

Promoting Healthy Youth, Schools, and Communities

A Guide to Community-School Health Councils



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Promoting Healthy Youth, Schools, and Communities: A Guide to Community-School Health Councils

Background

Schools play a central role in promoting children's health in our communities. In the past, school health may have been defined by schools and communities as clinical services provided by a school nurse, physical education classes, and classroom instruction about health issues or concerns. Today, the definition of school health has broadened to include school nutrition services, student guidance and counseling, the physical and emotional school environment, staff wellness, and how schools reach out to parents and communities for support. There is a growing recognition that children's health status directly affects their capacity to learn and achieve academic success. Therefore, schools and communities are seeking ways to bridge the gap between health and academics.

As parents become more aware of and concerned about the health problems of children and youth, they naturally turn to community partners, including schools, for solutions. Schools can play an important role in maintaining and improving the health of the children and youth they serve. Experience has shown that when schools involve parents and other partners from the community, the responsibility for student health and success can be successfully addressed.

One effective way to promote this partnership is through a school health council made up of a broad cross-section of parents, students, business and community leaders, and school staff. The title of this guide identifies the council as a "Community-School" Health Council to emphasize the partnership that must exist between school administration personnel and the community at large. The council can engage in communication and problem solving and make recommendations related to school health policies, programs, and practices within the school district that reflect community concerns, values, and resources.

Purpose of the Guide

This guide will assist school districts in developing new school health councils, strengthening existing school health councils, and maintaining them as effective entities that can support and guide school health practices, programs, and policies. It is tailored to the planning needs of school district staff responsible for school health. The guide can also be useful to parents and other community partners interested in promoting the development of a school health council.

If you are new to the school health arena, the appendix contains a publication from the American Cancer Society titled “School Health: Elements of Excellence for Programs that Help Children Learn and Stay Healthy.” This document provides an overview of the school health program, its eight defining components, as well as key elements that are needed to create an exemplary school health program. Other excellent readings are listed under the “References” tab.

Format of the Guide

The guide provides a practical, five-step approach to planning, developing, maintaining, and evaluating school health councils. Information is presented in a series of five short modules with brief explanations and specific worksheets and sample tools. It is organized as a *how-to* manual with information on planning and leading meetings, recruiting potential members, creating a vision for the council, creating and implementing action plans, as well as conducting evaluation on the council’s work. Every approach to and reason for creating a council is unique to the needs and desires of the school district. Some councils are mandated by legislation; some are developed with very clear tasks and outcomes as articulated by school administration. Still others may be the result of a few dedicated community members and school health advocates. The guide offers background reading, sample meeting handouts, checklists for planning, forms for reporting on the work accomplished, and other resource materials. Hard copies of most worksheets and handouts appear at the end of each step. A CD-ROM included with the guide contains a modifiable electronic version of the blank worksheets and sample handouts that you can use in their current form or modify for your particular circumstance.

Each module begins with a statement of intended learning outcomes and finishes with next steps. Pages are numbered sequentially within modules. While references are made to specific meetings (1st, 2nd, 3rd, etc.), these five steps are fluid and the amount of time, and number of meetings required to accomplish the work will vary. Be flexible and adapt the content of the steps to your circumstances.

Approach to Building the Council

There is no single, right way to form a school health council. Nor is there a cookbook approach for implementing a well-coordinated school health program. Schools and communities must work together to match the health needs of the student population with the available and/or desired resources, to craft solid plans that can have positive impact on health behaviors for students and the community at large.

This guide offers a process to create and achieve the vision of children and youth who are healthy, able to learn, and able to leave school ready for life. On the next page, “A Process for Change” illustrates this guide’s approach to forming school and community partnerships that promote healthy students.

A Process for Change

Step 1: Get together

- Commit to work together on school health
- Involve the right people
- Hold the first meeting
- Decide to act

Reflect and celebrate

Step 2: Create a vision

- Develop a base of common knowledge about school health
- Define a shared vision

Reflect and celebrate

Step 3: Develop a plan

- Identify priorities
- Design an action plan

Reflect and celebrate

Step 4: Take action

- Implement plan
- Celebrate achievements
- Recognize contributions
- Evaluate progress

Reflect and celebrate

Step 5: Review commitment

- Build community reputation
- Deepen commitment to vision
- Recruit new members and develop new leaders
- Adapt and expand action plan

*Repeat the process beginning with
“Get together.”*

Adapted from *Together We Can, A Guide for Crafting a Profamily System of Education and Human Services* by Atelia I. Melaville and Martin J. Blank with Gelareh Asayesh (Washington, DC: US Government Printing Office, April 1993) 21.

Convening a School Health Council

In this step:

- Learn about school health councils.
- Obtain support from the school district.
- Identify potential members for the council.
- Organize and conduct the first meeting.
- Follow up after the first meeting.

Starting a School Health Council

Schools alone can't be responsible for the health and well-being of children and youth in their communities, but they play an important role. By creating a school health council (SHC), schools can find partners within their communities to identify health problems and concerns, set priorities, and design solutions. Local leaders and parents know what is needed by their communities and children. When engaged as decision makers, communities have repeatedly proven that they are up to the task of addressing local problems and supporting schools in their initiatives.

"Health is number one. You can't have a good offense, a good defense, good education, or anything if you don't have good health."

– Sarah McClendon

Learn About School Health Councils

You already may know a lot about school health and community involvement. Still, you should review the publication *Improving School Health: A Guide to School Health Councils* (available by calling 1-800-ACS-2345 to obtain a free copy). This resource provides essential background information on school health councils.

Obtain Support from the School District

An SHC usually begins with two or three individuals who are interested in making sure that health is addressed effectively in the schools. These individuals may be school administrators, parents, concerned citizens, health care professionals, or community agency representatives.

In order for a school health council to be effective in supporting/strengthening the school health program, it is critical that there be administrative support to develop a council. *If you are an employee of the school district* and you have been asked to initiate development of a school health council, a decision has most likely been made and supported by school district administrators. Your initial task may be to identify interested representatives from your community.

If you are a part of a community group interested in forming a school health council in your school district, you will need to promote the idea and gain support from school leadership. It should either be owned by the school district or at the very least seen as a collaborative effort that meets a need for the school district. To gain support for the idea of an SHC, you will need to meet with several key school personnel to begin forming a relationship with them. These key people may include a principal or the superintendent, a school nurse, a health teacher, a guidance counselor, or other interested school staff. Begin by inquiring about any existing school health committees that work with health issues. A district will not want to form a school health council if a group or committee already exists that has school health as a part of its responsibility. Also, find out if the school has any policies about starting advisory committees. For example, some school districts might require school board approval for a school health council. With the support of key school personnel, you may need to prepare a proposal for the school board to consider.

If the school district has existing committees that address health issues, with the support of key school administrators, you may want to learn how they function and what they are responsible for. Examples include committees for drug-free schools, school-based youth services projects, school wellness programs, TEAM nutrition projects, and school improvement teams. With some work, you may find that these groups can either broaden their scope or be brought together under a larger school health umbrella. Be sure the individuals in these groups have a genuine desire to promote a larger school health agenda. You also want to be certain that they are willing to support the involvement of parents, youth, and other community members.

Another important step is to identify a coordinator or meeting facilitator for the SHC. The coordinator prepares meeting announcements, makes copies of agendas and other handouts for meetings, reminds council members of their assignments, reserves locations for meetings, and performs other tasks that keep the council running smoothly. The school district may appoint a school employee as the coordinator for the council, but the coordinator could be a community agency employee or a parent. The coordinator role also may be shared by two people.

Regardless of who fills this role, the coordinator needs clerical support for preparing meeting announcements, minutes, and other mailings to the council. He or she also needs financial support or access to office equipment for telephone calls, postage, copying, and office supplies. The school district, another agency, or a local business may agree to help provide the necessary support.

Remember, for a successful council, it is important that the school take an active role in convening the council and that the school superintendent and other key personnel support the idea.

To successfully engage the school and community:

- Meet with key school personnel and/or community representatives.
- Identify existing school and community groups that address health issues. (Don't "reinvent the wheel.")
- Find a coordinator for the council.

Identify Potential Members for the Council

Identify by name individuals and groups in your community who are likely to be interested in serving on a local SHC. (See "Community Partners to Invite" on page 1-9.) Membership should be as broad and diverse as possible, including students and parents. Locate potential members' correct job titles, phone numbers, mailing addresses, and email addresses (if available), and create a master list of potential invitees.

Include a cross-section of people from your community. Leadership takes many forms. It comes from charisma, connections, expertise, fame and visibility, integrity and credibility, life experiences, persuasive ability, position, and resources. You will find it easier to recruit leaders in the more formal, organized segments of your community, but don't overlook other candidates.

Volunteer and informal leaders are more difficult to involve, but they make up the majority of the community. Their participation is critical to your council's success. Their unique life experiences offer a valuable resource and will help balance the perspectives of other community members.

To help identify these informal leaders, ask community service providers to recommend potential council members. Principals, counselors, and teachers also are good sources for the names of parents, students, or other key community or school members who might otherwise be overlooked.

What Are the Roles of a School Health Council?

An important way to engage families in the school is through involvement in a school health council. An SHC is a core group of parents, youth, educators, and others who represent different segments of the community. The group works together to give advice and support to the school on all parts of its school health program. Read the information sheet "Benefits of a School Health Council" (page 1-14) to learn more about its contributions to the school and community.

The council may or may not be part of the school's administrative structure and may not hold any legal responsibilities, but SHCs can help in the following ways:

- 1. Program planning**, such as participating in curriculum review, identifying emerging health issues, encouraging innovation in health education, and providing in-service training programs
- 2. Advocacy**, such as ensuring that sufficient resources are given to support school health and health education programs, helping to build understanding between the school and community, and linking the school to other community resources
- 3. Fiscal planning**, such as helping to raise funds for local programs and preparing grant applications
- 4. Education**, such as initiating policies related to smoking, alcohol use, and the sale of nutritious foods, and organizing schoolwide health promotion events
- 5. Evaluation and accountability**, such as ensuring that the school's health and physical education programs are achieving their goals, obtaining input from parents and school staff, and identifying health needs
- 6. Resource mapping**, such as identifying county resources and matching them to specific program needs

One of the important tasks in forming an SHC is to identify the purpose and roles it will serve in your community. You will learn more about this task in Step 2.

This guide provides schools, parents, and communities with the tools to build a council committed to school health improvement. More than ever we need to appreciate and strengthen the connection between health and learning through a coordinated school health program.

Key Points

- The health status of children is linked to their behaviors and to their success or failure in school.
- Health education programs work.
- School health programs are more than a single prevention program and address physical, behavioral, social, and mental aspects of health.
- School health councils serve as a mechanism for advising schools on various aspects of school health.

Helpful resources for identifying potential council members:

- Local phone and address directories
- Membership lists of other school advisory groups
- List of the communities served by your school district (their ZIP codes)

Organize and Conduct the First Meeting

The first meeting will take the most time to organize. Allow three to four weeks between sending out invitations and holding the first meeting. For subsequent council meetings, send out notices to everyone on the council at least 10 days before the meeting. The actual time you spend preparing will depend on your knowledge of the stakeholders in the communities served by your school district, your other job responsibilities, and the amount of help others can provide.

Set a time, date, and place for an organizational meeting. Keep in mind such things as parking, room comfort and accessibility, and other community activities scheduled for the same time. Arrange for childcare if necessary. Some parents may not be able to attend a meeting if they have to find care for their children.

Invitations to the organizational meeting should motivate potential members to want to learn more about school health councils. If you invite participants by phone or in person, follow up with a letter confirming the date, time, and location of the meeting. A sample invitation and response form that you can modify are on pages 1-12 and 1-13. Include the information sheet “Benefits of a School Health Council” on page 1-14 with the invitation.

You may want to publicize the organizational meeting in the local media so interested citizens can attend but, by doing so, you must be prepared to respond to potential “special interest” inquiries or concerns. Be certain that the agenda is focused and the meeting stays on track. Use the sample news release on page 1-15 to prepare your media releases. You can place information in PTA/PTO newsletters or other school newsletters, as well as in student and local newspapers. Also post information on library bulletin boards and use other creative ways to spread the word.

Plan the Meeting Agenda

The success of the organizational meeting depends in large part on the amount of preparation you do. At the end of this step, you will find two handouts that will help you structure the agenda: “Agenda Planning Guide for the Organizational Meeting” and a sample “Meeting Agenda for the Organizational Meeting.” In addition, Appendix B “Meeting Planner Checklist” provides a step-by-step guide to planning the organizational meeting and all subsequent SHC meetings.

The “Agenda Planning Guide” provides details needed to conduct the first meeting. You will find suggested topics, a recommended amount of time for each, and possible speakers. The sample “Meeting Agenda for the Organizational Meeting” is a briefer version of the “Agenda Planning Guide.” You can modify the sample agenda on the diskette with your meeting information and make copies for all participants.

Invest enough planning time, and you will be rewarded with an efficient and well-run meeting.

Remember the six Ps of planning: Prior proper planning prevents possible problems.

Secure the necessary facilitator, equipment, and supplies for the meeting. Ask your school superintendent to speak at this first meeting. Her or his presence will indicate the level of commitment being made to this partnership effort. The president of a parent-teacher organization, a physician or other health care provider, and a community leader who all support the creation of a council might also be good speakers to promote the idea to others. Appendix C contains a script and master transparencies to provide an overview of school health and an SHC.

Arrange for a healthy snack. One goal of a council is to model healthy lifestyle practices. Ask your district's food service director if food service staff from a local school can provide a nutritious snack. This is a good opportunity to feature an often overlooked area of the school that contributes significantly to the health of children and youth.

Recruit several staff members to assist you at the meeting. One person can set up refreshments and refill supplies as needed; another person should greet participants as they arrive and direct them to the sign-in sheet and refreshments, and a third person should take minutes of the meeting.

Make enough copies of the handout "School Health Programs: An Investment in our Nation's Future" (Appendix D). Obtain additional copies of the American Cancer Society booklet, *Improving School Health: A Guide to Health Councils* (available by calling 1-800-ACS-2345) for each participant.

Conduct the Meeting

Arrive early to set up the room the way you want it. Remember, people participate best when they can see each other. If possible, put the chairs in a circle rather than straight rows. Most people prefer sitting at a table so they can take notes. If participants don't know each other, provide name tags.

Approximately one and a half to two hours are needed for the organizational meeting. You will need the following items for the meeting:

- Sign-in sheet for attendance
- Name tags and markers
- Healthy snacks
- Overhead projector, LCD screen, and power cords
- Copies of the meeting agenda and other handout materials
- Any other resources you decide to use

For a successful meeting, remember to:

- Start the meeting on time.
- Welcome everyone and have everyone introduce themselves.
- Review the agenda and focus discussion on the topics listed (to stay within time limits).
- Identify a secretary or recorder for meeting minutes – choose someone free of other meeting responsibilities.
- Speak confidently, but don't be too formal.
- Encourage participation by asking questions rather than making statements. People prefer to be asked rather than told.
- Ask for action and seek commitment from participants.
- Summarize meeting results orally and in writing.
- Determine follow up needed and who will be responsible; identify agenda items for next meeting.
- Set the date, time, location, and purpose of the next meeting.
- Thank everyone for attending.
- End the meeting on time or earlier.

Remember, the success of the council meeting is everybody's responsibility. If you are the coordinator or chair, your job is to help create the environment for interaction. Stimulate discussion rather than dominate it.

Follow Up After the First Meeting

The follow up that's done after the first and all subsequent meetings is very important. Send minutes or a summary of the actions taken to all council members and others you want to keep informed and engaged. Include a list of who attended the meeting, agenda items, and the date for the next meeting. Appendix E "Next Meeting's Agenda" is a sample worksheet for preparing the next meeting agenda.

Check Your Progress on Step 1

After the meeting answer the following questions.

1. How many people attended? _____

2. What were some examples of their responses?

3. What direction were you given by those attending?

☐ Move ahead

☐ Wait a while

☐ Do nothing

4. What did you promise to do? By when?

5. What did others promise to do? By when?

6. What is the date, time, location, and purpose of the next meeting?

7. What are the agenda items for the next meeting?

8. Who else needs to be invited to the next meeting that did not participate this time?

Next step:

Plan the next meeting on creating a vision for comprehensive school health.

