

GUIDEBOOK TO THE CALIFORNIA SCHOOL CLIMATE, HEALTH, & LEARNING SURVEYS



ADMINISTRATION INSTRUCTIONS

2011–12 EDITION

Healthy Kids School Climate
SURVEYS

WestEd 



school climate, health & learning
CALIFORNIA SURVEY SYSTEM

The California Healthy Kids Survey—along with the California School Climate Survey and the California School Parent Survey—is part of the comprehensive Cal-SCHLS data system, developed for the California Department of Education.



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PURPOSE OF THE GUIDEBOOK

This guidebook is designed to ensure that the survey administration process of the students, staff, and parents as efficiently and problem free as possible. The California School Climate, Healthy, and Learning Surveys (Cal-SCHLS) encompass three individual surveys known as the California Healthy Kids Survey (CHKS), the California School Climate Survey (CSCS) for staff, and the California School Parent Survey (CSPS). Every effort has been made to minimize local survey responsibilities and costs, but there are still steps and details involved in successfully conducting the survey. Step-by-step, this guidebook describes the tasks that need to be performed and offers strategies to help you along the way. There are two sections:

- » The first section lists common tasks necessary for all three surveys.
- » The second section presents detailed tasks for the student survey, the most complex, including sampling, parent consent, etc.

In the Appendix is a Survey Planning Checklist that lists all common steps.

Common Tasks for the Student, Staff, and Parent Surveys

TASK 1: CONTACT A SURVEY TECHNICAL ADVISOR PROVIDER

The first task is to contact one of the Technical Advisors to discuss your survey options and begin the planning and scheduling process. Calling 1-888-841-7536 can access the Cal-SCHLS Regional Technical Assistance Center. In addition, information and surveys are available at cal-schls.wested.org from which you can access individual survey websites

TASK 2: IDENTIFY DISTRICT SURVEY COORDINATOR

Identify a District Coordinator who will be responsible for planning and administering the CAL-SCHLS at all participating schools in the district. It is essential for the District Coordinator to regularly monitor and make frequent follow-up calls to check on the status of each task at each school, and to stay in contact with Technical Advisors. Checklists for survey tasks, along with a timeline, are provided in the Appendix. Each task on this checklist corresponds to the common survey tasks listed in the remainder of this guidebook.

TASK 3: OBTAIN SUPERINTENDENT AND SCHOOL BOARD APPROVAL

In most districts, the surveys will require authorization from the district superintendent and/or the school board. Even if this is not required, keep them informed about the surveys and obtain their support—they are often the people who will receive calls from parents and reporters. A letter of support from the superintendent is useful for encouraging principal, school staff, and parent participation. In particular, this group will need to know the survey content (i.e., sensitive questions), procedures for protecting parents' and pupils' rights (including a draft consent form), and the costs to the district. The Frequently Asked Questions, available online at chks.wested.org, may help you respond to their likely concerns.

In addition to superintendent and School Board approval, check to see if you need survey approval from an Institutional Review Board.

TASK 4: FORM ADVISORY COMMITTEE

An advisory committee of influential school and community leaders can be a tremendous advantage in planning and conducting the surveys, and in determining how to address the needs that are identified. It may be especially valuable in addressing local concerns that need to be taken into consideration.

The basis for such a group should already exist. Make sure there is broad representation from stakeholders such as the following:

- » Students, teachers, principals, School Site Council members, and other individuals who will be involved in the survey process;
- » School board members and the district superintendent;
- » Key district administrators, such as the Title I or other categorical program directors, the director of curriculum and instruction, and the director of pupil support; or
- » Parents and key religious, medical, and business leaders, law enforcement, and elected public officials.

TASK 5: DETERMINE GOALS AND DATA NEEDS

All three surveys are designed to be responsive to local needs and standards. Work with your advisory committee and superintendent to identify the main survey objectives and potential data uses, as well as local concerns and issues that need to be taken into consideration.

You don't have to have immediate answers for every question, issue, or problem surrounding the surveys that emerges at this time. But you do need to start thinking about them and formulate tentative answers or recommendations that you can present to stakeholders and survey participants.

Among the questions you should discuss are:

- » Since you have the option of including your own, custom, local questions, discuss whether your district may want to add them.
- » Whether you have school-specific data needs
- » What stakeholders you need to involve in survey planning
- » Who should be asked to take the surveys beyond the minimum requirement
- » Tentative administration dates

TASK 6: SELECT METHOD OF ADMINISTRATION

All three surveys may be administered on paper or online. The print versions of the surveys vary in format. Because of their length and the need to have flexibility for customization and use of different modules, the student and staff surveys use scannable answer forms separate from the questionnaire. For convenience, and because of the short length, the printed parent survey is a single scannable booklet (questions and answer form together). Note, that only the Core Module of the student survey is available for online administration.

There are pros and cons to each method:

- » **For students**, online survey administration may not be feasible in large districts/schools because of the lack of enough computers in locations that can ensure controlled administration with confidentiality.
- » **For staff**, we strongly urge using only online surveys. Online administration offers many conveniences; particularly that staff can even do it at home. Most staff have computer access and this speeds survey administration and data processing, and reduces costs. But for some districts, providing staff with printed forms has been shown to improve response rates.
- » **For parents**, both forms may need to be offered to parents. The best option may be to provide parents with paper forms and let them know that there is an online version. Printed forms are especially recommended because many parents don't have online computer access, but the online option should also be offered for those who find it more convenient. One of the virtues of online administration is that parents can take it from any computer, anywhere. However, make this as convenient as possible at the school. If computers are limited, dedicate one computer or a specific time when computers will be available for parents to use.

TASK 7: SELECT THE SAMPLES AND SUBMIT COUNTS

One of the first survey planning steps is to determine who will be included in the survey and to submit to the Technical Advisor a list of schools and for each school the estimated number of students, staff, and parents that will be asked to complete the survey.

