



STATE OF WASHINGTON  
**HEALTH CARE AUTHORITY**

626 8th Avenue, SE • P.O. Box 45502 • Olympia, Washington 98504-5502

March 9, 2020



Dear School District Leaders,

Thank you for your school district's participation in the Washington State Healthy Youth Survey ([www.askHYS.net](http://www.askHYS.net)). We want to make you aware of some important updates to the 2020 survey and plan for the 2022 survey. Since its beginning in 1988, this survey has evolved to address contemporary issues facing our youth. Since 2010, questions related to potentially sensitive topics were placed at the end of the survey for students in grades 8-12, and schools chose whether to administer a form of the survey with or without these questions. This included questions on sexual behavior, sexual abuse sexual orientation (added in 2014), and gender identity (added in 2018).

In the 2020 HYS administration, the questions regarding gender identity and sexual orientation will be included on the main survey in the demographics section rather than in the tear-off section of the survey. In the 2018 survey, 80 percent of participating schools chose to administer the optional questions. **If including these questions on the survey causes undue hardship on your school or district, creates a risk to student safety, or potential loss of funding, your district can request an exemption at [www.askhys.net/exemption](http://www.askhys.net/exemption).**

We are including these questions in the main survey to:

- Gather data that helps address health disparities. Combining information from these questions with other data can show how sexual orientation and gender identity intersect with other health-related behaviors. These relationships can give districts a better sense of how to support students and where to focus needed interventions..
- Ensure the survey is more inclusive for all students. Students and advocates have told the survey committee they do not feel represented if they do not see these questions on the survey placed among similar demographic questions.

Planning ahead: The 2022 survey

- The state agencies responsible for administering the survey want to hear from you. We will begin a stakeholder process for the 2022 survey to determine whether to include sexual behavior and abuse questions on the main survey. These questions will remain on the tear-off portion of the survey for 2020. These data can help schools and communities more effectively support and promote student health.

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We will communicate with partners, schools, and the prevention field as these stakeholder meetings are scheduled in early 2021. Please email [HCAHealthyYouthSurvey@hca.wa.gov](mailto:HCAHealthyYouthSurvey@hca.wa.gov) if you want to express your interest now in participating in this process.

Thank you for your ongoing partnership on behalf of Washington youth.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Sue Birch". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, stylized "S" and "B".

Sue Birch, MBA, BSN, RN  
Director