

# WARNS

Washington Assessment of the Risks and Needs of Students

## USER MANUAL



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*Version 4.0*

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## Authorship

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Please visit our informational website at [WARNS.WSU.EDU](http://WARNS.WSU.EDU) for additional information.

# SECTION I. A USER’S GUIDE TO THE WASHINGTON ASSESSMENT OF THE RISKS AND NEEDS OF STUDENTS (WARNS)

## Introduction

The Washington Assessment of the Risks and Needs of Students (WARNS) is a brief (53 to 74-item) self-report measure for **13 – 18-year-old youth** designed to allow schools, courts, and youth service providers to assess individual risks and needs that may lead to truancy and/or school failure, and to target interventions accordingly. **The WARNS takes approximately 10 to 30 minutes to administer**, and measures both past and current experiences in several domains that are critical to healthy social, emotional, and educational development.

The WARNS can be administered online via remote access to a secure server located at *Washington State University (WSU)*. The *Learning and Performance Research Center* at WSU is responsible for overseeing all aspects of the administration and use of the WARNS.

Section I of this manual provides an overview of the WARNS, instructions for accessing and administering of the instrument, and different options for administration. Section II provides information on the different sections of the WARNS and how to interpret the results.

Please see the *WARNS Technical Manual* for more detailed information on the instrument, its development, reliability, validity, and history. All manuals and additional information is available at our informational website [WARNS.WSU.EDU](http://WARNS.WSU.EDU).

## What is the WARNS?

There are six **Needs Scales** in the WARNS instrument, each consisting of between five and nine questions (40 questions total). All six areas have been linked to truancy, delinquency, and/or dropping out of school. Scores on a scale are used to determine whether a youth has a **Low, Moderate, or High** need for intervention in that area. The six scales consist of the following:

- Aggression-Defiance
- Substance Abuse
- Family Environment
- Depression-Anxiety
- Peer Deviance
- School Engagement

The **Aggression-Defiance** scale refers to the tendency to act-out one’s distress in an aggressive, irritable, and defiant manner. The **Depression-Anxiety** scale, on the other hand, assesses levels of internalizing behaviors, which tend to take the form of depression and anxiety, and may result in intense sadness, hopelessness, and sleeping and eating problems, among others. The **Substance Abuse** scale screens for the frequency of alcohol, marijuana, and “hard drug” use.

Three other needs scales assess a youth’s functioning in three critical social contexts. The **Peer Deviance** scale assesses a variety of problematic behaviors among the youth’s friends.

The **Family Environment** scale focuses on a youth's relationships with their parents and home environment. The **School Engagement** scale assesses how much students like going to school, and their engagement with the educational environment.

### **Other WARNS items**

In addition to the items that compose the six Needs Scales, the WARNS contains a number of other items found to be strong predictors of truancy, delinquency, and dropping out of school in the research literature. These items address basic demographic information, family functioning and organization, school attendance and engagement, criminal history, barriers to school attendance, and can also be used to obtain a rough assessment of the validity of a student's responses.

### **Factors Affecting Data Validity**

The WARNS survey does not have any built-in methods that attempt to assess the veracity of youths' responses. However, the WARNS Online does have a place at the end of the survey for administrators to indicate their impression of the validity of the responses based on how the youth behaved during the administration. Please see the *WARNS Technical Manual* for further information on factors affecting data validity.

## **What are the Uses and Benefits of the WARNS?**

### **Needs Assessment and Treatment Planning**

For counselors, case managers, and other individuals working with at-risk youth, the WARNS provides a method to quickly gather and synthesize important information about a youth's developmental experiences and current functioning. It is best used during the initial stages of engagement with the youth to better understand his or her specific risks and needs, guide conversations, and develop a successful intervention plan.

*The WARNS should not be used for diagnostic purposes or as the sole source of information in treatment planning, but instead as one of several strategies available to professionals to assist in identifying past and current challenges that may be negatively affecting school engagement and attendance.*

The WARNS is uniquely designed to allow professionals to prioritize services for those youth most at-risk for school failure, including dropout. Scores on the six need scales can be used to match youth to targeted interventions. For example, less intense, group-level interventions may not be effective with high-risk students, but may be beneficial for those with moderate levels of need.

*As stated in the User Agreement, the WARNS may only be used in the best interest of the youth. It may not be used when considering or determining any punitive sanctions or to place students into certain educational classrooms or with a population of youth with similar results.*

If a given site is interested in-the-aggregate results for a group of individuals, Washington State University can provide the site administrator with the individual-level data in Excel or SPSS format for further analysis. Group reports may be of interest for specific populations (e.g., incoming freshman, court-petitioned truants, treatment participants), or different groups of youth can be compared within a population (e.g., truants and non-truants; boys and girls; 9<sup>th</sup>, 10<sup>th</sup>, and 11<sup>th</sup> graders).

### **Individual Progress Monitoring or Program Evaluation**

Individual service providers and stakeholders who are interested in whether or not their efforts were successful in bringing about meaningful change in the lives of youth may want to administer the WARNS both before and after an intervention. The WARNS was designed to measure recent changes in the perceptions and experiences of adolescents. All items on the six Needs Scales and several additional items inquire about youths' functioning during the past two months. Therefore, individuals and groups can be assessed both before and after most interventions to help determine if youth have improved in critical areas of development. Service providers or stakeholders interested in program evaluation are encouraged to contact the Learning and Performance Research Center at Washington State University for help with research design and other issues necessary to a valid program evaluation.

## **Gaining Access to the WARNS**

### **Registration**

Courts, schools or other agencies interested in administering the WARNS may apply to use the instrument by completing and submitting a **WSU WARNS User Agreement** (See Appendix A). The User Agreement can be obtained by either contacting WSU at [WARNS@wsu.edu](mailto:WARNS@wsu.edu) or by using the version provided in Appendix A.

The User Agreement should be printed, filled out, signed, scanned and emailed to the Washington State University (WSU) at [WARNS@wsu.edu](mailto:WARNS@wsu.edu). An individual with signing authority for the agency must sign the completed User Agreement. Any subsequent changes to the User Agreement, including the addition or modification of the list of qualified administrators who will have access to students' responses, may be requested by submitting a revised, signed User Agreement.

Any site or individual wanting to administer the WARNS must describe the purpose of its use, the population of youth who are to receive the survey, the approximate number of surveys to be administered, and the dates of administration. The individual or individuals responsible for interpreting the results of the WARNS for any purpose, including but not limited to

evaluation or the provision of specific interventions, must be identified on the User Agreement and possess the appropriate qualifications. Qualified individuals include psychiatrists, clinical or counseling psychologists, certified school counselors, registered psychiatric nurses or nurse practitioners, social workers, or persons designated by a court as qualified to interpret risk assessments of court-involved youth.

Each site must designate a primary administrator to serve as the main source of communication with WARNS staff. The primary administrator is responsible for distributing all materials, instructions, codes, passwords, and results to other approved administrators. She or he is also responsible for informing others of the terms and conditions in the User Agreement and ensuring the integrity of the WARNS survey and administration process. The primary administrator, and other administrators who will have access to students' responses, must be designated on the User Agreement.

