

CREATING A MANDATE FOR STATEWIDE COORDINATED SCHOOL HEALTH

Federal and state resources combine to improve the health of Tennessee students

Public Health Problem

- Inadequate physical activity, poor diet, tobacco use and other health risk behaviors can affect the physical and social well-being of young people, as well as their academic achievement.
- Two thirds of Tennessee high school students don't get recommended levels of daily physical activity and a third are overweight or at risk for becoming overweight. Few students eat enough fruits and vegetables and one fourth of all students are smoking.

Program

- A statewide coordinated approach to school health can improve student health and strengthen academic achievement.
- Tennessee state agency staff and school health advocates built support for improving the health of students which resulted in the Tennessee General Assembly's authorization of a pilot program implementing the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's coordinated school health approach in ten school districts in 2000.
- Based on the pilot sites success, state legislators appropriated fifteen million dollars in recurring funds to expand the coordinated school health approach statewide in 2006.
- This funding, along with the collaboration between the Tennessee Departments of Education and Health and support from partners such as Tennessee Action for Healthy Kids and the Tennessee School Health Coalition, led to the implementation of the coordinated school health model in 135 of the 136 school districts in Tennessee. All schools use the *School Health Index* to guide planning efforts and benefit from continued technical assistance and materials provided by the Division of Adolescent and School Health with the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention as well as the Office of Coordinated School Health, Tennessee Department of Education. Middle school *Youth Risk Behavior Survey* data is collected in all CSH funded sites.

Impact

- Tennessee is the first state in the nation to mandate and fund a coordinated approach to improving students' health and academic outcomes in every school district in the state.
- Results from the pilot sites which will now be extended to all Tennessee students, include:
 - reduced absenteeism
 - improved nurse-to-student ratios resulting in increased class time
 - expanded health screenings for students to include Body Mass Index (BMI) and blood pressure
 - increased access to health care services
 - increased health education

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