

Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)

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What is the Healthy Kids Colorado Survey (HKCS)?

The HKCS is the state's most comprehensive survey on the health and wellbeing of young people. This voluntary, anonymous, online survey asks middle and high school students about health-related attitudes and behaviors. The survey is administered every two years. In 2023, over 120,000 students participated from more than 340 middle and high schools. Broad participation from students across Colorado is valuable in order to gather representative statewide youth health data. HKCS data helps identify student needs and informs state funding decisions that support programs at the local level. Results are used to apply for funding that supports youth, bringing millions of dollars into Colorado communities.

Is participation confidential?

Yes, participation is confidential and anonymous. Students do not put their name or any other identifying information on the survey. Teachers are instructed to follow protocols to protect confidentiality while the survey is being completed. No individual student data or identifiable information is included in the results, only summaries of combined data.



What topics does the HKCS cover? How do I review a copy of the survey?

The HKCS includes health-related topics such as physical activity and nutrition; mental health; school safety and bullying; tobacco and other substance use; and risk and protective factors. Some versions of the HKCS survey also ask students questions about sexual behavior. The high school survey and some versions of the middle school survey include demographic questions about sexual orientation and gender identity. Decisions on optional sections are made at the district level. To view a complete copy of your local survey, please contact your school office.

How does the HKCS benefit Colorado communities?

The results from the HKCS are used to:

- Increase public awareness about health issues that impact youth.
- Provide local, regional, and state youth health behavior data and track trends over time.
- Support healthier learning environments by informing school health policy and programs.
- Help community leaders to shape effective public policy.
- Write grant applications that bring funding into the state and local communities.

How will the HKCS benefit our school?

- Each school receives a report with its own results. No individual student data or identifiable information is included, only summaries of combined data.



- Schools use results in needs assessments, grant applications, and program planning to support youth health and wellbeing.

How long does the survey take?

The HKCS takes a single class period to complete. In 2023, the average completion time was 25-30 minutes. The survey uses skip logic, which shortens the length of the survey: if students indicate that they do not engage in the given behavior, they are not shown follow-up questions. For example, if a student reports they've never smoked a cigarette, the survey skips future questions, such as where they got their last pack of cigarettes.

Can answering survey questions influence youth to try unhealthy behaviors?

There is no evidence to suggest that health surveys influence youth behavior or experimentation with unhealthy behaviors. Use of youth health surveys has increased across the country since the early 1990s. At the same time, national data shows that many unhealthy youth behaviors, such as substance use, continue to decline.

How do we know that youth answer the survey honestly?

Years of survey research indicate that young people, much like adults, respond honestly to anonymous surveys. In focus groups conducted in 2021 by the University of Colorado, youth participants reported that they would answer HKCS questions honestly. The overwhelming majority believed their peers would also answer honestly. Anonymous youth surveys like the HKCS give youth the



opportunity to directly report on their experiences, affirming that youth are the experts on their lives.

Do parents/guardians give permission for the survey?

Yes, Colorado law requires informed parent/guardian consent for youth surveys in schools. The requirement is met when parents/guardians are informed that their student has been asked to participate in a survey and given the ability to opt their student out of participating. The school sends a permission form and a copy of the survey to parents/guardians for review. In most districts, parents/guardians are asked to return the form only if they want to opt their student out of participating. Districts vary in their policies about survey consent: please contact your district directly for information about local policies.

How do I view the HKCS results?

Regional and statewide results are released at the beginning of the following summer and are available online at www.healthykidscolo.org. Please contact your school to request local results.

If I have additional questions, who do I contact?

Please contact your local school or email CSPHSurveyTeam@CUAnschutz.edu.