

Healthy Students for a Better Worcester

School Health Action Plan 2015–2016

Background:

The School Health Advisory Council (SHAC) works with the Worcester Public Schools (WPS) to develop, implement, monitor, review, and revise school health, nutrition, and physical activity policies, programs, and strategies. The Council serves as a resource to school staff for implementing these policies, with the belief that healthier students are better learners.

The SHAC meets quarterly, convened by Debra McGovern, DNP, PNP-BC, RN Coordinator of Nursing Services, who facilitates and chairs the meetings. The Council represents a coalition of representatives from within and outside of the school community, interested in improving the health of youth in schools. The following regularly attend the Council meetings:

- The WPS physician consultant
- The Medical Director and other members of the Worcester Division of Public Health
- WPS Health Education and Physical Education Liaison and other staff members
- Members of the Child Study Department
- School nurses and School Health Ambassadors
- Parents
- Head Start Health Director and nurses
- Representatives of community health centers (Family Health Center and the Edward M. Kennedy Community Health Center)
- Members of the School Committee
- Members of the local oral health community
- Various UMMHC representatives
- Local college and university representatives
- YMCA representatives
- Members of the local mental health community
- Manager of WPS Facilities and Transportation Departments
- Various members of the WPS SPED Department

Purpose:

Worcester Public School students, families, faculty, and staff will benefit from a Health Action Plan that promotes wellness, leading to positive outcomes including: improved attendance, better grades, and an increase in health and wellness participation at the individual schools. In addition, the Health Action Plan can be used as a resource to prepare proposals for future funding and grant opportunities.

Objective:

Promote health and wellness of students in school, at home, and in the community.

Central Areas of Focus:

- General school environment
- Student and staff health and wellness
- Physical and health education
- School nutrition and education

ACTION ITEMS

The Action Items align with WPS efforts to develop and maintain a welcoming, safe and secure school environment. These Items also support policies and standards that meet city, state, and national health objectives.

I. Improve Student Attendance Rates:

- A. Review data systems from nursing, administration, and transportation records to explore reasons for absenteeism
- B. Educate parents and students so they understand when it is appropriate to stay home and why it is important for children to attend school
- C. Strategize, utilizing available resources and collective experience, to identify the impediments parents might be facing and which prevent their children from achieving better attendance
- D. Implement and coordinate programs and projects across the district seeking to improve student attendance rates

II. Promote Asthma-Healthy Schools and Improve Individual Student Asthma Control:

- A. Indoor-Air Quality (IAQ) assessment in every school building throughout the district
- B. Provide guidance and education to school staff, students, and parents
- C. Collaborate with Environmental Management System
- D. On-going participation in community-wide asthma research and projects
- E. Influence Wellness Policy revision based on evidence-based research outcomes

III. Automated External Defibrillator (AED) Procurement:

- A. Potential sources for AED donations identified and letter prepared for request
- B. Explore possibility of the city's capital budget
- C. Grant opportunities
- D. School fundraisers through Parent Teacher Organizations (PTOs)

IV. Expand School Health Ambassador Program to Middle Schools

- A. Empower others through increased awareness and knowledge of school health-related programs within each school; share among all schools
- B. Increase the chance of ownership and commitment among the student population
- C. Promote student engagement in health-enhancing behaviors and avoidance of health-risk behaviors

V. Wellness Policy Revision:

- A. Focused strategies for implementation of policy throughout the district
- B. Simplify language, making it more accessible and understandable for parents and students
- C. Include information on “Safe Routes to School”
- D. Include information on mental/behavioral health
- E. Promote a safe and supportive environment for sexual health education
- F. Align goals with the City of Worcester Community Health Improvement Plan (CHIP)

VI. Employee Assistance Program:

- A. Evaluate and collaborate with the Human Resource Department to identify and assess the wellness services available to WPS employees
- B. Research potential alternative(s) or complement(s) to the Employee Assistance Program
- C. Promote health and wellness participation in identified programs

Find us on the Worcester Public Schools Website:
Wpsweb.com/wellness-resource

