ADMINISTERING
THE YOUTH RISK BEHAVIOR SURVEY (YRBS)
WHILE PROTECTING STUDENT CONFIDENTIALITY

Frequently Asked Questions

Q. What are the differences between passive and active parent permission?
A. See the chart below.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Passive Parent Permission</th>
<th>Active Parent Permission</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Parental notification…</td>
<td>…informs parents about the survey and gives them the opportunity to decline their child’s participation.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Parents are notified when…</td>
<td>…a letter is sent to parents that describes the purpose, procedures, and the voluntary nature of the survey.</td>
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<tr>
<td>In order for a child to participate in the survey…</td>
<td>…parents return a permission form indicating whether they give permission for their child to participate.</td>
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<tr>
<td>If a form is not returned…</td>
<td>…permission is assumed.</td>
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Q. Does my school/district need active parent permission in order to conduct the Youth Risk Behavior Survey (YRBS)?
A. No. There are no new federal or state laws or regulations that require active permission for students who participate in the YRBS.
Q. What type of parental permission should our school/district use to conduct the Youth Risk Behavior Survey (YRBS)?
A. Since 1995, the North Dakota Department of Public Instruction has recommended that schools use passive parental permission. Copies of passive permission forms will be distributed along with YRBS participation forms and support materials in December of even numbered years. The YRBS is administered in January/February of odd numbered years.

Q. Does Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) apply to the YRBS?
A. No. FERPA applies to individual, identifiable educational records. The YRBS DOES NOT contain any personally identifiable information on student participants. Both surveys are administered ANONIMOUSLY and results are not part of any student’s permanent educational record.

Q. How does the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) affect the YRBS?
A. ESSA does not change the way the YRBS has been conducted in North Dakota. ESSA, will continue the requirement through the Protection of Pupil Rights Amendment (PPRA). The PPRA states that schools and contractors obtain written parental consent before minor students are required to participate in any Department of Education-funded survey, analysis, or evaluation that reveals information concerning any of the following eight protected areas described in the law. These eight areas include:
1. Political affiliation;
2. Mental and psychological problems potentially embarrassing to the student and his/her family;
3. Sex behavior and attitudes;
4. Illegal, anti-social, self-incriminating, and demeaning behavior;
5. Critical appraisals of other individuals with whom respondents have close family relationships;
6. Legally recognized privileged or analogous relationships, such as those of lawyers, physicians, and ministers;
7. Religious practices, affiliations, or beliefs of the student or student’s parent; or
8. Income (other than that required by law to determine eligibility for participation in a program or for receiving financial assistance under such program).

The YRBS survey does ask questions regarding some of these areas. However, it is not required and they are not funded in whole or in part by the Department of Education. Therefore, the PPRA requirement for active parental consent does not apply to the YRBS. The YRBS is conducted using funds from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

ESSA will also continue to require schools that receive funds from the U.S. Department of Education develop and adopt local policies, in consultation with parents, to protect student privacy. This includes the right of parents to inspect the survey upon request if the survey contains any of the personal issues listed above. Allowing parents to review the YRBS questionnaires at the school is consistent with standard YRBS practice in North Dakota.
Q. Can the YRBS help my school fulfill its ESSA requirements?
A. Yes. As agreed by the ND ESSA Planning Committee, ND schools will need to collect data on school climate and student engagement as its non-academic indicator. Based on their work, YRBS stakeholders have added questions pertaining to school climate so that ND school districts can use this vital data as a needs assessment tool for the consolidated application process.

REFERENCES:

- U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, National Center for Chronic Disease Prevention and Health Promotion, Division of Adolescent School Health, (2002). Parental Permission: Conducting a Successful Youth Risk Behavior Survey (YRBS) with Active Parental Permission, Atlanta, GA.

- Forum Guide to Protecting the Privacy of Student Information

FOR MORE INFORMATION:

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