Students

Most districts will need to survey all students in each recommended grade in all their schools to have representative data. Larger districts may request that a Technical Advisor develop a sampling plan; however, sampling is not required and districts may choose to survey all students in the selected grades, particularly if they would like school-level reports. See Task 17 for detailed information regarding selecting the sample and classrooms.

Staff

All staff within a school and district should be given the staff survey. This is especially important, first, to have confidence that there is no bias in the results, that the results truly representative or valid of staff perceptions. Second, it helps preserve the confidentiality of those that do complete the survey. Limiting the survey to just certain grades may threaten anonymity as it might be possible to identify the responses of certain teachers, especially in small schools. Perceptions of the school climate and learning barriers/supports may also vary by grade and subject.

As discussed above, even if the student survey is not conducted in all grades, the staff survey should be conducted:

- » In all the schools conducting the CHKS for students;
- » To all teachers, administrators, and other certificated staff working in each school, including paraprofessionals and aides, regardless of grade;
- » To all personnel working in the areas of counseling, health, prevention, and safety.

Staff Who Work at Multiple Sites. Staff working at multiple sites should be counted in the target sample at all sites. It is up to the individual staff person to decide for which sites they will fill out surveys. They should not fill out a survey if they don't think they work at that site enough to answer the questions. Similarly, it may be inappropriate for off-site staff such as bus drivers and district personnel to take the survey, as they are not tied to a specific school site. If you have questions about whether to include certain staff in your survey, contact your Technical Advisors.

Parents

The CSPS is generally offered to all parents, guardians, or other caregivers in a school or district, even if the student survey is only in selected grades. Sampling a smaller population presents serious technical obstacles, although it can be discussed with Technical Advisors. Only one survey should be completed for each child in a school. It can be filled out by parents together or just by one of them. If a parent has more than one child at a school site, the parent is instructed to complete one survey per child.

TASK 8: SUBMIT MEMORANDUM OF UNDERSTANDING

Districts that administer any one of the Healthy Kids School Climate Surveys are required to sign a MOU that includes a Confidentiality Agreement. The MOU outlines the responsibilities of both the district staff and the Technical Advisors and the conditions that must be met in administering the survey.

TASK 9: OBTAIN SUPPORT OF PRINCIPALS AND IDENTIFY SCHOOL COORDINATORS

Send out letters and information packets to the principals. Include the letters of support you obtained from the superintendent and other stakeholders.

Meet with all the principals personally to answer their questions and obtain their support. Emphasize how important it is that they strongly communicate the value of the survey(s) and their expectations that teachers will fully support it and comply with all procedures. The most successful surveys have occurred when the school administration has clearly expressed its expectations for success to the staff.

For large districts, have each principal identify one person to serve as the School Coordinator. Even in small districts, it is good to have one person at each school to be an onsite survey spokesperson, encouraging support, making sure participating teachers are well-informed, and monitoring the consent process. Give each School Coordinator a copy of the School Instructions for survey administration which you can download from chks.wested.org and identify a training date. It's best if these coordinators meet for a brief training about their role in the survey, as is discussed under survey preparation.

TASK 10: SELECT SURVEY DATES

Establish a general time period in which you will administer the surveys. Then work with the School Coordinators to set up specific, convenient dates for each school.

Student, staff, and parent surveys don't have to be administered all on the same days, but they should be administered in as short of time period as possible and in close proximity (e.g., within two weeks). On a practical level, this will save time and effort. There will be efficiency in distributing survey materials and monitoring response rates. This will also help to engender broad awareness of, and enthusiasm for, the survey across stakeholders. This will help engender higher participation in all three groups in a synergistic effect, and thus help improve the quality of the data. It will also make the student survey easier to conduct by enhancing staff awareness and support.

Student Survey Issues

Start by selecting the date(s) for the student survey, as it involves the most planning. The date selected may affect student participation and survey results in several ways. In general, select dates that do not conflict with other school activities, particularly testing and field trips. Use the following guidelines:

- » **Fall Surveys.** October through December is a good time because parent consent can be more easily obtained by sending forms out with registration materials at the beginning of the school year. These are also usually months in when you are less likely to conflict with scheduled testing.
- » **Spring Surveys.** Administer the survey no later than April to avoid busy school schedules and decreased attendance rates, particularly by 12th-grade students, at the end of the school year. Surveys conducted in the spring may result in higher prevalence rates for some risk behaviors and school climate indicators, as they increase as students age and the school year progresses.
- » **Holiday Periods.** Avoid administration after a long school break—particularly right after the winter holiday—because students may increase their drug use and other health-risk behaviors during these periods. This particularly will affect thirty-day prevalence rates.
- » **Special Events.** Do not administer the survey during a special event.
- » **Poor Attendance Days.** Avoid administering the survey on the following days because attendance may be unusually low: any *Monday or Friday* (especially a Friday before a Monday holiday); the day right before or after *spring break*; and the *last month* of school.

TASK 11: ENCOURAGE SURVEY PARTICIPATION

Participation by students, staff, and parents is voluntary. However, it is important to encourage a high survey participation (response) rate to avoid a biased sample (i.e., ensure that the data is representative). The first step is to

engender a thorough understanding of the value of the survey and the need for participation throughout the school-community. You should:

- » Conduct all three surveys around the same time (see Task 10 above).
- » Thoroughly inform students, staff, and parents about the survey's purpose, value, and procedures well in advance of administration. Use multiple venues (newsletters, meetings etc.)
- » Provide the letter of support from the superintendent or school board.
- » Have the principal encourage participation at a staff and parent meeting.
- » Make survey completion as easy as possible. Often this means providing both online and print options.
- » Frequently remind them of the survey dates

Among the points to stress are:

- » The value of the survey data for: (1) addressing the needs of students that are barriers to learning and overall well-being, (2) improving school safety and both learning and teaching conditions, and, ultimately, (3) improving school attendance, academic performance, and graduation.
- » The opportunity it provides students, staff, and parents to communicate confidentially their perceptions and concerns about the school and its environment in a neutral context, as neither the school nor district is being rated or evaluated based on the results.
- » How you will report back the results to the school-community and involve them in reviewing the results and using the data for school involvement. Make sure students, staff, and parents all are aware that the school/district will take their data very seriously and involve them in the process of addressing their needs. This communicates that taking the survey is worth their time.