Community Partners to Invite

Membership on your school health council should be as representative of your community as possible. Involve people with a broad variety of education, experience, opinion, economic level, gender, race, age, and ethnic background. Who are the key players in your community and school?

Community Members/Name, Affiliation	Invited	Accepted	Attended
Attorneys:			
_____	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
_____	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Business and industry leaders:			
_____	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
_____	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Civic, service, and professional organizations:			
_____	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
_____	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Clergy:			
_____	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Clients and customers of community services:			
_____	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
_____	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Community leaders:			
_____	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
_____	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Community government officials:			
_____	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Extension specialists:			
_____	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
_____	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Health care providers:			
Clinic _____	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Dental _____	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Dietitian _____	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Emergency _____	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Medical services _____	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Hospital _____	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Medical _____	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Mental health _____	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Community Members/Name, Affiliation	Invited	Accepted	Attended
Human service agencies:			
Public health _____	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Drug/alcohol counselors _____	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Child protection services _____	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Juvenile court system:			
Judge _____	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Probation officer _____	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Nonprofit service providers:			
_____	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
_____	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Parents:			
_____	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
_____	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
_____	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
_____	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
_____	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
_____	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Parent teacher organizations:			
_____	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Police department:			
_____	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Public media:			
_____	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
_____	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
School personnel:			
Area education agency representative _____	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Coach _____	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Counselor _____	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Family and consumer sciences teacher _____	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Community Members/Name, Affiliation	Invited	Accepted	Attended
School personnel (continued):			
Food service worker _____	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Health teacher _____	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
In-school support services provider _____	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Physical education teacher _____	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Principal _____	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Special education _____	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
School board member _____	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
School social worker _____	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
School nurse _____	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Teacher _____	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
University faculty _____	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Senior citizens:			
_____	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Students:			
Middle school _____	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
High school _____	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Student government representative _____	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Volunteer health agencies:			
_____	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Youth groups:			
_____	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Others:			
_____	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
_____	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
_____	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
_____	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Letter of Invitation

(Place on school district letterhead)

(Date)

(Title, Name, Position)

(Agency)

(Address)

(City, State ZIP)

Dear **(Title, Name)**,

We invite you to help make things happen in **(your community)**. In the words of Henry Ford, we need individuals who “have an infinite capacity for not knowing what can’t be done.”

An exciting new partnership is being created between **(your school district)** and members of the **(your community)** community. Like many other school districts across the country, we are forming a school health council. The purpose of the council is to bring together individuals and groups from our community to address issues affecting the health and well-being of our children, youth, and families. As a **(designate specific representation)**, your participation is important to our success.

An organizational meeting will take place on **(day and date)** from **(time to time)** at **(location)** to share information about school health councils. We hope you will accept this invitation to attend. If you have questions about the council, please contact **(your name, title, and phone)**.

We believe more can be accomplished together than alone. The complex social problems our young people face require a united effort if we are to improve the quality of life for children and families living in **(your community)**. Please join us to make your community and schools more positive, health-promoting places to live and learn.

Sincerely,

(your school superintendent)

(community representative)

Response Form

(Use with letter of invitation. Could be printed on a self-addressed, stamped postcard.)

_____ **YES**, my organization is interested, and a representative will attend.

_____ **YES**, I want to make a difference in my community. **I will attend** the organizational meeting to discuss the creation of a school health council in **(your community)**.

_____ **YES**, I'm interested in the creation of a school health council, but **I cannot attend** the meeting. Please keep me on your mailing list and inform me of future plans.

_____ **NO**, I'm not interested in being involved in this partnership at this time. Please remove my name from your mailing list.

Name _____

Representing _____

Address _____

City _____ State _____ ZIP _____

Work phone _____ Home phone _____ Fax _____

Email address (if available) _____

Benefits of a School Health Council

Effective school health councils can:

- Be instrumental in improving student health and creating healthy schools
- Help schools meet community involvement mandates and community expectations
- Support school-health staffed programs
- Provide a way for community members to work together with school personnel to accomplish school district goals
- Utilize and make the most of community resources and assets
- Influence more people within a community than a single institution could
- Be a credible, collective voice of support for healthy children and youth
- Provide a forum for sharing youth health information and resources
- Provide a range of advice and perspectives
- Foster personal satisfaction and help members understand their roles in strengthening their community
- Foster cooperation by building trust and consensus among grassroots organizations, community segments, and diverse citizens

Adapted from *Developing Effective Coalitions: An Eight-Step Guide* by Larry Cohen, Nancy Baer, and Pam Satterwhite; Pleasant Hill, Calif. Contra Costa County Health Services Department of Prevention Program, Spring 1994, p. 4.

News Release

(Place on school district letterhead)

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Mail/Delivery Date: **(date)**

CONTACT: **(your name)**

(your phone)

(your address)

(your email address)

Members sought for local school health council

(Your city) School Superintendent **(your district's leader)** announced plans today for the creation of a school health council. "The purpose of the council," **(she/he)** said, "is to bring together individuals and groups from **(your community)** to address issues affecting the health and well-being of children and youth living in our communities."

In stressing the importance of community partnerships, **(your superintendent)** believes our nation's most valuable resource is our children and youth. Unfortunately, we know that in America today one child in four is at risk for school failure and has fewer chances of becoming a healthy and productive adult. It is obvious that schools alone cannot solve the complex social problems threatening our children.

"Today's problems call for new ways of doing business," **(she/he)** said. "This council will provide a way for parents, community leaders, students, health services providers, government officials, and other local citizens to work together to improve the health and well-being of the children and youth of **(your community)**."

(Your superintendent) has high expectations for the council. **(She/He)** said, "The council will identify local concerns, establish priorities, make recommendations, and provide the strong leadership we need to promote health in our schools and community." **(She/He)** invites any community member interested in becoming a council member or learning more about the work of this council to attend an organizational meeting on **(date, time, and meeting location)**. For additional information, contact **(your name)**, **(your school district or title)**, at **(your phone number)**.

Agenda Planning Guide for the Organizational Meeting

Promoting Healthy Youth and Healthy Schools

(date, time, location)

Goal: Explore the possibility of creating a school health council to promote school health efforts.

Get acquainted (15 minutes)

- Refreshments
- Sign-in
- Name tags

Welcome (2-3 minutes)

(school leader in charge of facilitating this initiative)

- Introduce yourself.
- Describe the purpose of the meeting.
- Thank those attending for their interest.
- Introduce the superintendent.

Opening remarks (5-7 minutes)

(superintendent)

Using visuals (handouts or transparencies) and the script in Appendix C:

- Explain why this initiative is being proposed.
- Describe the school district's commitment to collaboration with the community and to student health and well-being.
- Outline the potential envisioned and the results hoped for with the creation of a council.
- Express appreciation for their attendance, interest, and commitment to helping improve our schools and community.
- Ask attendees for their support of this partnership.

Introductions (Estimate: 15 minutes, variable)

(all)

- Ask those attending to introduce themselves, identify who they represent, and explain what motivated them to attend.

**Overview of school health councils
(10 minutes)**

**(school, health care, or other
community leader)**

Summarize: What are they?
What do they do?
Who can be a member?
Why should we form a council?

(Use visuals – handouts or transparencies – and the script in Appendix C. Build in comments made during the introductions as appropriate)

What can a council do for parents? **(5 minutes)**

(PTO representative)

What can a council do for our community? **(5 minutes)**

(community leader)

What are we asking you to do? **(5 minutes)**

(school leader)

Feedback (15 minutes)

(school leader)

- Ask for volunteers to share some of their responses.

Next Steps (10 minutes)

(school leader)

- Ask participants what additional information they need.
- Ask participants if they are interested in establishing a local council.
- If the group decides to establish a council, set the next meeting date, time, and location. Indicate that the next step recommended in establishing a council is the development of a vision statement. Ask for agreement on that task as the purpose of the next meeting.
- Ask for volunteers to help plan and lead the next meeting. Ask volunteers to stay a few minutes after the meeting to set a date, time, and place for a planning committee meeting.
- Ask for the names, addresses, and phone numbers of others who should be invited to the next meeting.
- Remind participants that their active involvement is important. Encourage them to invite others to the next meeting.

Adjournment (2 minutes)

(superintendent)

- Thank participants again for their attendance and input.

Meeting Agenda for the Organizational Meeting

(date, time, location)

Goal: Explore the possibility of creating a school health council to promote school health efforts.

Sign-in, refreshments, get acquainted (all)

Welcome (school leader)

Opening remarks (superintendent)

Introductions (all)

(Your name, who you represent, and why you chose to attend this meeting)

Overview of school health councils (school leader)

- What are they?
- What do they do?
- Who can be a member?
- Why should we form a council?

What can a council do for parents? (PTO representative)

What can a council do for our community? (community leader)

What are we asking you to do? (school leader)

Feedback (school leader)

Tell us what you think:

- What three points would you like to make?
- What have you heard that squares with your beliefs?
- What one step are you going to take as a result of attending this meeting?

Next steps (school leader)

- What more information do you need?
- What should we do about establishing a council?

Adjournment (superintendent)

Creating a Vision and Building Ownership

In this step:

- Plan the next meeting on creating a vision.
- Establish ground rules for operating the council.
- Develop a vision for your school health council.

Why Visioning Is Important

In Step 1, a group of interested community members, parents, youth, and educators met to learn more about comprehensive school health. If they decided school health is a priority for their school and community, begin Step 2. You will create a vision that describes the future council members' desire for their community's health – especially that of children and families.

How you and other council members want your school and community to look in the future is your *vision*. What you propose to do to make that vision happen is the council's *action plan*. The plan that bridges the gap between where you are and where you want to be is the map for the day-to-day work of the council.

By creating a vision statement, council members take their first step in providing leadership for change in your school and community. The vision defines the council's desires and commitments for school health. It expresses why community members have come together and why others should join the effort. Drafting, discussing, and agreeing on a vision assure that the community will understand and support the council's work.

Vision ... an idea or dream whose pursuit will provide a mission and rallying point for ... activity. A shared community vision ... will provide the necessary direction for strategic planning actions and enhance the effectiveness of ... programs.

– Community Readiness for Drug Abuse Prevention:
Issues, Tips, and Tools

Plan the Next Meeting on Creating a Vision

To begin, become familiar with the materials in this step that are recommended for conducting the second meeting. Make copies of these materials for those who are helping you plan the next meeting. Add any resources you have that might help you with the meeting.

Plan the second meeting with the two or three people who volunteered at the first meeting. They will help you plan the agenda for the second council meeting and work to make that meeting a success.

Because the goal of the second council meeting is to agree on a vision, it is critical that a person with strong group facilitation skills help conduct the meeting. You may wish to recruit someone specifically to facilitate. Local school districts, city governments, or larger businesses may have staff who can help. The facilitator will need to summarize work done by individuals or small groups and lead the overall group toward agreement. Ideally, council members will leave the meeting with (at least) a draft of the vision statement.

Reserve a meeting room that allows enough space for small groups to work. Find either several rooms or one room large enough for several small groups to work in without disturbing each other. Because members will write on flip charts and worksheets during the meeting, be sure table space is available.

Invite all those to the second meeting who expressed an interest in the council. Mail a copy of the meeting agenda and minutes from the organizational meeting with the letter stating the meeting date, time, location, and purpose. (See pages 2-7 and 2-8 for sample letter and agenda.) Mail the materials to those who attended the organizational meeting and those who could not attend but asked to remain on your mailing list. For names and addresses, refer to the returned response from the organizational meeting and the sign-in sheet you used to record attendance. Also invite others who were identified or recommended by those who attended the first meeting. Publicize the meeting in local papers, PTA newsletters, etc.

Arrange for healthy snacks. Copy the meeting agenda and other needed resources. Gather supplies. Follow up with other committee members as needed to ensure that all meeting arrangements have been completed.

Checklist for planning the “vision” meeting:

- Meet with two or three volunteers to plan the meeting.
- Reserve the meeting space.
- Send out letters of invitation, minutes, and agenda 10 to 14 days in advance.
- Arrange for healthy snacks.
- Copy transparencies and other handouts, including extra copies of the meeting agenda.
- Gather supplies (for example: paper, pencils, tape, markers, a sign-in sheet).
- Obtain an overhead projector, flip chart, or LCD projector, screen, and power cords.
- Find a council member to take meeting minutes.
- Follow up with those who helped plan the meeting to confirm arrangements.

Establish Ground Rules for Operating the Council

At the beginning of the second meeting, help the group agree on the ground rules that members will follow during council meetings. The following process will take about 15-20 minutes.

1. Ask members to jot down short answers for each of these questions. Allow about one minute for each question. Write the questions on an overhead transparency or board.
 - How do you want to be treated when you share your thoughts and opinions?
 - How should we treat others when their ideas are shared?
 - How can we make our time together meaningful and productive for everyone?
 - What basic ground rules can we agree to follow as a group?
2. Review members’ responses to the first three questions. For each question, ask for a few volunteers to share their answers. Not all council members need to share their responses to every question. Involve as many members as possible.
3. Ask members to summarize what they have heard by suggesting a ground rule for the group’s consideration. If there is agreement on the ground rule, write it on a blank transparency, flip chart, or type it into PowerPoint.

Use the ground rules to conduct this and other council meetings. Post the ground rules on the wall during all meetings.

Develop a Vision for Your School Health Council

The facilitator will need about one and a half to two hours to help the group create a vision statement. He or she will guide the group through a process of:

- Identifying the need for a vision
- Reflecting on a vision for the school and community health
- Discussing possible visions for the future
- Formulating a vision statement for the council

Identify the Need for a Vision

The facilitator uses the transparency “Where We Want to Be” (on page 2-9) to describe the need for a vision, and the transparency “A Vision...” (on page 2-10) to describe the characteristics of a vision.

Reflect on a Vision for the School and Community Health

Distribute the worksheet “Creating A Vision for Our Community and Schools” (page 2-11) to the members. Explain that their responses to these questions will provide the framework for creating the council’s vision statement. Give members 10-15 minutes to complete the worksheet. Spend 20-30 minutes asking volunteers to share their answers. Summarize the excitement, hope, energy, determination, strengths, etc., that you heard in members’ responses. Explain how these assets can be used to create the vision.

Discuss Possible Visions for the Future

Depending on the size of the group, divide the council into small groups of three to five people. Ask each group to choose a recorder and spokesperson. Distribute the worksheet “Our Vision for the Future” (page 2-12), and let the small groups go to their work areas. Ask each group to begin to develop a vision statement by completing the tasks listed on the worksheet “Our Vision of the Future.” Explain that they have about 20 minutes before they will be asked to come back to the large group and share their results. Provide paper, tape, and markers, or provide the worksheet as a transparency for groups to write on. Ask the groups to record each answer on a separate sheet of paper. It may help build a cohesive group to encourage people to discuss why the things they emphasized in their vision are important to them.

Formulate the Vision Statement for the Council

The facilitator should reassemble the council after 20-30 minutes. Give each group about five minutes to report. Ask the spokesperson to present first, and then allow other small-group members to add comments.

The facilitator should summarize the comments and ask the entire group to agree on the major points presented by the small groups. Identify common words and phrases, and strive to reach consensus on what should be included in the vision statement. The words, phrases, and ideas that emerge from this discussion become the foundation for creating a shared vision and purpose.

Tell the group to imagine that it is five years from today, and they have created the healthy youth and school they wanted to create. It is the group's job – as a team – to describe what they see. Consider each question one at a time to gain a clear picture of the group's vision.

- What reputation would our efforts have?
- What contributions would we have made?
- What changes would we see in the school and community?
- Who would be our clients or customers?
- How will people work together?
- How will people handle the good and bad times?

The vision statement needs to be brief and easy to remember. It should not be longer than one or two simple sentences. Consider developing the vision by recording single thoughts such as:

- “Our children will....”
- “Our families will....”
- “Our schools will....”
- “Our community will....”

