

Survey Fact Sheet: Frequently Asked Questions & Answers for Principals



What is the Connecticut School Health Survey (CSHS)?

The Connecticut School Health Survey (CSHS), conducted biennially since 2005, is a survey of high school students (grades 9 -12) in CT's public high schools. The survey has been designed by state and local health and education departments in conjunction with the CDC to monitor trends in health behaviors that significantly impact youth and carry over into adulthood. The 2023 CSHS will be administered electronically using a web-based questionnaire. This is not a school-wide survey. Only a small number of classes, typically 4 to 6 classes per school, are random selected to participate.



What kind of information will be collected on the CSHS?

The CSHS is designed to monitor how priority health risk behaviors among high school students increase, decrease, or remain the same over time; evaluate the impact of broad national, state, and local efforts to prevent unhealthy behaviors; and to improve school health education policies and programs. The CSHS will be comparable to previous CSHS and hence provide unprecedented trend data. The survey collects data on tobacco, alcohol and drug use; mental health; suicidal behavior; interpersonal violence; familial and social support; sexual behaviors; nutrition; physical activity; and weight control among high school youth in grades 9 through 12. Also, in response to requests from schools, a section on protective factors and social support has been included since 2005. The survey allows us to monitor current behaviors, age of initiation, and lifetime practices.



How will this survey benefit schools and youth in Connecticut?

DPH is committed to working with schools to create safe environments and enhance early adoption of healthy lifestyles. A key component of this is ongoing monitoring of students' health behaviors. All schools benefit from sharing the findings of the survey to help them improve their efforts and to demonstrate the need for increased funding for prevention and health promotion programs for youth. **Healthy students are better learners and more likely to become healthy adults.**



Who supports this survey?

This survey is supported by many Connecticut agencies and organizations interested in the health of our youth. The Connecticut Departments of Public Health, Education, Mental Health and Addiction Services, Children and Families, and Social Services, as well as the CT Office of the Child Advocate and CT-area youth advocacy groups and non-profits, have all been involved in creating this survey. It is also supported by many national organizations which have submitted letters of support, which are available upon your request.



We already have other data on student behavior. Why do we also need the kind of data provided by the CSHS? Is this really necessary?

CSHS is a representative survey of the entire Connecticut public school student population. It is also conducted on a national level and by over 40 states, and multiple large city surveys. All of these data can be used to see how Connecticut students compare to their peers. CSHS reports on a variety of health behaviors in grades 9-12, as well as by gender and race/ethnicity. This allows the study of behavior acquisition on an age continuum, as well as among sub-groups. The CSHS covers topic that focus on priority health risk behaviors established during youth that result in the most significant illnesses or diseases and causes of death during both youth and adulthood. Since each student answers questions in each of these areas, the CSHS can provide information about inter-related behaviors, resilience, or protective factors. Other surveys focus on fewer topic areas in isolation. **A successful 2023 survey will continue to provide Connecticut with trend data on youth behavior since 2005.**



How are schools and students selected?

Schools are randomly selected utilizing a 2-stage sample design: 1) schools are randomly selected with a probability dependent on enrollment size, 2) from each selected school, classes are randomly selected to participate. Statewide, approximately 3,500 public high school students in grades 9-12 will be selected at random to participate in the CSHS.



When and how will the survey be administered?

The CSHS is a self-administered web-based survey using any internet connected device provided by the school or student. All other survey materials will be provided to teachers for administration in their randomly selected classes on a convenient date between February and June 2023. Participating classes are randomly selected, typically from an advisory period, second or third period classes, or during a required class such as Language Arts. Students log in anonymously to the survey URL using a unique, five-digit access code and securely submit their survey electronically when finished.



How long does it take to fill out the questionnaire? Is there some sort of physical test?

One class period is needed for the students to complete the self-administered, web-based questionnaire. Teachers will be asked to read a brief set of instructions; it then takes approximately 25 minutes for students to record their responses via a secure website. No physical test or exam is involved.



Are sensitive questions asked?

Some questions on the CSHS may be considered sensitive. The only way to learn if youth are at risk of illness or injury is to ask questions about these behaviors. Attempted suicide, sexual behavior, tobacco use, alcohol and other drug use, and weapon carrying are also sensitive issues. Survey questions are written in a direct *but sensitive way*. The CSHS is designed to protect student anonymity, thus reducing any uneasiness about answering questions considered sensitive. Also, if students are not comfortable answering a question, they may leave it blank.



Is student participation anonymous? How is student privacy protected?

Strict survey protocols are designed to protect student privacy and allow for anonymous participation. Personally identifiable information is not collected. Students submit their surveys electronically and responses are not accessible once submitted. Published reports do **not** include names of any participating cities, districts, schools, or students.



Is this survey voluntary? What if school districts, schools, or students do not choose to participate?

Effective July 1, 2022, and pursuant to Section 3 of Connecticut Public Act 22-87, school participation in the CSHS is required for districts selected by the CDC. However, parents and caregivers have the opportunity to exclude their student(s) from the survey in writing. Additionally, a student can opt-out or stop participating in the survey at any time.



Do students need parental consent to complete the survey?

Since this survey is anonymous, federal law does not require active parental consent. Connecticut Public Act 22-87 states that schools must allow for a twenty-one day notification period for parents or guardians to review the survey and return a form if opting their child out of the survey.



Where can additional information be obtained?

If you have any questions or to obtain additional information about the CSHS, contact Celeste Jorge at DPH, at (806) 509-7695 or Celeste.Jorge@ct.gov or Jill Trott at ICF, at (301) 572-0378 or at Jill.Trott@icf.com. More CSHS information can be found on the DPH website: www.ct.gov/dph/cshs.



What do the schools receive for participating in the 2021 CSHS?

As a token of appreciation for your time and support and for being a significant partner in the 2023 CSHS effort, each participating school **will be provided with a variety of stipend options from which to choose valued up to \$1,000**. Teachers of selected classes will receive a \$20 gift card, in appreciation for their time and support.