Once a primary administrator has been designated and a User Agreement signed, WSU will register a user ID and password for the primary administrator with our *Portal for Supporting Successful Outcomes* (PSSO; pronounced pea-so). PSSO allows access to the WARNS online assessment and data (see the next section on PSSO).

## What is PSSO

The *Portal for Supporting Successful Outcomes* (PSSO) is an online dynamic user management and reporting system that improves the delivery of the WARNS assessment for stakeholders working in schools and juvenile justice. PSSO allows school and agency personnel to make data-driven decisions about students most in need of resources in Washington State and throughout the nation. PSSO provides stakeholders with the following features: *data collection, automated reporting, live data downloads, and a variety of user management options*. For example, the primary WARNS administrator will be able to use PSSO to define new users including their access level and permissions. While WARNS is currently designed for high school students, PSSO is also providing a development platform for a WARNS assessment for middle and elementary students. Please see the PSSO user manual at [WARNS.WSU.EDU](http://WARNS.WSU.EDU) for additional information.

## WARNS Reports

The WSU WARNS online system produces a detailed individual-level report immediately following the survey administration. The report contains the youth's identification number and demographics at the top of report. Next, the level of need is presented for each of the six Needs Scales. The levels of need (Low, Moderate, High) are color coded for quick and easy identification of the results. Following the Needs Scales, information from every item on the survey is presented and organized by the content of the items. If the user requests the Anonymous Administration (See *WARNS Online Step-by-Step Instructions*), then only the demographics and the six level of need scores will appear at the end of the report. Users may

recreate any youth WARNS report using the PSSO platform (see the section on What is PSSO). Additionally, users may download live WARNS data for their organization to an Excel sheet using the PSSO platform, depending on their user permissions.

## Subscription to WARNS

The use of WARNS and PSSO requires an annual subscription. Information on costs for either or both the High School WARNS or the Middle School WARNS is available at our informational website at [WARNS.WSU.EDU](http://WARNS.WSU.EDU).

## Ownership and Access to Data

The WARNS User Agreement specifies that all data resulting from either paper or online administration of the survey becomes **co-owned by the signing agency and Washington State University**. All submitted data are stored on secure servers within at WSU in unidentified format and are accessible only to approved staff. Data may be used by WSU for further survey development or other research purposes at its own discretion and without notification to the submitting agency. The identity of submitting agencies will not be released in publications or to third-parties without the consent of the submitting agency.

Respondent data will not be released to third-parties without prior written approval of the submitting agency unless otherwise directed by law. However, WSU may share aggregated results of data analyses to third-parties without prior approval so long as the results do not identify a specific school, school district, or agency. Users should keep in mind that open records laws in Washington State may require the release of data to third-parties without the approval of WSU or the submitting agency.

## Ethical and Legal Considerations

Guardian consent is not required when screening and assessment activities are being done in fulfillment of the law for doing a juvenile court filing for student truancy or as part of a valid court order. Guardian and student consent should be obtained if doing a general screening of the student population. Consent forms have been developed for use by WSU and are available on our website at [WARNS.wsu.edu](http://WARNS.wsu.edu).

The WARNS contains questions of a personal nature, some of which may implicate the youth or others in possible crimes or other misdeeds (e.g., drug use by self or peers, truancy, physical assault, theft). The User Agreement specifies that the WARNS may only be used in the best interests of the youth, that is, to provide appropriate targeted interventions for truant youth. The use of the WARNS responses to impose punishment or sanctions or to implicate the youth in a crime, or interpreting a response as an admission of guilt would be a gross misuse of this instrument. ***Schools, courts, and other agencies should establish policies regarding the***

***use and retention of student information prior to administration to safeguard the rights and welfare of every youth.*** Further, the youth should be fully informed as to how his or her information will and will not be used. The WARNS User Agreement also specifies that each administrator must understand and comply with all rules, requirements, and laws regarding the reporting of physical and sexual abuse.

Finally, consideration must be given to the requirements of the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA). If WARNS Reports are maintained by the school, they should be maintained separately from the students' educational records in order to avoid inappropriate and potentially damaging disclosure. Schools should consult with legal counsel when establishing policies regarding the retention of WARNS Reports.

## **WARNS Administration**

### **Overview**

Most students can complete the WARNS in approximately 10-30 minutes, depending upon their level of concentration, reading and comprehension abilities. The WARNS is currently available in English, and is written at approximately a fifth-grade level.

Youth taking the WARNS should be allowed to complete the survey in a quiet, comfortable space free of distractions. Multiple youths may take the survey simultaneously on different devices as long as their confidentiality is maintained. An administrator should remain nearby to answer any questions, ensure appropriate use of the survey instrument, and help students who may have difficulty reading or understanding certain words or phrases. An administrator may also read the questions to students, although the students should be encouraged to answer independently if possible.

If conditions preclude access to the WARNS online, WSU can provide a paper version. In this case, the site administrator will need to enter the responses directly to the online site before the survey can be scored. Administrators approved for viewing individual students' reports and responses will be provided with a password to access the survey report.

The online survey can be administered using any web-enabled device. Administrators should become familiar with the device or devices to be used for administration as well as the process for saving reports, if desired, to a secure storage device. When using the online WARNS, surveys are electronically scored and the results are available immediately to the survey administrator. Care should be taken to delete or secure survey results after administration to ensure student confidentiality.

### **Legal reporting requirements**

**An important consideration is any legal requirement for reporting information to authorities if administration of the WARNS reveals physical abuse of the youth.** The user should review and understand the laws surrounding the reporting of sexual or physical abuse to

law enforcement. The user should also comply with any and all these rules, requirements, and laws and report to law enforcement any suspected abuse based on a Respondent's answers.

In addition, survey administrators should prepare for emotional reactions to the questions by the youth. Mental health professionals should be made available in case of strong emotional reactions to the questions or as a follow-up resource. Finally, the survey administrator should possess the necessary interpersonal skills and knowledge to appropriately handle youths' responses to these items and to refer them to mental health resources if necessary.

## **Preparation**

1. *Inform guardians and obtain parental and student consent unless performing the assessment in fulfillment of the law for a Juvenile Court filing for truancy.*

It is the responsibility of the approved agency and administrators to obtain consent from the youth and their parent or legal guardian prior to administration unless the assessment is part of a valid court order or in fulfillment of the law. The parent and student consent forms are available at [WARNS.wsu.edu](http://WARNS.wsu.edu).

The WARNS User Agreement specifies that under most circumstances, completing the survey must be voluntary on the part of the youth. If a student decides he or she does not want to take the survey or answer a question that requires a response, simply terminate the survey. Informing students of their rights, explaining how their information will be used, and enlisting their cooperation are critical steps for ensuring data validity.

2. *Consider the youths' abilities*

- At least a fifth-grade English reading and comprehension abilities.
- The visual ability to read the paper or online survey.
- The manual dexterity to accurately answer the questions.