Then combine these thoughts into a sentence or two that incorporates their meaning and intent. (If additional time is needed to refine the statement, ask volunteers to complete it later.)

After the meeting, send the vision statement to council members for their review within two weeks. Final agreement on the vision statement will be the first agenda item of the next council meeting. Once consensus is reached, the vision statement should be publicized widely in the community. Celebrate this achievement.

Check Your Progress on Step 2

1. How many people attended the second council meeting and contributed to the development of the council's vision? _____

2. Was a vision statement developed?

☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ A draft was developed

3. What went well during the vision meeting?

4. What do you want to do differently at the next council meeting?

Next steps:

1. Prepare written minutes of the second council meeting. Mail the minutes, a list of those who attended the meeting, and the agenda for the third meeting to council members.

2. If additional work is needed on the vision statement, bring together the council members who volunteered to complete this task. Mail the results of their work to all council members. Ask the council to approve the vision statement at its next meeting.

3. What is the date, time, location, and purpose of the next meeting?

Date: _____

Time: _____

Place: _____

Purpose: To begin work on an action plan to attain the vision.

4. Meet with members who volunteered to plan and lead the third council meeting.

Name: _____ Phone: _____

Name: _____ Phone: _____

Name: _____ Phone: _____

Meeting Agenda for the Vision Meeting

(date, time, location)

Goal: Develop a vision for our school health council

Sign in, have refreshments, and get acquainted

Welcome and introductions

(leader and council members)

(Members' names, who they represent, and what they like best (and least) about living in the community)

Opening remarks

(leader)

- Establishing ground rules for council meetings

Creating our vision

(facilitator)

- Deciding where we want to go
- Characteristics of a vision
- Large and small group work

Next steps

(leader)

- Next meeting date, time, location, and purpose
- Volunteers needed to help plan and lead the next meeting
- Reminder of any commitments made by council members

Adjournment

(leader)

Letter of Invitation

(Place on school district letterhead)

(Date)

(Title) (Name, Position)

(Agency)

(Address)

(City, State ZIP)

Dear **(Title) (Name)**,

Those attending the organizational meeting of the school health council last week expressed overwhelming support for its creation. A meeting to define the vision and, therefore, the future work of the council will take place on **(day, date, time, and location)**.

We hope you will be able to attend this important meeting. The vision we create for the council will determine the focus of our work. Our vision will express what we want our schools and community to look like in the future. Your participation is critical in creating a map for improvements that will lead to the kind of future **(your community)** residents desire. Your involvement can help us reach our destination as a health promoting community.

By creating a strong vision of what we want for our children and ourselves we can plan council activities that will help us achieve that goal. If you know of others who might be interested in helping us create this wide vision, please share this information with them and invite them to attend the meeting with you. We look forward to seeing you at the meeting.

Please let us know if you plan to attend this important meeting by calling **(phone number)** or emailing **(email address)**. Thank you for your interest and support.

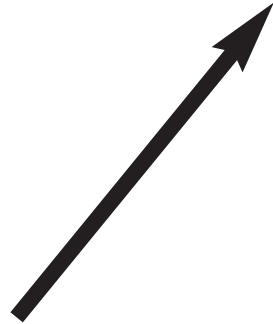
Sincerely,

(superintendent)

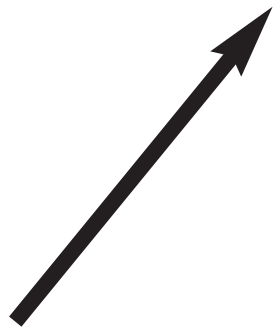
(school leader)

Note: Include a “Response Form” with this letter. (See Step 1, page 1-13.)

**OUR VISION Is
Where We Want to Be**



ACTION PLAN



Where We Are Today

A Vision:

- Organizes and unites us around a common purpose
- Expresses what we want our future to be
- Is personal as well as group centered
- Asks for our best to make our desired future real
- Expresses what could be when we use our talents and strengths
- Represents a leap of faith and inspires us to shape our destiny
- Communicates confidence in our ability to get the job done
- Guides our actions and attracts others to our cause
- Uplifts, compels, challenges, and inspires
- Comes from our hearts and appeals to our spirits

Adapted from *Thriving on Chaos*, by Tom Peters; New York: Perennial Library, 1987; and *Making the Grade: Community Workbook*; Washington, DC: The National Collaboration for Youth.

Creating a Vision for Our Community and Schools

1. What three things do you like best about our schools?

2. If you could change one thing about our schools, what would it be?

3. What worries you most about your children (or the children of our community) and their lives now?

4. What is one wish that you have for your children (or the children of our community)?

5. What could the schools do to make this community a better place to live?

6. What could our community do to make this a better place to live?

7. What could families do to make this community a better place to live?

8. What could this council do to make this community a better place to live?

Adapted from *Step by Step to Comprehensive School Health: The Program Planning Guide*, by William M. Kane; Santa Cruz, CA: ETR Associates, 1993; 65-68.

Our Vision of the Future

Task I: Write three sentences that express your aspirations (hopes) for the children, youth, and families living in our community.

1.

2.

3.

Task II: Write four sentences that describe the role of schools, families, our community, and this council in helping children and youth grow up healthy, safe, and happy.

1.

2.

3.

4.

Adapted from *Step by Step to Comprehensive School Health: The Program Planning Guide*, by William M. Kane; Santa Cruz, Calif.: ETR Associates, 1993; 65-68.

Developing an Action Plan

In this step:

- Plan the next meeting on writing an action plan.
- Confirm the vision of the council.
- Describe the relationship of change and planning.
- Write an action plan for your school health council.

Why Planning Is Important

Three ingredients make up a successful school health council:

- A vision of what the partners want to accomplish
- A commitment to work together to achieve that vision
- A plan of action describing responsibilities, resources, and deadlines

In your last meeting you created a vision to guide the council's work. In this meeting, you will develop an action plan to help you attain that vision. Too often in our haste to "do something," we fail to spend enough time planning. Shortchanging the planning process can sabotage your council's effectiveness down the road. Planning means taking a look at the big picture, setting priorities, and initiating rather than reacting.

An action plan provides a written framework of the changes desired in your community and how the council hopes to achieve them. Because people support what they help create, good planning involves all members in the development of the council's action plan.

At the end of the third meeting, your group should have started writing an action plan that holds council members accountable to the commitments they made. The plan also provides a way to track progress in keeping with the council's vision.

"Those who achieve success are those who take a dream and make it come true."

– Anonymous

"Entre el dicho y el hecho hay un gran trecho." (Between the saying and the doing there is a long stretch.)

– Irma Castro, *New Beginnings*

Plan the Next Meeting on Writing an Action Plan

To begin, review the materials in this step recommended for helping the council create an action plan. Share copies of these materials with the two or three members from the council who volunteered to help you plan the next meeting. Add any resources on planning that might help you with this meeting.

The goal of the third council meeting is to write an action plan. You may want to find an expert facilitator to conduct the meeting, but a member of the council can fill this role. The facilitator needs to sum up work done by individuals or small groups and guide the group in priority setting. Ideally the group should have at least a draft of an action plan at the end of the meeting. Small subgroups may need to meet before your next meeting to refine objectives, action steps, and evaluation methods.

Creating an action plan is as intense a task as creating a vision. Therefore, you may want to plan the third council meeting around a meal or divide the meeting over two evenings. Reserve a meeting room that allows small groups to work. Members will be writing on worksheets during the meeting and will need table space.

Invite council members to the third meeting. Mail a copy of the meeting agenda and minutes from the visioning meeting with the letter stating the meeting date, time, location, and purpose (pages 3-8 and 3-9). Mail the materials to those who have attended either of the two previous council meetings, and those who could not attend but asked to remain on your mailing list. Refer to the council's membership list for names and addresses. Publicize meeting in local papers, PTA newsletters, etc.

Checklist for organizing the action planning meeting:

- Meet with two or three volunteers from the council to plan the meeting.
- Reserve the meeting space.
- Send out letters of invitation, minutes, and agenda 10 to 14 days in advance.
- Arrange for healthy snacks.
- Copy transparencies and other handouts including extra copies of the meeting agenda.
- Gather supplies (for example: paper, pencils, tape, markers, a sign-in sheet).
- Obtain an overhead projector, flipchart, PowerPoint, LCD, etc.
- Find a council member to take meeting minutes.
- Follow up with those who helped plan the meeting to confirm arrangements.

Confirm the Vision of the Council

At the beginning of the meeting, remind members of the ground rules for council meetings and review the vision statement. If needed, ask for council approval on the statement. Ask these questions to help the council come to agreement:

- What, for you, are the key words in this vision statement?
- How did you first feel at the moment you saw the vision or read it?
- How do you feel about it now?
- Do you feel like you could “own” it?
- If not, how would it have to change for you to feel a sense of ownership for it?
- How does it strike your sense of meaning and purpose?
- How would it have to change to be meaningful for you?

Post the ground rules and vision on the wall at every council meeting. They will set the tone of the meeting and remind all members of the purpose of their work.

Describe the Relationship of Change and Planning

Individuals and groups have a greater opportunity to create change that affects a large number of people when they join others with the same interests. Your council represents a group that has organized itself around a shared vision to create change in your community. Although the risk and commitment in time, energy, and resources are greater when people work together, so are the rewards.

Use the transparency “A Process for Change” (page 3-10) to illustrate one way the change process has been described. Explain that your council has moved through Step 2 with the development of your vision statement and that you are now ready for Step 3. The plan your council creates will determine what action you take in Step 4 and will be the basis for evaluating the council’s progress in achieving its vision. The results of Step 4 will help council members decide whether the council should continue and move into Step 5.

Use the transparency “What’s Needed for Change to Occur” (page 3-11) to describe the ingredients needed for change, and what happens when an ingredient is missing. The action plan will help identify the skills and resources council members will need to implement the plan. The incentives represent the benefits that members receive from their participation in the council.

Write an Action Plan for Your School Health Council

The facilitator will need about two hours to help the group develop an action plan. He or she will guide the group through this process:

- Brainstorming about the desired changes in school and community health
- Prioritizing desired changes
- Evaluating priorities
- Writing an action plan for the top priorities

Brainstorm About the Desired Changes in School and Community Health

This step will take about 30-45 minutes to complete and can be done in one large or several smaller groups depending on number present. Given the information on change, brainstorm to identify what changes council members would most like to see in their community. Use the information sheet “Tips for Brainstorming” (page 3-12) to explain the brainstorming process to members. If your group is having a difficult time identifying potential action steps, give members the information sheet “What Can We Do?” (Page 3-13) to stimulate their thinking.

Record the desired changes on paper. After all ideas have been shared and clarified, combine ideas that are similar (with permission from the contributors). Discuss how the changes identified would help the council achieve its vision.

Prioritize Desired Changes

Although the discussion may inspire the council members to “take on the world,” they should decide realistically how much they will undertake. Setting priorities will help council members balance their family, work, and personal obligations with their commitment to the council.

Have the council choose its top five priorities from the list produced during the brainstorming. Use consensus if possible. If consensus is not possible, vote by asking members to assign points to their choices as follows:

- 1st ranking = 5 points
- 2nd ranking = 4 points
- 3rd ranking = 3 points
- 4th ranking = 2 points
- 5th ranking = 1 point

Get members out of their seats by asking them to write their point assignments on the paper by the five priorities of their choice. Total the scores for each idea. While the scores are being totaled and ranked, provide a meal or refreshment break.

Note: You could stop here and continue the agenda at the next meeting.

Evaluate Priorities

Compare each of the top five priorities to the criteria found on the worksheet “Evaluating Priorities” (page 3-15). This step allows the council to quickly evaluate each priority’s potential for success. Results may suggest a reordering of priorities. This step may generate a great deal of discussion among the group’s members. The facilitator needs to judge how much time to allow for this discussion and when it is time to move on to writing the action plan.

Write an Action Plan for the Top Priorities

Use the worksheet “Action Planning Guide” (page 3-17) to create an action plan for the highest ranked priority. The council may choose to design action plans for each of the top priorities depending on the number of members, their willingness to tackle several issues at once, and the resources available. *It is important to take on something that is achievable, has broad support, and will help establish the council as a vital force in the community.* Use the worksheet to outline the actions the council will take to achieve each priority.

A good action plan includes:

- What is to be accomplished
- Activities planned to create the desired result
- Who will be responsible for each activity
- When each activity will be completed
- What resources are needed
- How success will be judged

If more time is needed to complete action planning, ask for volunteers to complete the work. A draft action plan should be provided to all council members for their review within two weeks. Final agreement on the action plan should be the first agenda item of the next meeting. Once consensus is reached, the action plan should be widely publicized in the community. Celebrate this achievement.

Check Your Progress on Step 3

1. How many people attended the third council meeting and contributed to the development of the action plan? _____

2. Was an action plan developed?

☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ A tentative plan was developed

3. What went well during the action planning meeting?

4. What do you want to do differently at the next council meeting?

Next steps:

1. Prepare written minutes of the third council meeting. Mail the minutes, a list of those who attended the meeting, and the agenda for the next meeting to council members.

2. If additional work is needed on the action plan, bring together the council members who volunteered to complete this task. Mail the results of their work to all council members within two weeks. Ask the council to approve the action plan at its next meeting.

3. What is the date, time, location, and purpose of the next meeting?

Date: _____

Time: _____

Place: _____

Purpose: To complete work on the action plan and identify implementation steps.

4. Meet with members who volunteered to plan and lead the next council meeting.

Name: _____ Phone: _____

Name: _____ Phone: _____

Name: _____ Phone: _____

Meeting Agenda for the Action Planning Meeting

(date, time, location)

Goal: Develop an action plan for our school health council

Sign in, have refreshments, and get acquainted

Welcome and introductions

(leader and council members)

(Members' names, who they represent, and one thing they would like to see happen as a result of their involvement in the council)

Opening remarks

(leader)

- Review ground rules
- Confirm vision statement for the council

Creating our action plan

(facilitator)

- A process for change – What's needed for change to occur?
- Group work
 - Brainstorming ideas
 - Setting priorities
 - Creating an action plan

Next steps

(leader)

- Next meeting date, time, location, and purpose
- Volunteers needed to help plan and lead the next meeting

Adjournment

(leader)

Letter of Invitation

(Place on school district letterhead)

(Date)

(Title) (Name, Position)

(Agency)

(Address)

(City, State ZIP)

Dear **(Title) (Name)**,

Thank you for your continued support of our school health council. At our last meeting, the council agreed upon its vision statement. Our vision is **(your vision statement)**.

The council's next step is to create an action plan to make the vision become reality. A meeting to work on this action plan will take place on **(day, date, time, and location)**.

We hope you will be able to attend this important meeting. The action plan we create will identify the council's priorities, and describe activities and time lines for achieving our goals. Our action plan will be the map for improvement in our school and community. Your involvement can help us create an action plan that represents the interests of those living in our community.

If you know of others who might be interested in helping us create the council's action plan, please share this information with them and invite them to attend the meeting. We look forward to seeing you at the meeting.

Sincerely,

(superintendent)

(school leader)

A Process for Change

Step 1: Get together

- Commit to work together on school health
- Involve the right people
- Hold the first meeting
- Decide to act

Reflect and celebrate

Step 2: Create a vision

- Develop a base of common knowledge about school health
- Define a shared vision

Reflect and celebrate

Step 3: Develop a plan

- Identify priorities
- Design an action plan

Reflect and celebrate

Step 4: Take action

- Implement plan
- Celebrate achievements
- Recognize contributions
- Evaluate progress

Reflect and celebrate

Step 5: Review commitment

- Build community reputation
- Deepen commitment to vision
- Recruit new members and develop new leaders
- Adapt and expand action plan

*Repeat the process beginning with
“Get together.”*

Adapted from *Together We Can, A Guide for Crafting a Profamily System of Education and Human Services* by Atelia I. Melaville and Martin J. Blank with Gelareh Asayesh (Washington, DC: US Government Printing Office, April 1993) 21.

What's needed for change to occur?

Vision	Skills	Incentives	Resources	Action Plan	=	Change
--------	--------	------------	-----------	-------------	---	--------

What happens when pieces are missing?

