

WARNS



Washington Assessment of the Risks and Needs of Students



User Manual Version 7

Visit the information website at: warns.wsu.edu

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Washington State University
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Authorship

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Please visit our informational website at WARNS.WSU.EDU for additional information.

A USER'S GUIDE TO THE 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 past and current experiences in several domains critical to healthy social, emotional, and educational development.

The WARNS can be administered online via remote access to a secure server hosted by Amazon Web Services (AWS) that complies with all FERPA regulations. The *Learning and Performance Research Center* at WSU oversees 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 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's development, reliability, validity, and history. All manuals and additional information are available at our informational website 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 total). All six areas have been linked to truancy, delinquency, and/or dropping out of school. Scores on a scale help 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 attending school and their engagement with the educational environment.

Other WARNS Items

In addition to the items that compose the six Needs Scales, WARNS contains several 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, and 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 has no built-in methods to assess the veracity of youths' responses. However, WARNS 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, 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 understand their specific risks and needs better, guide conversations, and develop a successful intervention plan.

NOTE: 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 dropouts. 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 placing 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., in-coming students, 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; 9th, 10th, and 11th 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 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 for 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 contacting WSU at WARNS@wsu.edu or using the version provided in Appendix A.

The User Agreement should be printed, filled out, signed, scanned, and emailed to Washington State University (WSU) at WARNS@wsu.edu. An individual with signing authority for the agency must sign the completed User Agreement. Any substantive changes to the User Agreement, such as a change in the Primary User, may be made 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 with access to students' responses, should be designated on the User Agreement.

Once a primary administrator has been designated and a User Agreement signed, WSU will create a user ID and password for the primary administrator in our online WARNS system (see next section).

The WARNS Online System

WARNS is available to users via a dynamic online system. The online system allows subscribing organizations to perform assessments, generate assessment reports, define and manage users for their organization, and manage their own data. The online system allows school and agency personnel to make data-driven decisions about students most in need of resources in their location. The system provides stakeholders with the following features: *data collection, automated reporting, live data downloads, and a variety of user management permissions, the ability to assess large groups of students, access to our online vignettes.* For example, the primary WARNS administrator in each organization can define new users, including their access level and permissions. Finally, WARNS high school and middle school versions are available through the online system.

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 on the first page of a downloadable pdf file in the user's web browser. The next on the first page shows the scores for each of the six risk and needs domains that WARNS measures. The levels of need (**Low, Moderate, High**) are color-coded for quick and easy identification of the results. Also provided within the report are the youth responses for every item on the survey organized by the risk domain. If the user requests the Confidential Version (See *WARNS Online Step-by-Step Instructions*), then only the demographics and the six levels of need scores will appear at the end of the report. Users may recreate any youth WARNS report using the student data management features of the online system. Additionally, users may download all the raw WARNS data for their organization to an Excel sheet, depending on their user permissions.

Subscription to WARNS

Access to the WARNS online system requires an annual subscription. Information on costs for either the High School WARNS or the Middle School WARNS is available at our informational website at 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 become **co-owned by the signing agency and Washington State University**. All submitted data are stored on secure servers with Amazon Web Services (AWS) that comply with all FERPA regulations. The data are stored in an unidentified format and are accessible only to approved staff. WSU may use data for assessment maintenance, development, or other research purposes at its 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.

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. 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 with third parties without prior approval so long as the results do not identify a specific school, school district, or agency.

Ethical and Legal Considerations

WSU does not require parent or guardian consent to assess youth as part of the subscribing organization's mission. WSU asks that each organization follow its normal protocols for assessing youth. WSU has developed consent forms available on our website at warns.wsu.edu for *optional* use by subscribing organizations.

The WARNS contains questions of a personal nature, some of which may implicate the youth or others in possible crimes or other offenses (e.g., drug use by self or peers). The User Agreement specifies that the WARNS may only be used in the best interests of the youth, that is, to provide appropriately targeted interventions for truant youth. Using the WARNS responses to impose punishment or sanctions, implicate the youth in a crime, or interpret 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 reporting physical and sexual abuse. Finally, schools may wish to consult legal counsel when establishing policies for retaining WARNS Reports and data.

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 Spanish 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. Administrators should remain nearby to answer any questions, ensure the 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. Multiple youths may take the survey simultaneously on different devices as long as their confidentiality is maintained.

If conditions preclude access to the WARNS online, WSU can provide a paper version. In this case, the site administrator must enter the responses directly to the online site before the survey can be scored, as no manual scoring is available.

The online survey can be administered using any web-enabled device. Administrators should become familiar with the device or devices for administration and the process for saving reports to a secure storage device if desired. 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 the administration of the WARNS reveals physical abuse of the youth. The user should review and understand the laws surrounding reporting sexual or physical abuse to law enforcement. The user should also comply with all these rules, requirements, and laws and report any suspected abuse to law enforcement 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 available in case of strong emotional reactions to the questions or as a follow-up resource. Finally, the survey administrator should possess the interpersonal skills and knowledge to appropriately handle youths' responses to these items and refer them to mental health resources if necessary.

Preparation

1. *When appropriate, inform guardians that the assessment will be performed and for what purpose.*

WARNS administrators are responsible for following their organization's protocol when assessing students – informing students of their rights, explaining how their information will be used, and enlisting their cooperation are critical steps for ensuring data validity. 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.

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.
- WARNS administrators, however, may read questions to the youth and help them record their responses if needed.

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 know your site's administration option?
- Do you have a unique local ID for each student?

5. *Survey Environment*

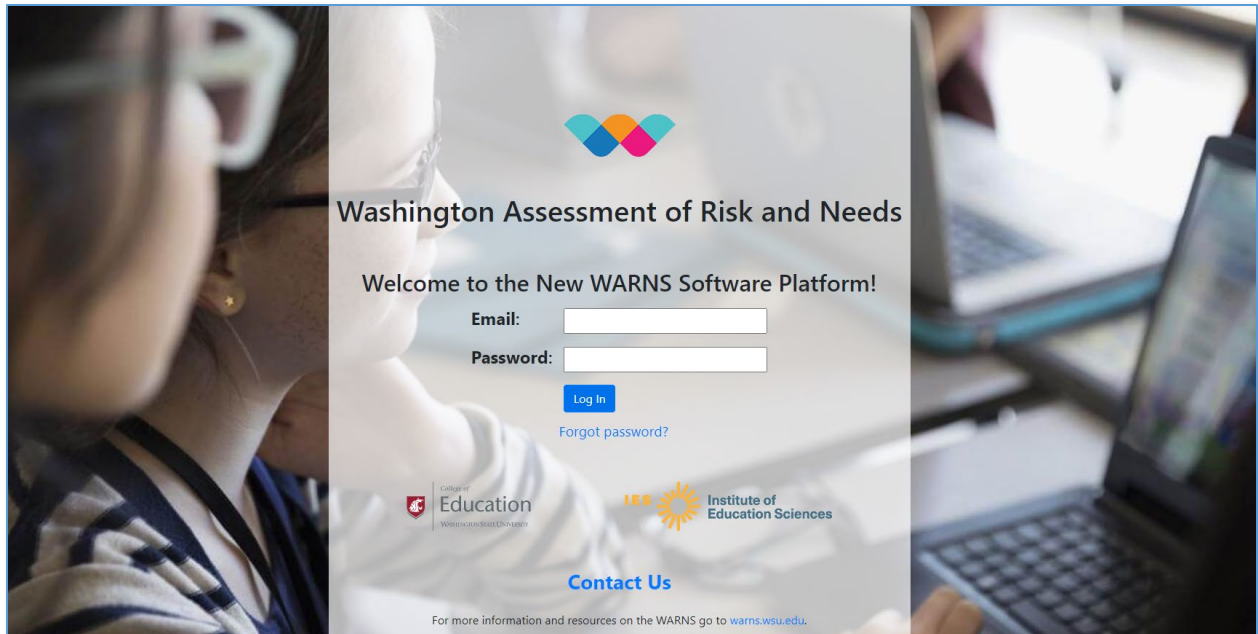
- Is the environment quiet, comfortable, and free of distractions?
- Can the youth enter responses privately?
- Are resources available to answer youths' questions and respond to issues?

