms (in six languages) are sent home with students in the selected classes. Only students with positive parent/guardian permission are allowed to participate in the survey. The survey is administered by staff who have been trained about the proper methods of survey administration, including protecting students’ confidentiality and anonymity. Student participation is voluntary. They could decline to participate, turn in blank or incomplete surveys, or stop completing the survey at any time.

Activities within SFUSD and School Health Programs Departments that support Youth Risk Behavior Survey:

- Healthy School Teams
- Health Education Teacher Leaders
- K-12 Comprehensive Health Education
- Teenage Pregnancy Prevention Program
- HIV/AIDS Prevention Education
- Safe Schools/Healthy Students Initiative

For further information contact:

**SFUSD-School Health Programs Department
1515 Quintara Street, San Francisco, CA 94116
(415) 242-2615 / (415) 242-2618 Fax**