	Skills	Incentives	Resources	Action Plan	=	Confusion
--	--------	------------	-----------	-------------	---	-----------

Vision		Incentives	Resources	Action Plan	=	Anxiety
--------	--	------------	-----------	-------------	---	---------

Vision	Skills		Resources	Action Plan	=	Slow Change
--------	--------	--	-----------	-------------	---	-------------

Vision	Skills	Incentives		Action Plan	=	Frustration
--------	--------	------------	--	-------------	---	-------------

Vision	Skills	Incentives	Resources		=	False Starts
--------	--------	------------	-----------	--	---	--------------

Permission obtained from *Health Is Academic: A Guide to Coordinated School Health Programs*, by Eva Marx, Susan Frelick Wooley, and Daphne Northrop; New York: Teachers College Press, 1998; 264.

Tips for Brainstorming

"The best way to get good ideas is to have lots of ideas."

Brainstorming is an idea-generating technique useful for:

- Generating many ideas in a short time
- Encouraging creative, spontaneous thinking
- Helping people temporarily suspend judgment
- Expanding or piggybacking on ideas

Procedure

1. Identify a question or topic for discussion.
2. If there are more than 10 participants, divide into smaller groups.
3. Ask each group to select a recorder and a spokesperson.
4. Explain the purpose and rules of brainstorming:
 - **Quantity is the goal.** More ideas mean better planning results.
 - **Reserve judgment.** Do not criticize. Evaluation comes later.
 - **Be creative.** Wild ideas are great because they stimulate even wilder possibilities. It is easier to tame what may seem like an impossible idea than to think up new ideas.
 - **Combine and improve ideas.** Expand, consolidate, create analogies, make the issues bigger and smaller.
5. Brainstorm responses to the question. The recorder lists all ideas on paper. If the group has been divided into smaller groups, give a two-minute warning before calling time. Ask the group to share its list.

Adapted from *Take Charge: Economic Development in Small Communities*, by Janet Ayres, et al.; North Central Regional Center for Rural Development, January 1990; 163.

What Can We Do? Suggested Action Steps for an SHC

These examples are just a sampling of possible actions that an SHC might take. The activities your council selects depend upon the specific role and function that guides your work. Ideally, councils work to impact school health program policy and practice, but some may also have a function that supports the planning and implementation of specific programs or activities within the school health program. The suggestions below support both approaches:

1. To support *planned, sequential health education*...
 - Initiate a review of the current scope of health education taught in the school district K-12 against state and national standards.
 - Conduct a needs assessment – identifying student needs and gaps in curriculum.
 - Review district policies related to health instruction.
 - Invite representatives from various health organizations to health council meetings (Dairy Council, American Cancer Society, Department of Public Health, American Heart Association, American Lung Association, etc.) to learn about available resources.
2. To support *physical education* classes that promote lifelong physical activity...
 - Review current policies regarding participation requirements for physical education. Promote an environment that supports annual physical education.
 - Encourage the district to provide opportunities before or after school hours for fitness activities, intramural programs, and interscholastic sports programs.
 - Encourage student and family participation in events that promote physical activity such as Jump Rope for Heart or walk-a-thons.
3. To support *school health services*...
 - Review current policies and practices related to preventive services, education, emergency care, and management of health conditions.
 - Review student school health service utilization – identify needs, gaps, and make recommendations for improvements/changes.
 - Identify ways to strengthen links to community providers for referrals and case management.
4. To promote a *healthy school environment* for teaching and learning...
 - Review existing policies that address use of tobacco, alcohol, and other drugs; student and staff with HIV infection; and sexual harassment.
 - Determine gaps, propose revisions, additions, deletions.
 - Promote the creation of safe school teams, crisis response teams, injury prevention programs, or universal precautions awareness sessions.

5. To support *counseling, psychological, and social services...*

- Review existing policies/practices.
- Ensure that training is provided for all school staff on recognizing and reporting child abuse and identifying students at risk for suicide, substance use, and other health-risk behaviors.
- Ensure that policies exist that ensure opportunities for students to discuss health-related issues.
- Ensure that student assistance programs are available to students.

6. To support *health promotion for staff...*

- Review current district policies and practices for employee wellness (awareness activities, on-site health assessments, stress management and fitness activities, health-related support services).
- Make recommendations for improvements in district employee wellness offerings.

7. To support *school nutrition services...*

- Review current food service offerings – breakfast, lunch, after-school – to ensure that healthy foods are being served.
- Encourage district participation in the TEAM nutrition project.
- Recommend policy that supports healthy vending machine selections.

8. To support the *community-school connection...*

- Identify other community health coalitions addressing student health needs, learn about their work, and support shared goals.
- Ensure that parents/caregivers and other community members have opportunities to reinforce health messages received at school through newsletter/email communication, etc.

Adapted from *Health Is Academic* (pgs. 28-29)

Evaluating Priorities

Part I: Use one or two words to summarize each top priority and write them in the spaces under the letters A-E. Then for each priority rate the nine factors on a scale of 1 to 10, with 1 being the lowest and 10 being the highest.

Top Five Priorities					
Factors	A:	B:	C:	D:	E:
1. How many people will be affected?	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
2. How big an issue is it in the community?	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
3. Is the school ready to take on this issue?	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
4. Is the community ready to support it?	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
5. Is the community aware of this need?	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
6. Are there potential strategies that can affect it?	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
7. Are these strategies easy to implement?	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
8. How much will it add to the staff workload?	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
9. Do we have or can we get the resources to address it?	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
Total score	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____

Part II: After rating the five priorities, consider these additional factors before selecting the priority or priorities on which you'll work.

Factors	Top Priorities				
	A:	B:	C:	D:	E:
What are the costs of action?	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
What are the costs of doing nothing?	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
How much time is needed to carry it out?	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
How long will it be before we see tangible results?	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____

Action Planning Guide

Complete this form for each of the selected priorities. This may be done as a whole group or in smaller groups.

Priority: _____

Start date: _____

Change desired: _____

Completed: _____ (month/year)

[illegible]

Adapted from *Moving to the Future: Developing Community-Based Nutrition Services (Workbook & Training Manual)*, by Karen L. Probert; Washington, DC: Association of State and Territorial Public Health Nutrition Directors, 1997; 76.

Taking Action and Getting Results

In this step:

- Design a structure for the council's work.
- Create a plan for marketing your council's efforts.
- Handle conflict.

"The greatest thing in this world is not so much where we stand as in what direction we are moving."

– Oliver Wendell Holmes

"Implementation will test the vision and commitment of even the strongest collaborations."

– Khatib Waheed, *Together We Can*, p. 67.

Your school health council has created a vision and an action plan. Your group knows what specific actions it wants to take, by when, and with whom. You also know who on your council is responsible for completing the action steps. Now comes the fun part – implementing your action plan!

Steps 1 through 3 of this guide provided sample agendas, letters of invitation, and instructions for you to conduct council meetings. Now, you will need to conduct regular meetings that fit your unique situation. The last two steps of this guide do not provide these types of samples, but the tools in the first three steps can be used to help you plan and conduct future meetings.

Step 4 contains practical tools and valuable information for implementing your action plan. Your council may not need all the resources in this step. This step serves as a reminder of factors that are key to success when taking action, and it offers tools that can help you. Complete the checklist "Checking Your Council's Progress on Taking Action" to identify the steps that your council would find most beneficial.

Checking Your Council's Progress on Taking Action

For each statement, check yes if it is true of your council and check no if it is not.

1. ☐ Yes ☐ No Regular monthly/bimonthly meetings occur with attendance by most members.
2. ☐ Yes ☐ No Established procedures for conducting business are in writing and understood by members.
3. ☐ Yes ☐ No A chairperson provides positive and productive leadership.
4. ☐ Yes ☐ No Members understand what is expected of them and willingly share responsibilities for carrying out the council's action plan.
5. ☐ Yes ☐ No The council has a strategy for communicating with the school and community about its vision and action plan.
6. ☐ Yes ☐ No Some council members have good communication skills and knowledge of marketing.
7. ☐ Yes ☐ No Presentation materials about the council's vision and action plan for improving school health are available for members to use.
8. ☐ Yes ☐ No The council has assessed the community climate and identified potential areas of conflict.
9. ☐ Yes ☐ No Varied and opposing viewpoints are valued by the council, and conflicts are resolved as they occur.
10. ☐ Yes ☐ No Meetings are conducted in a professional manner allowing all members to express opinions.
11. ☐ Yes ☐ No The importance of members' time is recognized by keeping meetings on schedule and focused on the agenda.
12. ☐ Yes ☐ No Members are asked for recommendations on improving the effectiveness of meetings.

What your responses mean:

If you answered "No" to questions 1, 2, 3, or 4, go to "Design a Structure for the Council's Work" (page 4-3).

If you answered "No" to questions 5, 6, or 7, go to "Create a Plan for Marketing Your Council's Efforts" (page 4-3).

If you answered "No" to questions 8, 9, 10, 11, or 12, go to "Deal with Conflict" (page 4-4).

Design a Structure for the Council's Work

Your council works best when members agree on a structure to carry out the action plan efficiently. An organizational structure helps members see where they fit in the council and what their responsibilities are. Once you complete your action plan, conduct a meeting to decide the council's organizational structure. Be sure to review your vision statement, action plan, and resources the council needs to carry out the plan.

The worksheet “Creating a Structure for Your School Health Council” on page 4-6 of this section outlines a three-step process:

1. Decide what kinds of groups are needed to carry out the action plan.
2. Determine how flat the organizational structure will be. A flatter organization has fewer people managing the work and more people doing the work.
3. Members of the council need to determine the roles of individuals, subgroups, the whole group, and staff in doing the work.

Create a structure that allows members to volunteer for or be assigned to roles that match their interests and strengths. Members who don't feel involved or needed tend to stop attending meetings. Sharing or rotating roles can help prevent burnout and ensure that council members feel useful and valued.

One caution: keep the structure of the council flexible and adaptable to changing conditions in the school and community. Council members need to understand that the structure is temporary and applicable to the current circumstances and action plan. You may need to change the structure with the changing needs of the council, school, and community.

Create a Plan for Marketing Your Council's Efforts

Your council's action plan proposes making school-wide and perhaps community-wide changes to improve school health. To produce these changes, you must communicate your vision, goals, and plan well beyond the boundaries of your council membership. You must convince a wide array of people about the importance of school health improvement and coordinated school health. You also need to provide a forum in which issues can be discussed and decisions made about how to improve health and learning.

Businesses use marketing techniques to promote their products and services to people who want and need them. Just like a business, your council needs to promote its “product” – a vision and plan for improving school health – to those who will support and use it. This process of taking the council's message to the community is called “social marketing.”

You need to tell your message to the community for three reasons:

1. To increase public awareness of coordinated school health and the work of the council
2. To build legitimacy for your work
3. To build community support for your goals, objectives, and action plan

Select a member or subgroup of the council to be responsible for marketing your efforts to the community. This individual or committee can develop and make recommendations to the council about how to handle marketing. Include people in this group who have experience using the media or conducting social marketing campaigns. It is helpful to have individuals with good communication skills – people who speak and write well. Ideally, your council’s marketing efforts will be led by people who have specific skills in advertising, public relations, and media.

Use the worksheet “Building Social Marketing into Your School Health Council” on page 4-8 of this step to help your council plan its marketing efforts. The worksheet contains eight steps for designing your social marketing plan and provides a basic understanding of social marketing. You can either complete this worksheet with all the members of the council or ask a subgroup to complete the plan and share it with the entire council.

Create a Presentation on Your Action Plan

Use the visuals and script in Appendix C to tell the school and community your story. Supplement these visuals with some you create that outline your school health council’s specific vision and action plans.

Deal with Conflict

Your council naturally will encounter resistance to change as it carries out the action plan. The social marketing techniques suggested in “Building Social Marketing into Your School Health Council” will overcome some resistance to change. However, concerns and objections may arise from outside your council that should be addressed through a planned effort. The worksheet “Meeting Resistance to Change” on page 4-12 identifies the kinds of problems you may encounter. Review the potential problems and discuss approaches for addressing them early and proactively in a regular meeting.

The worksheet also suggests a process for resolving conflicts that arise within the school or community. Conduct a special meeting with those who object to aspects of your council’s action plan in order to adequately address concerns.

"If you find a path with no obstacles, check to see if it leads anywhere."

– Attributed to Alan Joseph

Your council also may encounter problems working together. Members come to the table with different values, histories, personalities, skills, and experiences. If these differences aren't acknowledged and appreciated, your council will be limited in its ability to create change.

Your council should expect and manage conflict as it occurs. The information sheet "Possible Sources of Conflict" on page 4-14 describes potential sources of conflict and offers suggestions for overcoming it. Periodically, your council should review this information during a regular meeting to determine how well it is doing. Again, it is important to be proactive by addressing problems early. However, if your council continues to have problems working as a group, consider bringing in a trained facilitator to conduct team-building activities.

Next steps:

1. Develop strategies for tracking your council's progress toward achieving its vision.
2. Celebrate the council's successes. Marvel at what a small group of thoughtful, committed people working together can do to change their community.
3. Revitalize the council's membership as needed to realize your council's desired future for the school and community health.
4. Expand the vision and action plan for school health improvement.

Creating a Structure for Your School Health Council

Decide how to organize your council to complete the action plan. Answer the following:

- What kind of team structure do we need to organize the work of the action plan?
- How important is it for all members to make decisions?
- Can some decisions be made by subgroups?
- How much will we need to communicate with one another?

1. What kind of structure do we want to adopt?

Table structure: All group members come to the table to make decisions. The council believes that all members need to be involved in decision making. This approach works best for smaller groups with a narrower focus.

Wheel structure: Small groups form spokes of a wheel and work independently. An executive committee at the center coordinates information and activities. The smaller groups may have little contact with each other except at occasional meetings. This approach works best for larger groups with complex action plans.

Combination of table and wheel structure: A council, whose primary approach is the table, may have subgroups that make recommendations to the larger group. A group using the wheel approach may have their “spokes” use the table approach for decision making.

Label the structure your council wants to adopt. Ask the group to discuss the advantages and disadvantages of each structure and reach consensus on the best structure for this group.

2. Who will make decisions? How flat will our structure be?

Hierarchical: These groups put one or two people in charge of members and subgroups. The leader(s) make sure that people follow through on their responsibilities. A pyramid best represents this group. Hierarchy makes coordination easier, but it is often more difficult to resolve conflicts. Groups that want a more grass roots approach may find this approach too top-down.

Individual-based: These groups give each member responsibility for a certain aspect of the work. The structure is flat and gives the greatest responsibility and freedom to individual members. Leadership is distributed to all members, and everyone feels involved, useful, and valued. This structure works well for smaller groups but takes time to develop. It also may be difficult to coordinate the group.

Group-centered: These councils delegate most work to teams, although some work may be done by individuals. The structure is flat, and leadership is given to subgroups. Typically there is no leader for these subgroups. A problem sometimes develops with this approach because responsibilities may not be clearly assigned and some work missed.

Label the decision-making structure of your council. Identify one of the three approaches or combine them to create the decision-making structure for the council. Ask the group to reach consensus on which approach to use.

3. Who will assume the roles and responsibilities for carrying out the work of the council?

Write in the space provided the individuals, subgroups, the whole council, or staff who will be responsible for each task.

Responsibility	Name of Individual or Group
Initiate meetings, including sending out notices and setting the agenda	_____
Set up meetings, choose the location, and provide refreshments	_____
Lead meetings, make sure that members are active participants	_____
Resolve conflicts and problems	_____
Record and distribute meeting minutes and other information	_____
Communicate information to members, media, and community	_____
Manage the day-to-day operations of the council	_____
Monitor the council's activities to achieve its vision and action plan	_____
Reward members	_____

Adapted from *Collaboration Handbook: Creating, Sustaining, and Enjoying the Journey*, by Michael Winer and Karen Ray; St. Paul, Minn.:Amherst H. Wilder Foundation; 78-79.

Building Social Marketing into Your School Health Council

Here are eight steps to help your council create and implement a social marketing plan.

