

THE CRITICAL ROLE OF YOUTH SURVEYS



Listening to Youth: The Power of Surveys

Data from youth surveys is essential because it provides valuable insights into the challenges, concerns and perspectives of young people. By understanding their experiences, we can better address issues such as mental health, substance use, education and community engagement. Youth surveys help inform policies and programs that directly impact their well-being, ensuring that decisions are based on real, relevant information. This data empowers communities to create targeted solutions and support systems that truly resonate with the needs of the next generation.



Critical Advantages

- Identify challenges like vaping, bullying & mental health crises
- Target effective prevention & intervention strategies
- Support grant applications for critical funding (e.g., Drug-Free Communities grants)

Schools Have the Authority

Montana School Board Association: Opt-Out is Lawful & Effective

Surveys like the Youth Risk Behavior Survey (YRBS) are anonymous and do NOT collect personally identifiable information. The YRBS qualifies for opt-out under Montana law. [MCA 40-6-701(2)(k)]

- Active consent applies ONLY to surveys collecting personal data unrelated to educational records.
- Opt-out is sufficient for anonymous, confidential surveys like the YRBS, as confirmed by MTSBA legal experts.

Opt-out includes youth by default, allowing parents or guardians to withdraw them if they choose, ensuring robust participation and accurate, actionable data.

BETTER PARTICIPATION = BETTER INSIGHTS = BETTER OUTCOMES FOR YOUTH

Tracking Youth Trends: The Power of the Youth Risk Behavior Survey

The Youth Risk Behavior Survey (YRBS), administered every odd-numbered year by the Montana Office of Public Instruction, tracks health-related behaviors among grades 9-12. It monitors trends and evaluates the effectiveness of adolescent health programs. This vital tool helps identify issues such as youth substance abuse, mental health challenges and suicidal ideation, providing essential data to guide decision-making and improve student well-being across the state.