3. *Choose and prepare a mode of online access*

- Where will administration occur?
- Is there a reliable internet connection?
- Is the battery life of the device suitable for administrations in the field, or is a power cord and a power source available?
- Can you easily and securely save the WARNS Reports, if desired?
- Is the WARNS survey link easily accessible on every device to be used?
- Have you tested the device and taken a sample survey?

4. *Have the necessary information ready*

- Do you have your Administrator login ID and password?
- Do you have your Administrator's Code?
- Do you know your site's administration option?
- Do you have the WARNS Report password?
- Have you created a log and assigned a unique local ID to each student's name?

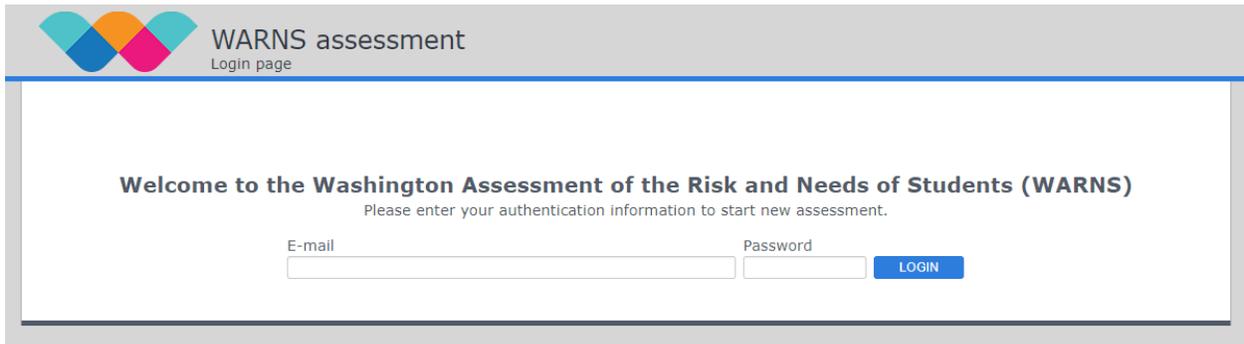
5. *Survey Environment*

- Is the environment quiet, comfortable, and free of distractions?
- Can the youth enter responses privately?
- Are resources available to answer youths' questions and respond to issues?

## WARNS ONLINE STEP-BY-STEP INSTRUCTIONS

**Step 1:** Open a web browser and go to the link: <https://pssso.wsu.edu/warns/>

You should see the following page:



The screenshot shows the WARNS assessment login page. At the top left is a logo consisting of four overlapping circles in teal, orange, pink, and blue. To the right of the logo, the text reads "WARNS assessment" and "Login page" below it. The main content area has a white background with a blue border. It features the heading "Welcome to the Washington Assessment of the Risk and Needs of Students (WARNS)" followed by the instruction "Please enter your authentication information to start new assessment." Below this are two input fields: "E-mail" and "Password". To the right of the "Password" field is a blue button labeled "LOGIN".

**Step 2:** WARNS is linked to the PSSO platform. You will use the same email address and password that you used to register for PSSO. Please see the *PSSO User Manual* for information on registering your email as a login ID. The *PSSO User Manual* is available on our informational website <https://warns.wsu.edu/>.

## User Agreement Page

**WARNS assessment**  
User agreement Bruce Austin

**USER AGREEMENT**

I, or someone from my agency, has signed and submitted the Washington Assessment of the Risks and Needs of Students (WARNS) User Agreement supplied by Washington State University (WSU). I have received confirmation from Washington State University that I have been approved to administer the WARNS. I have read, understand, and will fully comply with the terms and conditions of use as described in the User Agreement.

I understand that administration of the WARNS without prior approval is strictly prohibited.

I understand that any prior agreement with the Washington State Administrative Office of the Courts does not extend to the use of this system.

I agree and confirm that my use conforms to the User Agreement with Washington State University.

[Next >>](#)

**Step 3:** Read the terms and conditions on the User Agreement.  
Note: "I agree" must be selected to proceed with administration.

## Youth ID Page

**WARNS assessment**  
Student lookup Bruce Austin

Please enter a unique ID number for the student

- 1) You may make up an ID number. If you make up your own student ID and need to re-assess the student at a future date, then you will need the same ID to compare reports.
- 2) You may use the student's school ID. If you use the student's school ID, please remember that it will appear on printed reports and should be kept secure and confidential. Use of the student's school ID will allow you to re-assess the student at a later date and compare reports.

Please remember to keep all printed student reports secure and confidential and refrain from writing the student's name on the report unless directed by a court to do so.

[Next >>](#)

**Step 4:** Enter a unique ID for each youth. The ID must be a number and not a name. Please refer to the User Agreement for maintaining confidentiality of student identity.

1. You may make up an ID number. If you make up your own student ID and need to re-assess the student at a future date, then you will need the same ID to compare reports.
2. You may use the student's school ID. If you use the student's school ID, please remember that it will appear on printed reports and should be kept secure and confidential. Use of the student's school ID will allow you to re-assess the student at a later date and compare reports.

Please remember to keep all printed student reports secure and confidential and refrain from writing the student's name on any WARNS reports unless directed by a court to do so.

## Administration Page

WARNS assessment  
Administration options

Bruce Austin

**Please select assessment's version**

- FULL Version
- NEEDS Only Version
- Anonymous Administration (WARNS Report Only; no report of survey responses).

**Have you obtained signed Parent and Student Consent forms provided by Washington State University (Version November 9, 2016), OR is screening and assessment included as part of a valid court order for this youth?**

**CONSENT:** Please follow the procedures for your organization for notification or obtaining consent

Next >>

**Step 5:** Please select the administration version. See the section below on Administration Options.

## Administration Options

### (1) Full version:

This option will give the respondents the choice to answer **all questions** in the online survey including those that address basic demographic information, family functioning and organization, school attendance and engagement, criminal history, barriers to school attendance. The responses to all survey questions will appear on the WARNS Report that is produced immediately following the completion of the survey.

### (2) NEEDS Only Version:

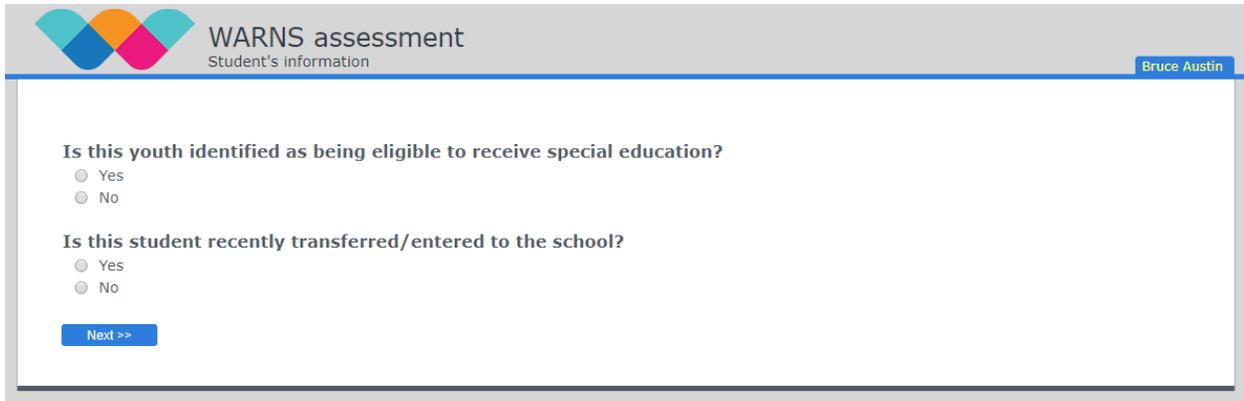
This option allows users to administer only the demographic questions and the approximately 40 questions that result in the *low*, *moderate*, and *high* classifications for the six Needs Scales (Aggression-Defiance, Depression-Anxiety, Substance Abuse, Peer Deviance, Family Environment, and School Engagement). All responses will appear on the report that is produced immediately following the completion of the survey. This option is provided for circumstances in which a youth may have limited reading and/or comprehension abilities. It may also be used in order to reduce the administration time of the survey. **This option is NOT recommended for regular administration as it limits information for potential research and clinical use.**