WARNS ONLINE STEP-BY-STEP INSTRUCTIONS

The WARNS Online Platform

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

You should see the following login page:



To log in to the WARNS online system, use **your email address and password** that were registered in the WARNS system by WSU or your organization's Primary User.

If you have forgotten your password, click on the **Forgot password** link and follow the directions provided. You will receive an email to complete the process.

Both the high school and middle school versions of the assessment and all other features of the WARNS system are available through this login page.

The WARNS Landing Page

Once logged in to the online system, you will see the main landing page that provides access to all features for which you have been given permission. Figure 1 shows the landing page for an individual with permission to be a Primary User and access to all possible features in the system. You may not see all of the tiles in the Figure depending on your permissions.

Figure 1: *The Landing Page of the WARNS Online System*

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

You are logged in as Bruce CGSDUser [Logout](#)

Admin Dashboard

- Start Assessment
- Assessment Links
- Student Data
- Manage Admins
- Communication Guidance
- My Account

WARNS Assessment Versions

| Version | Scores | Demographics | Background | Response Record | Middle School |
|--------------|--------|--------------|------------|-----------------|---------------|
| FULL | Yes | Yes | Yes | Yes | No |
| NEEDS | Yes | Yes | No | Yes | Yes |
| CONFIDENTIAL | Yes | Yes | No | No | Yes |

Background: Static information about the youth's history such as involvement with the juvenile justice system, living arrangements, exposure to violence.

Response Record: This refers to the responses to the individual WARNS questions and whether they are displayed on the final WARNS report.

Each of the tiles in Figure 1 will be explained in the following sections. The Table of WARNS Assessment Versions provided on the Landing Page reminds the user of the five different versions of the WARNS (three high school versions and two middle school versions). All versions of the WARNS provide all the questions that are used to score the six Needs Scales. The Full version provides additional background questions; the Needs version only provides the WARNS scored items; the Confidential version produces a report that only includes the scores for the six Needs scales but does not include the student responses. The Full and Needs versions provide a list of all WARNS items and the student responses.

Setting Up a WARNS Assessment: Administrative Section

By clicking on the *Start Assessment* tile on the Landing Page (Figure 2), you will be shown a dropdown menu for the different versions outlined in the *WARNS Assessment Versions* Table. There are three high school versions and two middle school versions. There is currently no “Full” version for the middle school. Each version is described in detail below.

Figure 2
Selecting an Assessment Version

The screenshot shows the WARNS Admin Dashboard. At the top, the browser address bar shows 'go.warns.wsu.edu/dashboard/'. The dashboard title is 'Washington Assessment of the Risk and Needs of Students (WARNS)'. The user is logged in as 'Bruce CGSDUser'. The 'Admin Dashboard' section contains several tiles: 'Start Assessment' (with a dropdown menu), 'Assessment Links', 'Student Data', 'Communication Guidance', and 'My Account'. The 'Start Assessment' dropdown menu is open, showing options: 'HS Full', 'HS Needs', 'HS Confidential', 'MS Needs', and 'MS Confidential'. Below the dashboard is a table titled 'WARNS Assessment Versions'.

| Version | Scores | Demographics | Background | Response Record | Middle School |
|--------------|--------|--------------|------------|-----------------|---------------|
| FULL | Yes | Yes | Yes | Yes | No |
| NEEDS | Yes | Yes | No | Yes | Yes |
| CONFIDENTIAL | Yes | Yes | No | No | Yes |

Background: Static information about the youth's history such as involvement with the juvenile justice system, living arrangements, exposure to violence.
Response Record: This refers to the responses to the individual WARNS questions and whether they are displayed on the final WARNS report.

Important Note: Each version of the WARNS assessment asks all WARNS items that go into scoring the six Needs Scales.

(1) Full version:

In addition to the WARNS items, this option gives the youth additional questions about their background and history, such as family functioning and organization, school attendance and engagement, juvenile justice involvement, and barriers to school attendance. These responses will appear on the WARNS Report along with the WARNS items produced immediately following the completion of the survey. This option is useful the first time the WARNS assessment is given to provide the counselor with additional background information about the youth.

(2) **NEEDS Only version:**

This option allows users to administer only the demographic questions and the WARNS items (approximately 45 questions total). This is the *fastest* assessment option and will still produce the *low*, *moderate*, and *high* scores 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 produced immediately after the survey's completion.

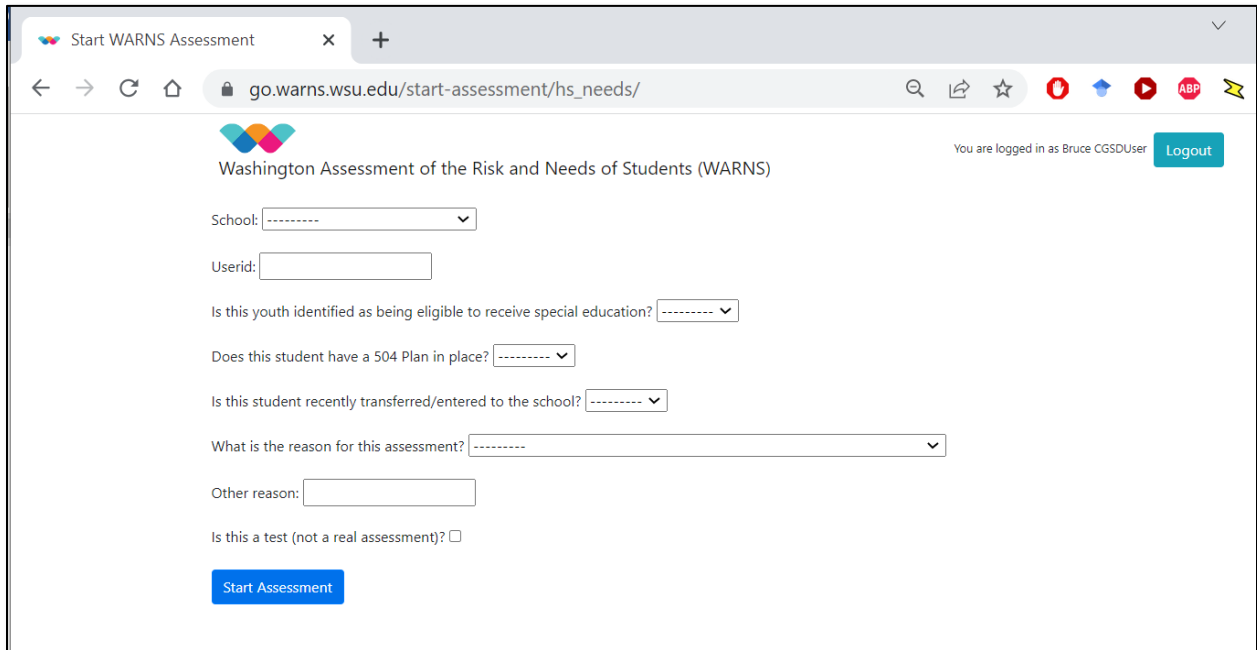
(3) **Confidential version:**

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. **No responses are reported at the end of the survey administration.** Only the first page of the WARNS Report will be produced that summarizes the *low*, *moderate*, and *high* classifications for the six Needs Scales. This option is available for administrators who feel the respondent may be less willing to respond truthfully to the survey questions if the youth thinks the administrator can view their responses. Please be mindful that all youth responses are still accessible through the data download option in the online platform.

