



2016 Arizona Youth Survey (AYS) FAQ Sheet

Why should schools administer the Arizona Youth Survey?

The Arizona Youth Survey utilizes the *Communities That Care* model that looks at risk and protective factors as they relate to individuals, peers, families, schools, and communities. Risk and protective factor focused prevention is based on a simple premise: to prevent a problem from happening, identify the factors that increase the risk of that problem developing and then find ways to reduce the risks. Similarly, identifying the protective factors that reduce the likelihood of problem behavior and enhancing those factors rounds out a risk and protective factor prevention strategy. The *Communities that Care* model has been validated in identifying risk and protective factors associated with problems such as substance abuse, teen pregnancy, violence, school dropout, and academic achievement.

By assessing the challenges and opportunities facing students resources can be directed where they are most needed. Through this process, programs and policies can be developed to address the particular risk and protective factors of individuals, peers, families, schools and/or community.

Identifying the risk and protective factors at a particular school can also assist the school in directing resources more effectively, utilizing best practices that are proven to work with youth and identified risk and protective factors, and can assist them in obtaining needed funding to provide services to the students most at-risk. Individual schools are also able to use the data from the surveys to assist in applying for grants and in mobilizing community resources to implement effective prevention interventions and strategies to reduce risk factors and enhance protective factors.

How do student behaviors link to success within educational and social settings?

Students who use illegal substances, engage in antisocial behavior, have high levels of risk, and have low levels of protection are also the students who are more likely to have lower levels of academic achievement. Similarly, students who are exposed to poor neighborhood conditions, anti-social parents and peer groups are at a significantly greater risk for gang membership, carrying guns, and using alcohol, tobacco, and illicit drugs. Conversely, students who come from backgrounds with strong social networks and are exposed to other protective factors are less likely to join a gang, carry a gun or weapon to school or experiment with alcohol, tobacco or illicit drugs.

Validity of the Arizona Youth Survey findings.

Survey Environment: A high priority is placed on the anonymity of participating students and the confidentiality of the information students provide during the survey administration process. There is no identifying information or question on the survey that links students to their surveys. Participants are informed that no one will see their answers and that there is no way to trace the survey back to a student.

The survey is carefully pre-tested to ensure that middle and high school students understand the meaning of each question. Using a well-developed and tested administration method, and by reading the same instructions to all participating students, much of the potential for response bias is eliminated.

Self-Reported Responses: Assessments of students' responses are done in order to check for inconsistencies. For example, surveys where the student reported using an impossibly high level of substance abuse or claims to use a nonexistent drug will be deleted from the sample.

Throughout the survey, responses are also checked for other inconsistencies within logically-linked groups of questions and population subgroups in order to reduce the likelihood of fabricated answers.