### (3) Anonymous Administration:

This option allows users to administer only the demographic questions and the approximately 40 questions that result in the *low*, *moderate*, and *high* classifications for the six Needs Scales. **No responses are reported at the end of the survey administration.** Only the WARNS report that summarizes the *low*, *moderate*, and *high* classifications for the six Needs Scales will be reported. This option is available for administrators who feel that the respondent may be less willing to truthfully respond to the survey questions if they think the administrator can view their answers.

## Background Page

After the **Administration page**, all options will ask the following two questions.



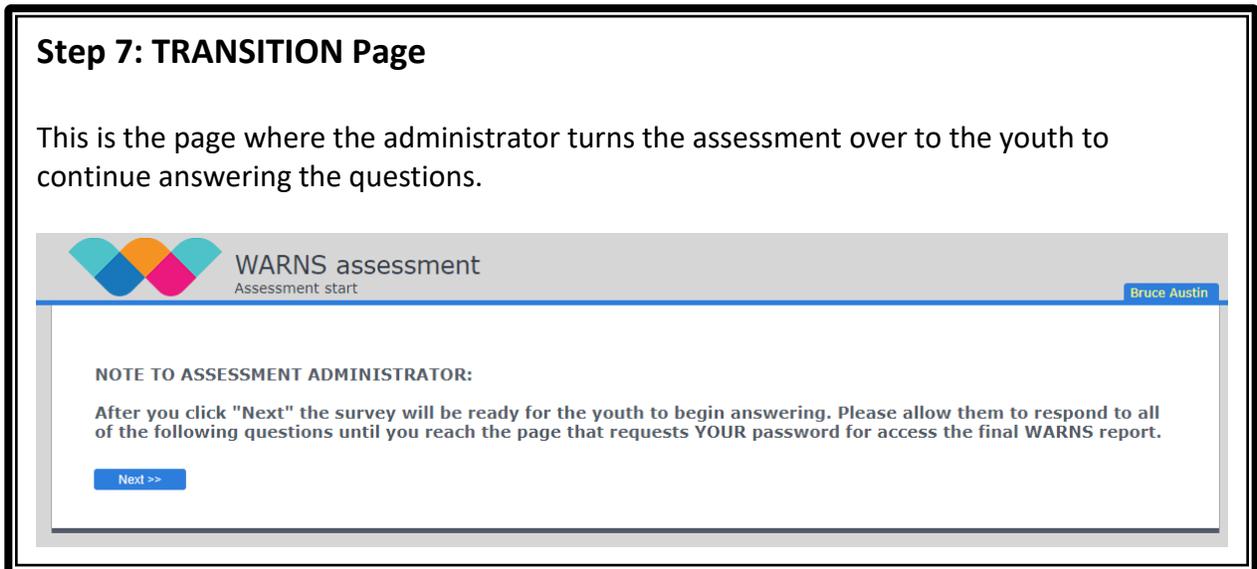
The screenshot shows the 'WARNS assessment' interface for 'Student's information'. The header includes a logo with four overlapping colored shapes (teal, orange, blue, pink) and the text 'WARNS assessment Student's information'. A user name 'Bruce Austin' is displayed in the top right. The main content area contains two questions with radio button options:

- Is this youth identified as being eligible to receive special education?
  - Yes
  - No
- Is this student recently transferred/entered to the school?
  - Yes
  - No

A blue button labeled 'Next >>' is located at the bottom left of the form area.

### Step 7: TRANSITION Page

This is the page where the administrator turns the assessment over to the youth to continue answering the questions.



The screenshot shows the 'WARNS assessment' interface for 'Assessment start'. The header includes the same logo and text as the previous page, but with 'Assessment start' below the logo. The user name 'Bruce Austin' is in the top right. The main content area features a note to the administrator:

**NOTE TO ASSESSMENT ADMINISTRATOR:**

After you click "Next" the survey will be ready for the youth to begin answering. Please allow them to respond to all of the following questions until you reach the page that requests YOUR password for access the final WARNS report.

A blue button labeled 'Next >>' is located at the bottom left of the form area.

## Demographics Pages

This is the first demographics page and the first question that the youth will answer. The demographics questions are made available for all administration options. The student should now be allowed to begin responding to the survey questions. When the student reaches the **Completion Page** they will be instructed to inform the teacher or counselor that they are finished with the assessment.

**Washington Assessment of the Risk and Needs of Students (WARNS)**

Question 1 of 35  
**What is your age?**  
 years

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## WARNS Questions

This is the first set of questions that are used for the WARNS Risk and Needs scales.

**Washington Assessment of the Risk and Needs of Students (WARNS)**

Question 26 of 35  
**We would like to know how you have been doing during the past 2 MONTHS**

	Never or hardly ever	Sometimes	Often	Always or almost always
I like going to school	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I got into physical fights	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I felt close to my parents	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I smoked cigarettes	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I broke the rules at home, school, or work	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

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If a question is not answered the following **warning message** will be given.

Question 30 of 35  
**We would like to know how you have been doing during the past 2 MONTHS**

These questions are important to understand your current risk level and to see the way to help you. Please be sure you provide your best answer to each and every question.

	Never or hardly ever	Sometimes	Often	Always or almost always
I got into arguments with my parents	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I drank two or more alcoholic beverages in a day (beer, wine, liquor)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I studied for my quizzes and tests	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I threatened to hurt someone	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I had trouble sleeping or eating because I couldn't get something off my mind	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

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The **warning message** appears in the event that a respondent accidentally skips a question. It gives the responding youth the opportunity to select a response before proceeding. This is done because all of the WARNS questions must have a response in order to calculate the WARNS Risk Scores. We cannot substitute a value for any skipped question out of concern for either over- or under-estimating the Risk score for a youth.

Counselors should always keep in mind that **the assessment is voluntary** and that **a youth may stop responding at any time**. If a youth is not comfortable with answering a particular question then the assessment should be stopped. Your organization has agreed to this protocol as part of the WSU WARNS User Agreement.

