



**SCHOOL
HEALTH
ADVISORY
BOARDS**





§ 1. OVERVIEW

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

Margaret Meade

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As the role of school health has become more comprehensive in the last decade, so has the role of the school health advisory board (sometimes referred to as school health councils or coalitions). Health advisory boards enable schools to ensure a healthy educational community, facilitate learning, and integrate the school within the community by working in partnership with agencies, community institutions, and families to lower the health-related barriers to learning. These boards can build support for school health program efforts by:

- raising awareness of the need for coordinated approaches to improving health and educational outcomes for school children;
- forging the links required to implement the goals of a comprehensive school health program; and,
- providing the school district with the opportunity to look at the issue of children’s health in a broader community context.¹

Generally, school health advisory committees are made up of volunteers interested in school health issues such as, local health care providers, public health representatives, human service staff, representatives from business, religious and service organizations, the police department, and other local officials. School representatives may include the school nurse, students, teachers, other staff, school administrators, and parents. The board could meet as often as once a month or as infrequently as twice a year. The duties and responsibilities of the board are varied but focus on such issues as health data review and execution of health needs assessments, health program evaluation and monitoring, school health promotion and advocacy for critical health issues in the school and community.

¹ National Center for Chronic Disease Prevention and Health Promotion, Division of Adolescent & School Health. (2002). School health defined: Coordinated school health program. <http://www.cdc.gov/nccdphp/dash/about/scho>

[ol_health.htm#8](#); American Academy of Pediatrics (N.D.). School health resources for pediatricians: School health leadership training kit. Section 6. <http://www.schoolhealth.org/trnthtrn/trainmn.html>.





OVERVIEW (continued)

FUNCTIONS OF A SCHOOL HEALTH ADVISORY BOARD

The specific functions of the school health advisory board will vary in every school district depending on the health needs and issues within the district and the community. In general, school health boards facilitate understanding and cooperation among those interested in developing and improving the local school health program.²

The role of the school advisory board may include some or all of the following functions.³

Developing School Health Policy

School health advisory boards can help local school boards develop health-related policies, evaluate the status of health in an individual school, and effect health education and health services programs.⁴

Advocating for Comprehensive School Health

² American Academy of Pediatrics, (N.D.). School health resources for pediatricians: School health leadership training kit. Section 6. <http://www.schoolhealth.org/trnhtn/>.

³ The following material is taken directly from Virginia Department of Health. (2002) Virginia school health guidelines, Chapter Two: Parent and Community Involvement. <http://www.vahealth.org/schoolhealth/chapter2.pdf>.

⁴ Virginia Department of Health. (December 2002) Virginia school health advisory board report and community involvement. http://www.vahealth.org/schoolhealth/shab_dec10_2000.pdf.

A health advisory board's collective knowledge, expertise and influence can be a powerful force working on behalf of a comprehensive and coordinated school health model. A coordinated school health model consists of eight interactive components: health education, physical education, health services, mental health and counseling, nutrition services, health promotion for staff, healthy school environment, and parent/community involvement⁵ Many schools have some or all of these components already in place, however, the individuals responsible for each of the components often work in isolation or only focus on their own program or role responsibilities.⁶

A school health advisory board can conduct or facilitate activities that bring attention to the benefits of a quality school health program. These activities are often able to generate further support and momentum for school health programs.

⁵ Marx, E. & Wooley, S.F. (Eds.) (1998). Health is academic: A guide to coordinated school health programs. New York: Teachers College Press.

⁶ Maine Health Advisory Committee. (5/2002) School health manual: Coordinated school health program. <http://www.state.me.us/education/sh/contents.htm>.





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Creating Visibility for School Health

An active school health advisory board provides visibility for school health within the school system and community. It communicates to school personnel and community members a message of concern for the health of children and staff, the value of health in education, and the role of the school nurse and other health related personnel.

Involving Parents and Community

A school health advisory board promotes parent, citizen, and professional involvement in the schools. A well-organized council provides an opportunity for parent participation in activities and decisions influencing the lives of their children. It also serves as a mechanism for school partnerships with other community members, including those from business, religious organizations, civic groups, and human service agencies.

Providing a Forum for Discussion of Health Issues

Often there are health issues affecting students and school staff that need a specific place in the community for discussion, decision-making, and planning. A health advisory committee

provides a forum for discussing issues such as potential and/or planning for a school-based health center, drug testing of students, determining how Medicaid reimbursement monies should be spent, or implementing a new health curriculum. These issues may be controversial and require the opportunity for presentation and review from different points of view. The school health advisory board provides a positive environment for constructive reviews of issues through its meetings, subcommittee structure, and representatives.

Recruiting Community Health Resources

The identification of needs in the school health program may lead to a solution requiring the participation of multiple community health resources. The school health advisory board can coordinate the involvement of resource persons and agencies for a specific need in the school health program.⁷

Facilitating Understanding Between School and Community

Participation in school health advisory board activities

⁷ Minnesota Department of Health. (11/96) Minnesota school health guide. Section One: Program Planning. Chapter 2 Developing an effective school health program. <http://www.health.state.mn.us/divs/fh/mch/CA/REweb/schoolhealth/chapter2.html>.