Administrative Pages

After selecting the administrative option from the dropdown tile on the Landing Page, the administrative page shown in Figure 3 will appear.

Figure 3: *The Administration Page*



The screenshot shows a web browser window with the URL `go.warns.wsu.edu/start-assessment/hs_needs/`. The page title is "Start WARNS Assessment" and the main heading is "Washington Assessment of the Risk and Needs of Students (WARNS)". The user is logged in as "Bruce CGSDUser" with a "Logout" button. The form contains the following fields:

- School: [Dropdown menu]
- Userid: [Text input]
- Is this youth identified as being eligible to receive special education? [Dropdown menu]
- Does this student have a 504 Plan in place? [Dropdown menu]
- Is this student recently transferred/entered to the school? [Dropdown menu]
- What is the reason for this assessment? [Dropdown menu]
- Other reason: [Text input]
- Is this a test (not a real assessment)?

A blue "Start Assessment" button is located at the bottom of the form.

The WARNS Administrator should now select a school from the school dropdown menu and 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.
3. Respond to the additional questions on the page. These remaining questions are optional but provide the opportunity to record vital information about the assessment.
4. Click the **Start Assessment** button and then give the youth access to your computer to respond to their demographic and WARNS items.

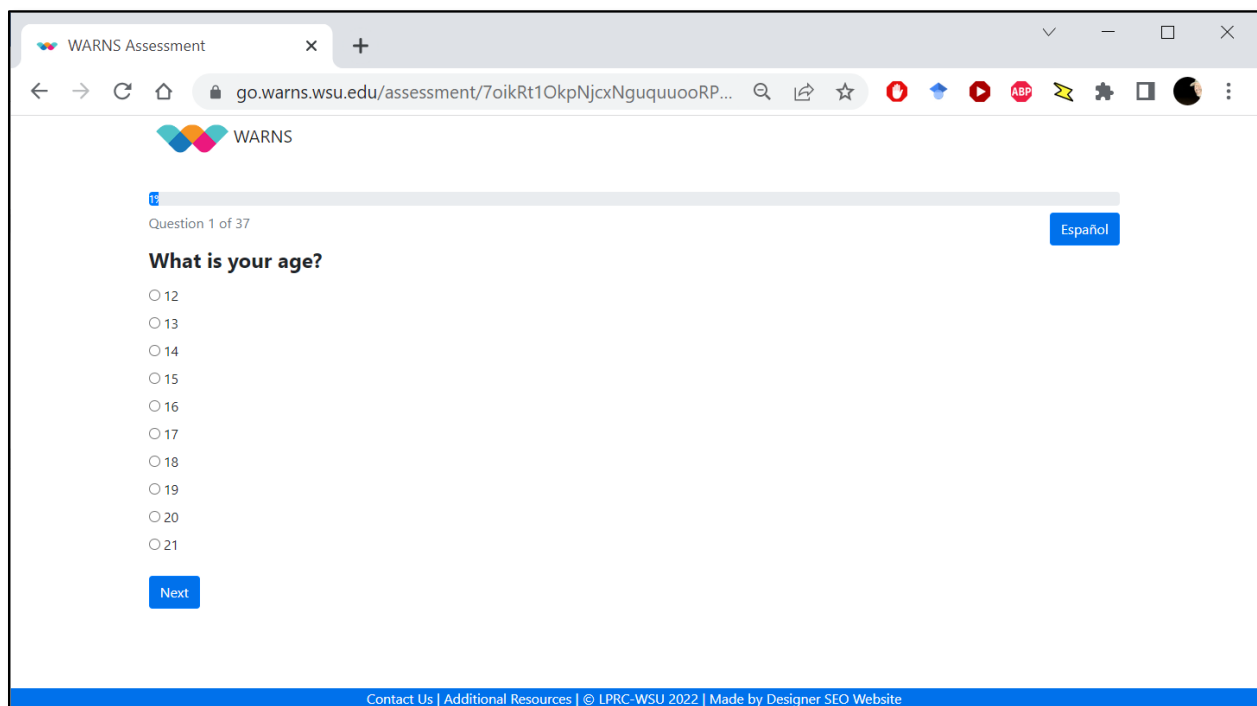
Please remember to keep all printed student reports secure and confidential and refrain from writing the student's name on any WARNS reports unless directed by a court to do so.

Taking the WARNS: Youth Section

The youth should now have control of the computer to respond to all items independently. The counselor may read items to the student if necessary, depending on the youth's language skills.

Figure 4 shows the first demographic question provided to the youth. Please note that the Spanish version of all questions can be accessed by the youth at any time during the administration of the assessment by clicking on the **Español** button in the upper right of the screen shown in the Figure.

Figure 4: *The First Page of the Youth Section*



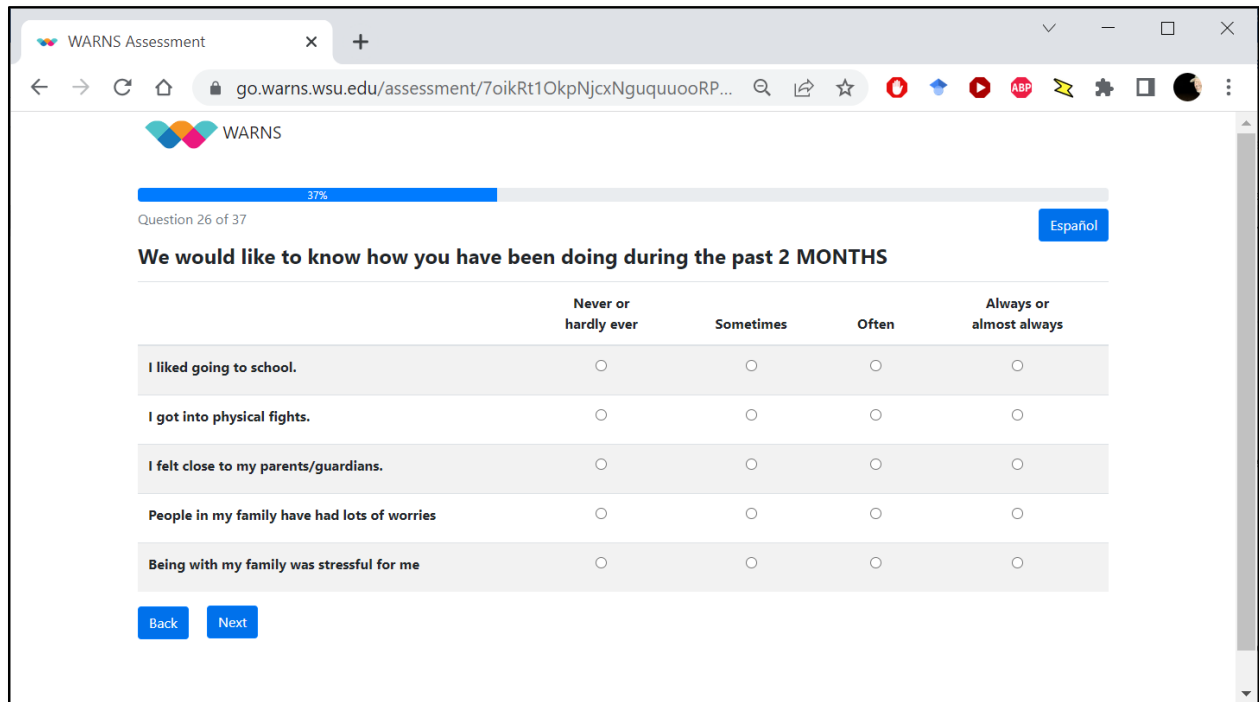
The screenshot displays a web browser window titled "WARNS Assessment" with the URL "go.warns.wsu.edu/assessment/7oikRt1OkpNjcxNguquuoRP...". The page features the WARNS logo at the top left. Below the logo, a progress bar indicates "Question 1 of 37". In the top right corner, there is a blue button labeled "Español". The main content area contains the question "What is your age?" followed by a list of radio button options: 12, 13, 14, 15, 16, 17, 18, 19, 20, and 21. At the bottom left of the question area, there is a blue button labeled "Next". A footer at the bottom of the page contains the text: "Contact Us | Additional Resources | © LPRC-WSU 2022 | Made by Designer SEO Website".