## Step 8: Completion Pages

This is the page where the student can review their responses or submit the assessment. The Administrator of the assessment may take over the instrument at this time and click the **Submit assessment** button.

**Washington Assessment of the Risk and Needs of Students (WARNS)**

You are about to finish this assessment.

To submit the assessment click "Submit assessment" button below.

To review your answers starting from the beginning click "Review your answers" button.

Review your answers | **Submit assessment**

Once the **Submit assessment** button has been clicked, the following screen will appear. The Administrator will be required to enter their password again in order to access the **WARNS Report** for the youth.

**WARNS assessment**  
Re-authentication

Bruce Austin

Please confirm your identity.

E-mail bwaustin6704@gmail.com

Password

Next >>

## Step 9: Demographics Confirmation

The Administrator will then be given the opportunity to confirm or provide the demographic information of the youth.

**WARNS assessment**  
Student's information

Bruce Austin

**Please confirm/provide student's demographic information:**

**Age**  
17 years

**Grade**  
6 7 8 9 10 11 12

**Gender**  
 Female  Male

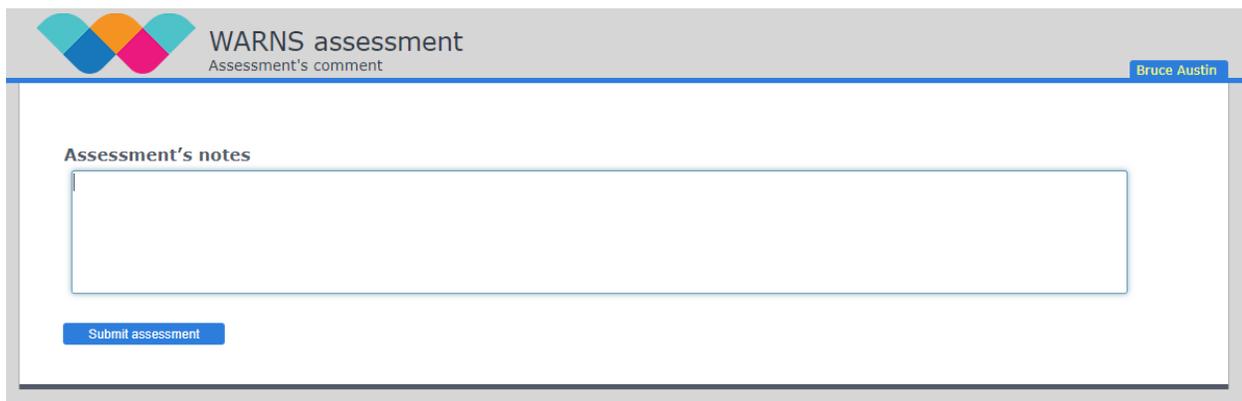
**Race/Ethnicity**  
 American Indian/Alaska Native  
 Asian  
 Pacific Islander  
 African-American/Black  
 Hispanic/Latino  
 White/Caucasian  
 Other, please describe

Next >>

## Step 10: Comments and Notes

The next screen allows the Administrator to enter any comments or notes about administration of the assessment. One recommended use is to record thoughts on the integrity of the youth responses – whether or not the youth took the assessment seriously, or any issues or behaviors that may have affected the integrity of the responses.

**In order to maintain confidentiality and compliance with the WSU User Agreement, please do not enter the name of the youth in this space.**



WARNS assessment  
Assessment's comment

Bruce Austin

Assessment's notes

Submit assessment

## The WARNS Report

Finally, after clicking the **Submit assessment** button, an individual **WARNS Report** will appear as a downloadable PDF file in your browser window. The WARNS Report contains the youth's identification number and demographics at the top of report. Next, the levels of need are presented for each of the six Needs Scales. The levels of need are color coded for quick and easy identification of the results. Following the Needs Scales, information from every item on the survey is presented and organized by the content of the items. If the user requested the Anonymous Administration, then only the demographics and the six level of need scores will appear at the end of the report.

Note that there is a scroll bar available to view the full report including the responses to the assessment.

WARNS\_assessment\_2017\_08\_23 1 / 3

Washington Assessment of the Risks and Needs of Students

### Assessment report

**Student's information**

Student ID: 88564  
Administration date: 08/11/2017  
Gender: Female  
Age: 15  
Grade: 9  
Race/Ethnicity: Asian, White/Caucasian

**Risk scales**

Aggression-Defiance: LOW  
Depression-Anxiety: LOW  
Substance Abuse: MODERATE  
Peer Deviance: LOW  
Family Environment: MODERATE  
School Engagement: HIGH

~~TOTAL RISK SCORE: 89 (HIGH)~~  
(At risk if score is greater than 20 for female, 17 for male)

**Risk Scales:** The risk scales appear on the first page of the WARNS Report and indicate the level of risk assessed by the instrument for each domain in addition to a total risk score.

There are 3 possible risk levels for each domain: **LOW**, **MODERATE**, and **HIGH**.

Please consult the sections below on the interpretation of the risk levels.

**FOR ADDED SECURITY, BE SURE TO CLOSE THE BROWSER TO PREVENT FUTURE RESPONDENTS FROM VIEWING OTHERS' ANSWERS.**

## SECTION II. A PROFESSIONAL'S GUIDE TO INTERPRETING THE WARNS RESULTS

### WARNS Risk Scores

WARNS risk equations, scores, and categories have been developed to assess risk for delinquency<sup>1</sup> over one-year and two-year periods from the date of administration. Scoring and classification should not be used for other populations of students given that the equations, classification, and predictive accuracy would undoubtedly vary.

For detailed information on the Needs Scales and Risk Scores please consult the *WARNS Technical Manual*.

### The Needs Scales

All of the items that compose the Needs Scales are measured on a four-point Likert-style rating scale indicating the frequency of the thought, behavior, or emotion during the previous two months. The responses categories are:

- *Never or hardly ever*
- *Sometimes*
- *Often*
- *Always or almost always*

Each item on a scale receives a score from zero to three. Higher scores reflect more problematic functioning. Most items are written with reference to a problem behavior (e.g., *I got into physical fights*), though some assess positive feelings (e.g., *I felt close to my parents*) and are therefore reverse scored. Scores are then summed across all items for each of the scales.

### Levels of Need

Scores for each of the Needs Scales are categorized into one of three needs levels: *Low, Moderate, or High* need for intervention. Several early studies (discussed in detail in the Technical Manual) were conducted to determine the reliability and validity of the six needs scales and the accuracy of the WARNS in predicating truancy and distinguishing between youth with and without histories of truancy. The cut-points for the levels for each of the scales were determined by clinical judgment and through consideration of the score distributions of different groups of youth included in the study (e.g., high school students, truants, offenders).

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<sup>1</sup> Risk for delinquency was defined as the probability of a court referral for an At-Risk Youth petition or a Truancy petition.

Please consult the Technical Manual for full details on the reliability, validity, and cut-point specifications for each scale.