Parent Issues. Ensuring parent participation is especially challenging. Stress the convenience, simplicity, and brevity of the survey. For printed surveys, send them home with the student consent forms (see Task 3) and include a check-off box on the form indicating that they received it. Give them many options for dropping off completed survey forms.

Staff Issues. Encouraging staff enthusiasm for the survey is also important for the essential task of monitoring student consent and will help ensure high levels of participation. Staff need to carefully monitor this process to ensure that students are not inadvertently surveyed without parent consent. Making sure they take the survey seriously as important will help insure that this happens. Also, the assurance of anonymity and confidentiality is an important point to make among staff so that they feel that the survey is an opportunity to provide input about school climate.

Student Issues. The first step in ensuring high student participation rates is obtaining high parental consent rates (see Task 3).

TASK 12: MAKE THE SURVEYS AVAILABLE IN ADVANCE FOR PUBLIC VIEWING

As a requirement of informed consent (whether active or passive) and the Protection of Pupil Rights Act, the student survey must be *conveniently* available for staff and parents to review. This also helps allay concerns about the survey content.

This survey must be the actual version that is being administered by your district, including all the modules that the district has selected and any additional questions that it has included. If the content changes after parental notification, parents must be informed of this.

You should post your survey version on your own district website. However, because many people don't have Internet access you must also make it conveniently available at the district office.

Similarly posting the staff and parent surveys shows transparency and allows staff and parents to see how the three surveys are related.

TASK 13: DISTRIBUTE SURVEY MATERIALS

The District Coordinator will be sent all survey materials via mail or email for distribution to the individual schools.

Student

Online Surveys. Survey administration materials will be sent to the District Coordinator via mail or email. The materials will include school-specific login and passwords which will need to be distributed to school coordinators. This document has two blanks for the District Coordinator to fill in with the coordinator's contact information and the date(s) of the survey. Coordinators will also receive the *CHKS for Student Participation Form* which is designed to track the number of students who have permission and the number of participating students. The *CHKS for Student Participation Form* will need to be returned when all students have completed the online survey.

Paper Surveys. The District Coordinator will receive scannable answer sheets and transmittal envelopes for the number of students requested in Task 7. It is the district's responsibility to produce the student surveys. More detailed information about student survey administration can be found in the following section starting at Task 17.

Staff

Online Surveys. Survey administration materials will be sent to the District Coordinator via mail or email. This will include a master letter (*Survey Instructions for Staff*) for each participating school containing the school name, a school-specific login and password, and instructions on how to fill out the survey online. It has two blanks for the District Coordinator to fill in with the coordinator's contact information and the date the survey window should open. Copy the letters and distribute one to each staff member at each site; e.g., put them in staff mailboxes or distributing at staff meetings. Staff should follow the instructions and fill out the survey online, from any computer.

Paper Surveys. District Coordinators will receive answer sheets for each staff person requested in Task 7. It is the district's responsibility to produce the same number of surveys. Distribute the surveys and answer sheets (e.g., put them in staff mailboxes or distributing at staff meetings) with the *Survey Instructions for Staff* which contains

rationale and instructions for the survey. It also has two blanks for the District Coordinator to fill in with the coordinator's contact information and the date by which the survey should be completed and submitted.

Parents.

Online Surveys. Survey administration materials will be sent to the District Coordinator via mail or email. The materials will include school-specific login and passwords which will need to be distributed to school coordinators. If you are doing an online-only survey, administration consists of getting the survey website address to all parents. Several strategies exist to accomplish this, including multiple direct mailings (a postcard can often suffice), sending notices home with children, posting notices at the school, through the school newsletter, and announcements and handouts at public meetings.

Paper Surveys. Administration of the paper survey is more challenging, because forms must get out to the parents, as well as back to the school or district. Two things to keep in mind when administering the parent survey: 1) Use multiple strategies and 2) provide return envelopes so the surveys can be returned anonymously. Some tested strategies are listed below:

Use multiple options to get surveys to parents.

- » Direct mailings.
- » Consider assigning someone, perhaps a parent volunteer, to hand out surveys during school drop-off and pick-up.
- » Send home with the student along with the parent consent form .
- » Passing surveys out during parent meetings or during other school events.

Use multiple options to let parents return surveys.

- » Use a postage paid return envelope for surveys you mail out.
- » Consider assigning someone, perhaps a parent volunteer, to collect surveys during school. drop-off and pick-up.
- » Send to school with the student in a sealed envelope.
- » Provide a drop-off box.

TASK 14: ENSURE CONFIDENTIALITY DURING ADMINISTRATION

Regardless of what survey administration method is selected, the conditions under which the survey is administered must preserve respondent privacy and the confidentiality of the responses. If administered to multiple people in large rooms, ensure that the set up prevents anyone from observing how the respondent is answering the question. This is particularly a concern for use of large-screen monitors in conducting the survey online.

TASK 15: MONITOR SURVEY COMPLETION

Monitoring survey completion is very important so you can determine if problems have occurred that need to be addressed.

Student

Monitoring parent consent of the student paper version of the survey is done early in the surveying process. See Task 10 for further detail. Online response rate monitoring for the online student survey is not available.

Staff

One of the advantages of online staff survey is that you can monitor participation online in “real time” (view how many surveys have been completed at any given time). Staff survey data may be viewed at the district level with all schools combined, by school type and by individual school. If participation appears low, it may help to distribute a reminder and have the principal again reiterate his or her support for the survey.

