

#### What are the extra questions?

Survey questionnaires include the following questions for schools with Grades 8, 10 and 12 (and Grades 9 and 11 in small school districts). The extra questions relate to sexual behavior, sexual abuse, sexual orientation, and gender identity are included on the end of survey. Schools that choose not to ask the extra questions will receive survey versions that have the extra questions removed.

The questions include:

Sexual behavior questions (Sex includes oral, vaginal, and/or anal sex):

- *How old were you when you had sex for the first time? (I have never had sex; 11 years or younger; 12, 13, 14, 15, 16, 17 years old or older).*
- *During your life, with whom have you had sexual contact? Select all that apply. (I have not had sexual contact; Females; Males; Other)*
- *With how many people have you ever had sex? (I have never had sex; 1 person; 2 people, 3 people, 4 people, 5 people; 6 or more people)*
- *The last time you had sex, what method(s) did you or your partner use to prevent pregnancy and/or sexually transmitted infections? (Select all that you used): (I have never had sex; No method was used; Birth control pills; Condoms; An IUD or implant (such as Mirena or ParaGard; Implanon or Nexplanon); A shot (such as Depo-Provera); Patch or birth control ring (such as Xulane; NuvaRing); Withdrawal or some other method; Not sure)*

Sexual orientation question:

- *Which of the following best describes you? (Heterosexual (straight); Gay or lesbian, Bisexual, Questioning/not sure; Something else fits better; I don't know what this question is asking)*

Gender identity question:

- *How do you currently identify yourself? Select all that apply. (Male; Female, Transgender, Questioning/not sure of my gender identity, Something else fits better, I do not know what this question is asking)*

Sexual abuse questions:

- *Have you ever been in a situation where someone made you engage in kissing, sexual touch or intercourse when you did not want to? (No, Yes).*
- *Have you ever seen someone about your age pressure someone else to kiss, touch, or have sex when they did not want to? (No; Yes).*

#### Where do these questions come from?

The sexual behavior and sexual orientation questions are from the national Youth Risk Behavioral Survey (YRBS) sponsored by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). Sexual behavior and sexual orientation questions are on the core survey and almost all states ask them. In 2015, forty-seven states asked these questions (in 3 of those states, only large school districts participated). The gender identity question wording is adapted from other teen youth surveys and is in line with current methodological recommendations on how to ask youth about gender identity. The sexual abuse questions were adapted from a Sexual Experiences Survey designed to assess sexual victimization among high school students. They are broader than the YRBS sexual abuse question that only asks about forced sexual intercourse on the core survey.

### **Have these questions been asked previously?**

The three sexual behavior questions were on Healthy Youth Survey since 2010. The question on sexual orientation and the first question on sexual abuse have been asked since 2014. Depending on grade, between 79% and 84% of schools registered for the forms that asked these questions in 2018. There were no adverse reports from having administered these questions.

### **How does collecting information on these extra questions benefit school districts?**

Having data about sexual orientation, behavior and abuse can assist districts and schools in understanding their students' experiences. Schools and districts can use the information to reshape social norms, determine the need for sexual health education, or develop support structures that best meet the needs of students.

For example, asking questions about sexual behavior gives students who have NOT had sex the opportunity to be represented. According to the 2018 Healthy Youth Survey, 76 percent of 10th grade students and 47 percent of 12th grade students have never had sexual intercourse. Unfortunately, students often operate on the inaccurate perception that most of their peers have had sexual intercourse.

For districts that don't offer sexual health education, information on sexual behavior could be useful when talking to school boards and community members about the need for sexual health education. For districts that already offer sexual health education, data could provide support for continuing or modifying the program to most effectively meet the needs of students. If, for example, data suggests that many students begin sexual intercourse in ninth grade, the district may decide to include lessons on abstinence, contraceptives, STDs, HIV, and sexual decision making in middle school.

Combining information from these questions with other Healthy Youth Survey data can show how sexual orientation, behavior and abuse intersect with other health-related behaviors. These relationships can give districts a better sense of how and where to target appropriate interventions with limited resources. Research shows that intervening with youth at highest risk benefits not only those youth, but all youth who participate.

Information from the extra questions can also be used to boost or restructure student support services for sexually active youth, as well as for LGBTQ youth who are at high risk of being bullied, being suicidal, and engaging in risky health behaviors and for youth who have been sexually abused who are at increased risk of a variety of psychological and behavioral problems.

### **Will sexual behavior increase if we ask about it?**

Research shows that asking youth about sexual behavior does not increase this behavior. Additionally, if there were large-scale negative effects of Healthy Youth Survey questions on health-risk behaviors, in general, we would expect to see increases over time in behaviors that we have measured repeatedly, such as violence and substance use. We do not, however, see a consistent pattern of increases.

Nationally, even though most states ask youth about sexual behavior, the percent of sexually active adolescents is dropping in many states.

### **For more information:**

**Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction, HIV and Sexual Health Education**

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<http://www.k12.wa.us/HIVSexualhealth/default.aspx>