## **THE SIX NEEDS SCALES**

### **Needs Scale: Aggression-Defiance (8 items)**

The Aggression-Defiance scale is composed of eight items that assess the frequency of youths' externalizing, acting-out behaviors during the previous two months. Five items assess aggression and three assess defiant behavior. The five aggression items measure destructive aggression towards people or property. The five items are:

- 2. I got into physical fights
- 7. I lost my temper and hit or yelled at something
- 24. I threatened to hurt someone
- 36. I picked on or bullied other kids
- 41. I got so angry I hit or broke something

Individuals who are aggressive also tend to act-out by defying authority, breaking rules, and lying to others. Three items on the Aggression-Defiance scale measure these behaviors. The three defiance items are:

- 27. I lied, disobeyed, or talked back to adults
- 43. I lied, hustled, or conned someone to get what I wanted
- 45. I damaged or stole something on purpose

### **Needs Scale: Depression-Anxiety (8 items)**

Some individuals may internalize their distress and experience feelings of depression and/or anxiety. Four items assessing symptoms of depression and four items assessing symptoms of anxiety compose the Depression-Anxiety scale. The four depression items measure the frequency of symptoms such as sadness, hopelessness, and lack of concern. These items are:

- 9. I felt like nothing could cheer me up
- 14. I felt down, sad, or unhappy
- 29. I felt hopeless about the future
- 39. I didn't care about anything or anyone

The four items assessing anxiety indicate a level of distress that is beyond one's typical experience or is interfering with cognitive and physical functioning. The anxiety items are:

- 16. I was so worried or bothered by things it was hard to concentrate
- 25. I had trouble sleeping or eating because I couldn't get something off my mind
- 31. I felt more tense, irritated, or worried than usual
- 37. I got so nervous I felt sick, had trouble breathing, or felt shaky

**Needs Scale: Substance Abuse (5 items)**

Substance use among adolescents is a great concern among parents, service providers, and others. The Substance Abuse scale is composed of five items. Because even occasional drug or alcohol use may be a concern, youth are categorized as having a moderate need for intervention even if they say they just *sometimes* use alcohol and marijuana.

The five items are:

- 15. I got sick, passed out, or couldn't remember what happened because of alcohol and drugs
- 22. I drank two or more alcoholic beverages (beer, wine, liquor) in a day
- 34. I used drugs such as cocaine, ecstasy, meth, or pills
- 38. I missed or skipped school to use or recover from drugs or alcohol
- 40. I smoked or used marijuana (pot, weed)

**Needs Scale: Peer Deviance (5 items)**

During adolescence, youth develop strong associations with their peer group and close friends. Teens often begin exploring different types of activities and relationships within these contexts, and begin testing social norms and rules with greater intensity. The peer group is highly influential in the process. Five items assess peer deviance across a variety of behaviors:

- 11. My friends got drunk or high from alcohol, marijuana (pot, weed), or other drugs
- 19. My friends did things that could have got them arrested
- 30. My friends got into trouble at school
- 35. My friends skipped or cut class
- 46. My friends got into physical fights

**Needs Scale: Family Environment (5 items)**

Parents continue to play a vital role in the social and emotional development of their children throughout adolescence. As teens seek independence from their parents, and develop stronger associations and intimacy with their peers, the nature of the parent-child relationship changes. The five items on the Family Environment needs scale are designed to assess the general quality of the parent-child relationship and environment. They are not designed to

screen for serious or abusive altercations. Four of the items are framed positively and are, therefore, reverse scored. Higher scale scores indicate a more dysfunctional home environment.

The five items are:

- 3. I felt close to my parents (Reverse scored)
- 6. If I wanted to do homework, my parents' home was a good place to be (Reverse scored)
- 21. I got into arguments with my parents
- 28. I could talk to my parents if I had a problem (Reverse scored)
- 49. My parents would help me with my homework if I asked (Reverse scored)

### **Needs Scale: School Engagement (9 items)**

How one adapts and performs in the challenging school environment has major implications for a youth's life. A lack of school engagement is associated with truancy, delinquency, and drug use in adolescence, and is predictive of dropping out of school, adult criminal offending, and poor financial outcomes in adulthood, among others. The School Engagement scale consists of nine items. Four items assess feelings of connection to the school environment and the task of learning. These items are:

- 1. I liked going to school (Reverse scored)
- 17. I learned things in class that will be important later in life (Reverse scored)
- 26. I thought about dropping out of school
- 44. My classes were interesting (Reverse scored)

Two additional items assess youths' efforts to succeed in school. They are:

- 23. I studied for my quizzes and tests (Reverse scored)
- 32. I got my homework completed and turned in on time (Reverse scored)

And three items assess youths' attitudes and connections to teachers and school staff:

- 8. I felt supported and respected by the adults at school (Reverse scored)
- 13. I could talk to an adult at school if I had a problem (Reverse scored)
- 42. My teachers cared about me (Reverse scored)

### **Other WARNS Items**

The WARNS contains a number of other items important to risk and needs assessments. Most of these items have been found to be significant predictors of truancy, delinquency, and school drop-out (Hammond et al., 2007; Howell, 2003; Loeber & Farrington, 1998). These items

are organized by content domain on the WARNS Report. The items, with response options in parentheses, are presented below.

### Demographics

- ◆ **Age** (12 through 20<sup>2</sup>)
- ◆ **Grade** (6 – 12)
- ◆ **Gender** (Female, Male)
- ◆ **Race/ethnicity** (American Indian/Alaska Native; African-American/Black; Asian; Hispanic/Latino; Pacific Islander; White/Caucasian; Other)

### Family

- ◆ **Which adults do you currently live with?** (Mom, Dad, Step-mom, Step-dad, Grandmother, Grandfather, Other adult(s), No adult)
- ◆ **How many different homes have you lived in during the past 2 years?** (None (homeless), 1, 2, 3 - 5, 6 or more)
- ◆ **How many times have you been in foster care?** (none, 1, 2, 3 or more)
- ◆ **Did any of your sisters or brothers drop out of junior high or high school?** (Yes, No, I don't have any brothers or sisters)
- ◆ **How many times have you run away or been kicked out of your home for more than a day?** (0, 1, 2, 3 – 5, 6 or more)

### School

- ◆ **How many different schools have you attended in the past 2 years?** (0, 1, 2, 3 – 5, 6 or more)
- ◆ **Have you ever been held back or not promoted to the next grade in school?** (Yes, No)
- ◆ **What were your most recent grades at school?** (Mostly A's and B's, Mostly B's and C's, Mostly C's and D's, Mostly D's and F's)
- ◆ **How far do you think you will go in school?** (Won't finish high school, GED, High school diploma, Associate's, Bachelor's, Master's, advanced degree)
- ◆ **In the past YEAR, how many times did you skip or cut class?** (Never, A few times all year, About once or twice a month, About once a week, More than once a week)
- ◆ **How many times in your life have you been suspended or expelled from school?** (0, 1, 2, 3-5, 6-10, 11 or more)

### Criminal History

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<sup>2</sup> Even though the WARNS was designed for 13 – 18 year-olds, it may be appropriate for slightly younger or older students depending upon the circumstances. However, the survey is not yet validated for use with students not yet in high school.

