

Program Highlights

Alaska

Obtaining Weighted YRBS Data with Active Parental Consent

In 1999, Alaska passed a statute requiring active parental consent for any public health school survey, including the YRBS. Among the few other states with a similar statute, none had ever been able to conduct a YRBS with a high enough overall response rate to allow the data to be weighted and thus be generalizable to all public high school students in the state. Alaska did not conduct a YRBS in 2001, but was successful in 2003 and became the first state to get weighted data with active parental consent. However, the 2005 YRBS did not go as well and they did not get weighted data. To make sure that they got weighted data in 2007, the Alaska Department of Education and Early Development (DEED), the Alaska Department of Health and Social Services (DHHS), and other education and public health partners worked together to strengthen the procedures used to conduct the 2007 YRBS and to raise awareness of the unintended consequences of requiring active parental consent. Specifically, the Alaska DEED, Alaska DHHS, and their partners:

- Notified sampled districts and schools early in the school year and offered individually tailored support to help them obtain parental consent.
- Combined several funding sources to allow doubling of the financial support offered to districts to defray the costs associated with conducting the survey and providing incentives to increase response rates.
- Conducted a record number of statewide audio-conferences with YRBS coordinators in districts and schools.
- Went door-to-door in some rural villages to obtain parental consent.

As a result, Alaska obtained weighted YRBS data in 2007. State and local agencies will now be able to use YRBS data to set school health and health promotion goals, support modifications of school health curricula, support new legislation and policies that promote health, and seek funding for new initiatives and programs.