

PARTNERING FOR SUCCESS: How Health Departments Work and How to Work with Health Departments

WHAT HEALTH DEPARTMENTS CAN OFFER SCHOOLS: DATA COLLECTION AND ANALYSIS

Public health departments can be valuable allies to state and local education agencies seeking to achieve healthy schools. Helping to promote or improve these partnerships is the goal of *Partnering for Success: How Health Departments Work and How to Work with Health Departments*,¹ a publication developed by the National Association of Chronic Disease Directors (NACDD). *Partnering for Success* outlines 11 key ways in which educators can collaborate with public health departments to achieve healthy schools. This document focuses on one of these: data collection and analysis.

All three levels of the public health system — local, state and federal — are regularly involved in collecting data on the health status and risks of various populations. Schools can use this information to identify health problems in their student populations, as well as prioritize solutions, develop programs, and evaluate the results. Public health departments can be key partners in this effort by pointing schools to key sources of data, providing analytical assistance, and contributing their program development and evaluation expertise.

Data obtained through public health departments can help schools to:

- **Identify priority health concerns**, including health conditions, health risk behaviors, and community health hazards. For example, schools might ask: What percentage of students in our district have diabetes? How does this compare with other districts?
- **Track trends to align or realign school health program priorities**. For example, schools might ask: Has there been a change in the proportion of our students who are overweight? What environmental conditions contribute to childhood obesity and how might we address them?
- **Make the case for coordinated school health or its components**. For example, schools might ask: How have other districts successfully used the coordinated school health model?
- **Target scarce resources**. For example, schools might ask: How can we demonstrate the cost effectiveness of coordinated school health efforts or any of its components?
- **Demonstrate the impact of a school health program** in a critical academic area. For example, schools might ask: Have absenteeism, graduation and drop-out rates, or the needs for special education changed since we initiated our school health program?
- **Develop successful grant applications**. For example, schools might ask: What's the best way to present our data? How can we illustrate the need for this program?

When it comes to addressing the health of our nation's young people, the public health system is an underutilized resource. Your state or local health department is the place to go for help in building healthy schools.

About NACDD

The National Association of Chronic Disease Directors (NACDD) is a national public health association for chronic disease program directors of each state and U.S. territory. Founded in 1988, NACDD links together more than 1,400 members to advocate for preventive policies and programs, encourage knowledge sharing and develop partnerships for health promotion. Since its founding, NACDD has been a national leader in mobilizing efforts to reduce chronic diseases and their associated risk factors through state and community-based prevention strategies. For more information, please visit <http://www.chronicdisease.org>.

¹ *Partnering for Success: How Health Departments work and How to Work with Health Departments* (the full publication) and one-page summaries describing how public health departments can help schools in 11 specific areas are available at: <http://www.chronicdisease.org/nacdd-initiatives/school-health/publications/Partnering-for-Success>