- ◆ ***How many times have you been arrested or charged with a crime?*** (0, 1, 2, 3 – 5, 6 or more)
- ◆ ***How old were you the first time you were arrested or charged with a crime?*** (10 – 20, not asked if never arrested or charged with a crime)
- ◆ ***How many times have you spent at least one night in juvenile detention?*** (0, 1, 2, 3 – 5, 6 or more)

### **Barriers to Attendance**

Four items assess a student’s current experiences and may play an important role in truant behavior. These items are:

- ◆ ***Do you have a learning disability (LD), a mental health problem, or a behavior disorder (like ADD/ADHD)?*** (Yes, No)
- ◆ ***How often do you babysit or provide care for someone during school hours?*** (Never, Sometimes, Often)
- ◆ ***Do you have any health problems that make you miss a lot of school?*** (Yes, No)
- ◆ ***How often do you have trouble getting a ride to school?*** (Never, Sometimes, Often)

### **Trauma**

- ◆ ***Have your parents divorced or separated in the last year?*** (Yes, No)
- ◆ ***Have you ever seen anyone very badly hurt or killed in person (not on TV, video, or computer)?*** (Yes, No)
- ◆ ***Did anyone you felt close to die in the last year?*** (Yes, No)

Finally, the WARNS includes a number of items that were not included in the six Needs scales. Some were included due to their general interest among stakeholders (e.g., experiences of being bullied, gang involvement), while others exist to determine if they can improve the reliability and validity of the Needs Scales.

### These items include the following:

- |   |  |
|---|--|
| ◆ <i>Things in my home were stressful</i>   | ◆ <i>I broke the rules at home, work, or school</i>                                    |
| ◆ <i>I had little interest or pleasure in doing the things I usually like to do</i> | ◆ <i>I got into trouble at school (kicked out of class, disciplined, suspended)</i>    |
| ◆ <i>Other kids at school picked on or bullied me.</i>                              | ◆ <i>I stayed out past my curfew or overnight somewhere without telling my parents</i> |
| ◆ <i>I smoked cigarettes</i>  | ◆ <i>I did things that could have got me arrested</i>                                  |
| ◆ <i>I hung out with gang members</i>   |  |

## **DEVELOPMENT, RELIABILITY, AND VALIDITY OF THE WARNS**

Test reliability and validity information are essential and fundamental aspects of test construction. Ultimately, test score validity is said to refer to the degree to which the decisions based on test scores and the inferences on which the decisions are based, are justified by supporting evidence (Linn, 2005). Many forms of evidence contribute to a body of evidence to support the construct validity of test scores for a given purpose (Messick, 1989). We provide several pieces of evidence for the WARNS scores that are documented in the technical manual:

### **Summary of Test Reliability and Validation Evidence**

Evidence demonstrates that the WARNS scores have strong reliability. The scores have:

- High internal consistency.
- A high degree of test-retest reliability.
- A high degree of inter-rater reliability.

Evidence demonstrates that:

- Test content in the WARNS is supported.
- The WARNS factor structure is supported.
- The WARNS items function similarly across major identified groups.
- Correlations with external variables reveal that WARNS scores are correlated as expected with other measures.
- The WARNS scores show expected differences in expected groups.

Major forms of reliability and validity evidence were provided to support the WARNS scores and inferences. However, exhaustive validity evidence is impossible to collect given (a) building validity evidence is an ongoing process, (b) an assessment program or assessment developer cannot foresee all uses of the scores, and (c) a test developer cannot predict every type of child that may be assessed. However, the evidence we do present provides a strong foundation for the use of the WARNS.

**For detailed information on the WARNS reliability and validity evidence please consult the *WARNS Technical Manual*.**

## References

George, T.P. (2012) Washington Assessment of the Risks and Needs of Students (WARNS): User Manual.

Hammond, C., Linton, D., Smink, J., & Drew, S. (2007). *Dropout Risk Factors and Exemplary Programs: A Technical report*. Clemson, S.C.: National Dropout Prevention Center, Clemson University, and Alexandria, VA: Communities in Schools, Inc.

Howell, J. C. (2003). *Preventing and reducing juvenile delinquency: A Comprehensive framework*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Loeber, R., & Farrington, D. P. (Eds.) (1998), *Serious and violent juvenile offenders: Risk factors and successful interventions*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

**Appendix A: WARNS User Agreement**  
**with**  
**Washington State University**

*Washington Assessment of the Risks and Needs of Students (WARNS)*

**Organization:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Address:** \_\_\_\_\_

**City:** \_\_\_\_\_ **State:** \_\_\_\_\_ **ZIP:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Purpose of use and population of youth:**

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Grade Levels for Administration** \_\_\_\_\_

**Approximate # of surveys:** \_\_\_\_\_ **Time period of administration(s):** \_\_\_\_\_

**Primary administrator of the WARNS:**

**Name:** \_\_\_\_\_ **Job title:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Email:** \_\_\_\_\_ **Phone:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Other administrators of the WARNS:**

**Name:** \_\_\_\_\_ **Job title:** \_\_\_\_\_

## **Definitions**

“Administer”: To read the answers given, discuss the answers with the Respondent, and interpret the results of the WARNS survey. To ensure all records are stored, retained, and destroyed in accordance with this Agreement and applicable laws.

“Assessment”: A series of questions designed to assist schools or courts in determining the risks and needs of the person or group of persons responding to the questions.

“Confidential Information”: Any combination of information that identifies and describes an individual, including Respondent’s name in conjunction with Social Security number, protected health information, protected school information, and financial account information.

“Content”: All questions, responses, instructions, notes, reports, and other information contained in both hard copy and online version(s) of the WARNS, the WARNS Report, and in the WARNS User Manual.

“Data”: The responses of the User and Respondent.

“Private Information”: Any information provided for the WARNS that is in relation to a Respondent’s private or family life.

“Respondent”: The youth who takes the WARNS survey.

“User”: The entity responsible for administering the WARNS survey to the Respondent.

“WARNS”: Acronym for Washington Assessment of the Risks and Needs of Students.

“WARNS Administrator”: A psychiatrist, psychologist, psychiatric advanced registered nurse practitioner, psychiatric nurse, a social worker, a school counselor with an Educational Staff Associate certificate, a person who has at least a Bachelor’s Degree in a relevant field and has worked with at-risk youth more than five years, or a person designated by a court to perform risk assessments of youths who are in the court system.

“Youth”: A person who has reached his or her 12th birthday, but is younger than 19 years of age.

## **Warranties to Washington State University**

- a. By accepting the terms of this Agreement, User warrants that it possess the legal authority to enter into this Agreement.
- b. By accepting the terms of this Agreement, User is acknowledging responsibility for payment for use of this Agreement as an individual or as the legal representative of the entity.
- c. By accepting the terms of this Agreement, User warrants that it understands and agrees that Washington State University (WSU) in no way warrants or guarantees the services or deliverables provided under this Agreement and makes no warranties, express or implied, including, but not limited to, the warranty of merchantability or warranty of fitness for a particular purpose regarding the quality or accuracy of the same.