§ 2. LEGAL CONSIDERATIONS

provides opportunities for parents and other community members to gain insight into the life of schools and school activities. Similarly, the council allows school personnel to learn more about varied backgrounds and views of community segments and resources.

valuable step in considering innovations.⁸

Snapshot: In 2002-2001, the Hanover County, Virginia School Health Advisory Board

- formed an Incident/Accident Report subcommittee;
- monitored proposed school health legislation;
- established a subcommittee to review information on backpacks in school;
- prepared an Annual Report for the Superintendent and the School Board;
- served as an advisory board for the writing of an additional Community/School Health Grant.

Improving Public Relations

In addition to advocacy-related activities, many school health advisory boards function as effective public relations extensions of the school system. Informing the community and school personnel about aspects of the school health program can enhance the image of the school system. The involvement of media representatives and influential community decision makers has been an effective way of implementing this public relations function.

Facilitating Innovation

The school health advisory board can advocate for the introduction of new program components. Through their advisory role, council members can share with school personnel special interests or approaches to components of the school health program. In some situations, the council may become the major financial and motivational supporter of change within the school system. Using the council as a sounding board for new approaches can be a

⁸ American Academy of Pediatrics, School health resources for pediatricians (N.D.). School health leadership training kit. Section 6. <http://www.schoolhealth.org/trnhtn/>.





§ 2. LEGAL CONSIDERATIONS

MEMBERSHIP ON THE HEALTH ADVISORY BOARD

Membership on the health advisory board should be broad and include diverse school and community representation. Prospective board members should be selected for their energy and interest in student health and not simply for their professional positions. Other characteristics that members should bring to the process include:

- interest and involvement in youth-related activities;
- general understanding or awareness of the community;
- professional ability to contribute to the board;
- willingness to devote time to the board;
- representative of the community's population;
- respected in the community; and,
- motivated to serve as a member of the board.⁹

While too many people on a board can make the work process more complicated, it is a good idea to include representation from a broad array of stakeholders. Serious consideration should be given to

all sectors of the school and community, such as:

- students;
- parents of elementary, middle and high school students;
- parents of medically fragile children;
- PTA or collaborative decision-making team representatives;
- community health professionals (mental, dental, medical health, public health, and/or other);
- community representatives (youth services, legal, law enforcement, media, religious leaders, business and industry); and,
- school health team members or those persons who represent or have responsibility for components of the comprehensive school health program (school nurse, health coordinator, health teacher, home economics teacher, counselor/social worker/psychologists, administrator, physical education teacher, food service personnel and first aid providers).¹⁰

⁹ Virginia Department of Health. (1999) Virginia school health guidelines. Chapter Two: Parent and community involvement. <http://www.vahealth.org/schoolhealth/chapter2.pdf>

¹⁰ Id, MN Department of Health. (11/96) Minnesota school health guide. Section One: Program planning. Chapter 2 Developing an effective school health program. <http://www.health.state.mn.us/divs/fh/mch/CAREweb/schoolhealth/chapter2.html>





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Colorado law does not require the creation of a school health advisory board in school districts. Colorado law does require community participation in the formation of a “Safe School Plan,” directed at school safety issues, such as violence and bullying, a narrower set of issues than a school health advisory board might address.¹¹ School-based health centers in Colorado must be the product of parental involvement, but do not necessarily function as a health advisory board.¹² However, either of these types of community involvement could be expanded to function as a school health advisory board.

The legal considerations related to the health advisory council are very similar to those that must be followed when parents are involved as volunteers in the school.

- Many members of the school advisory council will be community or parent volunteers. Appropriate screening processes and release forms must be completed prior to board members participating in school activities, as set forth in school district policy, *i.e.*, conflict of interest statement,

confidentiality assurance, or criminal background check.

- The role of the school health advisory board volunteers needs to be clearly defined through the creation of a health advisory board job description. It should be made clear in the job description that members of the school health advisory board are not expected to perform direct health related activities with students. Lack of clarity on roles and responsibilities of the board may leave the school district vulnerable if a health related incident is mishandled.
- It should also be made clear in the job description that the school health advisory board members cannot set health policy for the school district. The group can provide advice, information, and recommendations to the school board, but all health policy decisions affecting students in the district are set by the school board for the district.

¹¹ §22-32-109, CRS (2000).

¹² See generally, Colorado Association of School-Based Health Centers. What is a school based health center? <http://www.casbhc.org/sbhcwhat.htm>.





“There are three kinds of groups: Those that make things happen; those that wait for things to happen; and those that wondered what happened.”

Anonymous

§ 3. ROLE OF THE SCHOOL NURSE

The school nurse may provide leadership or play a supporting role on a school health advisory board. The school nurse’s role in the development and long-term implementation of the advisory board will vary from district to district, depending on the variables at hand, such as politics, personalities, and policies. Aspects of the school nurse’s role include the following:

- In the planning stages, the school nurse is an information resource, a grass-roots catalyst, and an advocate to bring interested and necessary groups together.
- As a primary and acute care provider, the school nurse is an expert on how health services, including case management, family outreach, education, assessment, triage, counseling, referrals, monitoring, and follow-up, is currently delivered in the school and how it could be delivered more effectively.
- As coordinator, the school nurse serves as a "hub" in data collection and a primary consultant in interpreting results of evaluation and needs assessment.¹³

¹³ National Association of School Nurses. (rev.2001). Issue brief: Integrated services delivery. <http://www.nasn.org/briefs/integratedsvcdel.htm>; NASN. (2002). Issue brief: Role of the school nurse. <http://www.nasn.org/briefs/role.htm>.