Online response rate monitoring for the staff survey is not available to school level staff or administrators. As an alternative, you may also ask each staff person to print out the last page of the online survey, where he/she logs out of the system, and return it to a site-level coordinator as proof of participation. (This page does not contain any answers or identifying information.) Since anonymity and confidentiality is of major importance, if this option is used staff should be availed the opportunity to return this page to a site level coordinator in a way to preserves privacy. Having staff appoint a trusted colleague to collect this information may be a workable solution.

Parents

As mentioned under Task 11, ensuring parent participation is especially challenging. Strategies to increase the response rate include multiple mailings, reminders, and encouraging participation through the steps listed in Task 11.

TASK 16: RETURN COMPLETED SURVEY INSTRUMENTS

For Paper Surveys: Each school coordinator is responsible for collecting all print answer forms (student, staff, and/or parent) and placing them in the appropriate Transmittal Envelop and forwarding to the District Coordinator. The Technical Advisors will process the printed data and combine the results with any online surveys.

Additional Information and Detail for Healthy Kids School Climate Survey for Students

The previous section contained information and instructions pertinent to all three surveys. This section provides additional, detailed tasks for the student survey that include sampling, parent consent, and other important factors.

TASK 17: SELECT SAMPLE

A Technical Advisor will help you determine your specific sample requirements. Districts must conduct a representative district-wide, grade-level survey of students who are in grades 7, 9, and 11 in comprehensive schools. (Information about non-traditional schools is found at the end of this section.)

School and Classroom Sampling Procedures

Most districts will need to survey all students in each selected grade in all their schools. Larger districts may request that a technical advisor develop a sampling plan; however, sampling is not required and districts may choose to survey all students in the selected grades, particularly if they would like school—level reports. Eligibility for sampling is based on the following criteria:

- » **Number of students.** If a district has 900 or fewer regular students enrolled per grade level, all students must be surveyed, regardless of the number of schools. (Note: This is total enrollment, not the number who consented to the survey.) If grade-level enrollment is more than 900, the district may choose to sample. Technical Advisors will randomly select classrooms across all schools to reach the target sample of 900. *However, we recommend that sampling be done only if the district has 1600 or more students per grade.* This is recommended, as enrollments below 1600 tend to leave out just a few classes per school, which could lead to possible resentment on the part of teachers and/or inability to easily schedule a “grade-wide” survey day.
- » **Number of schools.** If a district has ten or fewer schools at a surveyed grade level, all schools must be surveyed. A random sample of schools can be selected for districts with more than ten schools with the grades involved AND more than 900 students per grade.

These cutoff numbers were selected to balance logistical efficiency with adequate precision of results. If 900 students per grade are selected, the minimum recommended sample size of approximately 625 students can be expected to actually participate—after eliminating those students without returned signed consent forms, those with returned negative consent forms, those who individually decline to participate, and those absent on the survey day.

Meeting the minimum sample requirements is absolutely essential for obtaining representative data.

Determine Additional Sample Needs

These are the minimum requirements. You may decide local needs warrant surveying more grades, students, or schools, particularly if you:

- » Have previously collected data from other grades;
- » Have special programs targeting other grades;
- » Want to assess differences among your schools; and/or
- » Are incorporating the CHKS into a program evaluation.

Collecting School-level Data

School-level planning is strongly encouraged so that the program is owned by and relevant to each unique school site. For most districts, the survey plan will result in representative data from all schools. However, large districts that choose to sample may want to expand their sample to allow for school-level data and reports. Generally, this involves including all students in the designated grades in each school. It is up to the district to request a report on each school before survey administration. There is an additional charge of \$50.00 for each individual school report.

School-level data are especially valuable if schools in a district vary markedly in their student demographics, programs, or services. However, some schools initially may be wary of being compared and stigmatized. A response to this concern is provided in the Frequently Asked Questions available at chks.wested.org.

Continuation and Other Non-traditional Schools

Surveying continuation and non-traditional schools provides a more comprehensive picture of health risks among all local youth. Since grade designations are not clear in many non-traditional schools, survey all students regardless of age or grade (i.e., 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, and 12). All grades 7-12 should be given the high school version of the survey. At the upper-grade level, the results are listed separately in your reports.

Because of the difficulty of surveying and obtaining parental consent in other non-traditional school settings such as adult education, alternative, county community, juvenile hall, opportunity, special education, and state special schools, their inclusion in the survey is optional.

TASK 18: SELECT CLASSROOMS

A Technical Advisor will help you determine your specific sample requirements. Districts must conduct a representative district-wide, grade-level survey of students who are in grades 7, 9, and 11 in comprehensive schools.

Most districts—as they will be attempting to survey all students in targeted grade levels—will need to specify a required class subject for surveying that will cover all enrolled students in each grade in each school. Experiences shows that the best required class subjects are English or Healthy for 7th and 9th grades, and English or History for 11th grade.

Some large districts may need technical assistance to randomly select a sample of classrooms and/or schools to survey. Once the sample has been identified the sampling plan must be fully implemented by the district.

- » The district coordinator must obtain from each School Coordinator and provide to the Technical Advisors numbers lists of all grade-level classrooms in each school, with each class numbered and identified by teacher's last name. This class list can include either the entire school or just the required classes. Whichever is most convenient.
- » Technical Advisors will randomly select the classrooms and return the list to the district coordinator.

TASK 19: CHOOSE A CONSENT OPTION—PASSIVE OR ACTIVE

Each approach is defined below.

- » **Passive Consent.** Written notice is sent to parents/guardians about the survey, who in turn notify the school ONLY if they do not want their child to participate in the survey. The challenge with passive consent is ensuring that parents are fully notified.
- » **Active Consent.** No child can be surveyed until a parent/guardian has provided written permission. If a permission form is not returned, it must be assumed that parental permission has not been granted. The challenge with active consent is making sure that parents receive and return the forms to the school.

