

Health Sector Support of Comprehensive School Health Best Practices Implementation

Best Practices Summary:

Collaboration between the health and education sectors within and across boundaries has proven to be an effective mechanism for achieving successful Comprehensive School Health (CSH) initiatives.¹ Key to this collaboration is shared authority and responsibility as well as a joint investment of resources (eg: time, funding and expertise).² Best practice health sector resources and responsibilities in support of CSH include:

- Strengthening links among school, families and community³
- Participating in active knowledge transfer and exchange within and across sectors⁴
- Ensuring formal and informal mechanisms for coordination, cooperation and communication⁵
- Engaging in assessment, planning, implementation and evaluation processes where health is the priority for improvement⁶

Best Practices Implementation

1. Strengthening links among school, families and community

- Identify, collaborate and build strong working relationships with a variety of education sector partners (eg: school district/region/school personnel, parents, students and others working within the school setting)
- Promote and support linkages between school districts/regions/schools & families and community services/resources including health sector services
- Assist in establishing and participate in multi sector Healthy Schools Committee/Action Teams
- Assist in identifying and supporting health champions within the education sector
- Promote and facilitate student leadership development in relation to healthy schools knowledge, planning and action
- Facilitate the sharing of ideas, resources and solutions within the education sector with regards to CSH implementation
- Participate in a healthy schools community of practice

2. Participating in active knowledge transfer and exchange within and across sectors

- Support education sector capacity building in relation to CSH (knowledge, skills and abilities) by providing inservices and workshops
- Share and interpret health promotion best practice and evidence and support integration of best practice and evidence into effective CSH planning and action
- Provide, facilitate access to and interpret reliable data on the health status, determinants, behaviours, attitudes, skills and knowledge, trends and emerging issues related to the health of children and youth
- Share and interpret best practices and evidence regarding the implementation of healthy schools policies

¹ Pan Canadian Joint Consortium for School Health (2010). *Facilitating health and education sector collaboration in support of Comprehensive School Health, 101(S2)*. Canadian Journal of Public Health.

² Ibid

³ Health and Learning, Winter Edition (2008). *The role of the public health nurse and public health staff in schools*. Author.

⁴ Comprehensive School Health, Canadian Consensus Statement (Revised 2007).

⁵ Ibid

⁶ Deschenes, M. (2007). *Institute of public health*. Health and Learning, Winter edition: Quebec, Canada.

- Participate in research studies that will enhance CSH knowledge, decision making and practice
- Encourage positive role modeling as a positive influence on the school social environment

3. Ensuring formal and informal mechanisms for coordination, cooperation and communication

- Facilitate joint health and education sector CSH knowledge exchange and skill development opportunities
- Collaboratively develop a process to support ongoing communication with all partners (education sector, health sector, community, families and other stakeholders)
- Utilize appropriate media, technology and social marketing techniques
- Support and participate in ongoing communication processes
- Engage in regular consultations with education sector partners
- Support the dissemination and utilization of reliable health information
- Provide effective messaging re health sector services and supports that are available
- Facilitate internal and cross-sector communication regarding CSH initiatives and activities
- Assist in preparation of reports

4. Engaging in assessment, planning, implementation and evaluation processes where health is the priority for improvement

- Support education sector in conducting needs assessments to establish health priorities for school action in each of the four pillars of CSH.
- Support the development and implementation of CSH initiatives
- Assist education sector in accessing appropriate resources including health, community and other support services
- Assist with applications for funding resources for healthy schools related programs and activities
- Assist in the development and implementation of education sector staff wellness programs and activities
- Support development, interpretation and implementation of provincial and school district healthy school policies.
- Facilitate collaboration between education sector, health sector and other stakeholders in support of policy work
- Support the education sector in conducting environmental scans to determine current status with respect to healthy schools policy implementation
- Support implementation of school-based interventions for physical activity, healthy eating, and other priority issues (e.g. mental health, tobacco, substance use, injury prevention)
- Plan and/or participate in data collection and evaluation activities

Changes to Organizational Capacities:

In order to support CSH in a sustained manner the organizational capacities of the health sector should be strengthened in areas such as:⁷

- Comprehensive and coordinated policies on healthy schools, health issues and the elements of school health promotion that are actively supported by senior managers
- Assigned staffing infrastructure to support interdisciplinary cooperation at all levels
- Ongoing workforce development through staff development
- Periodic surveys and self-assessments of policy/program capacity
- Regular scans of environments, trends, and emerging issues that affect the health of children/youth
- Appropriate and sustained funding to ensure the continuance of programs which demonstrate effectiveness

⁷ Comprehensive School Health, Canadian Consensus Statement (Revised 2007).