## **Subscription Costs**

There is an annual subscription cost of \$275 for the High School assessment and \$275 for the Middle School assessment plus a \$1 charge for each student assessed in a given year. The Subscription cost for both assessments is \$500. WSU may change the renewal cost of this subscription.

## **Permitted Use**

User agrees that the best interest of the Respondent will take precedent at all times during the administration of WARNS and its subsequent interpretation. If the assessment is given to a group of students where the results are anonymous and not linked to a student, any teacher employed by the school district may distribute and collect the assessment. WARNS may only be administered and interpreted by a WARNS Administrator. WARNS will only be used as an assessment tool. If used by a school or other educational entity, WARNS may only be used to assess the educational, emotional, and social needs of the Respondent.

## **Prohibited Use**

WARNS may not be used when considering or determining any punitive sanctions and may not be used for any other purpose except to assist the User with assessing a Respondent's, or a group of Respondents', needs and risks, without the signed consent of Washington State University. WARNS will not be used as a mental illness diagnostic tool nor will it be used as the sole source of information for determining intervention or treatment. WARNS shall not be used for classroom assignment or to place Respondent with a population of Respondents with similar results or scores.

## **Consent Agreement**

The decision to take the WARNS assessment is voluntary, unless screening or assessment is included as part of a valid court order. The WARNS may be administered without signed consent from the student's guardian in fulfilment of existing law or court order to perform an assessment due to student truancy. When not ordered by the court, there must be written documentation signed by the Respondent and the guardian that demonstrates the Respondent and the guardian are aware that the decision to take the WARNS is voluntary and optional. A generic blanket consent form, signed by the student's legal guardian, may be evidence of parental consent only when WARNS is given to a large group of students where the results are anonymous and cannot be linked to a specific Respondent. The User must verify the blanket consent form has been signed by the Respondent and guardian prior to having the student take the WARNS, and the blanket consent form must have language that either specifically permits the taking of the WARNS or states that the parent or guardian consents to the child taking risk and needs assessments distributed by the school district. If the WARNS is given to an identified Respondent, the User will ensure that the Respondent and Respondent's legal guardians are aware that taking the WARNS is voluntary by using the attached consent forms. No changes will be made to the forms without prior approval from Washington State University (WSU) Contracts Manager. User agrees that the Respondent and the Respondent's parent or legal guardian shall review and sign the consent form prior to Respondent taking the WARNS assessment. A copy of the signed consent form shall remain either with the assessment results if results are retained or with other Respondent records. If either the Respondent or the Respondent's legal guardian refuses to sign the consent form, the WARNS will not be given to Respondent. Respondent may refuse to answer any question on the WARNS and any decision not to answer a question will be respected by the User. Respondent shall not be pressured in any manner to answer the WARNS

questions. No Respondent will be rewarded in any manner for taking the WARNS nor shall any Respondent be penalized in any manner for either refusing to take the WARNS or for refusing to answer some of the questions.

### **Confidentiality**

User agrees to hold in confidence information received from Respondent. All content will be considered confidential. User recognizes the disclosure of confidential or private information may give rise to irreparable injury to Respondent and WSU, inadequately compensable in damages and that, accordingly, consents to WSU or Respondent obtaining injunctive relief as well as any other legal remedies which may be available. User understands that a breach of confidentiality may be grounds for immediate removal from use of WARNS and termination of this User Agreement.

### **Required Reporting of Physical and Sexual Abuse**

User has reviewed and understands the laws surrounding the reporting of sexual or physical abuse to law enforcement. User will comply with any and all these rules, requirements, and laws and will report to law enforcement any suspected abuse based on a Respondent's answers.

### **Indemnification**

User agrees to defend, indemnify, and hold harmless WSU, its employees, and the State of Washington from all loss, risk of loss, and damages (including expenses, costs, and attorney fees) sustained or incurred because of, or by reason of, any claims, demands, suits, actions, judgments, or executions for damages of any and every kind and by whomever and whenever made or obtained, allegedly caused by, arising out of, or relating in any manner to any use made of the information or data obtained under this Agreement.

### **Ownership**

All data is co-owned by the User and WSU. WSU reserves the right to use the data for any and all research purposes without consent from the User. No reports, publications, materials, etc., produced by WSU will contain identifying information of WARNS Respondents without the signed consent of the Respondent. Users may request a data file from WSU with all the information supplied by the Users and Respondents. Under no circumstances will any private information be released by WSU unless required by law or court order. If Intellectual Property is developed under this Agreement, ownership of any and all such Intellectual Property reverts to WSU. User agrees not to use the name or other trademark of WARNS or WSU in any publicity, advertising, or news release without prior written approval of an authorized representative of WSU.

### **General Terms and Conditions**

- a. **Conflict of Authority** - If any provision of this Agreement shall be deemed in conflict with any statute or rule of law, such provision shall be deemed modified to conform to statute or rule of law.
- b. **Governing Law** - This Agreement shall be governed in all respects by the laws and statutes of the State of Washington. The jurisdiction for any action hereunder shall be the Superior Court for the State of Washington. The venue of any action hereunder shall be in the Superior Court for Whitman County, Washington.

c. **Records Maintenance** – User agrees to retain all books, records, documents, signed consent forms, and other materials relevant to this Agreement, including records of all Respondents who take the WARNS, for six years after termination of this Agreement and make them available at all reasonable times to inspection, review, or audit by personnel authorized by WSU and other officials so authorized by law. The User further agrees that WSU shall have the right, at any time, to monitor, audit, and/or review the activities and policies of the User in order to assure compliance with this Agreement.

d. **Severability** - If any term, condition, or application of this Agreement is held invalid, such invalidity shall not affect any other terms, conditions, or applications of this Agreement which can be given effect without the invalid term, condition, or application; to this end the terms and conditions of this Agreement are declared severable.

e. **Waiver/Modification** - Any failure of WSU to enforce any provision of this Agreement shall not constitute a waiver of any rights under such provision or any other provisions under this Agreement.

f. **Assignment** - The User cannot assign or transfer this Agreement to any other entity or person.

g. **Entire Agreement** - This Agreement sets forth the entire agreement between User and WSU regarding WARNS and supersedes all previous discussions and agreements. Understanding, representations, or warranties not contained in this Agreement shall not be binding on either party.

h. **Termination** - The provisions of this Agreement shall survive the termination of the use of WARNS.

**Authority**

The individual signing this Agreement on behalf of the User represents and warrants that he or she has the power and authority to bind the User, and that no further action, resolution, or approval from the User is necessary to enter into this Agreement.

---

**Signature** **Date**

---

**Printed Name** **Title**

**Please return this form in its entirety electronically or by mail to:**

Electronic:  
[warns@wsu.edu](mailto:warns@wsu.edu)

US Mail:  
Dr. Brian French  
The Learning & Performance Research Center  
Washington State University  
PO Box 642136  
Pullman, WA 99164-2136

## **Appendix B: Consent Forms**

Please visit the [WARNS.wsu.edu](https://warns.wsu.edu) website to obtain consent form templates for guardians and youth.



