



Introduction

Purpose of This Manual

Who Should Use This Manual

How to Use This Manual

Updating the Manual

INTRODUCTION

The Massachusetts Department of Public Health (DPH) is proud to present an updated and revised edition of the Comprehensive School Health Manual.

Prepared in collaboration with the Massachusetts Department of Education (DOE) and with input from experts in many aspects of child and adolescent health, including Massachusetts school nurses and nurse leaders, at the time of publication, this second edition incorporates the most complete and up-to-date information on the policy and practice of school health in the Commonwealth.

For slightly more than a decade, the first edition of this manual, published in 1995, has served as a trusted source of basic prevention and treatment information, regulatory information, guidelines, recommendations, and resources. DPH produced this second edition to document the many changes that have taken place in the intervening years, including:

- newly identified health risks;
- formerly small-scale health issues that have assumed much larger proportions;
- fresh research-based perspectives on prevention and treatment;
- medical advances that have brought many more seriously ill and technology-dependent students into the classroom;
- new regulations and guidance documents that address a variety of issues, including the environmental health threat posed by idling school buses, the confidentiality of student health records in an increasingly computerized environment, and acceptable policies regarding a la carte food in the school setting;
- considerable progress in the development and evaluation of science-based health education and risk-prevention curricula; and
- the movement of school health programs toward comprehensive health education and expanded services, serving as the hub of a support network that includes families, primary care providers, and community public health and safety professionals.

The updated Comprehensive School Health Manual addresses a host of new physical and mental health issues facing schools today, such as overweight prevention, food allergies, skin cancer prevention, abuse of prescription drugs and inhalants, gambling addiction, and self-injurious behaviors. It takes into account the ways in which schools and society have changed in recent years, providing, for example, information and resources on emergency response planning for incidents of student violence and bioterrorism. It reflects the latest research on risk prevention, health promotion, and the school's evolving public health mission.

The current edition of the manual is being published as a searchable CD in PDF format. The decision to employ this medium was based on a number of considerations: the fact that computer technology is present in most schools and school health facilities; the likelihood that the greatly expanded content of this edition, which includes many new topics and considerably more extensive resources and references, would prove cumbersome for many users in hard-copy format; and the ability to combine rapid search capability on a CD with clickable links. The manual is also available online.

Purpose of This Manual

This purpose of this manual is to assist schools with the complex mission of providing a safe, healthy, and health-promoting environment in which to learn. The ways in which it seeks to do this include:

- increasing awareness of current health issues affecting the Commonwealth's children and adolescents and of the need to develop strategies to address those issues in the school setting;
- providing guidelines for primary prevention and protocols for screening and assessment;
- serving as a guide for appropriate and acceptable practice on issues relating to the health of students;
- explaining current professional standards for school nurses and other school health personnel;
- offering basic treatment information for a range of health conditions that may arise in the school environment;
- providing a guide for the formulation of local school health policies and programs;
- providing sample materials that can be used to communicate with parents/guardians;
- linking users to a wealth of local and national resources that may be tapped for additional information on specific health issues, program and policy development assistance, screening and assessment tools, health promotion materials, evidence-based health curricula, and professional development; and
- providing a tool for orientation of new school personnel.

Who Should Use This Manual

This manual contains information useful for anyone who strives to promote the health of children and adolescents through preventive, proactive, and relevant school health programs. This includes:

- school health services personnel, such as nurses, nurse practitioners, physicians, school-based health center staff, school health aides, and health educators;
- school administrators, such as superintendents, assistant superintendents, principals, vice principals, and unit directors;
- learning support staff, such as guidance counselors, adjustment counselors, school psychologists, and other mental health professionals;
- teachers and classroom aides;
- foodservice staff;
- support staff such as secretaries and custodians;
- parents/guardians and family advocates;
- any community participant who provides health services or health education in the schools;
- local school committees;
- local boards of health and other public health and safety officials within the community; and
- students, when appropriate.

The success of a school health program depends in large part on good administrative structure and leadership, with assistance from a variety of other key individuals within the school and the community. Although school administrators are ultimately responsible for the success of the school health program, a team approach is most effective in the planning and management of health services. A typical team includes, but is not limited to, the nurse leader, health coordinator, school nurse, principal and other administrators, school physician, health educator, student support service staff, and classroom teachers.

How to Use This Manual

DPH recommends placing this manual — either as a CD loaded on a computer terminal or as a hard-copy printout — in a location in each school that is easily accessed by any member of the school staff, as well as parents/guardians or other visitors. The manual may be introduced to staff at an in-service session. DPH suggests that all school personnel familiarize themselves with the manual's content by perusing it in its entirety at least once. Later, when information on specific topics is required, the manual can serve as a convenient reference.

The manual has been organized into four major sections:

I. The School's Role in Child and Adolescent Health

New challenges and opportunities in school health, development of an effective school health program, appropriate school health curricula, and a safe and healthful environment.

II. School Health Services

Health assessment, nursing practice in the school setting, care of children with special health care needs, and infectious disease control.

III. Prevention and Health Promotion

Nutritional health, physical fitness and sports, mental health, reproductive health, injury and violence prevention, substance abuse and addiction prevention, oral health, and health issues of newcomers to this country.

IV. Index

A comprehensive and detailed index to all content.

Each chapter is organized into four components: 1) text; 2) resources (i.e., addresses, phone/fax numbers, and websites for agencies and organizations that can provide additional information or materials); 3) bibliographic references; and 4) exhibits. Exhibits consist of protocols and guidelines, sample policies, sample letters, handouts, fact sheets, charts, and other helpful material. They are designed for schools to photocopy or adapt according to their specific needs.

Updating the Manual

DPH recognizes that school health programs are evolving as the health needs of children, adolescents, and their families change. To facilitate rapid, ongoing access to new information, the contents of this manual, along with any informational, policy, and forms updates, are available on the Web. To access the manual and updates online, visit the School Health Manual website at <http://www.maclearringhouse.com/schoolhealthmanual.htm>.

DPH looks forward to an ongoing partnership with schools in promoting the health of children, adolescents, their families, and the communities in which they live. We welcome feedback on the usefulness of the manual, suggestions for additional content, and ideas for further distribution. Please send your feedback to: School Health Services, Bureau of Family and Community Health, MDPH, 250 Washington Street, Boston, MA 02108.