The WARNS Questions

Figure 5 shows the first set of WARNS questions used for calculating the scores for the WARNS Needs scales. All the WARNS questions appear with the leading stem: **We would like to know how you have been doing during the past 2 MONTHS**. All high school WARNS questions have the same response categories shown in Figure 5: *Never or hardly ever, Sometimes, Often, Always or almost always*. The middle school WARNS questions have the same leading question stem but only three response categories: *Never or hardly ever, Sometimes, Always or almost always*.

Once again, please note that the Spanish version of the assessment may be accessed by clicking on the **Español** button in the upper right of the screen, as shown in the Figure.

Figure 5: *The WARNS Items (high school version)*



The screenshot shows a web browser window titled "WARNS Assessment" with the URL "go.warns.wsu.edu/assessment/7oikRt1OkpNjcxNguquooRP...". The page displays a progress bar at 37% and "Question 26 of 37". A blue "Español" button is in the top right. The main heading is "We would like to know how you have been doing during the past 2 MONTHS". Below this is a table with five questions and four response categories: "Never or hardly ever", "Sometimes", "Often", and "Always or almost always". Each question has a radio button for each category. At the bottom are "Back" and "Next" buttons.

| | Never or hardly ever | Sometimes | Often | Always or almost always |
|--|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-------------------------|
| I liked going to school. | <input 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/guardians. | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| People in my family have had lots of worries | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| Being with my family was stressful for me | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |

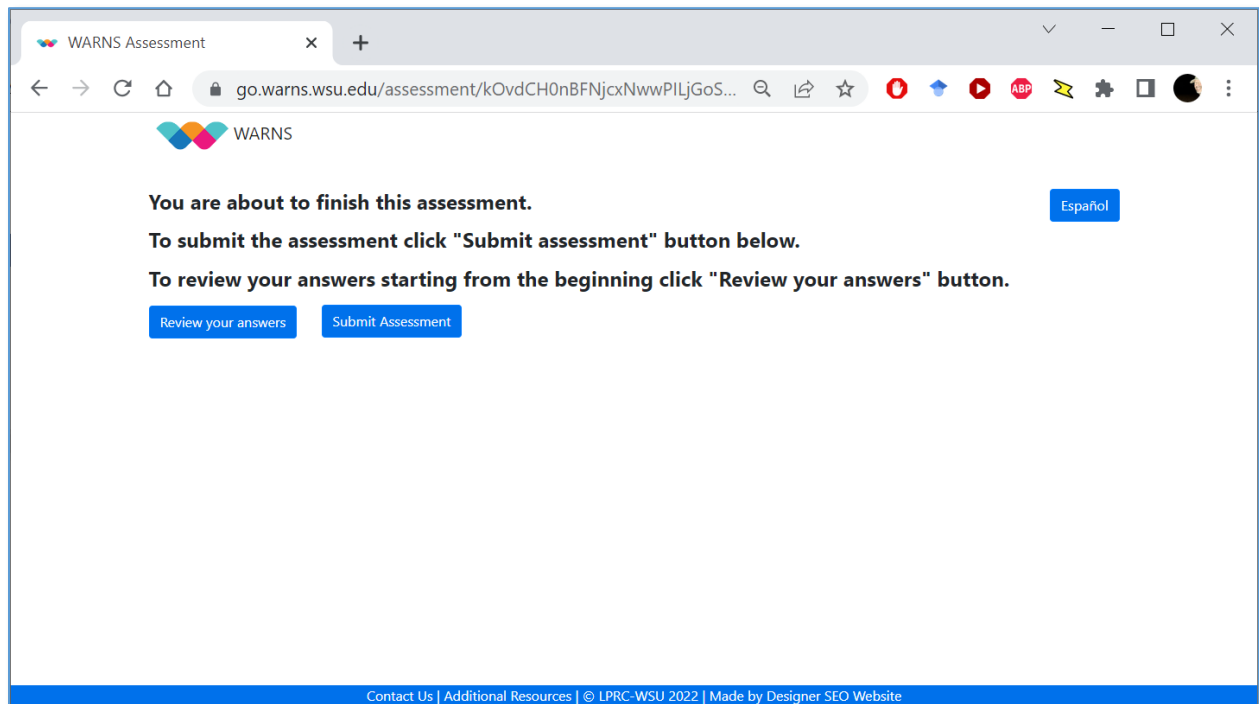
If a question is not answered, a **warning message** will be given. The **warning message** appears if a respondent accidentally skips a question. It allows the youth to select a response before proceeding. This precaution is in place because all WARNS questions must have a response to calculate the WARNS Risk Scores. We cannot substitute a value for any skipped question out of concern for either over- or under-estimating the scores for the youth.

Counselors should always keep in mind that **the assessment is voluntary** and that the **youth may stop responding at any time**. The assessment should be stopped if a youth is uncomfortable answering a particular question. Your organization has agreed to this protocol as part of the WSU WARNS User Agreement.

Submitting the Survey

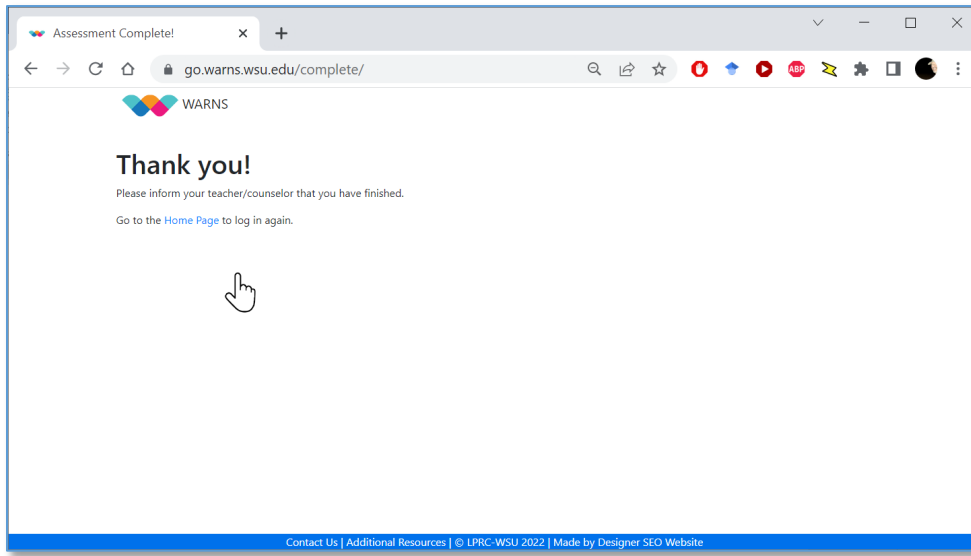
Figure 6 shows the page where students can review their responses or submit the assessment. The Administrator of the assessment may take control of the computer at this time and click the **Submit Assessment** button. If the youth chooses to review their responses, they may change them as needed but will always return to this submission page for the counselor to take back control of the computer.

