What is the Healthy Kids Colorado Survey (HKCS)?
The HKCS is a paper survey that collects anonymous information from students in 6th to 12th grades about health-related attitudes and behaviors, including: unintentional injuries and violence; mental health; school safety and physical fighting; tobacco and other substance use; physical activity and nutrition; sexual behaviors (high school only); basic demographic information such as age; and risk and protective factors. The survey is administered every two years to randomly selected schools. In 2013, over 40,000 students participated from over 220 middle and high schools.

How do Colorado communities benefit from HKCS data?
- Provides state and regional estimates of a wide range of youth health behaviors, that are comparable to national estimates
- Tracks trends in behaviors at state, regional and local levels over time
- Increases public awareness about health and behavior issues that impact youth
- Provides support for healthier learning environments through school health education policies and programs
- Educates leaders to shape effective public policy
- Brings funding into our state and local communities
- Informs program planning and grant applications

Grants that utilize HKCS data include:
- Safe Schools/Healthy Students
- Title IV 21st Century Schools
- Drug Free Communities
- Persistent Drunk Driving
- Chronic Disease Prevention Grants

How will HKCS benefit a participating school?
- Each school receives a report with its own results. The school can choose to share these data with other organizations in the community or not.
- Results can be used to support grant applications, needs assessments and program planning.

Who funds the HKCS?
Three state agencies have combined their funds to pay for the HKCS: the Colorado Department of Education, the Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment, and the Health and Human Services Office of Behavioral Health. Beginning in 2014, Marijuana Cash Tax funding was provided to allow any school in Colorado that wishes to participate to do so, free of charge.
What should our school do to prepare for the survey?
The process is simple. Districts and schools selected in the 2015 state sample will be notified in the spring/fall of 2015. If your school is selected, the first thing that your school can do after agreeing to participate is appoint a school survey coordinator. Once the school coordinator is selected, a HKCS team member will coordinate classroom selection, parental notification/consent, and classroom packet distribution and collection. If your school or district is not selected in the state sample, you may still participate, free of charge. Please contact the HKCS team to begin the survey process.

Why should randomly selected schools participate?
The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and other public health agencies require survey participation rates to be high before they view statewide results as credible. If a school declines to participate, it cannot be replaced. Your school’s participation helps Colorado seek some types of federal funding, which are often passed along to individual schools.

Is participation confidential?
Yes, for both students and schools! Students do not provide personal identifying information. Teachers follow protocols to protect confidentiality while the survey is being completed, such as not walking around the classroom, having students insert completed surveys directly into the return mailing envelope, and sealing the return envelope in the presence of students. Individual data are never released, only summaries of combined data. Participating schools are not identified in any public release information. Schools that do participate receive their own report and decide for themselves how the results are used. Outside requests for school or district level data must be approved by the school or district before the HKCS team will release the data.

How much will the surveying cost?
Beginning in the fall of 2015, all Colorado public middle and high schools can participate in the HKCS free of charge.

How long does the survey take?
The HKCS takes a single class period. The time to distribute the surveys in class, providing directions to the students, and complete and return the surveys typically takes about 45 minutes.

How many classrooms/students will be selected?
One to eight classrooms per grade will be selected, depending on school enrollment size.

Why does the HKCS ask about sensitive topics (like sex or drugs)?
Information about these behaviors helps Colorado provide resources and education necessary to prevent unhealthy behaviors and promote healthy behaviors. Students who complete the survey are instructed beforehand that their answers are completely anonymous and that they may skip any questions they do not feel comfortable answering.

Can answering the survey questions influence students to try unhealthy behaviors?
There is no research evidence to suggest that health surveys influence youth behavior or experimentation in unhealthy behaviors. This holds true even after repeated administration of the questionnaire. It’s reassuring to know that many health-related behaviors – including sexual behaviors, tobacco use, and some forms of violence – have declined since 1991, at the same time that youth survey activities have increased nationwide.
Can I obtain a copy of the HKCS survey instrument?
Yes. It's online at [www.HealthyKidsColo.org](http://www.HealthyKidsColo.org). We are also happy to send you a copy electronically or by regular mail.

Is parental consent required for HKCS?
Colorado law requires informed parental consent for surveying youth in schools. The requirement is met when parents are informed that their student has been asked to participate in a survey and given the option to opt the child out of participation. HKCS prefers to use this process, which is commonly known as “passive consent.” Schools should follow their district policy regarding survey consent. Unless your local policy requires something different, we recommend passive consent to minimize administrative burden on the schools, maintain student confidentiality, and increase response rates. Examples of both consent forms are available at [www.HealthyKidsColo.org](http://www.HealthyKidsColo.org).

Does the HKCS have an IRB review?
Yes. The University of Colorado Denver Anschutz Medical Campus obtains approval from the Colorado Multiple Institutional Review Board before administering the survey. It is also reviewed by the Educational Data Advisory Committee.

Do we have to participate?
Participation in the survey is not required, but your school's participation is needed for Colorado to obtain valid health information representing the whole student population in Colorado.

Why is our school always randomly selected?
We need to collect a representative sample from each health statistics region in Colorado. Health statistic regions differ in a variety of ways including size, population, and number of schools and districts within the region. All of these things can affect how schools are randomly selected.

If I have any further questions, who can I contact?
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