ROLE OF SCHOOL NURSE (continued)

TIPS FOR SUCCESSFUL ADVISORY BOARD WORK

- You understand what an Advisory Board is, what its functions are and how it works
- You have developed a system to assist Board members in understanding the Board and their roles on it.
- You have designed a process for welcoming, training, and mentoring new members.
- You have made plans for having effective meetings in the future.
- You gave the Board members a sensible work level.
- You have developed a policy for dealing with urgent matters between meetings.
- You have defined the terms for the membership.
- You have developed a conflict-of-interest policy and maintained it.
- You celebrate all of your accomplishments!¹⁴

¹⁴ Source: Community tool box (2003). Chapter 9. <http://ctb.ukans.edu>





§ 4. ROLE OF OTHER SCHOOL PERSONNEL

BUILDING AND SUSTAINING A SUCCESSFUL SCHOOL HEALTH ADVISORY BOARD

Building and sustaining a successful school health advisory board does not happen without strong leadership and staff support. Having adequate staff support to maintain the school health advisory committee is critical to the success of the group. Whether it is the school nurse or another staff person in the school, staffing the school health advisory group must be part of someone's job responsibility.

Basic duties that must be completed to maintain a school health advisory board entail:

- preparing meeting agendas and minutes;
- notifying board members of meetings or other events;
- collecting and presenting student health needs assessment data;
- informing the board of relevant state and federal school health requirements;
- updating the board on the strengths and weaknesses of current health programming in the school;
- presenting grant and funding opportunities;
- recruiting student and parent representatives to sit on the advisory board;
- running the advisory meetings;
- collaborating with others to create meeting agendas;
- communicating with other board members to determine their position on issues;
- advocating for important school health issues through communication with other school and community leaders;
- providing support to the school nurse and other health staff on critical health-related issues; and,
- staying abreast of emerging child health issues and promoting the needs of underserved children and families.





ROLE OF OTHER SCHOOL PERSONNEL (continued)

ROLES IN SUPPORTING HEALTH ADVISORY BOARDS

Administrative and teaching staff and parents have other support roles that will help ensure an effective board.

What Teachers and Other School Staff Can Do to Support a School Health Advisory Board

- Identify key players in the school and community.
- Obtain buy-in from school staff and community representatives.
- Identify existing school and community resources.
- Identify student, family, and staff needs.
- Identify and prioritize programmatic needs.

What Families Can Do to Support a School Health Advisory Board

- Meet school personnel.
- Identify other interested parents.
- Attend school board meetings.
- Support community organizations that work with schools.

- Participate in school health fairs and committees.
- Inform district staff of health-related issues and concerns.

What Administrators and School Districts Can Do to Support a School Health Advisory Board

- Secure district-level leadership and support.
- Identify supports and challenges in the broader school community.
- Develop an implementation and coordination plan.
- Develop supportive school board policies.
- Train district and community advocates in promoting comprehensive school health programs.
- Disseminate information and findings about school health programs.¹⁵

¹⁵ Center for School Health at Education Development Center, Inc (2001). Making health academic: From concept to action, <http://www2.edc.org/MakingHealthAcademic/Concept/partnerships.asp>.





§ 5. RESOURCES

NATIONAL

Community Toolbox—This website is dedicated to providing resources for the development of a community-wide health coalition. Many of the resources would be applicable for use with a school health advisory group. <http://ctb.ukans.edu>

Healthy People 2010 Tool Kit: A Field Guide to Health Planning (2002). This document provides guidance, technical tools, and resources to help in the development and promotion of successful Health People 2010 plans. It can serve as a resource for communities and other entities embarking on health planning endeavors. <http://www.health.gov/healthypeople/state/toolkit>.

Making Health Academic – This five-year project funded by CDC's Division of Adolescent and School Health (DASH) provides capacity-building assistance, resources, and connections to help state officials, education leaders, health professionals, families, and community leaders across the nation to establish Coordinated School Health Programs. Its goal is to provide current information, action steps, resources, and links to assist interested parties with

guidance in establishing local coordinated school health programs.

<http://www2.edc.org/makinghealthacademic/about.asp>

School Health Leadership Training Kit—The American Academy of Pediatrics developed a website called School Health Resources for Pediatricians. Included in that website is the School Health Leadership Training Kit. The kit is filled with resources to assist in the development of a school health advisory board. www.schoolhealth.org/trnthtrn/

We Did It Ourselves: A Guide Book to Improve the Well -Being of Children through Community Development—The Sierra Health Foundation has developed extensive materials designed to assist local communities in developing effective local health advocacy groups. www.sierahealth.org





§ 5. RESOURCES

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