Figure 6: *The Transition Page Back to the Administrator*



Once the **Submit Assessment** button has been clicked, the screen shown in Figure 7 will appear. The Administrator will be required to log in again with their credentials to access the **WARNS Report** for the youth. This security step is in place to prevent the youth from gaining access to the data in the system for other individuals.

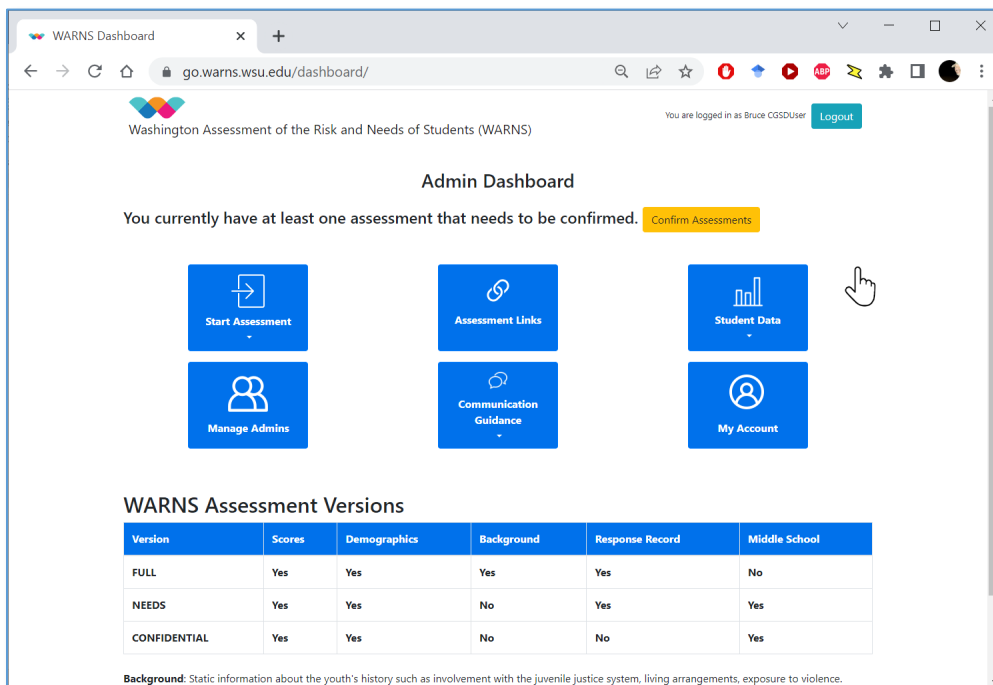
Figure 7: The Administrator Logs Back In



After clicking the Home Page link shown in Figure 7, the counselor will return to the login screen.

Once logged back into the dashboard on the Landing Page, a gold **Confirm Assessments** button will appear, as shown in Figure 8. This message and button only appear if the counselor has outstanding assessments that must be confirmed and viewed.

Figure 8: Confirming Assessments



After clicking the gold **Confirm Assessments** button, the counselor will be taken to a page that lists all outstanding assessments needing to be confirmed and viewed. Click on the

Confirm button, as shown in Figure 9. The Administrator will then be allowed to confirm or provide the demographic information of the youth.

Figure 9: *Confirm Your Outstanding Assessments*

The screenshot shows a web browser window with the URL go.warns.wsu.edu/view-confirmations/. The page title is "View Confirmations" and the logo is "Washington Assessment of the Risk and Needs of Students (WARNS)". The user is logged in as "Bruce CGSDUser". The navigation menu includes "Start Assessment", "Assessment Links", "Student Data", "Manage Admins", "Communication Guidance", and "My Account".

The main content area is titled "Assessments to be confirmed" and contains a table with the following data:

| Student ID | Sub Org | Version | Date | Confirm | Delete |
|------------|---------------------|---------|-------------|-------------------------|------------------------|
| 15253545 | Combined HS MS | Needs | May 9, 2023 | Confirm | Delete |
| 4444 | Crimson High School | Needs | May 9, 2023 | Confirm | Delete |

The mouse cursor is clicking the "Confirm" button for the second row (Student ID 4444). The footer contains the URL <https://go.warns.wsu.edu/confirm-assessment/6716/demographics/> and copyright information: "Additional Resources | © LPRC-WSU 2022 | Made by Designer SEO Website".

The next screen, shown in Figure 10, allows the Administrator to record their impression of the fidelity of the assessment. One recommended use it 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. Once this step is completed, click the **Confirm** button at the bottom of the screen in the Figure.

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

Figure 10: Confirmation Administration Screen

The screenshot shows a web browser window with the URL `go.warns.wsu.edu/confirm-assessment/6716/finalize/`. The page title is "Confirm Assessment" and the logo for "Washington Assessment of the Risk and Needs of Students (WARNS)" is visible. The user is logged in as "Bruce CGSDUser" and can click "Logout".

The navigation menu includes: Start Assessment, Assessment Links, **Student Data**, Manage Admins, Communication Guidance, and My Account.

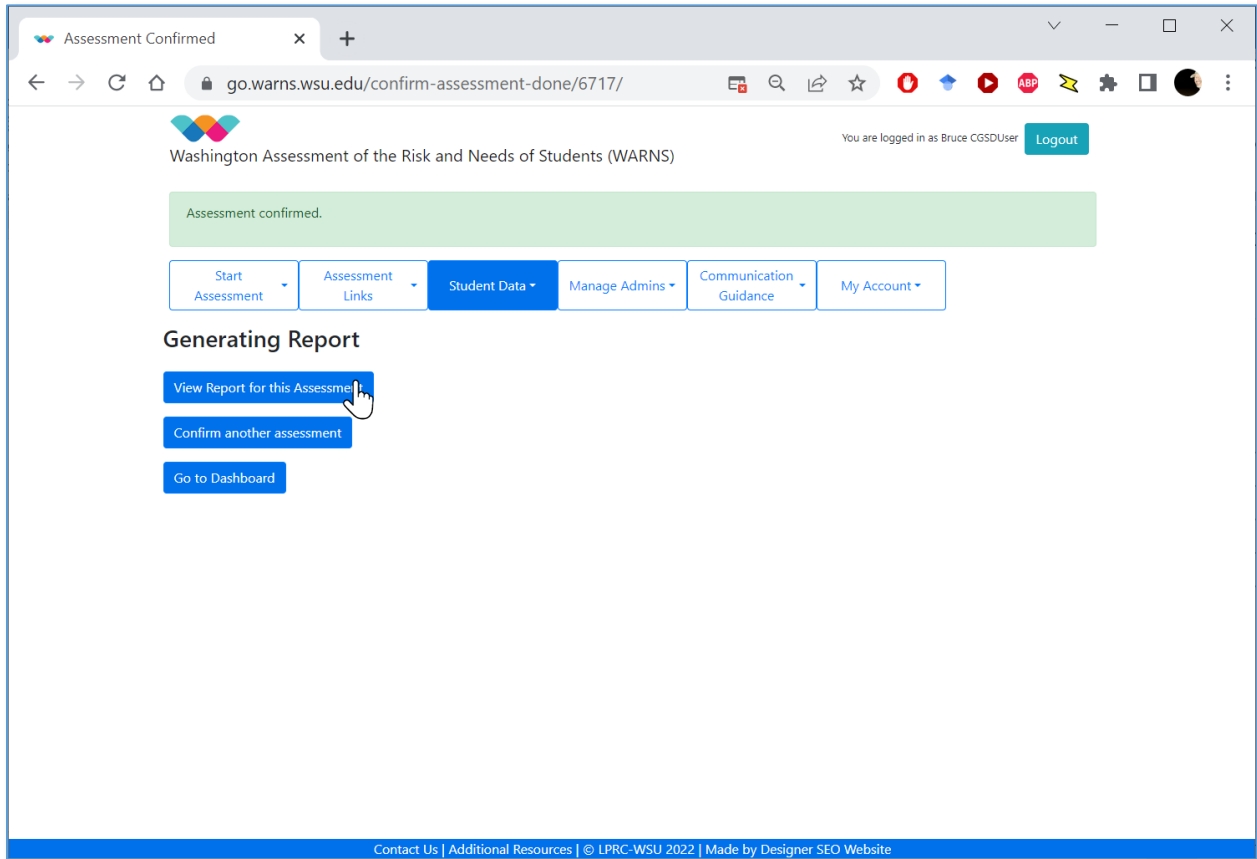
The main form contains the following fields and options:

- Userid:
- Is this youth identified as being eligible to receive special education?
- Does this student have a 504 Plan in place?
- Is this student recently transferred/entered to the school?
- Did the respondent seem to take the survey seriously and answer the questions honestly and accurately?
- Assessment Notes (Please do not enter the student's name in this box):
- Reason for assessment:
- Other reason:

A blue **Confirm** button is located at the bottom left of the form.

