

Why the Illinois Youth Survey Matters

Registration for the 2026 Illinois Youth Survey (IYS) is now open, and surveying will take place from January through May. While it may seem like just another student questionnaire, the IYS is much more than that. It's one of the most critical tools we have for understanding the experiences, behaviors, and needs of Illinois youth—and for translating that understanding into effective, data-informed action at both the local and state levels. But the value of this data depends on one key factor: participation. The more schools that participate, the more accurate and useful the data becomes—not just at the state level, but in each community.

Why is the IYS important for statewide data?

The IYS provides one of the most comprehensive sources of behavioral health data for adolescents in Illinois. This data is essential for state agencies, policymakers, and researchers to:

- Track trends over time, such as rising or declining rates of youth substance use or mental health challenges
- Identify emerging public health concerns across the state
- Inform statewide policies and prevention strategies
- Secure funding for youth support services by demonstrating need through credible data.

Why does the IYS matter for local planning?

One of the most powerful aspects of the IYS is that local communities get access to their own data in a ready-made report. When schools participate, local public health departments, prevention coalitions, school districts, and youth-serving organizations can:

- Evaluate how students in their area compare to state averages
- Identify specific areas of concern—whether it's vaping, anxiety, or bullying
- Measure the impact of local programs over time
- Use real data to guide funding proposals and strategic planning

You can help recruit schools to participate!

As someone vested in prevention in your community, you can play an active role in recruiting schools to participate in the IYS. You can learn more by taking the online, self-paced training, [Promoting the Illinois Youth Survey to Schools](#). The training will build your knowledge and skills to promote the IYS to schools in your community.

If you need help, please contact Prevention First at providerservices@prevention.org, and we can connect you with the right person to learn more about the survey's benefits and develop a recruitment strategy. You can learn more about the IYS on the [IYS website](#).