



[DATE]

[Principal Prefix] [Principal First] [Principal Last]  
[School Name]  
[School Street Address]  
[School City, State ZIP]

Dear [Principal Title] [Last Name]:

I am writing to inform you that your school is among the approximately 365 schools randomly selected across the United States to participate in the 2021 National Youth Tobacco Survey (NYTS), sponsored by the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC).

Preventing tobacco product use among youth is critical to ending the tobacco epidemic in the United States. Youth use of tobacco products in any form is unsafe. The Surgeon General has written that while considerable progress has been made in reducing cigarette smoking among U.S. youth, the tobacco product landscape continues to evolve to include a variety of new types of products, including electronic vapor products such as e-cigarettes. These products typically contain nicotine, which is highly addictive, can harm the developing adolescent brain, and can prime the brain for addition to other drugs. 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 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 (electronic cigarettes, cigarettes, cigars, smokeless tobacco, hookahs, pipe tobacco, and bidis) (2) knowledge and attitudes, (3) media and advertising, (4) minors' access and enforcement, (5) school curriculum, (6) secondhand smoke exposure, and (7) cessation. 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.

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 at your school and the number of classes are as follows:

**[6th (#), 7th (#), 8th (#), 9th (#), 10th (#), 11th (#), 12th (#)]**

Data collection will occur during late January through May 2021. Specially trained field staff will bring all the materials necessary to administer the survey, via tablet, during one normal class period. 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 your time and support, CDC will provide your 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 your school 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 YTS 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, sample parental permission forms, and study fact sheets. Within one week, a representative from ICF, a nationally recognized research firm contracted by CDC to conduct the NYTS, will contact you to confirm your receipt of this information and answer any questions you may have. If you have any immediate questions, please call Alice Roberts at 1-800-675-9727. Your support for this survey, which will help assess and improve efforts to reduce priority health-risk behaviors among adolescents throughout our nation, is appreciated.

Sincerely yours,



Linda J. Neff, PhD, MSPH  
Chief, Epidemiology Branch, Office on Smoking and Health  
National Center for Chronic Disease Prevention and Health Promotion  
Centers for Disease Control and Prevention

Enclosures

cc: Sean Hu, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention  
Alice Roberts, ICF  
Jill Trott, ICF  
<ICF RECRUITER>, ICF  
<STATE HEALTH PRE-CONTACT>, <AGENCY>  
<STATE EDUCATION PRE-CONTACT>, <AGENCY>

# 2021 NATIONAL YOUTH TOBACCO SURVEY (NYTS) 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 and nicotine related beliefs, attitudes, and behaviors, and exposure to influences that promote or discourage tobacco and nicotine use among students in grades 6 through 12. This fact sheet answers important questions about the 2021 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 and nicotine related topics: (1) prevalence of use (electronic cigarettes, cigarettes, cigars, smokeless tobacco, hookahs, pipe tobacco, and bidis), (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 2011-2020. The 2021 NYTS represents the seventeenth progress measurement.

**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 and nicotine 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. Are sensitive questions asked?**

A. Students will be asked specifically about electronic cigarettes, cigarettes, cigars, smokeless tobacco, hookahs, pipe tobacco, and bidis. Some students may consider some questions sensitive, especially those asking about content with which they are not familiar, such as pipes, snus, or dissolvable tobacco. The survey relates to students' attitudes, behaviors, and knowledge about tobacco and nicotine use, intent to use, exposure to tobacco and nicotine products, and exposure to tobacco and nicotine 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, who on the day of survey administration will provide each participating student with a tablet to use to complete the questionnaire. Students log into the secure survey application using a unique, randomly-generated five-digit access code. Students will not provide any personal identifiers, and the survey follows a skip-pattern logic based on the student's responses. Similar safeguards are used to complete make-ups, which can be conducted at school over the Internet. 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. 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 2021 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 365 schools has been selected to participate in the 2021 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 2021 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 and administering make-up surveys to 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 2021 in parallel with the 2021 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 states 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. The CDC works collaboratively with each state to identify schools selected for both state and national surveys to reduce the burden on these schools when possible.
- 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. How long does it take to complete the questionnaire? Is there some sort of physical test?**
- A. One class period is needed to complete the self-administered, tablet-based, multiple choice questionnaire. It takes approximately 5 minutes for the survey administrator to read instructions and distribute the tablets to the students. It then takes approximately 20 minutes for students to record and submit their responses. No physical test or exam is involved.
- 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 late-January 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 2021 NYTS?**
- A. As a symbol of appreciation for contributing their time and support and for being a significant partner in the 2021 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 2021 NYTS?**

A. ICF, 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 2021 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 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 [fik4@cdc.gov](mailto:fik4@cdc.gov), or telephone at (770) 488-5845.