1. Talk and listen to your customers.

The key to effective social marketing is listening to the people you are trying to reach through your action plan. Social marketing is a customer-driven process. All aspects of your program must be developed with the wants and needs of the target audience as the focus. To learn what your customers want, you must ask them!

Here are some inexpensive ways to learn more about your customers:

- Talk to teachers and attend regular faculty meetings at the school.
- Talk to parents and participate in meetings of the PTA, PTO, and other parent groups.
- Go to the local mall, school events, or school cafeteria and talk to teens about their issues and what they need.
- Talk to students and visit health-related classes at the elementary and secondary schools.

Who are our council's customers? Who are the people we need to talk and listen to in order to carry out our action plan?

2. Segment your audience.

Your council has several groups of customers it needs to reach: teachers, school administrators, health care professionals, parents, clergy, employers, merchants, and others unique to your community. Good marketers know that you cannot sell a product to the general public. Teachers, parents, employers, children, and teenagers respond differently to particular approaches. Segment your target audiences into similar groups, and create specific messages for each group.

What are the segmented audiences that you need to address in your action plan?

- A. _____
- B. _____
- C. _____

3. Position your product.

The products of social marketing often are difficult to promote. Products such as coordinated school health programs do not “sell” as easily as a bar of soap or a car. The costs of your product may include staff time; effort to plan and implement new curricula; abandoning past ways; embarrassment or inconvenience; and social disapproval. To counter factors working against adoption of your product, create a plan to address them.

Your product position is based on the benefits of the product (what will it do for me?) and/or removal of barriers (how difficult is it for me to do?). By talking about your product with the target audiences, you will discover the benefits they value most and the barriers they anticipate.

A. What is the specific “product” that your council is trying to sell?

B. What does each target audience perceive as benefits and barriers?

Target Audience

Benefits

Barriers

4. Know your competition.

Become aware of the competing messages vying for the attention of your target audiences. Your product’s competition may be alternative curricula or the status quo. Your product must be more attractive than the alternatives, or there will be no action at all.

A. Who are the competitors to your plan?

B. What strategies are your competitors using that you can adapt?

C. What other factors in the school and community may affect people’s reaction to your plan?

5. Go to your audience.

People will not go out of their way to find your message. When you talk to your customers, ask them where they get their news and what radio stations they listen to. If you learn that your target audience tends to read the local newspaper, place your ads there and work with that paper's reporters to get coverage of your issue.

Where do your target audiences find out about issues?

Target Audience

Where they get information

6. Use a variety of approaches.

Use a combination of mass media, community, small group, and individual efforts. When a simple, clear message is repeated in many places and ways across the community, it is more likely to be seen and remembered. The approaches depend on your budget and what is most effective with the target audience. Stick to one main look and slogan, or people may not realize all the pieces are from your council.

Check the approaches your council will use:

- ☐ Letters to families
- ☐ Speakers bureau
- ☐ Newsletters
- ☐ Brochures
- ☐ Television and radio spots
- ☐ Print ads
- ☐ Community events
- ☐ Poster contest
- ☐ Giveaways of products or services
- ☐ Toll-free hotline for information
- ☐ Classes on your topic offered in the community
- ☐ Other (please specify): _____

7. Test, test, test.

Test with your target audiences to determine the potential effectiveness of all materials developed for your project. Remember that the customers are the experts on what works best for them. You can use two methods for testing:

- Conduct a focused discussion on a given topic. A focus group brings together eight to 12 people relevant to your efforts. Focus groups can be used to learn how people in the target audience think about the issue, the language they use to talk about the issue, and their reactions to activities or materials you've developed.
- Distribute surveys that ask for general information about people's knowledge, attitudes, and behaviors regarding a particular topic. Surveys work best when you have very specific questions that don't require the respondents to explain their answers (e.g., "yes" or "no" questions). Surveys do not have to be complicated, but they do require care in administration and interpretation.

8. Build partnerships with key allies.

Your council needs groups throughout the school and community to come together in a coordinated effort. Groups concerned with your issues – the media, schools, businesses, government agencies – can join you in your vision. You will have a greater impact as well as access to new audiences.

Consider these potential allies:

- Reporters who cover health and school stories by suggesting stories and providing lists of experts and fact sheets
- Local politicians who can be helped to understand and support your issue
- Businesses who can sponsor your activities
- Professional associations, local civic groups, religious groups, and community coalitions

A. What key people and organizations do you need to work with that have the potential to bring attention and credibility to your efforts?

B. What do you need to ask these people and organizations for in terms of support?

Adapted from *Building Social Marketing into Your Program*, by Nedra Kline Weinrich; <http://www.social-marketing.com/>; 1995.

Meeting Resistance to Change

The table below summarizes the kinds of resistance from the school and community your council may confront as it implements its action plan. As a council, review the table and add any additional problems you anticipate that are not identified.

Kinds of Problems	Examples of Typical Problems
Problems with the current school health program: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Planning process • Planned activities • Content of program • Target population to be reached • _____ • _____ 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Delays in implementing • Lack of coordination among different areas • Bad fit for the school or community • Lack of understanding about the change • Unresponsive parents • _____
Problems with people: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Attitudes toward the new program or proposed change • Lack of knowledge and skills to implement the program • _____ • _____ • _____ • _____ 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Resistance and skepticism • Conflict in values • Poor group functioning • Inadequate teaching skills • Lack of training on the subject matter • _____
Problems with the program setting: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Normal day-to-day crises • Competing demands • Control of resources • Physical setting • Resources • _____ • _____ • _____ • _____ 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Unexpected school cancellations or delays • Illness of staff, especially long term • Curricula required by state or local regulations • Required testing • Lack of control over hiring, budget • Inadequate facilities • Lack of time or money • Overloaded staff • _____

Create a Process for Resolving Conflicts

As a council, you need to develop strategies to address issues early. Some problems can be addressed by members without involving outside individuals or groups. However, some problems may be serious enough to conduct a special meeting for the people raising concerns. Listed below is a conflict resolution process to help resolve these conflicts.

1. **Be prepared.** Anticipate possible objections from both inside and outside your council. Identify those concerns that may lead to resistance to change.
2. **Revisit the vision and the ground rules developed by the council.** Focus on the needs of children and the benefits of the action plan to meet those needs.
3. **Decide who will facilitate the process for resolving the conflict.** If the council chair or a member cannot help resolve the conflict, ask a third-party facilitator or mediator to help resolve the conflict.
4. **Explore and legitimize concerns.** Ask individuals or groups to share their concerns and objections. Get them out on the table. Acknowledge that concerns are realistic and that their ideas will be discussed. Designate someone to take notes (shows serious interest).
5. **Avoid personalizing the conflict.** Some people view conflict as a threat to long-held beliefs. Do not minimize others' concerns or attack their points of view.
6. **Make sure everyone is heard.** Limit the time of those who talk and invite the participation of those who do not. (*Tip:* During meetings give each participant the same amount of tokens. When they have used all of their tokens, they may not speak again.)
7. **Respond actively.** Let people know you are listening by recapping, paraphrasing, and summarizing. Demonstrate a willingness to follow up and pursue issues. Set up a committee to study the concerns and come up with solutions.
8. **Get closure.** Summarize concerns and the steps needed to address them. Restate the agreed upon course of action, and ask the group whether the notes are accurate. Determine what needs to be done next.
9. **Don't burn bridges.** Remember, most of those involved are members of the same community. Everyone must continue working together during and after the conflict. Create rituals for healing and forgiveness. Remember to use humor.

Adapted from *Healthy Students 2000: An Agenda for Continuous Improvement in America's Schools*, by Diane DeMuth Allensworth, Cynthia Wolford Symons, and R. Scott Olds; Kent, OH: American School Health Association, 1994; 51.

Possible Sources of Conflict Within School Health Councils

Sources of Conflict	Ways to Resolve
Power struggles <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Members use their power in negative ways by controlling information or resources; bullying others; using fear tactics; or being inconsistent, demanding, or manipulative. • Personal customs, languages, or preferences are not being met. 	Address power needs <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Look for underlying issues, such as history of conflict, fear of loss of control, agency stress, or personal stress. • Review the customs of members. Define frequently used terms. Acknowledge different styles and decide when each will best be used.
The wrong people <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Members were not well chosen in the beginning. • Members attend infrequently. 	Choose new members <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Look at the process for choosing members. • Recruit new members with the expertise needed by the council. • Ask members to evaluate their level of commitment to the council. <p><i>Note:</i> See Step 5 of this guide for suggestions on selecting new council members.</p>
Low trust <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The council leader lacks the needed skills. • Meetings are boring and do not accomplish the agenda. • Self-interests are not being disclosed. • Communications are poor. 	Enhance trust <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Choose a new leader. Ask the council to take more responsibility for meetings. • Review the characteristics of effective meetings and make needed changes. Add rituals that build trust. • Disclose the culture, gain, diversity, and perception each member seeks. • Practice communication skills. Review how communications are being managed.

Sources of Conflict**Ways to Resolve****Vague vision and action plan**

- Members frequently call the vision and action plan into question.

Strengthen vision and action plan

- Review the council's desired future. Remember that conflict often is not about wording but about the scope of effort. Some members want specific, readily achieved results; others prefer larger, more complex efforts. Set short-term goals.

Incomplete desired results and strategies

- Desired results and strategies are frequently debated, even though they are in writing.
- Some members pressure the council into quick action.

Revise desired results and strategies

- Review desired results. Can they realistically be achieved? Members get burned out when they cannot see concrete accomplishments.
- Stress the importance of planning.

Adapted from *Collaboration Handbook: Creating, Sustaining, and Enjoying the Journey*, by Michael Winer and Karen Ray; St. Paul, Minn.:Amherst H. Wilder Foundation; 82-83.

Maintaining Momentum

In this step:

- Evaluate your council's efforts.
- Hold an annual renewal meeting of the council.
- Revitalize the council's membership.
- Expand school health improvement efforts.

Putting together a school health council is like a journey into a new territory. Preparing for such a journey requires careful planning and selection of participants. Even though your council has assembled the right mix of people and created an action plan, the group may find itself growing weary long before it reaches its destination. Keeping people engaged and reaching goals require sustaining the spirit and purpose with which the group began.

Step 5 explains how to maintain your council's momentum and how to move it to the next level of school health promotion.

Suggestions include:

- Evaluate the implementation of your council's action plan.
- Identify outcomes.
- Recognize your members' contributions.
- Revitalize the council's membership.
- Move the council's work on school health improvement to the next level.

"Coming together is a beginning; keeping together is progress; working together is success."

– Henry Ford

Evaluate Your Council's Efforts

Evaluation should be an ongoing activity of your council. Assign to a council member or subgroup the responsibility of overseeing evaluation activities. The basic reason for evaluation is to check your progress on the council's action plan and to determine whether your work is having a positive impact. Council members will be motivated by knowing that they are making a difference in their school and community. There are two types of evaluation your council will need to consider: *process* evaluation and *outcome* evaluation.

Process Evaluation

A process evaluation helps you determine whether the action plan is being carried out as intended. Some of the information you will gather in a process evaluation will help the council determine:

- How effectively the council is working together and achieving its vision
- How closely the activities are being implemented as they were intended
- Whether there are any unintended consequences from the activities, and whether these outcomes are positive or negative
- How well the activities outlined in the action plan are being received by administrators, teachers, students, families, and community members
- What kinds of midcourse corrections are needed to get back on track

Process evaluation is ongoing; you will need to devote time to it at each meeting. Documenting the council's work as it occurs is much easier than trying to recreate the sequence of events after time has passed. Time also will be needed at the end of each year to collect evaluation information from members about how well the council is working together and to assess accomplishments. "Important Information to Keep About Your Council" gives examples of the kind of information your council may want to gather.

As you learned in Step 4, continuously checking your council's ability to work together will help you achieve your ultimate goal or vision. In addition to reading the information in Step 4, review the evaluation questions in the American Cancer Society's resource "Improving School Health: A Guide to School Health Councils" (available by calling 1-800-ACS-2345 to obtain a free copy). In that guide pages 17-18 provide 32 "yes/no" questions for evaluating the effectiveness of your council.

Important Information to Keep About Your Council

1. Briefly summarize how the council came to be. Include how the council idea was initiated; where, when, and why it was organized; who provided the leadership for the council; who joined the council's efforts; what the vision of the council is; who the members are; and what segments of the community they represent.
2. Keep a file of meeting minutes, sign-in sheets, newspaper clippings, promotional brochures, and other printed materials about the council's work.
3. Keep a running list of issues addressed by the council each year (barriers encountered, helpful resources, etc.).

Outcome Evaluation

Your council needs to collect information about the outcomes of your efforts. Once you've implemented the strategies in your action plan and your early process evaluation shows that things are running smoothly, assess the impact of your plan. This may come whenever your council chooses. Outcome evaluation examines the changes that occurred from your efforts and whether those changes were the ones you intended.

The worksheet "Planning an Outcome Evaluation for a School Health Council" on page 5-8 provides a series of questions to help you plan an outcome evaluation for your council's work. "Working with an Evaluator" gives tips for finding an external evaluator to help conduct an evaluation if your council decides that outside help is needed.

Working with an Evaluator

An evaluator can help your council objectively assess the impact of your action plan, plus save you time and energy in the long run. Carefully select someone for your evaluation needs. These suggestions will help you with this process:

- Form an evaluation committee to plan and oversee the evaluation.
- Outline the purpose of the evaluation and specify tasks for the evaluator (e.g., develop a plan and instruments, collect and analyze data, prepare a written report).
- Identify individuals who might help with the evaluation. Ideally, the evaluator will work for an organization already participating in the council and will provide services at little or no cost. You might also check with universities, professional associations, or private services. Most of these sources will expect to be paid.
- Meet with the evaluator to identify responsibilities, timelines, the reports he or she will provide, and budget.
- Meet regularly with the evaluator to check progress.

(Brighter Days for Our Kids: A Resource Guide for Comprehensive School Health Programs)

Hold an Annual Renewal Meeting of the Council

Hopefully your council will have made significant progress at the end of its first year. Even if some of what you planned did not turn out as anticipated, celebrate successes and learn from your challenges.

Plan an annual, half-day meeting with all the council members. This meeting can help the group monitor its efforts, rejuvenate membership, and refine the vision and action plans. At the end of this step, you will find two handouts that will help you plan and conduct a renewal meeting. They are: “Agenda Planning Guide for a Renewal Meeting of a School Health Council” (page 5-10) and a sample “Meeting Agenda” (page 5-12).

The “Agenda Planning Guide” gives details for conducting a three-hour renewal meeting. This handout is to be used by the meeting facilitator. Someone who is not a council member should facilitate the renewal meeting so that the chair and all members can fully participate.

The renewal meeting is a time to celebrate. Recognize council members who will not be continuing. Ask the food service director whether the food service staff can prepare a meal for the meeting. This is a good opportunity to highlight this aspect of coordinated school health.

Consider sending copies of council documents for members to review prior to the renewal meeting. These documents may include an annual report, a report to the school board, evaluation reports, promotional brochures, and other printed materials. Include these items with the invitation letter and ask members to read them before the meeting.

Revitalize the Council’s Membership

Effective school health councils are able to adapt and adjust to change. As your council matures, membership needs to change. In the first year of your council, people were needed who could envision the future for school health and empower others to participate. These were the “big picture” thinkers who helped pull together the vision and action plan. Your council now needs people who pay attention to details, procedures, and implementation.

When deciding whom to recruit as new members for your council, identify task-oriented people. These may be individuals who were involved earlier but drifted away because they grew impatient with the visioning. Also, consider staff from the school and other organizations that are likely to implement the action steps.

Evaluate the diversity and community representation found in the council’s membership using the worksheet “Evaluating Your Council’s Membership” (page 5-13). In addition, revisiting the planning form titled “Community Partners to Invite” (page 1-9) that you used in Step 1 will help to identify new members for your council.

Expand School Health Improvement Efforts

Hopefully the first year of your school health council produced positive results for students, the school, and community. Your council may now be ready to take on bigger projects that have a broader impact on the school and community.

How do you know if your council is ready to expand its efforts at improving school health? Do council members believe that they have built the kind of relationships that let them reach goals that none of them could have achieved alone?

