



## Using the Youth Experience Survey Outside of Evidence2Success

The Youth Experience Survey (YES) provides a comprehensive picture of how kids are doing, with questions geared to identifying the most effective evidence-based approaches for prevention and early intervention. The YES generates insights in five key areas – education and skills attainment, emotional well-being, physical health, positive behavior and positive relationships. It also helps identify the factors that put children at risk for developing problems in the future, as well as the factors that can protect youth from those risks. Survey results can help communities see the links among risks, protective factors and well-being and highlight areas in which public agencies and communities might focus their investments.

YES is a self-report survey that is administered in middle and high schools. YES is given in a single class period to students in grades 6, 8, 10 and 12. The unique value of the survey lies in its use as a tool to prioritize risk and protective factors. This helps communities make strategic choices to maximize the impact of programmatic expenditures. Survey results are primarily used to identify evidence-based programs, such as those found on the [Blueprints for Healthy Youth Development database](#), targeted to improve specific outcomes.

Even though YES is part of the suite of tools used in communities adopting the Annie E. Casey Foundation's Evidence2Success framework, communities that are not implementing Evidence2Success can still benefit from using YES by itself. This fact sheet is intended to explain how the survey is used and to help your community decide whether to use it. An additional [fact sheet](#) describes the role of YES for Evidence2Success sites.

### Is YES Right for My Community?

YES has been used in urban and rural communities. YES can be used with youth of all ethnic or racial backgrounds, as the concepts it measures have been shown to operate in similar ways in youth of all ethnicities. Thus far, it has been tested with African-American, white and Latino youth.

YES can be used in communities of any size, although concerns about anonymity and confidentiality arise when there are fewer than 40 students in each grade. In a standard Evidence2Success implementation, YES is often administered throughout a city, so that neighborhood-level results can be compared to the results for other neighborhoods or for the city as a whole.

To ensure adequate representation of the community's strengths and needs, we recommend relatively large samples of youth capturing multiple ages and drawn from diverse areas across a community. In most cases, this is best achieved by surveying all youth in grades 6, 8, 10 and 12 attending the community's schools.

If your community or school system already uses a scientifically validated risk- and protection-focused survey, such as the Student Health and Risk Prevention Survey (SHARP) in Utah, the Pennsylvania Youth Survey (PAYS), the Healthy Youth Survey in Washington or the Communities That Care (CTC) Survey, then you should continue to do so. If you are not already using one of these surveys, then YES may be right for your community.

### What Are Appropriate Uses of YES?

YES is administered anonymously to ensure confidentiality. Results are used to prioritize areas of strength and concern as a basis for choosing the most appropriate tested, effective (evidence-based) interventions for the community or neighborhood. This information can help communities get ahead of problems before they appear. Moreover, when administered every other year, YES enables communities to gauge their progress toward their priority goals over time.

The survey is a tool for assessing risk, protection and outcomes for youth throughout a community (on a neighborhood or citywide scale) and, in many cases, relative to comparable national or multistate samples. The survey provides validated reliable measures, and results can guide decisions on appropriate preventive interventions. It is **not** a diagnostic tool for assessing individuals or small groups.

If community-wide representation is not a goal, it is possible to use the YES for smaller populations, such as a large youth development organization. With smaller populations, however, it becomes increasingly difficult to ensure anonymity, as participants can potentially be identified by their demographic profiles or survey responses. If anonymity is compromised, there is increased risk of exposure of a participant's answers to sensitive questions. We do not encourage the use of YES with small samples for this reason.

### Who Developed YES?

YES was developed by a consortium of partner organizations, including the University of Washington Social Development Research Group (SDRG), the Dartington Social Research Unit, Child Trends and the Annie E. Casey Foundation's Evidence-Based Practice Group, which also led and funded the effort. The YES draws upon several well-known surveys, including the Communities That Care Survey, the Monitoring the Future Survey and the Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire.

### How Do We Know Children Are Honest on Surveys?

Research on student self-reporting of substance use and antisocial behavior indicates that young people tend to be honest about their behavior and experience on anonymous, confidential surveys. Analysis strategies allow screening for dishonest or exaggerated responses. If a survey does not meet the criteria for honesty, it is eliminated from the data set.

### How Do We Know Sensitive Questions Won't Inspire Problem Behaviors?

YES asks about matters that are serious problems in some communities, although they may not be evident on the surface. Research shows that asking these kinds of questions does not increase the incidence of these problems.

### Can the Survey Be Customized for My Community?

YES takes 45–50 minutes, or a standard class period, to administer and may be offered as a pencil and paper or computer-based survey. YES works best when administered as designed. Technical assistance providers can provide consultation if a community desires some survey modification.

### What Is the Cost of Using YES?

YES is available free of charge from the Annie E. Casey Foundation. You may examine [a sample survey](#) and the [item construct dictionary](#) online. Although the survey is free, costs of administration, analysis and reporting must be paid by the community adopting the survey and vary depending on the number of students surveyed, the mode of administration and other factors. Estimated costs for a community with 18 schools and 3,000 students in grades 6, 8, 10 and 12 fall in the range of \$30,000 for scanning and verifying data and producing reports.

### What Assistance Is Available for Administering YES and Analyzing the Data? Where Can I Learn More?

Detailed protocols for administering YES are available upon request from the Annie E. Casey Foundation. To learn more, please contact [mjohnson@aecf.org](mailto:mjohnson@aecf.org). The protocols include guidance on administering and communicating about the survey. Use of these protocols increases response rates, which helps to ensure reliable data. School districts can administer YES on their own. Consultation on YES is available for a fee through SDRG, to include administration, data collection, data analysis and reporting. Email [bbrooke@uw.edu](mailto:bbrooke@uw.edu) for information.