

WESTPORT PUBLIC SCHOOLS

INDOOR AIR QUALITY CONTROL AND IMPROVEMENT PROCEDURES

Revised February 10, 2024

The *Tools for Schools* (TFS) teams in the Westport Public Schools (WPS) have indicated a need for guidelines to assist staff in creating and maintaining a healthy school environment. The following procedures have been developed and are updated as needed to help provide guidance in meeting this important goal.

Teachers, staff and administrators will comply with these procedures. Please provide suggestions and share concerns with your Tools for Schools team members.

GENERAL PROCEDURES

- 1. Concerns of staff members regarding building-related Indoor Air Quality (IAQ) will be handled as described below.**
 - Staff members who have a *routine concern* related to indoor air quality in their classroom, office or other space in the school building (e.g., change in air flow, small water drip (stain) on a ceiling tile from water condensate on a pipe or a roof leak, temperature control) shall not put a work order in the system but instead shall follow the protocol below on reporting any issues that may arise.
 - The employee should first bring the problem to the attention of the head (or assistant head) custodian to be assessed. The custodian may have a work order in the system that is already in progress.
 - The custodian will then inform the principal that they have assessed the issue and will contact the facilities department and the proper maintainer. The head or assistant head custodian will submit a work order for the issue.
 - The head or assistant head custodian provides the principal with the work order number associated with the issue.
 - Upon the assessment, the maintainer will be contacted to review the issue further with a solution to the problem.
 - The maintainer will inspect the issue and suggest the correct solution to fix the issue.
 - The maintainer may either fix the issue or recommend an outside vendor to fix the issue.
 - The head or assistant head custodian will report the progress/completion of the work order associated with the issue and the date completed.
 - This will then be recorded by the TFS keeper of the log (Sees all IAQ related issues in their building through to completion).

- a. If a staff member observes the **same problem within the same year** and it appears to impact IAQ:
- A second work order should be submitted online, as described above.
 - The TFS IAQ Incident Report form should be filled out.
 - The principal or designee will:
 - ◇ notify TFS team members, including the district TFS coordinator, chief financial officer, and health services supervisor.
 - ◇ do a mini walkthrough of the area with 2-3 TFS team members,
 - ◇ if indicated, arrange a TFS meeting.
 - A designated TFS team member (per the decision of the TFS team in that school) will fill out the appropriate IAQ Incident Report form and Mini Walkthrough form. There are four different forms, one for each type of IAQ concern, which are accessible on the district website: click on the TFS tab, then the Procedures tab.
 - The keeper of the log is responsible to:
 - ◇ ensure that any reported IAQ incident is followed through to resolution of the problem and completion of related work,
 - ◇ provide feedback to the person(s) who initiated the complaint,
 - ◇ completely fill out the IAQ Incident Report form and Mini Walkthrough form.
 - The chief financial officer or health services supervisor will notify the director of the Westport/Weston health district, as indicated.
- b. Staff members who have an **urgent concern** related to indoor air quality shall immediately inform the principal or principal's designee. Examples of urgent concerns are:
- a new, significant water stain on the ceiling tiles,
 - flooding where porous material is wet (e.g., sheetrock, carpet, paper, books, cardboard),
 - an unusual odor,
 - visible mold growing on a surface, or
 - the sudden onset of physical symptoms among several individuals at the same point in time.

When an employee brings an **urgent concern** related to indoor air quality to the attention of the principal or designee:

- The principal or designee shall immediately:
 - ◇ telephone the work order request to the director of facilities;
 - ◇ alert the school's head custodian; head custodian to enter an online work order;
 - ◇ notify TFS team members, including the district TFS coordinator, the chief financial officer and health services supervisor; and
 - ◇ do a mini walkthrough of the area with 2-3 TFS team members,
 - ◇ if indicated, arrange a TFS meeting.
- The designated TFS team member (per the decision of the TFS team in that school) will fill out the appropriate IAQ Incident Report form and Mini

Walkthrough form. There are four different forms, one for each type of IAQ concern, which are accessible on the district website: click on the TFS tab, then the Procedures tab.