Over time council members develop relationships with each other and overcome their differences. Eventually the group will work together at higher levels of intensity. “Collaboration Continuum” describes three levels of relationships at which councils can work together. They are networking, cooperation, and collaboration. Very few councils start at collaboration.

To expand your school health improvement efforts, you will find it necessary to move toward the collaboration end of the continuum where relationships become more formalized and resources are combined. The information sheet “Moving to the Next Level of School Health Improvement” (page 5-15) gives examples of the kinds of activities that councils might initiate at the three levels of collaboration.

Your council’s annual meeting allows members to review the “Collaboration Continuum” and the information sheet. The materials suggest strategies for moving the council’s action plan to the next level of school health improvement.

Collaboration Continuum

Networking	Cooperation	Collaboration
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Share ideas• Learn about each other’s programs and services• Loose and informal links• Loosely defined roles• Informal communication• Little conflict• Some specific decisions• Resources of partners are kept separate	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Share ideas and resources• Minimize duplication of programs• Semi-formal links• Somewhat defined roles• Group planning and decision making• Regular communications• Some conflict• Funds are raised for specific projects	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Combine resources• Shared vision and a new system• Formal and written links• Formalized roles• Consensus used in decision making• Highly developed communication• Greater potential for conflict• Development of new resources and joint budget

Consider Conducting a Needs Assessment

As you work with the school health council, members may decide at some point that they need or want to do a needs assessment. A needs assessment can be conducted at any step along the way. As the council is forming, a needs assessment may determine priorities for the council. Later in the process, a needs assessment may help gain grant support, obtain commitments from a broader spectrum of community leaders, and provide baseline data for future program evaluations. “Conducting a Needs Assessment” (Appendix F) provides basic information to help you decide how to conduct this assessment and what to do once it is completed.

Check your progress on Step 5

1. Has an outcome evaluation plan for your council’s action plan been prepared?
- ☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ Not yet but plan to

2. Are you securing technical assistance from outside the council (if needed) to plan and conduct the evaluation activities?
- ☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ Not yet but plan to

3. Has an annual meeting been planned and held to celebrate the council’s success this year?
- ☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ Not yet but plan to

If yes, how many council members helped plan and lead the meeting? _____

How many people attended the meeting? _____

Did the media cover the event? ☐ Yes ☐ No

What positive things resulted from the annual meeting?

What improvements would you recommend for next year’s annual meeting?

4. Has your council revised and updated your vision, goals, and action plan?
- ☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ Not yet

5. Have you evaluated the current membership of your council and determined new membership needs?
- ☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ Not yet

Next steps:

1. Recognize that community change requires a long-term commitment. Immediate and dramatic results are rare.
2. Encourage council members to look for connections between their actions and changes in the community to show the effectiveness of the council. Because communities are affected by many initiatives, proof that council actions alone caused specific changes in the community is unlikely.
3. Continue to improve the effectiveness of your council by seeking feedback from current members and using their recommendations, and by revitalizing membership.
4. Recognize and celebrate the accomplishments of the council. Appreciate the improvements that the council's school partnership has contributed to your community's quality of life.
5. Prepare to move your council's effort at school health improvement to the next level.

Planning an Outcome Evaluation for a School Health Council

Planning and conducting an outcome evaluation is logical and straightforward but time consuming. The process outlined in this worksheet will be most effective if your council works with a trained evaluator. You do not need to hire an external evaluator if you can find this expertise within the council and as an in-kind donation from one of your community partners. Either way you need to address the questions in these steps.

1. Who in your council will oversee the outcome evaluation? Who else will assist him or her?

Chair: _____

Member of subgroup: _____

Member of subgroup: _____

Member of subgroup: _____

2. What do you want to evaluate in your council's action plan? What are the specific goals of the evaluation? You probably do not have enough resources to evaluate all activities. Review the action plan's goals and objectives to help determine the activities you want to evaluate and the kind of information you need to collect.

3. Who will use the outcome evaluation results? They could be parents, school board members, school staff, potential funders, or staff of community-based organizations. What kind of questions will they have about the program, and what kind of information will they find credible?

4. What methods are you considering for data collection?

☐ Gather and review data that are already available ☐ Telephone or face-to-face interviews

☐ Focus groups ☐ Participant observation

☐ Questionnaires ☐ Other _____

5. How will you share your evaluation findings with key stakeholders and the community?

☐ Community forum ☐ Newsletter articles

☐ Presentations ☐ Written report (complete report plus a summary)

☐ Media (radio, television, and/or newspaper) ☐ Other _____

6. Will you use a consultant or other resource person to assist with the evaluation?

☐ No

☐ Yes (please identify) _____

☐ Unsure (What kind of help do you need? Where might you get it?)

7. Outline the seven steps you will use to conduct the evaluation. Identify who might be responsible and when the step may be completed.

Step 1: Organize the evaluation team.

Person responsible: _____

Completion date: _____

Actions needed: _____

Step 2: Describe the purpose of the evaluation or the one to three key questions you want answered by the evaluation.

Person responsible: _____

Completion date: _____

Actions needed: _____

Step 3: Identify and gather information about the activity that is already available. Examine information to see how well it answers the questions in step 2.

Person responsible: _____

Completion date: _____

Actions needed: _____

Step 4: Determine whether additional information is needed and identify methods to collect it.

Person responsible: _____

Completion date: _____

Actions needed: _____

Step 5: Collect new information and analyze.

Person responsible: _____

Completion date: _____

Actions needed: _____

Step 6: Report your findings.

Person responsible: _____

Completion date: _____

Actions needed: _____

Step 7: Use findings in revising and planning the council's future work.

Person responsible: _____

Completion date: _____

Actions needed: _____

Agenda Planning Guide

Annual Renewal Meeting

for (your school district)

School Health Council

(date, time, location)

Goal: Celebrate the success and plan next steps of the school health council for (your community) to improve school health.

Note: Send out copies of the council's annual report, any evaluation studies, and other relevant materials for members to read before the meeting.

Before the meeting, post the vision and ground rules of the council.

Get acquainted (15-30 minutes)

- Serve refreshments or meal
- Sign in
- Name tags

Welcome (10 minutes)

(chairperson of the council)

- Introduce yourself.
- Describe the purpose of the meeting.
- Thank those attending for their interest.
- Have members of the council introduce themselves.
- Give any special recognition to members who are leaving the council.

Review of the council's work since the last meeting (30 minutes)

(chair or designated facilitator)

Ask members of the SHC:

- What did you think of the process that brought the council together?
- What have been the accomplishments of the council during the past year?
- What have been the benefits for you of being involved in the council?
- What have been your frustrations and disappointments?

Write their responses to each question on separate flip charts and post them around the room.

Assess the council's development (30 minutes)

(all)

Review with the members:

- Diversity and contribution of members
- Effectiveness of the council's structure

Ask the group to determine the following:

- Are the right people around the table? If not, review the worksheet “School Partners to Invite” from Step 1 and the worksheet “Evaluating Your Council’s Membership.” List on a flip chart those who need to be invited to participate in the council.
- Are members making the kind of contributions desired? If not, review the worksheet “Creating a Structure for Your School Health Council” from Step 4. Identify needed changes and list on a flip chart.

Identify strategies for the coming year (30 minutes)

(all)

Using the information on the flip charts from the previous two exercises, ask the group:

- What are the priority issues that the council needs to address in the next year?
- Which of these priority issues can we have an impact on and are committed to work on?
- What is the best way to organize our work to address these issues?
- Who needs to be recruited as new members to our council to help us address these priorities?

Revise the action plan (30 minutes)

(all)

Divide the council into smaller workgroups for each priority identified in the previous step. It is critical for the smaller workgroups to identify what needs to be done, by whom, and by when to address the priority issue. There may not be enough time to complete this work in the meeting, so have workgroups schedule another meeting to continue their work. Plan for each workgroup to share their progress at the next council meeting.

Feedback (15 minutes)

(chairperson)

- Ask for volunteers from the workgroups to share some of their planning.
- Encourage members to give each other feedback.

Next steps (10 minutes)

(chairperson)

- Set the next meeting date, time, and location.
- Ask for the names, addresses, and phone numbers of others who should be invited to the next meeting. Encourage them to help invite new members to the council.
- Remind workgroups to meet before the council meeting to finish their planning.
- Thank participants for their active involvement this past year.

Adjournment (2 minutes)

(chairperson)

Thank participants again for their attendance and input.

Meeting Agenda

Annual Renewal Meeting

for (your school district)

School Health Council

(date, time, location)

Goal: Celebrate the success and plan next steps of the school health council for (your community) to improve school health.

Welcome, have dinner or refreshments, and get acquainted (all)

Review of the council's work since the last meeting (chairperson or designated facilitator)

- What did you think of the process that brought the council together?
- What have been the accomplishments of the council during the past year?
- What have been the benefits for you of being involved in the council?
- What have been your frustrations and disappointments?

Assess the council's development (chairperson or designated facilitator)

- Do we have the right people around the table? If not, who do we need to invite?
- Are you making the kind of contributions to the council you want to? If not, what would you like to change?

Identify strategies for the coming year (30 minutes) (all)

- What are the priority issues that the council needs to address in the next year?
- Which of these priority issues can we affect and are committed to work on?
- What is the best way to organize our work to address these issues?
- Who needs to be recruited as new members to our council to help us address these priorities?

Revise the action plan (30 minutes) (all)

In smaller workgroups, identify what needs to be done, by whom, and by when for each of the priorities identified in the last step.

Feedback from workgroups (volunteers)

Next steps (chairperson)

- Set the next meeting date, time, and location.
- Remind work groups to meet before the council meeting to finish their planning.
- Thank participants for their active involvement this past year.

Evaluating Your Council's Membership

Use this worksheet to assure broad involvement of your community on the council. Check the categories currently represented on your council, and then recruit additional members as needed.

Names

Gender

Male: _____

Female: _____

Age

Youth: _____

Adult: _____

Race/ethnicity

African American: _____

White: _____

Asian: _____

Hispanic: _____

Native American: _____

Other: _____

Geographic representation

List the various regions of your community as row headings

Region #1 _____

Region #2 _____

Region #3 _____

Region #4 _____

Community representation areas of expertise

Churches: _____

Schools: _____

Youth organizations: _____

Government: _____

Civic clubs: _____

Service agencies: _____

Prevention services: _____

Intervention services: _____

Medical: _____

Mental health: _____

Business/industry: _____

Youth development: _____

Family interaction: _____

Community action: _____

Media/communications: _____

Other: _____

Adapted from *Making the Grade: A Community Workbook*; National Collaboration for Youth; Washington, DC: 13.

Moving to the Next Level of School Health Improvement

Function	Stage 1: Networking	Stage 2: Cooperation	Stage 3: Collaboration
Advising and decision making	Form school health council.	Partnership with physicians and teachers to improve health status and learning.	Form an interagency coalition to advise policy makers.
Information	Distribute materials produced by health agencies.	Use parents as partners in specific instructional strategies.	Distribute multiple agency newsletters, calendars of events, and directories of services.
Services	Have volunteer or health care professional screen students for health problems.	Use school setting for training of medical students, nursing students, etc.	Form a collaboration of schools and agencies to provide school-based services.
Planning and development	Open school recreation facilities to fitness activities for community.	Develop a plan to improve child health between the school and the health department.	Develop a consortium of schools to purchase research-based curriculum.
Research and evaluation	Provide access for researchers from higher educational institutions.	Cooperatively submit a grant proposal by school and community agency.	Use multi-agency task force to gather health and social data on student health problems.
Training	Use health care professionals and parents as consultants for in-service or instructional programs.	Use community agencies as learning laboratories for students who serve as volunteers.	Use personnel in health service network to provide in-service programs for other members.
Advocacy	Use parents as sources for articles on school health issues.	Initiate and develop regional school health education coalition.	Form a coalition to promote the benefits of comprehensive school health.

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3. *A Safe and Nurturing Learning Environment*

- Policies, programs, and facilities promote clear, high expectations for positive academic achievement and positive health choices.
- Facilities are hazard-free and promote learning.
- Health-enhancing messages from multiple sources are consistent (e.g., nutrition education is reinforced by lunchroom offerings; safety messages are underscored by seat belt availability and use on school buses).

4. *A Commitment of Time, Personnel, and Resources*

- Time, personnel, and resources are well-managed.
- Students, families, and school employees have access to appropriate resources.
- School staff have adequate time to plan and deliver health instruction and support services, and foster collaborative activities with community partners.
- Time and resources are available to seek funding for efforts that address student and school needs.

*By working together, we can
create and maintain something
wonderful for our future, for
our children...*

Elements of Excellence at a Glance

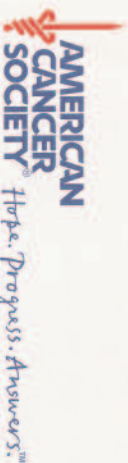
An exemplary school health program includes these elements:

- Active leadership
- A coordinated and collaborative approach
- A safe and nurturing learning environment
- A commitment of time, personnel, and resources

The health and well-being of young people does not begin and end at the school door. It is a 24-hour-a-day effort, dependent on the whole community's commitment to create new and effective solutions to ongoing health challenges.

The American Cancer Society and its partners in school health promotion recognize that the best way to help shape our children's future is by making a commitment to the elements of excellence in school health. We recognize that our efforts to enhance school health will have a tremendous impact on cancer prevention in this country.

For information on the American Cancer Society's efforts to improve student health in our schools, call:



1-800-ACS-2345 www.cancer.org

American Academy of Pediatrics



Health & Human Development
Programs at



CASHA
American
School Health
Association



School Health

Elements of Excellence

for Programs that Help

Children Learn and

Stay Healthy

Sponsored by:

American Cancer Society
American Academy of Pediatrics
American School Health Association
Education Development Center
National Middle School Association
National School Boards Association
State of California Department of Education



Why School Health?

The whole community is responsible for supporting the healthy development and academic performance of youth. It is a community's shared commitment to its children that will enable those children to become responsible and productive adults.

Experts agree that a coordinated school health program that addresses specific guidelines and includes common components is the best way to respond to the complex health and academic challenges facing our children.

Children's health and education are compromised by risky behaviors, such as tobacco, alcohol, and drug use, early sexual activity, failure to use seat belts, carrying weapons, lack of physical activity, and poor diet. A good school health program addresses such risky behaviors.

What's in a good School Health program?
For starters, it includes eight defining components:

1. Health education teaches physical, mental, emotional, and social topics.
2. Physical education supports physical activity and cardiovascular fitness.
3. Health services provide prevention, early intervention, and management of acute chronic health conditions.
4. Nutrition services offer nutritious meals, and an environment that promotes healthy food choices and support for nutrition education.

5. Counseling, psychological and social services provide consultation and other assistance.
6. A healthy environment promotes a positive physical, social, and emotional climate.
7. Staff health promotion helps staff maintain its health and act as healthy role models.
8. Family and community involvement promotes partnerships that maximize resources and expertise.

School Health

ELEMENTS FOR EXCELLENCE

Is your school a standout?

Parents, teachers, school officials, students, and others in the community all play active roles in ensuring schools meet the needs of students today and for a lifetime. The quality of your child's school health program can have a major impact on their academic achievement, and on their health and well-being for life.

With this in mind, the American Cancer Society and a special team of school health professionals developed a set of basic elements that define an exemplary school health program. These elements can help you find out whether your school is a standout in school health:

KEY ELEMENTS

1. **Active Leadership**

- Key decision makers in school administration support school health.
- A school health council meets regularly and offers guidance. It includes representatives from religious, medical, business, criminal justice, public health, and voluntary health communities, as well as families, administrators, teachers, students, and staff.
- A specially trained employee has sufficient resources to coordinate the school health program.
- Priorities are set based on information about youth health risks in the community.

2. **A Coordinated and Collaborative Approach**

- The school health council oversees all aspects of health, including health services, and school lunch and drug-free school programs.
- Priorities, roles, and tasks are identified and established based on understanding of community values and student, family, and staff needs.
- The council provides a forum for open communication.
- The council refines the school health program based on changing needs and resources.
- The school health program addresses the needs of all students, families, and staff.
- The school health program links with other health and social service providers and programs in the community.

