

## NYTS SCHOOL LETTER OF INVITATION

{Date}

{Contact Name}

{School Name}

{Address}

{City}, {State} {Zip Code}

Dear Principal:

I am writing to inform you that your school is among the approximately {#} schools randomly selected across the United States to participate in the {Year} National Youth Tobacco Survey (NYTS) sponsored by the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). As witnessed over the past few decades, youth tobacco use can increase or decrease rapidly. More recently, from 2003 to 2012, the CDC reported that while youth smoking has declined, it has occurred at a slower pace. Conduct of the NYTS has increased our ability to detect rapid changes in tobacco use behaviors and their influences, thereby enabling states, school districts, schools, and community organizations to modify their tobacco prevention and control interventions, if circumstances require.

First conducted in 1999, the NYTS is an ongoing survey of students in grades 6 through 12 that gathers information on: (1) prevalence of use (cigarettes, smokeless tobacco, cigars, and other tobacco products), (2) knowledge and attitudes, (3) media and advertising, (4) minors access and enforcement, (5) school curriculum, (6) secondhand smoke exposure, and (7) cessation.

The CDC respects the educational mission of schools. For that reason, only a small number of classes in each school, one or two at each selected grade -level, are chosen randomly to participate. The selected grades and the number of classes are as follows:

### **Grade (# of classes)**

Data collection will occur during {Month} through {Month} {Year}. Questionnaires will be administered during one normal class period by specially trained field staff. Survey administration procedures are designed to protect student privacy and allow for anonymous participation. States, counties, cities, school districts, schools, and students will not be identified in any published reports.

As a symbol of appreciation for contributing their time and support, the CDC will provide each participating school with a monetary award. One option is to use these funds for prevention curriculum and educational materials. However, no restrictions will be placed on how schools can use these funds.

The NYTS is the most comprehensive, nationally representative source of data regarding tobacco-related behaviors and the *only* source of such data for middle school students (grades 6-8). In parallel to this national survey, the NYTS questionnaire is used independently by many state and local departments of education and health to conduct their own surveys. Results from the national survey serve as an index against which state- and local-level data can be compared and are used by states to support the design, implementation, and evaluation of effective tobacco use prevention and control programs.

Enclosed are copies of the NYTS questionnaire, a fact sheet, sample parental permission forms, and letters of support. Within one week, a representative from ICF International, a nationally recognized survey research firm contracted by CDC to conduct the NYTS, will contact you. If you have any immediate questions, please call {Name} of ICF International at (800) 675-9727. Your support for this survey, which will help assess and improve efforts to reduce tobacco use among adolescents throughout our Nation, is appreciated.

Sincerely yours,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Tim McAfee', is written over a light gray rectangular background.

Timothy McAfee, MD, MPH  
Director  
Office on Smoking and Health

Enclosures

cc:

# FACT SHEET FOR SCHOOLS

## {Year} NATIONAL YOUTH TOBACCO SURVEY (NYTS)

Tobacco use is the leading and most preventable cause of disease and death in the United States. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) conducts the survey to document tobacco-related beliefs, attitudes, and behaviors, and exposure to influences that promote or discourage tobacco use among students in grades 6 through 12. This fact sheet answers important questions about the National Youth Tobacco Survey (NYTS).

**Q. What is the purpose of the NYTS?**

A. The purpose of the NYTS is to gather nationally representative data for students in grades 6 through 12 for the following tobacco related topics: prevalence of use (cigarettes, smokeless tobacco, cigars, and other tobacco products), knowledge and attitudes, media and advertising, minors' access and enforcement, school curriculum, secondhand smoke exposure, and cessation.

**Q. How frequently is the NYTS conducted?**

A. The baseline NYTS was conducted in 1999, with progress measurements occurring in the spring of 2000, 2002, 2004, 2006, 2009, 2011, 2012, 2013, and 2014. The {Year} NYTS represents the {#th} progress measurement.

**Q. Why is the NYTS conducted?**

A. A core priority of CDC's Office of Smoking and Health is to enhance tobacco control surveillance. The NYTS is the most comprehensive, nationally representative source of data regarding tobacco-related behaviors and the *only* source of such data for middle school students (grades 6-8). Results are used by CDC to support the design, implementation, and evaluation of effective tobacco use prevention and control programs. In parallel to this national survey, the YTS questionnaire is used independently by many state and local departments of education and health to conduct their own surveys. Results from the NYTS serve as an index against which state- and local-level data can be compared.

**Q. Does the survey have broad national support?**

A. Yes. The survey is supported by many major national organizations interested in the health of youth, including: American Academy of Pediatrics, American Alliance for Health, Physical Education, Recreation and Dance, American Association of School Administrators, American Cancer Society, American Heart Association, American Legacy Foundation, American Lung Association®, American Medical Association, American School Health Association, Association for Middle Level Education, Association of State and Territorial Health Officials, Council of Chief State School Officers, National Association of School Nurses, National Association of Secondary School Principals, National Association of State Boards of Education, National Catholic Educational Association, National Education Association Health Information Network, National PTA, and the National School Boards Association.

**Q. Are sensitive questions asked?**

A. No. All questions on the survey relate to the student's attitudes, behaviors, and knowledge about tobacco use, intent to use tobacco, exposure to tobacco use, and exposure to tobacco marketing/advertising.

**Q. Is student participation anonymous? How is student privacy protected?**

A. Survey administration procedures are designed to protect student privacy and allow for anonymous participation. The survey is administered by specially trained field staff. Students submit a completed optically scannable questionnaire booklet, containing no personal identifiers, in a sealed envelope which is then placed in a large box or envelope. Similar safeguards are used to complete make-ups. Students not participating in the survey are provided with an alternate activity by their school. Published reports do not include names of participating counties, cities, school districts, schools, or students.