- The keeper of the log is responsible to:
 - ◇ ensure that any IAQ incident is followed through to completion,
 - ◇ provide feedback to the person(s) who initiated the complaint, and
 - ◇ fill out, in detail and completely, the IAQ Incident Report form and Mini Walkthrough form.
 - The chief financial officer or health services supervisor will notify the director of the Westport/Weston health district, as indicated.
- c. When an IAQ ***urgent concern is reported during a vacation, holiday*** or other time when usual operations of the school and TFS team are suspended:
- the administrator on duty in the school building will immediately notify the TFS team members, director of facilities, and chief financial officer, and
 - the chief financial officer will then notify the district's TFS coordinator and health services supervisor, and the health director at the Westport/Weston health district.

2. **Cleaning procedures for teachers and staff**

Please see the Westport Public Schools' "Standard Cleaning Procedures" dated November 1, 2023, for cleaning guidance for teachers and staff, including health office staff.

3. **Hand Hygiene and Personal Care of Students**

- a. Students will be instructed in the appropriate way to wash their hands using soap and water. Teachers and staff shall encourage their students and provide time for them to wash their hands as needed. It is especially important to wash hands after coughing and sneezing, before eating snacks and meals, and after toileting. Hand washing is recommended over hand sanitizers for the control of communicable diseases and for IAQ purposes, and shall be the preferred method of hand hygiene in school. Hand washing is essential to remove visible dirt and food, such as peanut butter. Hand sanitizers kill germs, but do not remove substances on the hands.
- b. Soap dispensers in school will contain Purcell Healthy Foam Soap provided by the school district. Antibacterial soaps are prohibited. Such antibacterial agents are not better than soap and water in preventing the spread of communicable disease and may contribute to microbial mutations and the growth of "super bugs." No hand soap is to be brought from home.
- c. Facilities provides each classroom with a 12oz. pump bottle of fragrance free hand sanitizer that is refillable upon request.

- d. When washing hands in a sink is not feasible before lunch, students may use the hand sanitizer located in the cafeterias. This hand sanitizer has been researched and chosen because of several attributes that make it more effective and desirable than others.
- e. Teachers, staff and administrators may carry and use their own fragrance-free hand sanitizers (in 0.5 – 3.0 ounce containers) for personal use. If they do so, they must keep the sanitizer in their personal belongings and ensure that they are unavailable to students. Students may also carry 0.5 – 3.0 ounce containers of personal, fragrance-free hand sanitizer for their own personal use in their personal belongings (e.g. backpack).
- f. Wipes used for the personal care of students shall be approved by the health services supervisor, consistent with current medical and public health standards for personal health care in community settings, and bleach and fragrance free. The product “Nice ‘n Clean Baby Wipes” is approved solely for use by staff in diapering and toileting students requiring such care. Smart-San All Purpose Wipes, which have been approved for general cleaning, may also be used to clean hands, but only if no other hand washing option is available.

4. **Air deodorizers and fragrances in personal and district products**

- a. Fragrances can cause allergic responses and trigger asthmatic symptoms in some individuals. Therefore, teachers and staff are asked to minimize or refrain from the use of personal products that contain fragrances, such as perfumes and hand lotions. Products without fragrances are better for the environment in general, and individuals with sensitivity, in particular. There may be isolated situations where a staff member or student will need to be asked to discontinue the use of a product due to its fragrance.
- b. **All products used in the Westport Public Schools should be low odor, fragrance free or as odorless as possible because of the potential allergic reaction they may elicit in students or staff. The following items should not be purchased for school use:**
 - Regular (scented) markers and white board markers
 - Pens or pencils with additional fragrances or enhanced fragrances such as fruit scents
 - Scented / scratch stickers
 - Rubber cement glue
 - Spray adhesives
 - Regular paint

When selecting products to purchase, all adults should be aware of choosing low VOC (volatile organic compounds), low odor or fragrance free options.