Meeting Planner

Provide the information requested, and check off the tasks as they are completed.

- ☐ Meeting date, time, and location have been set:
Date _____ Time _____ Location _____
- ☐ Notify participants of the meeting
 - ☐ Reminder letter ☐ Media release
- ☐ The purpose of the meeting has been decided:
Purpose _____
- ☐ A chair or leader for the meeting has been chosen, and he or she has been involved in preparing the agenda or has been fully briefed:
Chair or meeting leader _____
- ☐ The agenda will accomplish the meeting's purpose, encourage commitment and involvement, and provide clear leadership roles.
- ☐ Necessary resources have been identified and include:
 - ☐ Sign-in sheet
 - ☐ Printed agenda
 - ☐ Minutes of previous meeting
 - ☐ Background materials
 - ☐ Proposals
 - ☐ Worksheets
 - ☐ Transparencies
 - ☐ (Other) _____
- ☐ Members have been asked to serve as:
 - ☐ Note taker _____
 - ☐ Timekeeper _____
 - ☐ Presenters _____
 - ☐ Sign-in greeter _____
 - ☐ Refreshment providers _____
 - ☐ Refreshment servers _____

- ☐ The following logistical matters have been considered:
 - ☐ Tables for sign-in and refreshments
 - ☐ Chair arrangements
 - ☐ Newsprint and markers
 - ☐ Easel or chalkboard
 - ☐ Outlets for audiovisual equipment
 - ☐ Podium and microphone setup
- ☐ Child care will be provided by _____
- ☐ Transportation will be provided by _____

Adapted from *Organizing for Social Change: A Manual for Activists in the 1990s*, 2nd ed., by Kim Bobo, Jackie Kendall, and Steve Max (Santa Ana, Calif.: Seven Locks Press, 1996) 102.

Script and Transparencies

Introduction: The transparencies and script may be used for the organizational meeting to guide opening remarks and explain a school health council (SHC). The script answers the following questions: Why is school health important? What do school health programs include? What is a school health council? These same materials can be adapted for use with other audiences to explain comprehensive school health and SHCs.

Transparency 1: Promoting Healthy Youth and Healthy Schools

Title slide

Transparency 2: The health of our children depends on our families, schools, and communities.

Research confirms what we have known all along. The health of children and adolescents depends on their families, schools, and communities.

- Youth who feel connected to their families and schools are healthier and less likely to get in trouble.
- When parents are involved in schools, student learning, behavior, and attitudes improve.
- Health is everyone's business – not just the school's, family's, or health care facility's responsibility.
- But families, schools, and government agencies are limited in what they can do alone to address the health issues of youth.

Transparency 3: “Efforts to improve school performance that ignore health are ill-conceived, as are health improvement efforts that ignore education.” (*Health Is Academic*)

We hear a lot of discussion today about improving student performance and our schools. It is important that health be a part of these plans to enhance learning. In addition, when we plan to promote health in the schools and community, we need to think about the whole school. Health improvement and school improvement are interrelated and critical to each other's success.

Transparency 4: “If schools do not deal with children's health by design they deal with it by default.” (*Health Is Academic*)

Some would argue that schools have no business addressing health issues and that they need to stick to teaching the basics. Unfortunately when schools do not deal with health issues proactively, they end up dealing with these issues later when they become a problem or a crisis.

Transparency 5: What are the most pressing issues facing the children and youth in our schools today?

Let's take a few minutes to identify some of the most pressing issues facing students in our school district today. What do you think they are? (Write participant responses on a flip chart or blank transparency.)

Which of these issues relate to health? (Check or circle those that relate to health.)

Transparency 6: Behaviors that affect health and learning

As you can see, the health issues currently facing children and youth differ from those 30 to 40 years ago. Then children were often harmed by infectious diseases, but advances in medications and vaccines have largely addressed these problems.

More than ever, the health of children and adults is linked to the behaviors that they choose to adopt. These six behaviors account for most of the serious illnesses and premature deaths in the United States.

- Tobacco use
- Unhealthy dietary behaviors
- Inadequate physical activity
- Alcohol and other drug use
- Sexual behaviors that result in HIV infection, other sexually transmitted diseases, and unintended pregnancies

Transparency 7: Children and youth are at risk

Health statistics show us how widespread these problems have become:

- More than 3,000 youth start smoking every day.
- Daily participation in high school physical education classes dropped from 42 percent in 1991 to 27 percent in 1997.
- Three of every four youth do not eat the recommended daily amount of fruits and vegetables.
- Each year, almost one million teens become pregnant, and three million become infected with a sexually transmitted disease.
- More than 30,000 youth die in motor vehicle accidents each year.

Transparency 8: Why do schools need to address health issues?

The problems caused by these behaviors reduce children's attendance at school and contribute to their failing in school. Education and health are linked. Schools alone do not address all the health needs of children and youth. However, schools provide a crucial opportunity to prevent or reduce risky health behaviors.

Prevention programs that reduce health risks and improve the health status of children work. After looking at many research studies, the Centers for Disease Control concluded that for every dollar invested in:

- Effective tobacco education, society saves an estimated \$26.45 in health care and other costs
- Alcohol and other drug use prevention, society saves \$5.69
- Prevention of early and unprotected sexual activity, society saves \$5.10

However, school health programs are more than just a single prevention program designed to reduce teen smoking or increase seat belt use. Rather, it is a coordinated and comprehensive approach to health that:

- Seeks to reduce risk factors and strengthens protective factors that affect students' health and learning
- Gains support from students, parents, friends, and adults within the community
- Incorporates many different strategies for promoting and educating about health
- Employs a program planning process that includes a wide variety of stakeholders

Transparency 9: A model for school health

The Centers for Disease Control created a model for coordinated school health that includes eight key parts. They are:

1. *Health education* curriculum in grades K-12 that addresses the physical, emotional, mental, and social aspects of health. Designed to help students improve their health, prevent illness, and reduce risky behaviors.
2. *Physical education* curriculum in grades K-12 that promotes lifelong physical activity.
3. *Health services* that provide preventive services, education, emergency care, referrals, and management of acute and chronic health problems. Designed to prevent health problems and ensure care for students.
4. *Nutrition services* that integrate access to nutritious and appealing meals, nutrition education, and an environment that promotes healthy eating.
5. *A healthful school environment* that provides a safe, healthy, and supportive climate for learning.
6. *Counseling and psychological services* that include individual and group assessments, interventions, and referrals. Designed to prevent problems early and enhance healthy development.
7. Health promotion for staff that includes assessment, education, and fitness activities for school faculty and staff who serve as role models for students.
8. Family and community involvement that includes school health councils and coalitions to build support for school health programs.

Transparency 10: Outcomes of school health improvement efforts

Evaluation of early efforts to start coordinated school health programs show great promise. Schools that implemented programs showed improved attendance and:

- Less smoking among students and school staff
- Lower rates of teen pregnancy
- Increased participation in physical fitness activities
- Greater interest in cholesterol levels and healthier diets
- Increased use of school health and counseling services, which resulted in fewer discipline problems and delayed the onset of risky behaviors

Transparency 11: “Never doubt...”

Schools alone can't be responsible for the health and well-being of children and youth in their communities, but they play an important role. By creating a school health council, schools can find partners within their communities to identify health problems and concerns, set priorities, and design solutions. Local leaders and parents know what is needed by their communities and children. When engaged as decision makers, communities have proven time and again that they are up to the task of addressing local problems and supporting schools in their tasks.

Transparency 12: School Health Council

An SHC is a core group of parents, youth, educators, and others who represent different segments of the community. The key purpose of an SHC is "advising." The group works together to give advice and support to the school on all parts of its school health program. The council is not part of the school's administrative structure nor does it hold any legal responsibilities. The kind of advice given depends upon the role the school wants it to serve.

Transparency 13: Councils can help with...

SHCs can help with:

1. *Program planning*, such as participating in curriculum review, identifying emerging health issues, encouraging innovation in health education, and providing inservice training programs
2. *Advocacy*, such as ensuring that sufficient resources are given to support school health and health education programs, helping to build understanding between the school and community, and linking the school to other community resources
3. *Fiscal planning*, such as helping to raise funds for local programs and preparing grant applications
4. *Education*, such as initiating policies related to smoking, alcohol use, and the sale of nutritious foods, and organizing schoolwide health promotion events
5. *Evaluation and accountability*, such as ensuring that the school's health and physical education programs are achieving their goals, obtaining input from parents and school staff, and identifying health needs

Transparency 14: Benefits of a Council

In the letter that invited you to this meeting, we included the information sheet “Benefits of a School Health Council” (page 1-14). Can you think of any other benefits not listed on this handout?

Transparency 15: Membership should...

Membership on a school health council should be as representative of our school and community as possible. We want to involve people with a broad variety of education, experiences, opinions, economic levels, gender, race and ethnic backgrounds, and ages. Key leaders from the community and school need to be included as well as those we may not typically think of for those kinds of leadership and volunteer activities.

Transparency 16: Who can be a member?

Here are some examples of the kind of people that we want to involve.

Transparency 17: Who else do we need to involve?

Can you think of others who we need to contact and ask to be involved in this effort?

Promoting Healthy Youth and Healthy Schools

Our children's health depends on our families, schools, and communities.

- Youth who feel connected to their families and schools are healthier and less likely to get into trouble.
- When parents are involved in schools, student learning improves.
- Health is everyone's business.
- But families, schools, and agencies are limited in what they can do alone.

“Efforts to improve school performance that ignore health are ill-conceived, as are health improvement efforts that ignore education.”

Health Is Academic, 1997

“If schools do not deal with
children’s health by design,
they deal with it by default.”

Health Is Academic, 1997

What are the most pressing
issues facing the children and
youth in our schools?

Behaviors that affect health and learning

- Tobacco use
- Unhealthy dietary behaviors
- Inadequate physical activity
- Alcohol and other drug use
- Sexual behaviors that result in HIV infection, other sexually transmitted diseases, and unintended pregnancy

Children and youth are at risk

- More than 3,000 youth start smoking every day.
- Daily participation in high school physical education continues to drop.
- Three of every four youth do not eat the recommended amount of fruit and vegetables.
- Almost one million teens become pregnant, and three million contract STDs each year.
- More than 30,000 youth die in motor vehicle accidents each year.

Why do schools need to address health issues?

- Education and health are linked.
- Prevention programs work.
- There is a need to address physical, mental, social, and emotional health.
- Most effective approaches are coordinated and comprehensive.

A model for school health

- Health education
- Physical education
- Health services
- Nutrition services
- Healthful school environment
- Counseling, psychological, and social services
- Health promotion for staff
- Family and community involvement

Outcomes of school health improvement efforts

- Improved student attendance
- Less smoking among students and staff
- Lower rates of teenage pregnancy
- Increased participation in physical fitness activities
- Greater interest in healthier diets
- Fewer discipline problems

“Never doubt that a small
group of committed people
can change the world.
Indeed, it is the only thing
that ever has.”

Margaret Mead

School Health Council

- Made up of a core group of parents, youth, educators, and other community members
- Gives advice and support to the school on all parts of school health
- Helps promote healthy behaviors and a healthy environment

Councils may help with...

- Planning programs
- Advocating for health programs
- Raising funds
- Educating the community
- Assessing needs and evaluating programs
- Coordinating resources, services, and programs between the school and community

Benefits of a council

- Increase parent and community involvement in the school
- Link schools with community health resources
- Provide a means for improving school health policies and programs
- Educate the community about the school and health issues

Membership should...

- Represent all segments of the community
- Involve people with a wide variety of backgrounds and experiences
- Include key players in the community and school
- Involve the least powerful as well as the most powerful

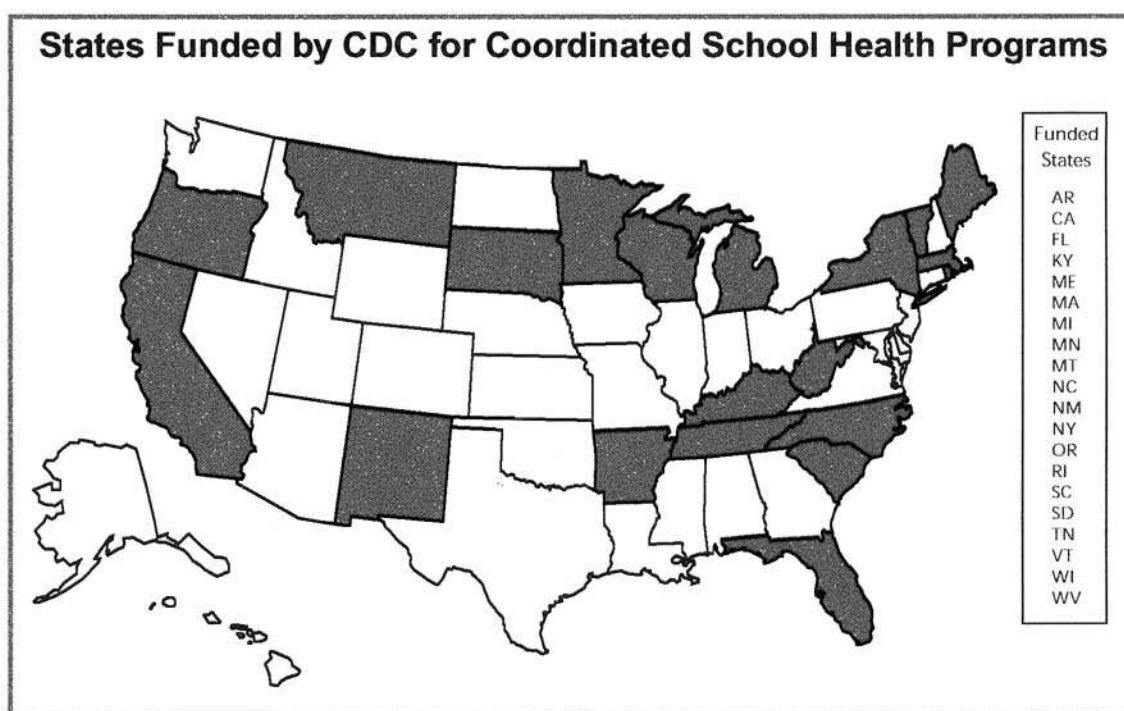
Who can be a member?

- Parent and teacher organizations
- Youth
- Health care providers
- Business people
- Community leaders
- Extension staff
- Human service agency representatives
- School personnel
- Clergy

Who else do we need to involve?



School Health Programs: An Investment in Our Nation's Future 2001



"Schools could do more than perhaps any other single institution in society to help young people, and the adults they will become, to live healthier, longer, more satisfying, and more productive lives."

Carnegie Council on Adolescent Development

Health Challenges of Young People

Many of the health challenges facing young people today are different from those of past decades. Advances in medications and vaccines have largely addressed the illness, disability, and death that common infectious diseases once caused among children.

Today, the health of young people, and the adults they will become, is critically linked to the health-related behaviors they choose to adopt.

Damaging Behaviors

Certain behaviors that are often established during youth contribute markedly to today's major killers, such as heart disease, cancer, and injuries. These behaviors include

- Tobacco use.
- Unhealthy dietary behaviors.
- Inadequate physical activity.
- Alcohol and other drug use.
- Sexual behaviors that can result in HIV infection, other sexually transmitted diseases, and unintended pregnancies.

- Behaviors that may result in violence and unintentional injuries (motor vehicle crashes).

These behaviors place young people at significantly increased risk for serious health problems, both now and in the future.

Young People Are at Risk

- ▶ Every day, nearly 3,000 young people take up daily smoking.
- ▶ Daily participation in high school physical education classes dropped from 42% in 1991 to 29% in 1999.
- ▶ Almost three-fourths of young people do not eat the recommended number of servings of fruits and vegetables.
- ▶ Every year, almost 1 million adolescents become pregnant, and about 3 million become infected with a sexually transmitted disease.

School Health Education Proven Effective

Every school day, 53 million young people attend nearly 117,000 schools across our nation. Because of the size and accessibility of this population, school health programs are one of the most efficient means of shaping our nation's future health and social well-being.

