

Student Health Survey (SHS) Parental Notification Letter and Fact Sheet

Dear Parent/Guardian:

Our school is participating in the Student Health Survey (SHS), a survey sponsored by the Oregon Health Authority Public Health Division and the Oregon Department of Education. The survey asks about health risk behaviors of students in grades 6, 8 and 11. The survey will be conducted online in the classroom and includes questions about student health and safety, mental and behavioral health, school climate and culture, and risk and protective factors.

Taking the Student Health Survey poses minimal risk to your child, who may feel embarrassed or uncomfortable answering some of the questions. Survey procedures have been designed to protect your child's privacy and allow for anonymous participation. If your child is not comfortable answering a question, he or she can leave it blank. While we encourage all students to participate, the decision to participate is voluntary. You may opt to send a refusal for your child's participation. Your child will have the chance to refuse at the time of the survey. There will be no action against you or your child if your child does not participate.

If you do not wish your child to take this survey, return this form to the principal's office before November 7th. You only need to return this form if you do not wish your child to participate.

Please see the other side of this form for more information. You can review the survey document at the principal's office before the survey date. The survey is also available on the Oregon Health Authority (OHA) Public Health [Student Health Survey](http://healthoregon.org/shs) website for you to review before the survey date at: healthoregon.org/shs

If you have other specific questions about the survey, please feel free to call your students school.



I have read and understand that I need to complete, sign and return this form to the school front office if I do **not** want my child to take the Student Health Survey.

[] My child does **not** have my permission to participate in this survey.

Student's Name: Grade:

Telephone Number: Date:

Signature of Parent or Guardian:

If you do **not** wish your child to take this survey, return this form to the principal's office before November 7th.

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Q: What is the goal of the Student Health Survey?

A. The Student Health Survey (SHS) is a collaborative effort with the Oregon Department of Education to improve the health and well-being of all Oregon students. Good health is an essential educational tool. No curriculum can overcome a hungry stomach or distracted mind. Trauma, hunger, mental health challenges, bullying and lack of access to medical care make it difficult for Oregon youth to reach their full potential.

Research shows that healthy students earn higher grades and test scores. They are also less likely to skip school, drop out or engage in risky behaviors. The Student Health Survey is the only source of statewide data that gives a snapshot of how students are doing physically, emotionally and socially to guide public health policy decisions.

Q: Will anyone know my child's answers?

A.: **No.** Your child's privacy (and yours) are protected. The SHS is an anonymous and confidential survey. We do not ask for any identifying information, and it not possible to link survey responses to a particular student, parent or family.

Q: How can I see the questions you're asking?

A: A copy of the questionnaires are available on the [SHS website](http://healthoregon.org/shs): healthoregon.org/shs or at the school's front office.

There are different questionnaires for 6th, 8th and 11th grade that contain age-appropriate questions. The SHS asks about topics that directly impact students' health and well-being, including:

- Support at school
- Positive youth development
- Emerging public health issues, such as climate change and social media use
- Food insecurity, nutrition and exercise
- Physical, emotional and mental health
- Injury prevention
- Sexual health relating to preventing unintended pregnancies and STIs
- Substance use (e-cigarettes, tobacco, alcohol, marijuana and prescription drugs)
- Demographics, including race, ethnicity and sexual and gender identity

Q: Does asking these questions encourage the behavior/put kids at risk?

A. **No.** The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) states that there is no evidence that asking students about health risk behaviors encourages that behavior. Some of the questions may be considered sensitive. Questions are age-appropriate and presented in a straightforward and sensitive manner. Students can choose not to answer any question that may make them uncomfortable.

Q: What if I don't want my child to participate?

A. We respect parents' decisions and have made it easy to opt your child out of the survey. Simply fill in the bottom of the parental notification letter (on the front of this letter), sign it and return it to the school's front office. The school will make sure your child does not take the survey.