

## Section III

# PREVENTION AND HEALTH PROMOTION

School health programs in Massachusetts and across the country are increasing their emphasis on early prevention, concentrating greater attention on health education and promotion programs for the general population that aim to instill healthy habits and reduce the likelihood of risk behaviors among children from the earliest grades. Simultaneously, health and mental health screenings are helping to identify at-risk children and adolescents so that they can be referred for health services, educational assistance, or behavioral support services before problems materialize.

Section III concentrates on those areas of health concern in which prevention and health promotion are a central goal.

**Chapter 9: Nutritional Health** discusses ways schools can encourage healthy nutritional habits and protect students from overweight and associated serious health conditions. Strategies covered include nutrition education, encouragement of healthy food choices, and securing the involvement of the entire school staff, parents/guardians, and community partners. Nutritional needs of the general student population and of particular groups with special requirements are presented, as are strategies for dealing with common nutritional issues affecting children and adolescents, such as eating disorders, food allergies, and lactose intolerance. Sample guidelines, policies, and tools and a resource list of curricula and teaching materials are included.

**Chapter 10: Physical Fitness and Sports** outlines how schools can promote regular physical activity, which helps children and adolescents maintain healthy weight, build muscle strength and bone mass, and maintain cardio-respiratory health, as well as reduce anxiety and stress, build self-esteem, and learn more effectively. Strategies covered include educating students about the importance of physical activity to lifelong health; providing high-quality, safe, and inclusive physical education and sports programs; and working with families and community groups to make exercise attractive and accessible. To assist schools in developing effective physical education and sports programs, the chapter includes a variety of sample policies and policy development tools, curriculum assessment tools, and fitness assessment instruments. Also discussed are steps that schools should take to ensure the safety of students engaging in physical education and sports.

**Chapter 11: Mental Health** describes a major need for mental health services for school-age youth nationwide and outlines how schools can play a key role in constructing an active continuum of care, built on school-based assessment, intervention, and support teams, and reinforced by partnerships with families, community mental health resources, local social service providers, and others. The chapter discusses techniques for screening and identification, intervention and referral, and follow-up. It also provides detailed information on common stressors that may put children and adolescents at greater risk for emotional difficulties and examines how some common psychological problems manifest in school-age youth. Suggestions regarding school-based interventions are included.

**Chapter 12: Reproductive Health** discusses the importance of reproductive health education in the school setting, providing an overview of sexuality education as well as guidance for developing a program that suits the needs of the community, parents, families, and students. The chapter describes sexual development and gives recommendations for physical examinations. Prevention of adolescent pregnancy and STDs are discussed, as are other issues surrounding adolescent pregnancy, cultural diversity, sexual orientation, and sexual abuse and sexual assault.

**Chapter 13: Injury and Violence Prevention** examines the varieties of unintentional and intentional injuries for which children and adolescents are at risk, as well as measures that schools can take to prevent or reduce these injuries. The chapter emphasizes the importance of a comprehensive program of education that begins in the earliest grades to instill safety principles, social skills, and concepts such as tolerance and continues with age-appropriate content through grade 12. Other prevention strategies covered include evaluation of the safety of the environment; development and enforcement of safety regulations; awareness among school staff, students, parents/guardians, and others in the community of the signs of potential injury or violence; and establishment of clear processes for reporting injuries and violence. The chapter also includes laws and regulations related to the types of injuries discussed and to the responsibilities of schools and school personnel.

**Chapter 14: Substance Abuse and Addictive Behavior** discusses the school's role in addressing and preventing substance use and problem gambling among underage youth. It discusses the particular vulnerability of adolescents to engaging in risky behaviors and to developing addictions, and emphasizes the importance of reiterating prevention messages at every grade, Kindergarten through 12th. Effective educational approaches, development and enforcement of school policies, and relevant laws, rules, and standards are covered. Signs and symptoms of various types of substance use are described, and screening protocols and information about treatment options and school reentry support are provided.

**Chapter 15: Oral Health** describes the important role schools play in promoting oral health. Prevalence of dental and oral disease is discussed, as are oral health promotion, prevention, and education and school-based dental screening. Injury prevention, the risks of oral piercing, and dental first aid are also covered, as well as a detailed list of emergency supplies that should be kept in the school health office.

**Chapter 16: Refugee and Immigrant Health Care** provides information about health issues frequently seen among children and adolescents in newcomer populations. It discusses factors that may impede newcomers' access to health care information and services and emphasizes the importance of sensitivity to newcomers' customs, health beliefs, practices, and family roles. Strategies for cultural assessment and a variety of resources to help school personnel with transcultural interactions are provided.