

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 and sexual abuse and are included at the end of survey. Schools that choose not to ask the extra questions will be able to opt out of these questions.

The questions include:

Sexual behavior questions:

- *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 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 diseases? (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 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 questions are from the national Youth Risk Behavioral Survey (YRBS) sponsored by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). In 2019, 36 of the 47 states and 31 of the 43 large urban school districts that administered the YRBS asked these questions. The sexual abuse questions were adapted from a Sexual Experiences Survey designed to assess sexual victimization among high school students.

Have these questions been asked previously?

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

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

Having data about behavior and abuse can assist districts and schools in understanding their students' experiences. We know that negative experiences during childhood and young adulthood can lead to lifelong consequences for physical and mental health. Learning more about what students are experiencing can help schools and districts to reshape social norms, establish new programming, or develop support structures that best meet the needs of students.

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 behavior and abuse intersect with other health-related behaviors. These relationships can give districts a better sense of how and where to direct appropriate interventions with limited resources. Research shows that intervening with youth at highest risk benefits not only those youth, but all youth who participate.

Asking questions about sexual behavior also provides information on students who have NOT had sex. This information can be used to educate students. 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.

Information from the extra questions can also be used to boost or restructure student support services for sexually active youth and those 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.

What about the new Index that measures adverse experiences among students?

Only schools who administer the extra questions will receive the new Washington HYS Adverse Childhood Experiences (WAH-ACEs) index with their survey results. Schools that do not administer these questions will not receive WAH-ACEs index with their survey results because sexual abuse is part of the index. This index was developed in response to Washington Senate Bill 6191 and is based on extensive research led by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention around adverse childhood experiences (ACEs).

The WAH-ACEs index will give schools and districts a clearer picture of the negative experiences that their students are facing, and how they can better support them in the classroom, with special programming, and with other resources. This index can also help highlight the importance of protective factors like safe and stable relationships at home and at school.

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 increases in these behaviors.

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

For more information:

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