

Oklahoma Prevention Needs Assessment Survey School Year 2019-2020

Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ)

Conducted by

Oklahoma Department of Mental Health and Substance Abuse Services

What is the Oklahoma Prevention Needs Assessment survey?

Known as the “OPNA”, the Oklahoma Prevention Needs Assessment is a biennial survey of public, private, and charter school students in the 6th, 8th, 10th, and 12th grades. The survey is a project of the Oklahoma Department of Mental Health and Substance Abuse Services (ODMHSAS), and has been conducted in Oklahoma since 2004.

What is the purpose of the OPNA?

The OPNA is a robust tool for providing direction to schools, districts, and communities to effectively improve the lives of students across a variety of issues, with a focus on: alcohol, tobacco, other drug use, mental health, academic failure, and violence. The OPNA measures problem behaviors and also risk and protective factors, which are attitudes, behaviors, and opinions that research has shown to be highly correlated with these health risk behaviors. The survey results provide the necessary information to understand current behavior trends and predict the development of future problems. This helps schools plan important prevention and intervention strategies. It also helps schools, districts, and counties evaluate the effectiveness of current prevention and intervention efforts. The information gained from these surveys will allow school districts and the State of Oklahoma to continue to provide comprehensive prevention programs for our schools and children. There is a possibility of adding a limited number of customized questions to the end of the survey for a fee. Please contact ODMHSAS at the contact number below for more information. There is no cost for participating in the standard OPNA.

How can my district participate at no cost?

Schools can participate in the OPNA at no cost in October through December 2019 and February 2020. Through a partnership between the Oklahoma Department of Mental Health and Substance Abuse Services, Cherokee Nation, and Southern Plains Tribal Health Board, all public, private, and charter schools with enrolled 6th, 8th, 10th, and 12th graders are eligible to participate in the survey and receive reports for free.

Why should my school district participate?

The OPNA collects data on research-based factors that are shown to not only contribute to student success on standardized tests and academic performance but also to aid in the prevention of substance use and mental health problems. It is the only survey that provides a risk and protective factor profile across four domains: individual/peer, family, school, and community. Examples of questions that are used to develop the risk and protective profile include: “If you wanted to get

some beer, wine, or hard liquor (for example, vodka, whiskey, or gin), how easy would it be for you to get some?” and “How often do you feel that the schoolwork you are assigned is meaningful and important?” When administrators understand student challenges and opportunities, they can most effectively plan for success. Survey results can help your district/school be more competitive in applying for grants such as Drug Free Communities and 21st Century Community Learning Centers, and can help secure funding through other sources by demonstrating need. OPNA results can also be used to help ensure that the state and counties maintain important prevention services which directly or indirectly benefit area school districts and schools.

What questions are asked?

The survey includes questions related to mental health; alcohol, tobacco, and other drug use; violent behaviors; other health risk behaviors; and related risk and protective factors. The survey questions have been designed to measure key behaviors without asking sensitive questions, although it is possible that some questions may be considered sensitive by some schools or school districts. Questions in these topic areas are asked honestly and directly, to help ensure clarity with students and accuracy in reporting. The survey is anonymous, so no student's response will ever be able to be connected with that student.

A copy of the survey instrument is available for review, and an online demonstration of the electronic survey can be provided at your request. The electronic copy of the instrument will be provided to District Survey Coordinators after the agreement form is received.

What if a parent does not wish their child to participate?

District Survey Coordinators will work with schools to distribute passive parental consent forms (or active consent forms in schools choosing to use them). Passive parental consent forms will inform parents of the study and instruct them to contact the principal's office if they do not wish their child to take the survey. A District Survey Coordinator for each district will work with schools to ensure students whose parents decline consent do not take the survey. If a parent declines, their son or daughter will be allowed to read or participate in an alternate activity while his or her classmates are taking the survey.

What if a student does not wish to participate?

The student's participation in this study is completely voluntary. At the beginning of the class period when the survey will be administered, the teacher will read a prepared statement that informs the students their participation is voluntary. The students will be given the option to decline to participate, or to skip any question they prefer not to answer. Any students who decline the survey will be provided with an alternative activity while the survey is being administered.

Is student participation anonymous?

