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STATE OF NEW HAMPSHIRE
DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES

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October 24, 2014

Re: 2015 Youth Risk Behavior Survey

Dear NH School Administrator:

The NH Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS), in conjunction with the NH Department of Education (DOE), respectfully requests your school's participation in the Youth Risk Behavior Survey (YRBS), which is to be administered in late winter/early spring of 2015.

Research has shown that risky health behaviors developed in childhood and adolescence often lead to poor health and lower productivity, including poor academic performance. The effects of such risky behaviors often extend into adulthood. Fortunately, such behaviors are both measurable and to some extent preventable by implementing programs made possible by utilizing YRBS data.

The YRBS represents a unique opportunity to collect data that are currently being used by New Hampshire school districts to obtain grants to assist schools and communities in developing intervention programs that discourage risky behaviors and improve the learning environment and lives of their students.

In 2013, enough NH YRBS surveys were collected to accurately estimate youth health risks at the state level. Our goal for the 2015 survey is to again collect surveys to estimate health risks at the state level, but also to collect enough surveys to allow for accurate health estimates at the Public Health Regional level. In order to support participation, the State of New Hampshire will not charge schools for its costs for administering the survey, up to a total participation of 45,000 students.

Schools may participate in YRBS by either administering the State Sample or the Community Survey:

The State Sample, which involves surveying a limited number of classes in grades 9 – 12, allows us to make statistically valid estimates of youth risk behaviors that apply to Public Health Regions and to the State as a whole.

The Community Survey, which involves surveying the entire student body, and includes the State Sample, provides schools with an extensive and user-friendly report of behavior that presents a risk to the community's youth, broken out by gender and grade. Although it includes questions regarding certain behaviors that occur on school property, the focus is on the community, and not on the high school itself.

In order to participate in the YRBS, principals or superintendents are requested to take the following steps to confirm their school's participation:

October 24, 2014

- Identify key school personnel to serve as the YRBS School Survey Administrator and allow them to attend the morning or afternoon YRBS training in Concord on December 2, 2014, or sign up for online training.
- Fax the enclosed *Confirmation of Schools Status and Contact Person Designation* form to Claire Gendron at 603-271-7623 with your school information and identified school representative.

I wish to assure you that school-specific data will be released only to Superintendents, who will provide the data to Building Principals in late 2015. Higher order reporting is based on aggregate data that cannot be traced back to individual schools.

We also understand the value of class time and the needs of decision-makers, so we will be happy to attend school board meetings, or other meetings as needed, to explain and answer questions about the importance of this survey to our state and its residents.

In closing, the YRBS is an excellent source of data that can help schools be competitive in seeking funding, both federally and through the State of New Hampshire. I encourage you to not miss this critical opportunity on behalf of your school, your students and your community, and to also utilize the services of your Regional Representative, who would be pleased to meet with you to explore opportunities that might be available to your school district.

Should you have any questions or concerns about the survey instrument, the protocols of administrating the survey, or the school report, please contact Claire Gendron at 603-271-4988 or by email at YRBS@dhhs.state.nh.us.

Sincerely yours,



José Thier Montero, MD, MHCDS
Director



Virginia M. Barry, Ph.D.
Commissioner of Education

Enclosures: 2013 YRBS Confirmation Form
NH Regional Network File – Map and Contact Information