MINNESOTA STUDENT SURVEY

Minnesota Student Survey Tip Sheet: Trauma-Informed Survey Administration

The Minnesota Student Survey (MSS) is the primary source of comprehensive data on young people at the state, county, and local level in Minnesota and is the only consistent source of statewide data on their health and well-being. It provides valuable information about issues vital to the health, safety, and academic success of young people. The survey is voluntary, confidential, and anonymous on the part of students.

This survey asks many questions, including those on sensitive topics. Students may have various levels of comfort answering these questions. Some students may have an intense emotional, cognitive, or physical response as these questions may remind them of previous uncomfortable or traumatic experiences.

Tips for administering the survey in a trauma-informed manner:

Know what a trauma response *may* look like

Any situation that reminds someone of a traumatic experience may initiate or "trigger" distress in the moment. This response may look like "fight, flight, or freeze." For example, students may show signs of irritability, nervousness, withdrawal, aggression, or they may experience a panic attack.

Reminding students that they have power and control while taking the survey may help calm some students. Some examples may be:

- **Remind students that participation is *voluntary***. They can skip any questions they do not want to answer and can stop at any time without needing a reason.
- **Remind students that participation is *confidential***. Their responses will not be connected to their identity. Refer to Minnesota Student Survey Tip Sheet: Confidentiality for more info.
    - Please keep in mind: If a student chooses to speak with an adult on-site about what they're feeling, mandated reporting laws may still apply and students should be aware of that.

Students can take a short break from the survey and come back later as long as their survey session is not expired or the device, they are taking the survey will not go to sleep mode. The survey needs to be completed in one sitting since the survey is anonymous and students will not have individual access codes. The survey will be active for 4 hours after students start the survey unless they complete the survey, or they close the browser, or their devices goes to sleep mode or become inactive.

Some activities that may help during a break:

- Taking a walk

- Taking some deep breaths/meditating
- Talking to someone
- Listening to music
- Writing or journaling

If a student does not want to continue with the survey, but may want to finish it another day, check with the onsite coordinator to see if that is possible.

Resources

Help with survey administration

If you have questions or need help, please contact:

- Minnesota Department of Education: mde.studentsurvey@state.mn.us
- Book office hours with an MDE staff to get help: Virtual office hours
- Find survey administration instructions, parent notification letters, tip sheets and more: MSS 2025

Help for students who have a heightened response to some survey questions

- **Know what resources are available on-site**. This may be a guidance counselor, school social worker, school nurse, or other on-site adult the student has a close relationship with.
- **Refer to the** Student Crisis Resource Handout **and resources listed on the MSS website**. Share this handout with students as needed.