Yes, student participation is anonymous. The student will be given a survey booklet that contains the question items and a place for him/her to record responses. The survey booklet will not have the student's name, or any other identifying information on it. Before they begin, students will be

reminded they should not write their name or other identifying information on the booklet. When completing the survey, students will be arranged in the classroom so their responses cannot be seen by the teacher administering the survey or by any of the student's peers. At the end of the class period, the survey booklets will immediately be gathered and placed in a sealed envelope or box. Contacts at each school will pick up the completed surveys and ship them to the survey contractor, Bach Harrison, L.L.C. in Salt Lake City, Utah using a prepaid FedEx Ground label. Students who complete the survey online are given an anonymous link. Online responses do not include the student's name or other identifying information.

What will students be asked to do?

The students will be asked to complete a self-administered survey questionnaire during one class period at school, either via paper and pencil or electronically online as chosen by their school. For the paper/pencil version, the student will be given a survey booklet that contains the survey questions. For the online version, students will access the survey online by clicking on a link specific to each school. The student will be asked to read each question and select the answer that most closely matches their response. Students may experience stress from the personal nature of some questions; however, any stress is expected to be minimal given the anonymous, voluntary nature of the survey participation. All questions are self-reported, and no physical tests or exams are involved.

How long does it take to complete the survey?

The paper survey takes approximately 45 minutes to complete while the online survey typically takes 30 minutes to complete. Sixth grade students may take longer to complete the survey. The survey is administered during a single class period. Although it is expected that the students will have sufficient time to complete the entire survey, they will be informed they should answer as many questions as possible during the class but not be concerned if they are not able to finish all of them. Students who finish before the end of class will be asked to work quietly at their desks while their classmates finish.

When will the study be conducted?

The survey will be administered during the following months: October 2019, November 2019, December 2019, and February 2020. Within a given school, the survey will be administered to all participating classes during the same class period when possible. This will help avoid students discussing the questions with classmates who have not yet completed the survey and biasing the results.

How does the District Survey Coordinator help with the survey?

ODMHSAS has community and tribal partners who will serve as point people to school district coordinators (or private school/charter school coordinators). The point person and the District Survey Coordinator will work with the Oklahoma Department of Mental Health and Substance Abuse Services to help facilitate the survey. The District Survey Coordinator will work with school

principals to set an appropriate and convenient survey date, develop a passive parental consent process, and distribute and gather survey materials.

What will schools be asked to do?

Schools will be asked to distribute the passive or active parental consent forms to parents/guardians at least two weeks before the survey date and track students whose parent/guardian do not want them to take the survey, and administer the survey. The survey should be administered by a teacher or other proctor to all participating classes during the same class period when possible. Survey booklets along with proctor instructions and scripts will be sent to the District Survey Coordinator for districts administering the survey via paper/pencil. District Coordinators will work with each school to distribute survey materials to each site. For the online administration, schools will administer the survey via an online survey link using desktop computers or other school-owned devices such as iPads or Chromebooks. Nothing has to be downloaded or installed on computers or other devices. Students are not allowed to take the survey on their personal phones or other devices. Survey links for all schools and proctor instructions will be sent to the District Survey Coordinator, who will then distribute the appropriate survey link and instructions to each school, and also work with the district and/or school's IT staff to ensure the links are set up properly on the computers or other devices.

How will the results be made available?

Reports will be generated on several levels, including state, regional, county, school district, and school. The reports will provide levels of health related behaviors; alcohol, tobacco, and other drug use; antisocial behavior; mental health, and the factors that place students at risk for problem behaviors and protect them from problem behaviors. School and school district level reports will only be made available to public school district superintendents or charter/private school lead administrators. In order to protect student confidentiality, schools and districts with 10 or fewer participating students will not receive a report. Schools and districts with more than 10 but fewer than 20 participating students will receive an abbreviated report. Schools and districts with 20 or more students will receive full profile reports. The state profile will be published on ODMHSAS's website. All reports will show aggregated data and not individual student responses.

How can my district sign up to participate?

Public school superintendents or private/charter school senior administrators should complete and sign the agreement form and email, mail, or fax the form to ODMHSAS.

If you have any additional questions about the OPNA, please contact:

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