An overview of each type consent option is provided below. Consider the pros and cons of each option before deciding which to use.

Overview of Passive Consent

The following conditions must be met to use passive consent:

- » Passive consent is limited to grades 7 through 12. Passive consent cannot be used below grade 7.
- » The survey must be anonymous, confidential, and voluntary.
- » The school board formally adopts, in consultation with parents, a passive consent policy for the administration of the CHKS for Students.
- » Parents/guardians are notified in writing at the beginning of the school year about the survey, the approximate administration date, and given a reasonable opportunity to review the survey and to decline their child's participation.
- » Questions are not added to the survey that elicit reports of parental attitudes or behaviors or any other category that requires active consent under Education Code 51513 and is not exempted under Education Code 51938. This includes questions about the pupil's personal beliefs or practices in sex, family life, morality, and religion, or any questions about the pupil's parents' or guardians' beliefs and practices in sex, family life, morality, and religion.

The chief benefits of passive consent are:

- » It involves less cost and labor, particularly for the classroom teacher.
- » It will almost certainly result in higher response rates.
- » Passive consent will probably result in a more representative sample, as many hard-to-reach subgroups, including groups at high-risk of substance use and other problem behaviors, may be underrepresented in active consent surveys.
- » One drawback of passive consent is that your district's trend data may be affected. If AOD use increases, for example, it will be difficult to say that whether this was due to changes in students' behaviors or a change in the students being surveyed.

Overview of Active Consent

- » Active consent may be used at all grade levels. It MUST be used below grade 7.
- » The survey must be anonymous, confidential, and voluntary.
- » The school board formally adopts, in consultation with parents, an active consent policy for the administration of the CHKS.
- » Parents/guardians are notified in writing at the beginning of the school year about the survey, the approximate administration date, and given a reasonable opportunity to review the survey.

The primary benefit of active consent is the extra protection against surveying a student whose parent/guardian claims not to have received notification, or who did not approve of participation but failed to inform the school. This extra protection may be important if risk behavior surveys are a sensitive issue in your community.

TASK 20: DEVELOP PARENT CONSENT LETTERS

After your school board policy is in place, prepare the consent letter/notification form (referred to as "consent letter" for the purposes of this document). Modifiable forms for both active and passive consent can be downloaded from www.chks.wested.org under Parent Consent. Translations are available in Spanish and other languages. If you make another language translation, we would appreciate receiving a copy so that we can make it available to others.

Current law requires that a letter must be sent out before or at the beginning of the school year on *school letterhead* that fully informs each student's parents and guardians about the survey. *In most cases, this letter will be the active or passive consent letter described below.* However, for ease in monitoring consent returns, districts using active consent have the option of sending an informative letter before or at the beginning of the school year, and distributing the actual active consent form closer to the survey date.

Minimum Requirements for Consent Letters

Parents must feel confident that every reasonable effort has been made to protect their privacy and that they have been fully informed about the survey. Below is a list of minimum requirements for consent letters, with specific requirements for passive and active consent:

- » Passive consent letters must include the location or person where parents can decline their child's participation, with instructions on how to do so.
- » Active consent letters must give parents the opportunity to grant or decline their child's participation, with instructions on how to do so.

Regardless of consent type, letters must contain:

- » The survey's purpose, content, and methods;
- » Student rights to privacy and confidentiality, and procedures for protecting these rights;
- » Any potential harm from participation;
- » The names and telephone numbers of *school or district personnel* to contact for additional information; and
- » The location where they can review the instrument

The following statements must also be added to the letter if administering the specific module, as follows:

- » **RYDM Questions About the Home Environment**, add "To further assess resilience and healthy development, there are questions about adult relationships, expectations, and participation in the home."
- » **AOD Use & Safety Module**, add that it includes items on "considering, planning, or attempting to commit suicide."
- » **Sexual Behavior Module**, add that it includes questions about "sexual behavior and practices leading to HIV/AIDS, sexually transmitted diseases, and pregnancy."

TASK 21: DISTRIBUTE LETTERS TO PARENTS

Although the details surrounding form distribution vary for passive versus active consent, the basic issues are the same. You'll need to distribute the forms, implement strategies to increase participation, and motivate your school staff. It's also important to make special considerations when working with non-traditional schools.

Form Distribution

For Passive Consent: Current law requires the passive consent letter to be sent out before or at the beginning of the school year. *Research and experience show that most parents do not object to student participation. The challenge is making sure that they are fully notified.* Send all consent letters and information via a method that guarantees receipt.

Classroom distribution is not recommended for passive consent because of the risk that students will never give the forms to their parents and will thus be surveyed without permission. Home mailing is strongly recommended for the distribution of passive consent letters, especially options that verify your efforts to inform parents (e.g., those that require a signature from the recipient).

For Active Consent: Current law requires that a letter must be sent out before or at the beginning of the school year that fully informs each student's parents and guardians about the survey. For ease in monitoring consent returns, districts using active consent have the option of sending an informative letter before or at the beginning of the school year, and distributing the actual active consent form at least two weeks before the survey date. Nevertheless, sending the actual consent letter before the start of school and again closer to the survey may allow time to implement a more aggressive outreach effort if the initial return rate is low.

Research and experience show that most parents do not object to student participation. The challenge is making sure they return the signed forms. If a signed consent form is not returned, approval has not been granted.

Tips for Form Distribution

Consider using the following strategies to help insure that parents receive and return the forms. They are part of the *School Instructions* that we include in each packet of classroom materials you distribute.

