

## PARTNERING FOR SUCCESS:

# How Health Departments Work and How to Work with Health Departments

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

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The nation's schools are striving to help all children learn and succeed; however, students' learning is increasingly hindered by a variety of health-related problems including poor nutrition, overweight and obesity, asthma, diabetes, and psychological issues. A growing body of research shows that health and education are inter-connected: good health improves behavior and the likelihood of academic success, and better-educated individuals are more likely to have better health status. But most schools do not have the resources necessary to address students' health challenges. Public health departments can help.

Partnering for Success: How Health Departments Work and How to Work with Health Departments<sup>1</sup> was developed by the National Association of Chronic Disease Directors (NACDD) to promote or improve partnerships between state and local education agencies and public health departments. It describes how state and local public health systems are structured, their roles, what types of programs they administer, the support and resources they can offer to school health programs, and how to take advantage of those resources.

### HOW HEALTH DEPARTMENTS CAN HELP

Partnering for Success outlines 11 key ways in which educators can collaborate with public health departments to achieve healthy schools:

1. Data collection and analysis
2. Assessment tools
3. Strategic planning
4. Strategies that work
5. Professional development and conferences
6. Health services (school nurses, etc.)
7. Funding and resources
8. Credibility on health issues
9. Community linkages
10. Policy and environmental change
11. Healthy school policies

### STRUCTURE OF THE PUBLIC HEALTH SYSTEM

Each level of the U.S. public health system—federal, state, and local—plays a vital role in protecting and promoting the public's health and safety. Partnering for Success (page 5) describes these roles and the functions, governance, and funding of various public health entities.

### TIPS ON MAKING CONTACT WITH HEALTH DEPARTMENTS

- Define the problem, not the solution – When approaching a public health department, articulate the problem you are facing instead of requesting a specific solution. By allowing the health department to fully utilize its expertise in developing solutions, you can maximize the benefits of your collaboration.

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<sup>1</sup> *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>

- Find the right person – It can often be challenging to find the right person to contact within a health department. Here are a few tips to navigate the system:
  - Search the agency website and explore all the programs that could address your problem.
  - Contact the office that most closely aligns with the issue about which you are calling.
  - Ask if anybody else in the public health department works on this issue or might have more information.

#### MORE RESOURCES ABOUT PUBLIC HEALTH AND SCHOOL HEALTH

Partnering for Success also offers links to a variety of online resources and publications to help educators learn more about school health and the assistance that public health entities can provide (see Appendix A, p. 21). It also presents information about selected federal initiatives related to coordinated school health (Appendix B, p. 26) as well as links to online resources and publications addressing specific health issues (Appendix A, p. 22), including:

- Asthma
- Cancer
- Cardiovascular disease
- Diabetes
- Flu
- Healthy eating
- Obesity
- Osteoporosis
- Physical activity
- Tobacco
- Wellness

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.

To access the full version of Partnering for Success, please visit <http://www.chronicdisease.org/i4a/pages/index.cfm?pageid=3320>.

#### 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>.