- c. Air deodorant products and air fresheners, including all “plug-in” and spray deodorizers, negatively affect indoor air quality by adding chemicals and odors to the ambient air. Therefore, plug-in and other deodorizers and air fresheners shall not be used in any school building or office. No spray deodorizer shall be used except as determined necessary and provided by the facilities department.
- d. In staff bathrooms where no children enter, adults may agree to use an air deodorant product.

5. Clutter

- a. All unit ventilators and vents for air circulation shall be kept clear in all rooms and spaces of every building (e.g., books, plants, paper, clothing, etc. must not be on top of vents or ventilators, and furniture or other objects must not obstruct the air flow in front of unit ventilators and vents).
- b. Teachers, staff and administrators shall be responsible for maintaining an organized environment and minimizing clutter in their classrooms, offices and other work spaces so that all flat surfaces can be cleaned by facilities staff on a regular basis.
- c. Teachers, staff and administrators shall be responsible for cleaning all materials in their classrooms, offices and workspaces plus any flat surfaces that are not clear of materials. See WPS Standard Cleaning Procedures dated November 1, 2023.
- d. Teachers, staff and administrators shall use WPS cleaning products to clean all materials and surfaces. See WPS Standard Cleaning Procedures dated November 1, 2023.

6. Food

- a. Food is generally prohibited in all school building locations except the kitchen, cafeteria and other spaces specifically designated as areas where food is allowed. Improperly stored foods, and food crumbs and spills from eating are open invitations to rodents and other pests.
- b. Where food items are necessary, permitted and stored by teachers and staff, as approved by a building administrator, the food must be stored in locking, sealed plastic, ceramic, or metal containers. Plastic bags, such as Ziploc Bags, baggies, and plastic wrap are not appropriate food storage containers as they can be eaten through.
- c. Food storage requirements do not apply to student and staff snacks and lunches that are brought to school and consumed on the same day.

7. Plants

- a. Plants can be a threat to indoor air quality, especially in media centers and classrooms, due to their potential for growing mold and fungus, and collecting dust. Also, watering plants allows for moisture incursion (e.g., spills, over-watering) and, if papers, books, cardboard, or carpets get wet, they have the potential to grow mold.
- b. Plants are not prohibited, but those who have plants in their work areas, especially in media centers and classrooms, shall be responsible to:
 - place plants in ceramic or plastic pots, not in wicker or other porous containers.
 - water plants away from porous materials (e.g., paper, books) and avoid spills;
 - keep the plants clean (prevent dust build up); and
 - monitor them for growth of mold and fungus and discard the plant if mold or fungus is found.

8. Stuffed Animals

- a. No stuffed animals are permitted in Westport Public Schools.
- b. Stuffed animals collect dust, harbor dust mites and animal dander, and are generally difficult to properly clean.
- c. There may be one or two stuffed animals (per elementary school classroom) approved for an instructional purpose for the reading program.

9. Upholstered furniture, accessories and rugs or carpets (from home and store)

- a. Fabric-upholstered furniture and accessories (such as pillows, couches, chairs, and curtains), area rugs and carpet squares collect dust, harbor dust mites and animal dander, may have mold growing on or in them (e.g., from spilled food or beverages), and cannot be properly cleaned.
- b. No fabric-upholstered furniture or accessories *from someone's home or from a tag sale*, including pillows, couches, chairs, and curtains shall be brought into school.
- c. No area rugs or carpet squares, *new or used*, shall be brought into school (The custodians do not vacuum or clean these.) The area rugs provided by the district are permitted because they are vacuumed regularly and professionally cleaned each summer.
- d. Leather, vinyl, wooden and plastic furniture, and furniture accessories from someone's home are generally acceptable. Leather and vinyl upholstered furniture is easier to wipe clean and vacuum than fabric upholstered furniture.

- e. Furniture and accessories (other than rugs or carpet squares), including fabric-upholstered furniture, *bought new and delivered from the store* are permitted.