- » **Combine with other important material requiring signatures.** When possible, send the letter to parents along with other important materials that they have to sign and return. This will increase the chances that the letter will not be overlooked or ignored. For example, it could be included in the registration or enrollment materials sent to all parents in the beginning of the school year, or with the school emergency cards.
- » **Use multiple contact techniques.** This is particularly important when employing passive consent, to avoid any parent complaint that their child took the survey without parent awareness. Be sure to document your efforts.
- » **Home mailing.** In addition to being the recommended strategy to use for passive consent, home mailing may be useful for active consent when used in combination with other techniques, such as classroom distribution.
- » **Announce survey to parents.** Before or while sending out the forms, alert parents through the school newsletter or other communication method when they will be receiving them.
- » **Give parents a deadline date.** Give parents a deadline for returning the letter or informing the school that they do or do not want their child to participate.
- » **Include letters of support.** Include a letter of support from the superintendent, principal, or other official.
- » **Send all consent information and forms via a method that guarantees receipt.** Preferably, use a method that documents receipt. For example, put the letter into a parent handbook that the parent signs for, or send via a mailing method that requires a signature from the recipient.

Motivating School Staff

It is essential that you fully inform and motivate all school staff to support the survey and work to make sure the consent process goes smoothly.

- » When using passive consent, school staff may not be directly involved in the distribution of consent letters or collection of refusals; however, they may be asked to respond to questions by parents or students.
- » When using active consent, staff motivation is especially important; it is the teacher who has to take on the primary responsibilities for obtaining consent and tracking which parents have returned the forms and which have not. The teacher also is the survey representative to parents, the person parents turn to for survey information. Their role in making sure you achieve your targeted response rate—or making sure that you don't survey a student by accident—is absolutely critical. The website (chks.wested.org) includes a handout of *Teacher Instructions* to assist in this effort.

Regardless of which type of consent you use, it is important to:

- » **Motivate the Whole School.** Don't limit your efforts to just the selected classrooms. A supportive environment throughout the school helps overcome pockets of resistance.
- » **Involve School Leaders.** Schools that have been most successful in obtaining high student participation rates are schools where there is strong administrative support of the survey. Make sure that the school principal strongly communicates this to the teachers.
- » **Promote Awareness.** Make sure all school staff understand the importance of the survey and the critical role that the process plays in making sure results are representative and useful. Teachers who have been involved all along are more likely to be enthusiastic supporters.
- » **Express Appreciation.** Send letters thanking the School Coordinator and teachers in advance for their cooperation.

Responding to Teacher Concerns

Some teachers may be resistant to the survey for personal reasons, or because it takes away instruction time, complicates scheduled lesson plans, or requires more work on their part. These concerns must be overcome. For this audience, emphasize:

- » There are links between health and academic achievement that must be taken into consideration in any school improvement effort (for useful information, refer to the Health & Achievement section of the CHKS website).
- » Measures have been taken to make their CHKS tasks as easy as possible, such as model consent forms and procedures, detailed instructions, and scripted administration.
- » Though the survey process is challenging, it also offers opportunities to better inform parents about the school prevention and health programs. It can be a positive opportunity for outreach.

Working with Continuation and other Non-traditional Schools

Obtaining consent for continuation and other alternative school students is especially challenging. Not only are they older, but many of the characteristics of these schools and students make obtaining active parent consent very difficult. It is necessary that you double your efforts to make sure that the parents receive and return the forms.

If court or community day schools are included in the sample, a universal consent from the head of Probation can be obtained for all students within the criminal justice system, if judged appropriate under Ed Code Section 51513. Be sure to carefully evaluate your county's guardianship arrangements before surveying.

TASK 22: MONITOR CONSENT FORM RETURNS

A critical step in the consent process is monitoring the return of the forms. The method you choose for monitoring returns may vary depending on a school's structure and the method of consent you use. Carefully track the distribution and return of forms so you can identify students whose parents never returned the consent form or declined participation.

- » **For passive consent**, it may be better to have a single person or office, identified in district policies and communications, responsible for monitoring and recording refusals. This will help avoid parent refusals from slipping through the cracks.
- » **For active consent**, it is usually most convenient for the classroom teacher to monitor returns. If you have enough advance time, you can mail the consent forms to nonresponding parents. Research shows telephone reminders to nonresponding parents are very effective. If your school has an automated phone calling system, it can be used to send out messages. Incentives for students and teachers may also be effective.

If one week before the survey the targeted parent return rates are not being reached in any classroom or school, contact your Technical Advisor immediately. It is best to postpone the survey if you cannot meet sample standards.

TASK 23: TRAIN SCHOOL COORDINATORS, TEACHERS, AND PROCTORS

It is very important that all people involved in the survey—School Coordinators, teachers, proctors—thoroughly understand its importance and the tasks for which they are responsible. The best way to assure this is through training. Your goal should be to not only inform them but to garner their enthusiastic support. Everyone can be trained at once, or you can train groups at different times. For large districts, you may want to train only the School Coordinators—and have them hold training meetings with the teachers and proctors at their individual schools.

The survey instructions and materials are designed to make this easy. Instructions for all three groups are available on the Administer the Survey page of the chks.wested.org website. Different instructions must be used depending on which type(s) of consent you are using, so be sure you are using the correct materials. Make sure the instructions and materials are distributed well in advance of the training so staff have time to review them. This will reduce the time needed for training.

School Coordinators

Ideally, training for School Coordinators should occur early, certainly prior to the beginning of the student consent process. This should be a general training touching upon all aspects of the survey, but focusing on the responsibilities detailed in the *School Instructions*.

Topics should include:

- » The purpose, value, and requirements of the Survey;
- » A description of the parent consent process, highlighting special concerns for the type of consent you are using (such as high consent rates for active and the withdrawal process for passive);
- » The importance of maintaining standard survey administration procedures;
- » Ways to motivate and monitor teachers;
- » Confidentiality and privacy issues;
- » The survey administration schedule; and
- » Their role in documenting school, class, and student participation, including how to fill out the transmittal form.

The most important topics, arguably, are the value of the Survey, the importance of the parent consent process, and the need for School Coordinators to motivate and monitor teachers.

