

School Health Advisory Board Annual Report to the School Board 2/8/2018

Code Ana Program

Dr. Alice Hoyt, a pediatric allergist, spoke to the board about a program she developed called [Code Ana](#) to help train school personnel to recognize and respond to episodes of severe allergic reactions. This team approach can also be used for responding to any medical emergency. Given the prevalence of students diagnosed with life-threatening allergies, the board recommends that schools participate in the Code Ana program.

Childhood Obesity Prevention and School Wellness Policy

The board heard from Tiffany Neal, a health educator from the local health department, who explained new legislation mandating updates to school wellness policies that include the involvement of various stakeholders, the identification of a school official who will have leadership authority to ensure compliance, and a means of sharing information about the wellness policy with the public. After reviewing the updated policy, the Health Advisory Board recommendations include:

- 1) Balance the provision of information about weight control measures with the avoidance of promoting eating disorders. Students should not be asked to count their calories for a week since the calorie requirements of individuals are so variable and the amount of calories is not as important as the nutrition per calorie.
- 2) Although calorie counting should be discouraged, it may be advisable to teach about serving sizes since there are many related misconceptions.
- 3) Health and p.e. teachers should have training in how to teach the wellness concepts of nutrition and exercise to avoid eating disorder triggers.
- 4) Suggest that the Wellness Policy be shared with parent groups such as Parent Council or PTOs for input and support.

The health advisory board recognizes the ongoing efforts of Christian Pitsenberger to exceed the required minimum nutritional standards mandated by the USDA in ACPS's Child Nutrition Program.

The board also heard from Scott Williams, a p.e. teacher at Meriwether, about his efforts to foster health and wellness that he would like to help push out to other schools. His undertakings include encouraging students to bring in only healthy food to share for celebrations, health fairs, "Wellness Week," incorporating movement in classrooms, creation of a school wellness team, summer camp offered for students to be active and learn about healthy eating, and various initiatives to introduce additional healthy foods in the school breakfast and lunch programs. The board applauds these initiatives and supports efforts to share them with other schools. Recommendations include: looking into the health fair program run by UVA's Department of Family Practice, and the use of caution to not assign moral value to foods and food choices.

Routine Annual Measurement of Height and Weight

While measuring and tracking BMI does have its uses including determining the progress of the wellness policy and other initiatives as well as contributing data to monitor national, state and local trends; it is not a reliable indicator of overweight and obesity on the individual level given variance in muscle mass,

bone structure etc. Because of concerns that routine annual p.e. measurements of height and weight can be detrimental to many children, the board suggests modifications be considered:

- 1) Measure height and weight at the time of other health screenings in grades K,3,7 and 10 rather than annually
- 2) Weights be measured and recorded, but not divulged to the student
- 3) Measurements can be done by the nurse in private instead of p.e. teachers
- 4) Parents be permitted to opt out of such measurements

Young Worker Safety

Kristy Davis, an occupational hygienist at UVa, introduced the topic of young worker safety making the point that by age 18 nearly 80% of students have worked or are working and that young workers are twice as likely to be injured on the job as adult workers. The health advisory board recommends that the worker safety components that are already in the health curriculum SOLs be taught and that leaflets or posters be placed in schools where students may see them such as clinics, guidance offices or cafeterias.

Sports Physical Exams

The board recommends that if athletic departments distribute announcements about the availability of \$10 sports physicals, a disclaimer be added that these physicals do not take the place of a comprehensive annual physical exam by a primary care physician. The sports physical is focused only on issues that might affect athletic participation while a checkup in their doctor's office is more comprehensive and covers issues such as the teen's growth and development, healthy lifestyle choices, and recommended vaccines.

Student Mental Health

Lori Wood, Director of Prevention, Outpatient and Mobile Crisis Services at Region 10, described the current mental health and suicide prevention efforts in the schools. There are 2 Student Assistance Professionals employed by Region 10 who work in the schools – one at AHS and one split between Monticello and WAHS. The SAPs provide crisis and substance abuse support, provide information and counseling about current morbidities such as cutting and eating disorder and connect students with community mental health resources.

Alex Moreno, a student at WAHS, spoke about the level of stress he sees among the students at WAHS. He explained the anxiety associated with a highly competitive academic environment. He described his efforts to encourage students to seek help before they reach the point of contemplating suicide. He is also working to try to de-stigmatize seeking help for mental health problems. He believes students should be able to seek the SAPs when they are having a bad day even if they do not have any mental health diagnoses. He advocates that the SAPs become full-time at WAHS and Monticello to increase access. He also recommends that mental health issues become part of the discussion in health classes and that students be encouraged to take the Mental Health First Aid Training.

The pediatricians on the health advisory board corroborate the above in the prevalence of patients they see with stress and mental health issues.

Based on Alex and Ms. Woods' presentation as well as on prevalence of child and youth mental health and stress issues the pediatricians see in their practices, the board recommends:

- 1) ACPS consider providing funding to increase the SAP support at Monticello and WAHS to full-time.
- 2) That mental health information be incorporated into the health curriculum.
- 3) That information about mental health resources be made available to students and parents.
- 4) That students be educated and encouraged to take other mental health preservation measures such as limiting screen time, spending more time with family and friends, exercise, meditation, adequate sleep and limiting caffeine consumption.
- 5) That schools incorporate mindfulness, yoga and other stress reduction measures into the school day at all levels.
- 6) Monitoring and enforcement of the new homework policy.
- 7) Consider limiting the number of AP courses students can take.

Banning Food Allergens

Administrators and members of the School Board asked the health advisory board to revisit the issue of banning allergens in schools. The consensus once again was that school-wide allergen bans are impractical, not linked to a decreased incidence of anaphylactic reactions, and therefore not recommended. Experts believe such bans can actually increase the chances of an accidental exposure due to the creation of a false sense of security and recommend against such bans. They continue to support allergen-free tables in the cafeterias.

Other

The board recommends that teachers who instruct students about important health matters be properly trained and provide accurate information.