



ALASKA PUBLIC HEALTH ASSOCIATION

Committed To Advancing Alaska's Public Health Since 1978

ALPHA RESOLUTION 7-2008

Support for Passive Parental Consent for the Youth Risk Behavior Survey

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Whereas the Youth Risk Behavior Survey (YRBS) is part of an epidemiological surveillance system that was established in 1988 by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) to help monitor the prevalence of behaviors that put young people at risk for the most significant health and social problems that can occur during adolescence and adulthood.

Whereas the survey examines six categories of adolescent behavior including: 1) behaviors that result in unintentional and intentional injuries; 2) tobacco use; 3) alcohol and other drug use; 4) sexual behaviors that can result in HIV infection, other sexually transmitted diseases (STD's) and unintended pregnancies; 5) dietary behaviors; and 6) physical activity.¹

Whereas Alaska's YRBS is a joint project between the Dept. of Education & Early Development and the Dept. of Health and Social Services and was established in Alaska in 1995.²

Whereas survey results are used at the national, state, and local level such as measuring progress towards the national Healthy People 2010 and the Healthy Alaskans 2010 health objectives.

Whereas, understanding the health risk behaviors of youth is critical for developing programs that address risk behaviors practiced and for measuring progress toward program goals.

Whereas Alaska's YRBS has been unable to collect reliable data consistently with the challenge of administering the survey under the active parental consent law AS 14.03.110, which requires written permission from all participating students' parents or legal guardians.²

Whereas employing active parental consent drastically increases costs and labor involved in conducting student surveys, and results in high failure rates for getting enough student responses to get usable data for larger surveys, and the potential for leading to inaccurate/misrepresentative data.³

Whereas Alaska is one of only three states in the nation that has a school survey law requiring active parental consent for surveys of this type.³

Whereas most states employ passive parental consent when administering such surveys which involves notifying and informing the parents about the survey and assuming that students will participate unless the parent provides a written refusal to opt out of the survey.³

Whereas it is believed that the majority of parents consent to their students participating in such surveys and that most parental failures to provide active parental consent (written permission to participate) are driven by apathy, oversight, or student error, not by refusal.⁴

Whereas the survey is anonymous and voluntary.

Therefore be it resolved that the Alaska Public Health Association supports the content and the implementation of the Youth Risk Behavior Survey in Alaska with parental notification and passive parental consent

And be it further resolved that the Alaska Public Health Association supports changing the requirement for participation in the survey from active parental consent to passive parental consent.

References:

¹ Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Retrieved November 2, 2008 from <http://www.cdc.gov/HealthyYouth/yrbs/brief.htm>

² State of Alaska, Department of Health and Social Services. Retrieved November 2, 2008 from <http://www.hss.state.ak.us/dph/chronic/school/YRBS.htm>

³ Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. National Center for Chronic Disease Prevention and Health Promotion, Division of Adolescent and School Health. (2006) *Parental Permission and the Youth Risk Behavior Survey*. 2006

⁴ Ellickson P, Hawes JA. An assessment of active versus passive methods for obtaining parental consent. *Evaluation Review* 1989;13(1):45-55.