Rigorous studies show that health education in schools can effectively reduce the prevalence of health risk behaviors among young people. For example,

- Planned, sequential health education resulted in a 37% reduction in the onset of smoking among seventh-grade students.
- The prevalence of obesity decreased among girls in grades 6–8 who participated in a school-based intervention program.

- Students who participated in a school-based life skills training program were less likely to use tobacco, alcohol, or marijuana than were students not enrolled in the program.

In 1998, Congress emphasized the opportunity afforded by our nation's schools when it urged CDC to "expand its support of coordinated health education programs in schools." Gallup polls have shown strong parent, teacher, and public support for school health education.

Enthusiasm for addressing health among young people has grown in the private sector as well. National health and education organizations, including the American Medical Association, the American Cancer Society, and the National Association of State Boards of Education, actively endorse a coordinated approach to health education in the school setting.

CDC Program Elements

In 1987, in response to the growing impact of HIV infection, CDC began providing funds and technical assistance for state and large-city education agencies to help schools implement effective HIV prevention education. In 1992, the U.S. House of Representatives Appropriations Committee commended CDC for its approach to providing HIV/AIDS prevention education in the nation's schools and expressed a desire for school children to be encouraged to adopt healthy lifestyles in other areas. The Committee's recommendations state, "The time to prevent health-damaging behavior patterns is before they are established; comprehensive health education in schools takes advantage of that."

In 1992, while continuing to provide funding to all states for HIV prevention education, CDC started a new initiative to support coordinated school health programs that can reduce chronic disease risk factors: poor eating habits, physical inactivity, and tobacco use. CDC currently supports 20 states for coordinated school health programs.

National Framework

CDC has established a national framework to support coordinated school health programs. More than 40 national nongovernmental education and health organizations work with CDC to develop model policies, guidelines, and training to assist states in implementing high-quality school health programs.

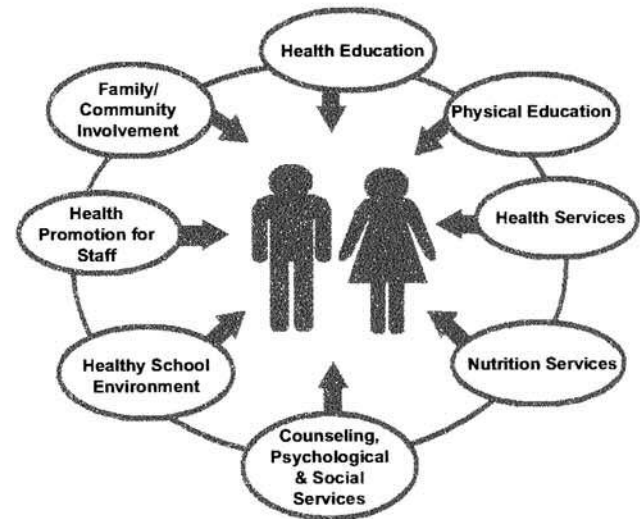
As part of this effort, CDC collaborates with scientists and education experts to identify curricula that have successfully reduced health risk behaviors among young people. CDC provides resources to ensure that these curricula, including training for teachers, are available nationwide for state and local education agencies interested in using them. Schools themselves decide which curricula best meet their students' needs.

State-Based Programs

Through the established national framework and in collaboration with health and education partners, CDC assists funded states in providing young people with information and skills needed to avoid risk behaviors, including tobacco use, poor eating habits, and physical inactivity. The eight components of a coordinated school health program systematically

address these risk behaviors. In addition to receiving instruction, students practice decision-making, communication, and peer-resistance skills to enable them to establish informed and healthy lifestyles.

The Eight Components of a Coordinated School Health Program



Roles of State and Local Departments of Education and Health

CDC funding and support enables state departments of education and health to work together efficiently, respond to changing health priorities, and effectively use limited resources to meet a wide range of health problems affecting the state's school-aged population. With this support, state and local departments of education and health are able to

- Provide high-level staff in both agencies to coordinate, support, and evaluate local school health programs.
- Build a training and development system for health and education professionals at the state and local levels to improve policies and programs.
- Bring together organizations committed to improving the health of young people to develop and coordinate strategies for communicating the importance of school health programs.

Success Stories From the States

The following examples from two of the funded states illustrate ways in which these states are helping to improve the health of young people.

West Virginia. The West Virginia Coordinated School Health Program developed Instructional Goals and Objectives for Health Education and Physical Education and trained more than 2,200 teachers to use the new framework. Results on the President's Physical Fitness Test in Clay County improved from a 20% pass rate in 1994–1995 to a 41% pass rate in 1997–1998.

Michigan. In response to its high rates of chronic disease and low rates of participation in high school physical education classes in the early 1990s, Michigan has taken the following steps:

- The Governor's Council on Physical Fitness, Health, and Sports established the Exemplary Physical Education Curriculum Project (EPEC) to develop and disseminate materials and procedures that provide students with the fitness levels, motor skills, and knowledge they need to be active for life. Since February 1998, when EPEC lessons were published, approximately 800 elementary physical educators representing more than 53% of Michigan's school districts have received EPEC materials and completed training. Students taught with EPEC tend to have higher fitness test scores and higher self-reported positive behaviors than those not taught with EPEC.
- The Michigan State Board of Education unanimously approved a policy statement supporting effective learning environments that include daily physical activity. The policy directs Michigan schools to carry out such activities as offering daily recess periods or periods of physical activity for all elementary and middle school students and helping students and families make good health choices.

School Health: Coordinated Efforts

Surveillance Plays a Key Role

Since 1991, the Youth Risk Behavior Surveillance System (YRBSS) has provided information about the prevalence of health risk behaviors among young people. Developed by CDC in cooperation with federal, state, and private-sector partners, this voluntary system includes a national survey of about 15,000 students and smaller surveys conducted by state and local education agencies. The YRBSS focuses on priority risk behaviors such as tobacco use and provides vital information to improve health programs.

Research Benefits Schools

National efforts for coordinated school health programs have been hampered by a lack of information on school health policies and programs. To address this need, CDC has conducted the School Health Policies and Programs Study, which provides valuable answers to specific

questions about school health programs at the state, district, school, and classroom levels. For example, although most schools have a written policy prohibiting tobacco use, only about half have a policy that bans all smoking in school buildings and on school grounds.

Future Directions

Because every child needs sound preparation for a healthy future, school health programs should be established in all states and territories and the 25 largest local education agencies. In keeping with the goals of the nation's key national health planning effort, *Healthy People 2010*, extending the eight components of school health to all American children through coordinated school health programs will be the major focus of future efforts to improve the health of young people and the adults that they will become.

For more information or additional copies of this document, please contact the
Centers for Disease Control and Prevention,
National Center for Chronic Disease Prevention and Health Promotion, Mail Stop K-32,
4770 Buford Highway NE, Atlanta, GA 30341-3717, (888) 231-6405.
ccdinfo@cdc.gov
<http://www.cdc.gov/nccdphp/dash>

SAMPLE WORKSHEET

Next Meeting’s Agenda

for the (your community/school district) School Health Council

(Send this to council members in advance of next meeting.)

Purpose of next meeting:

Meeting date:

Location:

Start and end times:

Meeting leader:

Phone:

Time	Agenda item	Council member responsible	Disposition (information, discussion, or decision)
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Adapted from *Collaboration Handbook. Creating, Sustaining, and Enjoying the Journey*, by Michael Winer and Karen Ray (St. Paul: Amherst H. Wilder Foundation, 1994) 149.

Conducting a Needs Assessment

In this appendix, these questions are answered:

- What is a needs assessment?
- Should our council hire a technical consultant?
- What are the steps involved in conducting a needs assessment?
- What does the council do after a needs assessment is completed?

What Is Needs Assessment?

Needs assessment is a process of gathering, analyzing, and reporting information about the health needs of your community's children. It also involves identifying the capacities or strengths that are currently available in your community to meet children's needs.

A needs assessment begins with the steps identified in this guide. Convene a group of citizens, establish a vision, and prioritize the issues that require change. The members of your council form a foundation for a needs assessment. They include professionals who have expertise on school health issues, plus youths, parents, and school staff who are likely to be affected by the changes that are planned.

The vision developed by your council during Step 2 provides a clear picture of where you want to be in the future. The action plan developed during Step 3 determines what changes your council decided were the most important. Use the information from these two steps to help you determine what information you need to collect during the needs assessment. The information gathered will help your council make decisions on how to make the desired changes.

Why should a needs assessment be conducted? As a council begins to think about the action steps needed to create change, council members often realize that they do not have enough information to make decisions. Members may base their decisions on selected "stories" or anecdotes they have heard from other members and community residents outside the planning group. Sometimes these anecdotes give inconsistent or inaccurate information.

Results from a well-designed needs assessment that uses sound research methods can be generalized to all residents in the community. A well-designed needs assessment allows council members to feel confident when they use the information as the basis for decision making.

A school health services needs assessment is the process of identifying the health needs of the children and youth in your community, determining whether and how well current services are meeting these needs, and setting priorities where there are identified gaps in service."

– School Health Needs Assessment: A Starter Kit

Needs assessments raise awareness of the issue of school health and promote local interest in joining the council to create change. Foundations and other funders that may give resources to support your action plan often require a formal needs assessment.

Why should we conduct a needs assessment?

1. To provide data for decision making
2. To promote awareness and action
3. To satisfy a mandate
4. To obtain funding and other resources

What are the characteristics of successful needs assessments? A successful needs assessment provides comprehensive, useable, and accurate information for decision making. Needs assessments that result in this information begin with an appraisal of the current situation. The capacities of the community – services and other resources provided by local agencies, institutions, and associations and the skills and abilities of individual children, you, and their families – are identified.

Your council may find a large amount of information on the Internet, but little of it may apply to the issue you are studying. Identifying two to five questions that you want the assessment to answer permits you to be more selective in collecting data and judging its usefulness. A preliminary list of questions also acts as a guide when you collect new information through surveys, focus groups, or public meetings.

Finally, a needs assessment that gives useful and complete information addresses issues about which stakeholders care. Stakeholders are people with an interest in your issue and include parents, students, staff, and school administrators. The information gathered in a needs assessment should be communicated to the stakeholders. It is also important to involve these stakeholders in the planning process for the needs assessment and for improving school health.

Characteristics of a successful needs assessment:

1. Understand the current situation first.
2. Begin with a vision of the future.
3. Allow two to five questions to direct the assessment process.
4. Address issues that stakeholders believe are important.
5. Communicate information to the stakeholders.

Should Our Council Hire a Technical Consultant?

Designing and conducting a needs assessment is a highly technical process. Your council may have a resource person who can provide technical advice on designing a study. This person should have graduate-level training and experience in statistics and research design.

If your council does not have a member with these skills, consider finding, and possibly hiring, someone to work with the council. While resources to pay a technical consultant are often limited, community members with these skills who are not on the council can sometimes be persuaded to assist the council.

Technical assistance may also be available through local community colleges, universities, and your state's extension network. Local agencies and organizations may provide resources to hire technical consultants and to cover the costs of data collection.

If your group decides to hire a technical consultant, be prepared to answer questions about the history of your planning process, any data that you have already examined (and what you learned from this data), the source of your funding, and any time restrictions on data collection and the planning process that will follow.

Whether the person guiding your assessment is or is not a member of your group, ask for a formal, written plan of the assessment. This work plan should include the steps in the process, a description of all parties' responsibilities, the expected outcomes, a timeline, and anticipated costs. If your council is large, create a subcommittee with responsibility for managing the needs assessment and reporting progress to the council.

What Are the Steps Involved in Conducting a Needs Assessment?

Once you have determined your council's source for technical assistance, the assessment may follow these steps:

1. What do we know?

Be prepared to explain the information you have already collected and interpret this information.

2. What do we still need to know?

Identify the additional information needed about the problem or gap. What questions are still partially or totally unanswered?

3. How will we collect what we need to know?

Select the method to be used. The technical consultant may suggest using additional data that is already available or help you analyze the data you have already found.

Steps in a needs assessment:

- Do we need to hire a technical consultant?
- What do we know?
- What do we still need to know?
- What method will we use to collect what we need to know?
- Who will we ask?
- What will we ask?
- Who will collect the data?
- How will we compile and analyze the data?
- How will we report our findings?

You may decide to collect new data through surveying a random sample of parents or residents. If correctly conducted, results from telephone and mailed surveys can be generalized to the entire population or community of children and youth in your schools.

You may decide to collect new data through focus groups, face-to-face interviews, a public forum (such as a town meeting), or through the nominal group process. These four methods give useful information for planning and decision making. However, their results cannot be generalized to all of your community's youth, children, and families.

Your group may decide to use a combination of data collection methods. For example, holding a focus group after conducting a random sample mail survey provides supporting information to the survey results.

4. What will we ask?

Creating the instrument for collecting data is also a highly technical process. The wording of questions influences the answers given, as well as the likelihood of getting any answer. Consideration must be given to the order and number of the questions, and, in a mailed questionnaire, the way the questionnaire is formatted (font size, spacing, highlighting, or emphasis).

5. Who will we ask?

Identifying the characteristics of the people who will give you the information can be a lengthy process. Ideally, if time and resources permit, data are collected from everyone in the geographic area who has the characteristics in which you are interested. However, collecting information from everyone usually is not possible because of cost and time constraints.

Often a random sample is selected. A sample is a smaller group of people who are asked to participate in the assessment. A sample is random if everyone in the group you want to reach has an equal chance of being selected for the sample. If you are collecting information by using a random sample, the list of everyone with the identified characteristics in the geographic area for your assessment is sometimes difficult to identify and obtain. For a nonrandom sample such as a focus group, care must be taken to identify participants who represent important characteristics of the community.

Regardless of the sampling procedure, consideration should be given to issues of consent and confidentiality. Respondents need to know the purpose of your study, how the data they provide will be used, and the measures taken to protect their identity. They also need to know that they can choose not to participate without disrupting any services they are now receiving.

6. Who will collect the data?

Volunteers from your council can be used to distribute questionnaires if there are a sufficient number of volunteers and volunteer training is available. Conducting telephone interviews, face-to-face interviews, and focus groups requires special training and skills. Your group should consider asking someone with training and experience to prepare volunteers. Mail surveys may be less time consuming for your council. Your state extension service or the consultant you hire may have resources to assist with stuffing and stamping envelopes.

7. How will we compile the data?

Your council may have someone who can create a database with the information you have collected. Frequencies are calculated for response to questionnaires. Sometimes additional analyses of the data are done. You can look at the difference in response between groups of respondents (for example, do parents of youth answer a question differently than parents of younger children).

Transcribing responses to open-ended questions (for mail and telephone surveys) and comments collected using focus groups or face-to-face interviews is also helpful. However, summarizing or analyzing this type of information is a highly subjective process. A technical consultant can provide a summary or guide you through the steps in creating your own summary.

8. How will we report our findings?

Once the data are collected, summarize the information in a report. Even more helpful is showing the results in charts or graphs that simplify the information for a lay audience. Graphing data can be a technical process. Your technical adviser can assist you in creating graphs or create them for you.

"A plan well begun is a plan half done."

– Anonymous

What Does the Council Do After a Needs Assessment Is Completed?

Your needs assessment hopefully gave you the information you needed – information in which you have a high level of confidence as a basis for decision making. But this is just a beginning. Unfortunately, many groups see a survey or assessment as the end of their efforts, instead of the means to achieving their vision. Now is the time to celebrate the completion of your needs assessment as the successful end of a process that took cooperation and a good deal of hard work. Your celebration also marks the beginning of the next phase of the change effort. Your planning process must begin again by, literally, beginning again.

A facilitator can guide you through a review of your group's vision. This process involves formulating a statement of the problems you have identified, generating solutions, and creating a plan of action that uses existing strengths in your community.

Careful consideration should also be given to whether the council membership is as inclusive as it needs to be, given the course of action you have chosen. When local residents and representatives of agencies, associations, and institutions to who you will look for resources are involved in the planning process, it is more likely they will support your efforts and endorse the results of your efforts in the future.