Teachers

The teacher training should cover the same areas as that for School Coordinators, although not necessarily with the same focus. What is most important is motivating them to support the survey and communicate this enthusiasm to the students. Go over the *Teacher Instructions* with them, emphasizing the important role that teachers play in the consent process and in providing correct information on the Transmittal Envelopes.

If teaching staff will also be proctoring the survey, go over the proctor information as well.

Proctors

It is most important that proctors uniformly follow the procedures provided in the *Proctor Instructions*. If proctors are not fully informed and prepared, students may not take the survey seriously, may incorrectly fill out the answer forms, or may not be able to complete the survey within the period. Review the following topics:

- » Room setup;
- » Confidentiality and privacy issues, including what to do with the Assurance of Confidentiality Agreement (attached);
- » Where students can go if they have questions or concerns arising from survey participation;
- » The survey administration schedule;
- » How to present and administer the online and/or print survey to students, including the importance of reading the Introductory Script; and
- » How to correctly complete the *Survey Participation Form*. This form helps you track how many students received parent consent and the number of students that completed the survey. These numbers will be compared to the online information to verify participation.

TASK 24: COLLECT SIGNED CONFIDENTIALITY ASSURANCES

All staff involved in administering the survey must sign the Assurance of Confidentiality of Survey Data (attached). You can do this on the day of the survey, or ask staff to fill them out during the training sessions. This communicates that the commitment to confidentiality is a serious one and reinforces the survey administrator's obligation to protect student privacy. These assurances can be made available for parents to view along with the survey instrument.

TASK 25: PREPARE TO ANSWER STUDENT CONCERNS

Make arrangements at the district or school level for someone, such as a counselor or health/prevention specialist, to be available to students who have questions or concerns as a result of their participation in the survey. Be sure your staff know who this person is, and know where to send the students. This is one of the necessary procedures to reduce any potential risks to students from taking the survey, as stated in the consent form

TASK 26: CONFIRM CONSENT

About three weeks prior to the scheduled survey administration, start checking with each School Coordinator:

- » **For active consent**, make sure forms have been sent to parents or guardians and reemphasize the importance of a high return rate;
- » **For passive consent**, make sure withdrawals are being carefully tracked;

One week before the survey, contact each School Coordinator and ensure that:

- » **For active consent**, enough parent consent forms have been received to assure that each school and grade will reach the 70% return rate (either consenting or not consenting). If not, immediately to discuss delaying the survey.
- » **For passive consent**, lists of non-participants are being prepared for the teachers.

TASK 27: SURVEY ADMINISTRATION

About three weeks prior to the scheduled survey administration, start checking with each School Coordinator:

- » Confirm the time and place of the survey administration;
- » Confirm the classes to be surveyed;
- » Review the procedures that will occur during administration.
- » Follow-up with a printed reminder to all School Coordinators and teachers

Two or three days before the survey, review with the School Coordinator and, if possible, the proctors themselves, the procedures for the survey day at the school, including room setup, and arrangements for students who do not have consent and are not taking the survey. Make sure each School Coordinator has contacted the proctors and distributed the needed survey materials to each classroom. These include:

- » For online surveys, login and passwords specific to each school site which are sent to you by your Technical Advisors;
- » For paper surveys, answer sheets surveys, and transmittal envelopes;
- » For passive consent, a list of students whose parents denied participation;
- » Teacher Instructions;
- » Proctor Instructions, including the Assurance of Confidentiality and Introductory Script;
- » Arrangement of the room:
 - » For online surveys, arrange the room so that no one else but the student can see the answers on the computer monitor;

- » For paper surveys, arrange the room so that no one else but the student can see the answers on the answer sheets;
- » Survey Documentation:
 - » For online surveys, have each proctor complete a Survey Participation Form for each classroom (or other type of venue) they proctor;
 - » For paper surveys, instruct each proctor to provide the information on the Transmittal Envelopes

One day before the survey, re-contact each School Coordinator to see if they need any help and remind them to: (a) contact you if any problems materialize on the day of the survey; and (b) make sure that the CHKS Participation Forms are filled out correctly.

The day of the survey, conduct the survey.

The day after the survey, send the Survey Participation Forms to your Technical Advisor.

- » For online surveys, collect all completed Survey Participation Form and submit them to your District Coordinator;
- » For paper surveys, collect all completed answer sheets in their Transmittal Envelopes to the District Coordinator

CHKS FOR STUDENTS – PROCTOR INSTRUCTIONS – ONLINE VERSION

These Proctor Instructions are designed for use by the person to proctor the Online Healthy Kids Survey. In some cases classroom teachers proctor the survey, in other cases proctors are hired to supervise the survey.

1. Arrive early, allow ample time to prepare the computers for the survey (i.e., turn the computers on, log into the survey website). It is *vital* that the computer be arranged so that only the student answering the survey questions can see the monitor.
2. Sign the Assurance of Confidentiality. Read and sign the attached confidentiality agreement and give it to the school or district coordinator.
3. Distribute or supply the students with the login and password for the online survey.
4. Read Introductory Script to students. The attached script assures that students know they will not be punished or rewarded for choosing to/not to participate. It was designed for your protection.
5. To ensure privacy and confidentiality, and promote honest responses, do not wander around the room while students are completing the survey. Provide as much privacy to each student by protecting monitor screens from being viewed by other students. Observe student behavior to ensure that disruptions do not occur.
6. Fill out the *Survey Participation Form*. While students are taking the survey, complete the requested consent and attendance information on the *Participation Form*. It is very important that all the information is accurate and complete.
7. At the end of the survey period logoff the Healthy Kids Online Survey:
 - » Make sure all the students have submitted their answers and logged off the survey.
 - » Thank the students for their participation.
 - » Turn in the *Healthy Kids Participation Form* and any other materials to the school coordinator.