HEALTH CONCERNS: DOCUMENTATION, FEEDBACK AND CONFIDENTIALITY

1. **Concerns of staff members about personal health symptoms that they believe may be related to indoor air quality will be handled as follows:**

- a. The staff member will share his/her concern with the school nurse in person. The staff member should clarify that he/she believes that his/her symptom(s) may be related to an IAQ problem. Email is not an appropriate vehicle for sharing personal health concerns.
- b. The school nurse will ask questions about the staff member's symptoms, document relevant information in SNAP (student health electronic record system) under "Information Exchange – School Staff Reporting Air Quality Concern" and, as appropriate, encourage the staff member to access his/her physician for medical care. The staff member may ask the nurse for a copy of the documentation entry in SNAP.
- c. The school nurse, TFS building administrator, and head custodian will do a joint "walk-through" of the teacher's classroom, office space, or other building area, as applicable to the concern, herein referred to as a "mini walk-through."
- d. The school nurse will review SNAP visit data to determine if there is a spike of similar complaints from others (students and staff) or more complaints in one part of the building than another, as applicable.
- e. Depending on initial assessment results, one of the following next steps will be taken:
 - a work order request form will be submitted for repair of an identified facility issue;
 - a full TFS team investigation will be initiated;
 - the health office visit data will be reviewed with the supervisor of health services; or
 - no further action will be taken except for ongoing monitoring of related complaints and physical symptoms of students and staff.
- f. In every case, the nurse will inform the staff member who shared the personal concern of the outcome of the initial assessment and next step(s) taken, if any, within two weeks. This information will be shared verbally and documented in SNAP as "Information Exchange – school staff feedback re: IAQ concern."
- g. SNAP will be used to document staff IAQ health concerns because it (a) eliminates redundant documentation, (b) enables the school nurse to retrieve

potentially relevant data in aggregate form and map complaints by classroom, (c) permits the health services supervisor to compare data across school buildings, and (d) supports the confidentiality of health information.

2. Concerns of parents/guardians regarding the possible effects of IAQ on their child's health shall be handled as follows:

- a. The PARENT will share his/her concern with the school nurse in person or by phone; if by phone, the school nurse may ask the parent to come in to provide further information, depending on the issue. The parent should clarify that he/she believes that his/her child's symptom(s) may be related to an IAQ problem. Email is not an appropriate vehicle for sharing personal health concerns.
- b. The school nurse will ask questions about student's symptoms, document relevant information in SNAP (our student health electronic record system) under "Information Exchange – Parent Reporting Air Quality Concern" and, as appropriate, recommend to the parent an assessment by the child's physician.
- c. The school nurse, TFS building administrator, and head custodian will do a joint "mini walk-through" of the teacher's classroom, office space, or other building area, as applicable to the concern.
- d. The school nurse will review SNAP visit data to determine if there is a spike of similar complaints from others (students and staff) or more complaints in one part of the building than another, as applicable.
- e. Depending on initial assessment results, one of the following next steps will be taken:
 - a work order request form will be submitted for repair of an identified facility issue;
 - a full TFS team investigation will be initiated;
 - the health office visit data will be reviewed with the supervisor of health services; or
 - no further action will be taken except for ongoing monitoring of related complaints and physical symptoms of students and staff.
- f. In every case, the nurse will inform the parent who shared the personal concern of the outcome of the initial assessment and next step(s) taken, if any, within two weeks. This information will be shared verbally and documented in SNAP as "Information Exchange – parent feedback re: IAQ concern."
- g. SNAP will be used to document parent/guardians IAQ health concerns because it (a) eliminates redundant documentation, (b) enables the school nurse to retrieve potentially relevant data in aggregate form and map complaints by classroom, (c) permits the school nurse supervisor to compare data across school buildings, and (d) supports the confidentiality of health information.

3. Concerns of students regarding the possible effects of IAQ on their own health shall be handled as follows:

- a. The student will share his/her concern with the school nurse in person. The student should clarify that he/she believes that his/her symptom(s) may be related to an IAQ problem.
- b. The school nurse will ask questions about the student symptoms and will consult with the parent/guardians, as appropriate, document relevant information in SNAP (our student health electronic record system) under “Information Exchange – Student Reporting Air Quality Concern” and, as appropriate, recommend to the student/parent/guardian an assessment by the student’s physician.
- c. The school nurse, TFS building administrator, and head custodian will do a joint “mini walk-through” of the teacher’s classroom, office space, or other building area, as applicable to the complaint.
- d. The school nurse will review SNAP visit data to determine if there is a spike of similar complaints from others (students and staff) or more complaints in one part of the building than another, as applicable.
- e. Depending on initial assessment results, one of the following next steps will be taken:
 - a work order request form will be submitted for repair of an identified facility issue;
 - a full TFS team investigation will be initiated;
 - the health office visit data will be reviewed with the supervisor of health services;
 - or no further action will be taken except for ongoing monitoring of related complaints and physical symptoms of students and staff.
- f. In every case, the nurse will inform the student who shared the personal concern, and parent/guardian as appropriate, of the outcome of the initial assessment and next step(s) taken, if any, within two weeks. This information will be shared verbally and documented in SNAP as “Information Exchange – student feedback re: IAQ concern.”
- g. SNAP will be used to document student IAQ health concerns because it (a) eliminates redundant documentation, (b) enables the school nurse to retrieve potentially relevant data in aggregate form and map complaints by classroom, (c) permits the health services supervisor to compare data across school buildings, and (d) supports the confidentiality of health information.

- 4. Student visits to the health office for health complaints on a given day (e.g., fatigue/sleepiness, headache, “not feeling well,” cough, wheezing) shall be documented in SNAP according to the same procedures for documenting all student visits to the health office.**
- a. On a monthly basis or more often if indicated by the nature of health office visits, the school nurse will review student health office visit data for clusters of symptoms and trends that may be indicative of a change in or problem with IAQ, and take actions, as follows:
 - The review will include data for a standard set of IAQ-related symptoms, as defined by the health services supervisor. This will be a subset of data that are retrieved and documented according to health services procedures for SNAP reports.
 - The school nurse will consult the health services supervisor for assistance in assessing data quality, relevancy, and limitations, interpreting the data, and deciding the need for further exploration of available SNAP data and other appropriate actions.
 - The school nurse will report IAQ concerns derived from the data, if any, to the building TFS team and principal.
 - b. The school nurse, after consultation with the health services supervisor as described above, will share the year-to-date aggregate number of “Information Exchanges” related to “Air Quality Concerns” of staff, parents and students, as documented in SNAP, with the TFS team at its fall and spring meetings, or more often if indicated. Details will not be shared at this time, including names, locations, and health complaints. If something unusual had been identified through SNAP data, it should have prompted a full team walk through at the time it was identified.
 - c. The health services supervisor will, as indicated:
 - review school-specific data for IAQ-related symptoms
 - ◇ routinely using the standard set of IAQ-related symptoms documented monthly through SNAP for each building
 - ◇ whenever a school nurse has a question or concern,
 - ◇ whenever building-to-building comparisons are indicated.
 - explore the data in more depth at any time that SNAP data indicate a potential concern in order to evaluate data relevance, integrity, and limitations.
 - consult with the school medical advisor and health director of the Westport/Weston health district.
 - provide a verbal summary of relevant aggregate data to the building principal, TFS team members, TFS district coordinator, chief financial officer, and superintendent.

- d. Confidentiality of individual student health information shall be protected according to WPS policies and procedures related to student health records and the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act. The school nurse, health services supervisor, and physician consultants to the district are the only individuals who may review and interpret individual student health records, except as otherwise permitted by school district policy.
- e. Confidentiality of individual staff information, as documented in SNAP, shall be protected, as appropriate.
- f. Direct access to SNAP data, individual and aggregate, is restricted to the health services supervisor, school medical advisor, and school nurses except when: (1) confidentiality of individual student and staff data can be assured (2) quality, relevance and limitations of the data have been properly explored, and (3) sharing it is indicated for health and safety reasons.

It is essential to understand that SNAP is a system for documenting student visits to the health office, not for monitoring IAQ. Also, TFS is a system designed to help monitor IAQ, not personal health.