This form only needs to be returned if you do NOT want your child to participate.

MARYLAND YOUTH RISK BEHAVIOR SURVEY AND YOUTH TOBACCO SURVEY

PARENTAL "OPT OUT" FORM

Our school will take part in the 2026 Maryland Youth Risk Behavior Survey and Youth Tobacco Survey (YRBS/YTS). The Maryland Department of Health (MDH) is conducting the survey in partnership with the Maryland State Department of Education (MSDE) and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). The CDC designed the survey to learn about health-risk behaviors among students. Topics include safety behaviors such as helmet and seat belt use, depression and mental health, tobacco, alcohol and other drug use, nutrition and physical activity, and sexual behavior.

Students will use an internet-connected device to complete the survey. It takes less than one class period, about 25-35 minutes.

The survey is designed to protect your child's privacy. It is anonymous, and **students will not put their names on the survey**. No school or student will be named in any report of the results. Although your child may not benefit right away from taking part, the information collected will help guide state and local programs that support student health.

We would like all selected students to take part. However, the survey is voluntary and involves little or no risk to your child. Some students may find certain questions sensitive. **If your child is not comfortable answering a question, they may skip it.** Students may also stop taking the survey at any time without penalty. No action will be taken against the school, you, or your child if your child does not take part. A copy of the questionnaire is available for you to review at school and on the health department website listed below.

State and local school officials and a review board have approved the survey. If you or your child have questions about taking part, please call toll-free 1-800-840-8248, leave your name and phone number, and someone will return your call as soon as possible. For more information, please visit https://phpa.health.maryland.gov/ohpetup/Pages/YTRBS.aspx or www.cdc.gov/HealthyYouth.

If you do **not** want your child to take part in the survey, (1) check the box below, (2) sign and date the form, and (3) return it to the school within 3 days. Please see the other side of this form for more facts about the survey. If your child's teacher or principal cannot answer your questions, please contact Jill Trott, Survey Manager, toll-free at 1-800-840-8248. Thank you.

Child's name (please print)_____Grade_____

I have read this form and know what the survey is about.

☐ **No** - My child may **not** take part in this survey.

Parent's signature_____ Date_____

Maryland Youth Risk Behavior Survey and Youth Tobacco Survey
Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)

Q. Why is the Maryland Youth Risk Behavior Survey and Youth Tobacco Survey conducted?

A. The Maryland Department of Health and the Maryland State Department of Education will use the results from the *Maryland Youth Risk Behavior Survey and Youth Tobacco Survey* to (1) monitor how priority health-risk behaviors among middle and high school students increase, decrease, or remain the same over time; (2) evaluate the impact of broad state and local efforts to prevent health-risk behaviors; and (3) improve school health education policies and programs.

Q. Are sensitive questions asked?

A. Some questions may be considered sensitive. Questions are presented in a straightforward manner and the survey is anonymous. Topic areas covered include use of helmets and seat belts, depression, and mental health, use of tobacco, alcohol, or other drugs, nutrition and physical activity, and sexual behavior. Students can skip any question that they do not wish to answer.

Q. How will the survey be administered?

A. Students will complete the web-based MD YRBS/YTS using an internet-connected device provided by the school or student. There are strict protocols for administering the survey online, which ensure responses are confidential and student privacy is protected. Maryland will offer a paper/pencil survey option if schools are unable to accommodate an online survey.

Q. Will student names be used or linked to the surveys?

A. No. The survey is designed to protect your child's privacy. The survey is administered by specially trained field staff or school staff. Students do <u>not</u> include their name on the survey. Responses are submitted electronically, and staff are not able to view a student's responses.

Q. Are students tracked over time to see how their behavior changes?

A. No. Students who participated cannot be tracked because no identifying information is collected.

Q. How was my child selected to be in the survey?

A. Statewide, approximately 90,000 students from about 385 schools will be selected to take part. Participating classes were picked randomly at each school.

Q. How long does it take to complete the survey? Does the survey include a physical test?

A. Less than one class period (approximately 25-35 minutes) is needed to complete the survey. The survey does not include a physical test or exam.

To learn more about the **Maryland Youth Risk Behavior Survey and Youth Tobacco Survey**, scan the QR code to watch a brief video, available in both English and Spanish. Separate videos have been created for parents/guardians and for students.

For Parents/Guardians:

For Students: