

PARTNERING FOR SUCCESS:

How Health Departments Work and How to Work with Health Departments

WHAT HEALTH DEPARTMENTS CAN OFFER SCHOOLS: POLICY AND ENVIRONMENTAL CHANGE

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 public health departments can help advance school health goals. This document focuses on one of these: policy and environmental change.

The public health approach to health promotion and disease prevention often focuses on policy and environmental change as opposed to individual and personal responsibility. Most major public health accomplishments are the result of policy interventions and environmental changes, such as community walking trails or indoor smoking bans, which affect the health of entire populations.

Health and education agencies can partner to develop and provide policy recommendations for school health program implementation. For example, the State of Maine has policy action packets that address healthy food choices at events, public use of school facilities, and vending machine contents.

Questions related to policy and environmental change that public health agencies can help answer include:

- What environmental changes would make the schools more conducive to learning?
- What types of environmental changes would make our schools safer for students, staff, and visitors?
- Can you provide examples of policies that address daily physical activity?
- How can we strengthen the wellness policies that we developed in response to the requirements of the Child Nutrition and WIC Reauthorization Act of 2004?
- Can you suggest strategies for introducing a tobacco ban policy to our school board?

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>