After confirming the assessment, the counselor will be given options, shown in Figure 11, for viewing the assessment report, confirming another assessment, or returning to the dashboard on the Landing Page. To view the report you confirmed, click the **View Report for this Assessment** button, as shown in the Figure.

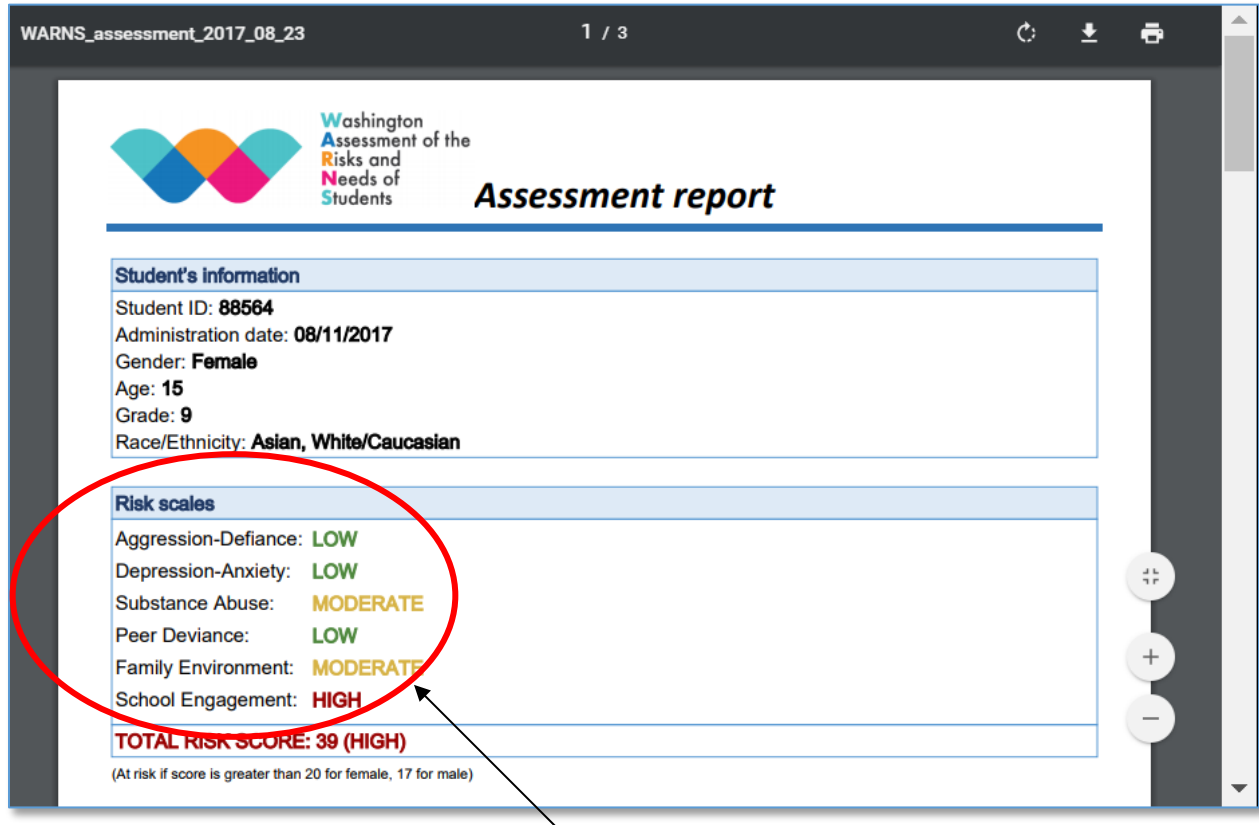
Figure 11: *Access the Assessment*



The WARNS Report

After clicking the **View Report for this Assessment** button (Figure 11), the **WARNS Report** will appear in your browser as a downloadable PDF file (see Figure 12). The WARNS Report contains the youth's identification number and demographics at the top of the 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 Confidential Administration, only the demographics and the six need scores will appear on the report. Note that a scroll bar is available to view the full report, including the assessment responses.

Figure 12: The WARNS Report Scores

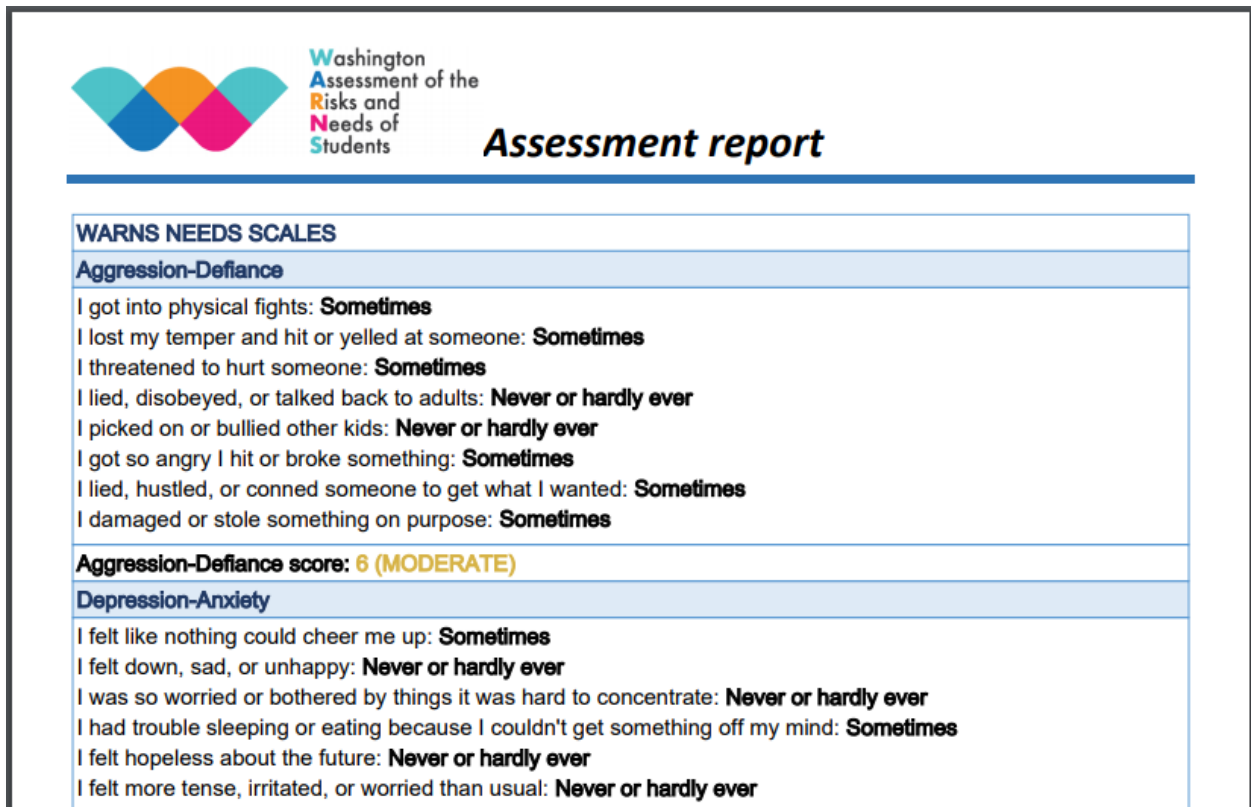


Needs Scales: The Needs scales appear on the first page of the WARNS Report and indicate the level of risk assessed by the instrument for each domain in addition to a total risk score.

