



ILLINOIS YOUTH SURVEY

Frequently Asked Questions

Why is the IYS administered in schools?

The Illinois State Board of Education (ISBE) and the Illinois Department of Human Resources (IDHS) recognize youth substance use as a problem shared by schools and communities alike. IYS survey results are used by both ISBE and IDHS in program planning and evaluation, and individual schools and districts benefit from having access to the results for their students. Administering the survey within schools allows for confidentiality and therefore, provides more valid results.

Free! **What is the cost to the school for participating in the IYS survey?** There is no cost to participating public or private schools. The survey is funded by substance use prevention grants.

How can IYS data help schools?

The IYS allows for comprehensive planning of prevention initiatives by indicating the prevalence of alcohol and tobacco use, prescription drug use, and the distribution of use across all geographic areas of the state. This information is valuable to communities and schools in targeting prevention initiatives. In addition, the IYS collects information about school climate, safety, and important contributing factors to youth risk behaviors that can impede learning.

How much time should be allowed to administer the IYS?

Generally, one class period of 40 to 45 minutes should be allowed to administer the IYS.

How can we feel confident that IYS survey results are valid?

Research indicates that well-monitored self-report surveys produce valid responses. Results from IYS and other comparable surveys show similar patterns and levels of drug use (with variation based on locale and year of survey), which also indicates validity in responses. Safeguards are built into the survey analysis to identify over-reporting of drug use. Under-reporting of drug use is minimized by assuring that survey participants are not linked with their responses.

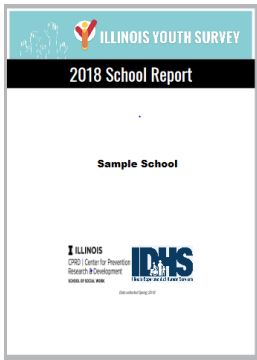


What do the IYS questions cover?

In addition to substance use and demographic questions, the survey covers some risk and protective factors for youth drug use and other youth risk behaviors. Questions about activities, home environment, violence/safety, school experiences, and nutrition are also included.

Is the IYS customized by grade level?

Yes. The high school form covers the broadest set of behaviors, and the eighth grade form covers a narrower set of behaviors.



What results are available?

- An individual school report will be sent solely to the school approximately 4 to 6 weeks after surveying is completed. If there are less than 10 students at any participating grade, no school results will be generated for that grade.
- A statewide aggregate report, based on a random sample of Illinois public schools, is generated approximately 8 to 12 months after survey administration. This report analyzes the results across Illinois and compares results from previous survey cycles.
- County-level and Chicago Community Area reports are made available if enough schools participate within a given county.

Does participating in IYS lead students to experiment with new negative behaviors?

Questions on a survey do not pose a threat beyond the risks or hazards already in a student's life. Research shows that substance use usually begins with either alcohol or tobacco. Exposure to alcohol or tobacco use will not be new to students, as it is prevalent in popular media and is often also seen among older siblings, friends, or friends' siblings. Marijuana use usually doesn't occur unless a youth is already regularly using alcohol, and use of other drugs almost never happens unless a youth is already regularly using marijuana. Progression beyond alcohol use typically doesn't happen unless there are some substantial risk factors already present.

Will parents be concerned about the survey?

As with any discussion of social problems, parental responses will likely vary. Some will enthusiastically support the administration of the survey, while others may be skeptical. However, because underage drinking and other drug use are dangerous and widespread, schools have an obligation to proactively address the issue. Participating in the IYS is one important step in that process because it provides guidance on questions that parents, school personnel, and community members have, including: How much of a problem do we have? What is the nature of that problem? How can we address it?

How can we address parents' concerns about the questions that are asked on the survey?

Questions about substance use, school violence, and mental health issues may be considered sensitive. But the only way to assess youth perception, attitudes, and behaviors in these areas is to ask about them. Parents should be assured that IYS questions are age-appropriate, students can choose to not answer any question, and can "opt out" of participating if they wish. In addition, the survey is administered in ways that protect the privacy of the respondents, and data collected is not linked to any personal identifiers. This means that though an individual student may participate in subsequent years, there is no way to track behavior changes for that specific student.



What if the IYS shows negative results for the school?

There is a tendency to doubt results when they are not as expected. However, it is important to focus on how to address problems and monitor progress by tracking all indicators related to the issues specific to your school. Accurate data is a first step in taking action and is a critical element when applying for funding.