**Q. Are students tracked over time to see how their behavior changes?**

A. No. Each year a new sample of states, schools, and students is drawn. Students who participated cannot be tracked because no identifying information is collected.

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

A. Participation in the NYTS is voluntary. However, to develop accurate national estimates, it is essential that school and student participation rates are high. Selected schools and students cannot be replaced. The goal is to achieve 90 to 95 percent participation by selected schools and students.

**Q. What grades are included? What types of schools are included in the sample?**

A. The {Year} NYTS will be administered to students in grades 6 through 12. This includes students from public and private schools with one or more grades in this range (e.g., K-6, 6-8, 6-12, 7-12, 9-12, and 10-12).

**Q. What is the sample size and how are schools selected?**

A. A random sample of approximately {#} schools has been selected to participate in the {Year} NYTS. The probability of a school being selected is based on enrollment in grades 6 through 12. One or two classes (about 25 to 50 students) from each grade 6 through 12 will be selected randomly to take part in each school. Approximately 100 to 200 students are asked to participate in a school containing grades 9 through 12. In a school with grades 6 through 8, approximately 75 to 150 students are asked to participate.

**Q. How is the {Year} NYTS coordinated at each school? What role does school staff play?**

A. It is preferable to have a single spokesperson in each school. This can be the principal, another administrator, a teacher, or someone else designated by the principal. The spokesperson provides a list of class sections, distributes parental permission forms to teachers of the sampled classes, follows up to ensure permission forms have been distributed to students, helps to promote the survey in the school, and ensures a high student participation rate. Teachers assist with tracking parental permission forms. Teachers generally are not asked to administer the survey except for make-ups with students absent during the initial survey administration.

**Q. What is done to maximize student participation?**

A. CDC provides information to school administrators explaining the importance of the NYTS that can be shared with teachers, parents, and students. It is helpful if the school's spokesperson for the NYTS is familiar with the survey and is willing to seek support from teachers, parents, and students. The school spokesperson may work through the school's PTA to gain support for the survey. Many schools also notify parents of the survey in the school newsletter.

- Q. What is the relationship between this national survey and similar surveys being conducted by state and local education and health agencies?**
- A. Many states and local education and health agencies use the same or a similar questionnaire to conduct their own state Youth Tobacco Survey (YTS). Nearly all states have conducted their own YTS at least once. Some states will conduct a YTS during spring {Year} in parallel with the {Year} NYTS.
- Q. Why can't a youth tobacco survey conducted by a state and/or local education/health agency be used to arrive at national estimates?**
- A. Many state and/or local education/health agencies regularly conduct their own school-based YTS. However, the sampling procedures and questionnaires vary. Thus, it is not possible to combine results from these surveys, even if every state participated.
- Q. What if a school is selected to be in a state or local YTS as well as the NYTS?**
- A. Every effort is made to avoid asking a school to participate in the state or local YTS and NYTS in the same school year. The CDC works collaboratively with each state to identify schools selected for both state and national surveys. Normally, agreement is reached that either the national or the state survey will be administered in the school.
- Q. How long does it take to fill out the questionnaire? Is there some sort of physical test?**
- A. One class period is needed to complete the self-administered questionnaire. It takes approximately 10 minutes for the survey administrator to distribute survey materials and read directions to the students. It then takes approximately 35 minutes for students to record their responses. The questionnaire contains approximately {#} multiple-choice questions. No physical test or exam is involved.
- Q. Can state and local education and health agencies conducting their own YTS obtain a waiver from the NYTS?**
- A. No. This action would jeopardize the selection of a nationally representative sample of all students in grades 6 through 12. To develop valid national estimates, every state, school district, school, and student in grades 6 through 12 nationwide must have a chance to be selected as a survey participant. Otherwise, survey results will be biased. The burden for a state participating in the NYTS is low because of the small number of schools and students selected to participate in each state.
- Q. Do students answer questions truthfully?**
- A. Research indicates data of this nature may be gathered as reliably from adolescents as from adults. Internal reliability checks help identify the small percentage of students who falsify their answers. To obtain truthful answers, students must perceive the survey as important and know procedures have been developed to protect their privacy and allow for anonymous participation.
- Q. When is the survey conducted? When are results available?**
- A. Data collection is scheduled to start in {Month} and continue through {Month}. Results are published the following year. All participating states, school districts, and schools will be notified when the report is available for download.

**Q. What do the schools receive for participating in the {Year} NYTS?**

A. As a symbol of appreciation for contributing their time and support and for being a significant partner in the {Year} NYTS effort, the CDC will provide each participating school with a monetary award. One option is to use these funds for prevention curriculum and educational materials. However, no restrictions will be placed on how schools may use these funds.

**Q. Who is the survey contractor for the {Year} NYTS?**

A. ICF International, a nationally recognized survey research company in Rockville, Maryland, is contracted by CDC to work with states, school districts, and schools to help obtain clearance, select a sample of students, schedule data collection, distribute survey materials, and collect student data.

**Q. Whom may I call to obtain additional information and/or make arrangements for data collection in my school?**

A. To obtain additional information and/or arrange for the NYTS to be conducted in your school, call the {Year} NYTS information line *toll-free*: 1-800-675-9727. Someone will be available to help make arrangements for your school between 8:30 a.m. and 5:00 p.m. Eastern time. If no one is available, please leave a message and someone will return your call promptly.

Inquiries to CDC should be directed to Mr. René Arrazola, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, Office on Smoking and Health, 4770 Buford Highway NE, MS-F79, Atlanta, GA 30341; email at [RArrazola@cdc.gov](mailto:RArrazola@cdc.gov) or telephone at 770-488-2414.