

## NYTS Pilot 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 sixty schools randomly selected across the United States to participate in the in the 2017 National Youth Tobacco Survey Pilot Study (NYTS Pilot) sponsored by the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). The pilot study will be conducted in parallel to the National Youth Tobacco Survey (NYTS), and will examine the feasibility of transitioning from a paper-and-pencil questionnaire to a tablet-based administration. Transitioning to a computer based survey may reduce respondent burden in the future.

As witnessed over the past few decades, youth tobacco use can increase or decrease rapidly, especially with the introduction of new tobacco products that appeal to youth. The CDC reported that from 2001 to 2015, cigarette smoking declined among middle and high school students while the use of electronic cigarettes and hookahs increased among the same population. Efforts such as the NYTS have increased our ability to measure changes in tobacco use behaviors and their influences, thereby enabling states, school districts, schools, and community organizations to adapt their tobacco prevention and control programs to combat the most prevailing issues at hand.

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 NYTS was designed in cooperation with Federal agencies and numerous state and local departments of education and health. Each cycle has produced valuable data regarding students' knowledge of and attitudes toward tobacco; their exposure to secondhand smoke; and their exposure to influences that promote or discourage tobacco use.

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. Data collection will occur during February through May 2017. Questionnaires, administered via computer tablets, will be administered during one normal class period by specially trained field staff. Computer tablets will be provided for use during the survey administration. 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. The selected grades and the number of classes are as follows:

**Grade (# of classes)**

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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.

Enclosed are copies of the NYTS Pilot questionnaires, sample parental permission forms, a survey fact sheet, and letters of support from national health and education organizations. Within one week, a representative from ICF International, a nationally recognized survey research firm, will contact you. If you have any immediate questions, please call Jill Trott of ICF International at (800) 919-8980. 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,

Linda Neff  
Branch Chief  
Office on Smoking and Health  
National Centers for Chronic Disease Prevention and Health Promotion  
Centers for Disease Control and Prevention

Enclosures

cc:

# **2017 NATIONAL YOUTH TOBACCO SURVEY PILOT STUDY (NYTS PILOT) FACT SHEET FOR SCHOOLS**

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 an annual 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 2017 National Youth Tobacco Survey Pilot Study (NYTS Pilot), and the NYTS, in general. The 2017 NYTS Pilot will be conducted in parallel with the 2017 NYTS and is designed to examine the feasibility of transitioning from a paper-and-pencil questionnaire to a tablet-based administration.

**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: (1) prevalence of use (electronic cigarettes, cigarettes, cigars, smokeless tobacco, 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.

**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, and annually from 2011-2016. The 2017 NYTS represents the twelfth progress measurement. This is the first pilot study of the NYTS.

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

A. A core priority of CDC's Office on 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 Association of School Administrators, American Cancer Society, American Heart Association, 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, Legacy, 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, National School Boards Association, and SHAPE America – Society of Health and Physical Educators.

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

A. The purpose of the NYTS Pilot Study is to examine the feasibility of transitioning the historically paper-and-pencil questionnaire to a tablet-based administration. The use of an electronic collection

format will also allow for the introduction a programmed skip-pattern. Transitioning to a computer based survey may reduce respondent burden in the future,

**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 will complete the questionnaire using a computer tablet; no personal identifiers will be collected. Students not participating in the survey are provided with an alternative activity by their school. Published reports do not include names of participating states, school districts, schools, or students.

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

A. No. Students who participated cannot be tracked because no identifying information is collected.

**Q. Will the school be expected to provide tablets or computers for the survey administration?**

A. No. We will bring the tablets to the school for use during the survey administration.

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

A. Participation in the NYTS Pilot is voluntary. However, to accurately assess the feasibility of the tablet-based administration, 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 2017 NYTS will be administered to students in grades 6 through 12. This includes students from public, Catholic, 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 60 schools has been selected to participate in the 2017 NYTS Pilot. 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 2017 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 are not asked to administer the survey.

**Q. 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 2017 in parallel with the 2017 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 Pilot?**

A. The CDC works collaboratively with each state to identify schools selected for both state and national surveys and to reduce the burden on these schools when possible.

**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 tablet-based 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 83 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 Pilot?**

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 February and continue through May. 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 2017 NYTS Pilot Study?**

A. As a symbol of appreciation for contributing their time and support and for being a significant partner in the 2017 NYTS Pilot Study 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 2017 NYTS Pilot Study?**

A. ICF International, a nationally recognized survey research company in Rockville, Maryland, with work with school districts and schools to help obtain clearance, select a sample of students, and schedule data collection. Deloitte Consulting, LLC, a nationally recognized survey research company in Fairfax, Virginia, will 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 Pilot Study to be conducted in your school, call the 2017 NYTS Pilot information line *toll-free*: 1-800-919-8980. 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 Dr. Sean Hu, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, Office on Smoking and Health, 4770 Buford Highway, MS F-79, Atlanta, GA 30341; email at [shu@cdc.gov](mailto:shu@cdc.gov) or telephone at 770-488-5845.