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.

Figure 13: The WARNS Report Item Responses



For the **Full** and **Needs Only** administration options, you can scroll down to page 2 of the report (Figure 13) to see all the student responses to the questions they were given.

This allows the counselor to engage in a more detailed conversation with the student about their risk areas.

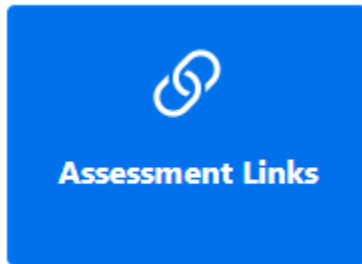
The **Confidential** administration option will not list the individual items and responses.

FOR ADDED SECURITY, BE SURE TO CLOSE THE BROWSER TO PREVENT OTHER INDIVIDUALS FROM VIEWING THE RESPONSES OF ANOTHER YOUTH.

ADDITIONAL FEATURES OF THE WARNS ONLINE PLATFORM

Additional features of the online platform are presented below. Depending on the permissions assigned by WSU or your organization’s Primary User, you may see all or only some of these features. Within each section below, the respective Tile displayed on the Landing Page of the online platform is featured.

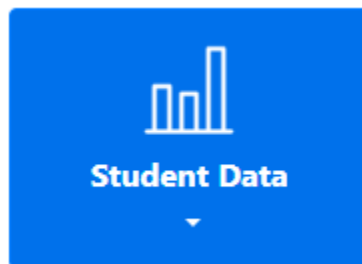
Assessment Links



Assessment Links is a feature that attempts to address the difficulty experienced by high-population school districts that need to assess large numbers of students with limited staff. Assessment Links help large districts assess youth in large group settings. The feature allows counselors to assemble groups of students in a classroom where each youth has a computer or tablet to respond to the WARNS items. The feature helps counselors streamline the administrative functions of giving an assessment so that the process can be completed quickly for the students.

Assessment links are good for 8 hours after they are created. These are best for large groups taking the assessment all at once. Permanent links can be created by clicking the Edit button next to the link and selecting the “Permanent” checkbox. For more information on assessment links, please see the video on our information website at <https://warns.wsu.edu/> or the video embedded in the online platform.

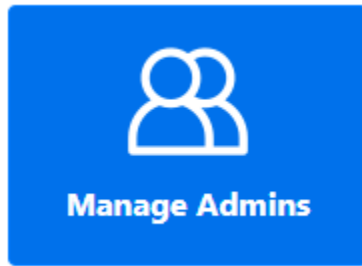
Student Data



The **Student Data** Tile allows access to your organization’s data, including archived WARNS Reports. The drop-down arrow on the tile reveals three options to view **Summary** data, the **View** of student assessments, and the data **Download** feature.

The **Summary** data option takes you to a page that contains summary tables of the number of assessments your organization has performed. Tables are presented by the organization, sub-organizations (e.g., schools within districts), assessment versions, and Risk scores. The **View** option lists individual student assessments that can be filtered by date, school, or student ID. Finally, the **Download** feature takes you to a page that allows you to download your organization’s raw data to an Excel file and includes a date filter.

Manage Admins



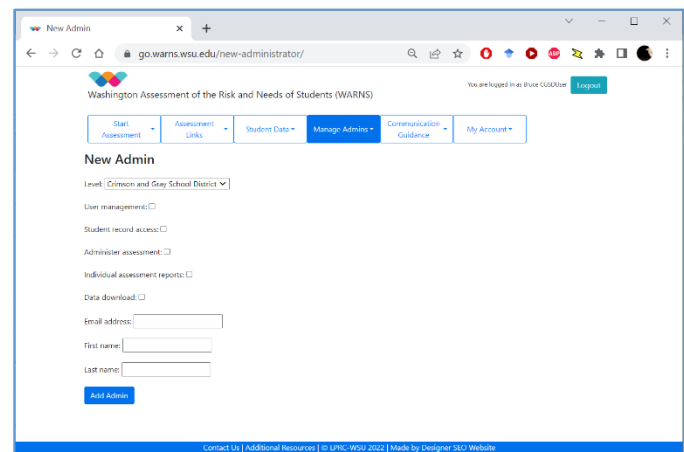
Manage Admins requires user management permissions. This feature allows the user to define, delete, and manage permissions for all other users – WSU always assigns this permission to the Primary User indicated on your User Agreement. The Primary User, however, may also assign permission to other district or school-level users. The permission only allows users to manage other users at their own or lower level in the organization. Clicking on the **Manage**

Admins Tile takes you to a page listing all your organization’s users and their assigned permissions. To add a new user for your organization, click the **New Admin** button on the page, which will take you to a page to define the new user, as shown in Figure 14.

The New Admin page allows you to define a new user by entering their name and email address. Their email address serves as their user ID. Next, define the new users’ **permission(s)** by clicking the checkboxes you want them to have access to:

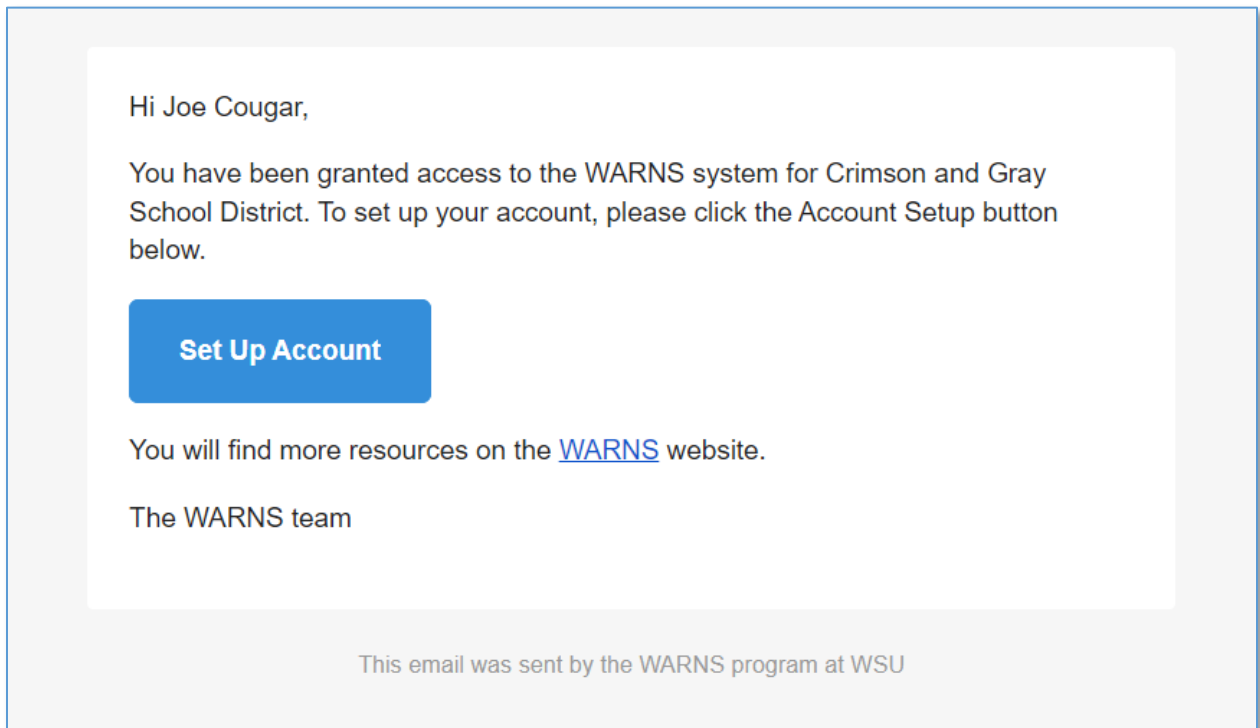
- **User management** is the ability to define new users at your level or lower level.
- **Student records access** is the ability to access existing records for students at their defined level or lower level. For example, district-level users can see the data for any student at any school in your school district (or organization). A school-level user can only access data at their school.
- **Administer assessment**: the ability to administer the WARNS assessment.
- **Individual assessment reports** are the ability to recreate an individual WARNS report for a student they have access to.
- **Data download** is the ability to download an Excel sheet of data for the level and organization at which they are defined. The user will NOT have access to data from any other school or district in the database.

