

OHT Parental Notification Letter

Dear Parent/Guardian:

Our school is participating in the Oregon Healthy Teens Survey (OHT), a survey sponsored by the Oregon Health Authority Public Health Division and the Oregon Department of Education. The survey will gather information about health risk behaviors of students in grades 8 and 11. The survey includes questions about:

- Physical activity and nutrition
- Access to health care
- Tobacco, alcohol, marijuana and other drug use,
- Personal safety and violence-related behavior,
- Mental health concerns such as suicidal thoughts, depression, and bullying
- Sexual risk behavior, and
- Positive youth development.

Completing the Oregon Healthy Teens Survey poses minimal risk to your child, who may feel embarrassed or uncomfortable answering the questions. Survey procedures have been designed to protect your child's privacy and allow for anonymous participation. While we encourage all selected students to participate, the decision to participate is voluntary. You may opt to send a refusal for your child's participation. Alternatively, your child will have the opportunity 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 the survey date of **[SCHOOL INSERT SURVEY DATE HERE]**. You need only return this form if you **do not** wish your child to participate.

Please see the other side of this form for additional 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 website for you to review before the survey date at: <http://public.health.oregon.gov/BirthDeathCertificates/Surveys/OregonHealthyTeens/Pages/index.aspx>.

If you have other specific questions about the survey, please feel free to call **[SCHOOL INSERT NAME AND PHONE NUMBER OF SCHOOL CONTACT]**.



I have read and understand this form concerning the Oregon Healthy Teens 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 the survey date of **[SCHOOL INSERT SURVEY DATE HERE]**.

SURVEY FACT SHEET FOR PARENTS

Q. What is the goal of Oregon Healthy Teens?

A. Healthy students have better attendance, get higher grades and test scores. They are less likely to skip school, drop out, or engage in risky behaviors. **Oregon Healthy Teens** is an anonymous, voluntary, school-based survey. It is a key part of a statewide effort to help local schools and communities ensure that all Oregon youth are healthy and successful learners who contribute positively to their communities.

OHT provides schools, communities, and our state with a clearer picture of youth strengths and problems. It allows schools and communities to find out what prevention efforts are working and which need improvement. Our goal is to do what the name says: give our teens the support they need to live healthy lives. State and local agencies depend on OHT to assess youth needs. They use the information to develop and evaluate strategies to promote health and prevent illness.

Q. Are sensitive questions asked?

A: Our goal is to reduce behaviors among high school and middle school students that adversely affect their health and ability to learn. AIDS, HIV infection, and other sexually transmitted diseases are major health problems. Sexual intercourse and drug use increase the risk of these illnesses. The only way to determine if students are at risk in these areas is to ask questions about these behaviors. Mental health, bullying, and tobacco, alcohol, and drug use may also be considered sensitive topics.

According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), there is *no evidence* that simply asking students about health risk behaviors encourages that behavior. Asking youth about sensitive topics such as suicide, sex, drugs or alcohol does not encourage these behaviors.

OHT asks questions in a straightforward and sensitive manner, appropriate to the student's age. Students can also choose not to answer any question that might make them uncomfortable.

Please note: If parents inform the school that they do not want their child(ren) to participate, students will be given the option of an alternate activity

Q. How will my family's privacy be protected?

A. This survey is **anonymous**. Schools administer OHT in a way that protects student privacy and allows for anonymous participation. Students will not put their names on the questionnaires or answer sheets. When the surveys are completed and collected, we will have **no identifying information** linking a questionnaire to an individual student or parent. The school and district receive summary information for each grade level.

Q: Will any students be tracked and surveyed again to see how their behavior changes?

A: No. A given student might participate again in future years. However, no one can track individual students who participate because no identifying information is collected.