CHKS FOR STUDENTS – PROCTOR INSTRUCTIONS – PAPER SURVEY VERSION

These Proctor Instructions are designed for use by the person to proctor the paper survey version of the student survey. In some cases classroom teachers proctor the survey, in other cases proctors are hired to supervise the survey.

1. Arrive early, allow ample time to prepare for survey administration.
2. Sign the Assurance of Confidentiality. Read and sign the attached confidentiality agreement and give it to the school or district coordinator.
3. Distribute survey modules and supplies. Provide each participating student with:
 - » The required survey (Core Module)
 - » Any optional modules the district elected to administer (Supplemental and/or Custom Modules),
 - » A scannable answer sheet, and
 - » A #2 pencil
4. Read Introductory Script to students. The attached script assures that students know they will not be punished or rewarded for choosing to/not to participate. It was designed for your protection.
5. Monitor students. To ensure privacy and confidentiality, and promote honest responses, do not wander around the room while students are completing the survey. However, do observe student behavior to ensure that disruptions do not occur.
6. Fill out the *Transmittal Envelopes*. While students are taking the survey, complete the requested consent and attendance information on the *Transmittal Envelopes*. It is very important that all the information is accurate and complete.
7. Collect answer sheets:
 - » Have students put their answer sheets in the Transmittal Envelope.
 - » Publicly seal the envelope before the students
 - » Thank the students for their participation.
 - » Turn in Transmittal Envelopes to the school coordinator.

ASSURANCE OF CONFIDENTIALITY OF SURVEY DATA

Your district is firmly committed to maintaining the confidentiality of individual respondents' data obtained through surveys.

Procedures for Maintaining Confidentiality

1. All survey administrators shall sign this assurance of confidentiality
2. All survey administrators shall keep completely confidential the names of respondents, all information or opinions collected, and any information about respondents learned incidentally. Survey administrators shall exercise reasonable caution to prevent access by others to survey data online.

Pledge of Confidentiality

I hereby certify that I have carefully read and will cooperate fully with the above procedures on confidentiality. I will keep completely confidential all information arising from surveys concerning individual respondents to which I gain access. I will not discuss, disclose, disseminate, or provide access to survey data and identifiers. I will devote my best efforts to ensure that there is compliance with the required procedures by personnel whom I supervise. I give my personal pledge that I shall abide by this assurance of confidentiality.

My signature below indicates I have read and agree to the Pledge of Confidentiality.

SURVEY ADMINISTRATOR NAME (PRINT):	
SIGNATURE:	DATE:

INTRODUCTORY SCRIPT FOR SURVEY ADMINISTRATION

“Your district is conducting the [INSERT NAME] Survey. You are among thousands of students throughout the day who are taking this survey.

The survey asks questions about your eating habits, physical exercise, drug use, violence and other health-risk behaviors.

This is not a test. There are no right or wrong answers and you will not be timed. The answers you give are very important. Please read each question carefully and answer it based on what you really know or do. Answer the questions truthfully and as best as your can.

This survey is anonymous and confidential. You will not be asked to enter your name at any time during the online survey. No one will ever be able to connect you with your answers. Your answers are private.

Participation is voluntary. You are here because your parents or guardians gave their permission for you to participate, but you don’t have to take the survey or complete the questions that you do not want to answer.

Your school district thanks you for your help in completing the survey. Your participation will help us to student programs and services. If you have any questions after completing the survey, your school principal or counselor is ready to spend time with anyone who feels that they would like to talk over their feelings about the survey. *Anyone who does not wish to participate should tell me now.*

It is important that you answer based on what you really know and do. Don’t pick a response just because you think that’s what someone wants you to say.

The first questions ask some basic information about your background such as your age, sex, and ethnicity. We need this information to understand how behaviors differ among youth.

Now you can read the directions on the computer screen and go to question number one. When you have completed the entire survey, click the submit button and exit the survey.

If you have any questions, please raise your hand.

Thank you.

Please begin.

HEALTHY KIDS SCHOOL CLIMATE SURVEY PARTICIPATION FORM

For Online Student Administration

Instructions: Please complete one form for each classroom							
District Name <i>(no abbreviations)</i> :							
School Name <i>(no abbreviations)</i> :							
School Type <i>(please circle)</i> :	Comprehensive	Non Traditional	Other (specify): _____				
Teacher's Name:							
Your Name:							
Course/Period:							
Grade Surveyed <i>(please circle all that apply)</i> :	6	7	8	9	10	11	12
Date of Survey:							
How many minutes did it take to administer the survey?							
Student Participation Information:							
Number of students enrolled in this class:							
Number of students not in class on the day of survey:							
Number of students refusing to participate:							
If Active Consent was used, please provide the following information:							
Number of consent forms distributed:							
Total number of parental consent forms received with signature:							
Number giving permission:							
Number denying permission:							
Of those students with permission, 1. How many students were absent on the day of the survey?: 2. How many students refused to participate?:							

SURVEY PLANNING CHECKLIST

BEFORE SURVEY	DUE DATE	PERSON RESPONSIBLE	✓	TASK	PLANNING AND CONDUCTING THE SURVEY
12 wks				1.	Contact a Survey Technical Advisor
12 wks				2.	Identify District Survey Coordinator
12 wks				3.	Obtain Superintendent and School Board Approval
12 wks				4.	Form Advisory Committee
11 wks				5.	Determine Goals and Data Needs
10 wks				6.	Select Method of Administration
10 wks				7.	Select the Samples and Submit Counts
10 wks				8.	Submit Memorandum of Understanding
8 wks				9.	Obtain Support of Principals and Identify School Coordinators
Ongoing				10.	Select Survey Dates
8 wks				11.	Encourage Survey Participation
4 wks				12.	Make the Surveys Available in Advance for Public Viewing
Ongoing				13.	Ensure Confidentiality
2 wks				14.	Distribute Survey Materials
2 wks				15.	Monitor Survey Completion
After survey administration				16.	Return Completed Survey and Documentation Forms