Figure 14: The New Admin Page

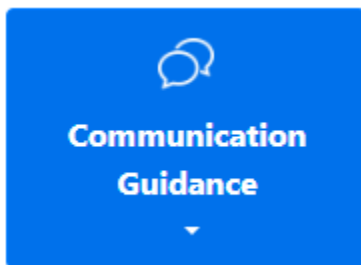


IMPORTANT NOTE: After a new user is defined, they will receive an automated email from the system asking them to activate their account (see Figure 15). The email will come from the address WARNS@wsu.edu. The Primary User should have new users add this address to their safe-sender list in their email software so that it does not get filtered into a spam folder. Some school districts, however, have additional software that may filter these emails. Contact WSU for help if your organization has difficulty receiving these emails. After the new user clicks the **Set Up Account** button in the email, they will be taken to the online WARNS system and asked to define their own password. They will then have access to the system.

Figure 15: *The WARNS Account Activation Email*



Communication Guidance

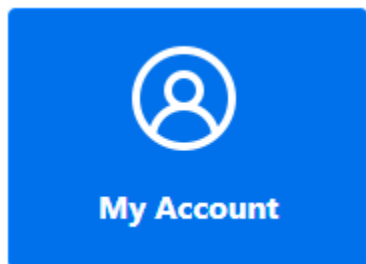


The **Communication Guidance** Tile provides information about how to use the WARNS report, its scores, and the vignettes that are available for use by youth under the guidance of a counselor. The Tile provides a drop-down menu with three options. The first option is an **Overview** of the guidance, the second option is a discussion of the scoring on the WARNS Report, and the third option is guidance on the Vignettes available with the system. The vignettes are short stories that feature a central character

who exhibits one of the WARNS domains and illustrate how risks and needs may play out in a student's everyday life. They are intended to function as an additional conversation starter with

the student beyond the domain scores. Research has shown that it can be easier for students to talk about a fictional character than to talk about themselves in a conversation about a sensitive topic. The vignettes allow for some psychological distancing from potentially uncomfortable disclosures. They also can challenge feelings of isolation and the sense that the student is alone and uniquely afflicted. Through the vignettes, student barriers can be viewed and interpreted through a context of understanding and helping a hypothetical peer.

My Account



The **My Account** feature allows users to change their password, user ID (email address), or name in the system.

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 delinquency¹ 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.

Please consult the WARNS Technical Manual for detailed information on the Needs Scales and Risk Scores.

The Needs Scales

All of the high school 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. In the middle school version, the "Often" response is eliminated. The response categories are:

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

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

Each item on a scale receives a score from zero to three (or zero to two for the middle school). Higher scores reflect more problematic functioning. Most items are written regarding 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. **(r)** indicates items that are 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 predicting truancy and distinguishing between youth with and without histories of truancy. The cut-points for the levels for each scale were determined by clinical judgment and by considering the score distributions of different groups of youth included in the study (e.g., high school students, truants, and offenders). Please consult the Technical Manual for full details on each scale's reliability, validity, and cut-point specifications.

THE SIX NEEDS SCALES (High School Version)

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

Aggressive individuals 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 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 beyond one's typical experience or 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 *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 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 their children's social and emotional development throughout adolescence. As teens seek independence from their parents, and develop stronger associations and intimacy with their peers, 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 items are framed positively and, therefore, reverse scored. Higher scale scores indicate a more dysfunctional home environment.

The five items are:

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

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 **(r)**
- 17. I learned things in class that will be important later in life **(r)**
- 26. I thought about dropping out of school
- 44. My classes were interesting **(r)**

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

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

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

- 8. I felt supported and respected by the adults at school **(r)**
- 13. I could talk to an adult at school if I had a problem **(r)**

42. My teachers cared about me (r)

Other WARNS Items

The WARNS contains several other items important to the risk and needs assessments. Most of these items are 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 20²)
- ◆ **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)

² 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.

- ◆ ***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

- ◆ ***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 may change periodically as part of the management and improvement process of the WARNS assessment by researchers at WSU.

The msWARNS Items (Middle School Version)

The middle school WARNS items presented below are organized according to the six domains. The items use a three-point response scale (0 = Never, not much, 1 = Sometimes 2 = Always, a lot). **(r)** indicates items that is reverse-scored.

As with the high school WARNS, each set of items is presented with the leading question stem:

We would like to know how you have been doing during the past 2 MONTHS:

Aggression-Defiance

- I get into fights
- I lose my temper
- I steal or break things on purpose
- I get so mad I hit or yell at people
- I lie to people
- I pick on or tease other kids
- I do things that could get me arrested

Depression-Anxiety

- Nothing cheers me up
- I feel sad or unhappy
- I worry about things
- I get nervous
- I have trouble sleeping or sleep too much
- Even when I'm not sick, I don't feel like eating
- I do fun things **(r)**

Substance Use

- I use tobacco products
- I have used alcohol (beer/wine/liquor)
- I use pot/weed/marijuana
- I get high or drunk from drugs or alcohol
- I have experimented with drugs

Peer Problems

- My friends get into fights
- My friends get into trouble at school
- My friends steal or break things
- My friends stay out late at night
- My friends have been arrested
- My friends break the rules at home or school

Family Problems

- I like my parents **(r)**
- I get into trouble at home
- My parents get mad at me

I yell at my parents
I do fun things with my parents **(r)**
I follow the rules at home **(r)**
I disobey my curfew

School Problems

I like school **(r)**
I like my teachers **(r)**
I get into trouble at school
I get good grades at school **(r)**
I learn important things at school **(r)**
I skip or cut class
My classes are interesting **(r)**

DEVELOPMENT, RELIABILITY, AND VALIDITY OF THE WARNS

Test reliability and validity information are essential and fundamental aspects of test construction. Ultimately, test score validity refers 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 present provides a strong foundation for using the WARNS.

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

References

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- 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

PLEASE DOWNLOAD THE LATEST WARNS USER AGREEMENT FROM OUR INFORMATION
WEBSITE AT <https://warns.wsu.edu/getting-started/manuals/>

Appendix B: Consent Forms

The use of consent forms is not required by WSU. Organizations wishing to use consent forms may visit the [WARNS.wsu.edu](https://warns.wsu.edu) website to obtain templates of forms for use with guardians and youth.



