

## School Health Advisory Board Meeting Minutes 10/25/2022

**Present:** Lori Balaban, Erin Callas, Kristy Davis, Christine Eagleson, Eileen Gomez, Kevin Kirst, Mark Niehaus, Chris Siebert

**Public Comment:** Citizen guest Ms. Barbara Cruikshank explained that she remains concerned about the level of radiation from the EMF emitted by the cell phone tower at Albemarle High School. She reported that she measured high levels with her EMF meter at various sites on the AHS campus. She distributed some printed materials:

- Letter from Dr. Devra Davis of the Environmental Health Trust <https://ehtrust.org/>
- This article: <https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/29725476/>

She explained that she submitted a request to the Board of Supervisor and School Board and was hoping for a SHAB endorsement that ACPS hire a 3<sup>rd</sup> party environmental biologist to measure the level of EMF at various points on the AHS campus.

**Naloxone:** Eileen reported that she was asked again about school nurses obtaining naloxone to be used on any student believed to be experiencing an opioid overdose. She explained that when this issue arose in 5/2019, a medical expert in Poison Control and Emergency Medicine discouraged schools from stocking naloxone since severe opioid overdose is rare in school-aged children and that calling EMS in suspected overdose situations would be appropriate, especially since overdose victims can be combative after receiving naloxone.

Erin reported that the health department has naloxone that anybody can access at no charge if they submit a registration and undergo training. She explained that a prescription is given to the requester in the registrant's name rather than a standing order to an organization in the manner of albuterol or epinephrine.

Because opioid abuse remains a problem, and obtaining naloxone is not too onerous, the board recommends that the high school nurses obtain naloxone and training through the BRHD, and consider having the middle school nurses do so as well if the initial phase at the high school level goes smoothly.

Eileen said she would work to incorporate this into the school nurse practice at the high school level.

**Pancreatic Enzymes:** Eileen explained that students with cystic fibrosis are required to take capsules containing pancreatic enzymes with meals and snacks. A high school student requested that she be able to self-carry and self-administer her own pancreatic enzymes rather than having to take them from the school nurse. The Code of Virginia and ACPS School Board policy allows for students to self-carry and administer albuterol, epinephrine and diabetes supplies, but does not specifically permit students to carry any other medication.

Because there is no abuse potential for pancreatic enzymes, and the chronic nature of cystic fibrosis is such that students should be encouraged to manage their condition independently, the board unanimously recommends that ACPS medication policy be modified to allow students with cystic fibrosis who demonstrate responsibility, and with parent, physician and student signature, be permitted to carry and administer their pancreatic enzymes.

**School Health Services Staffing** ACPS's current minimum qualification for their school nurse position is LPN. 10 of the 27 nurses are LPNs while the others are at least RNs. Eileen explained that the American Academy of Pediatrics, the National Association of School Nurses, the Virginia Association of Nurses as well as other organizations recommend that school nurses have the minimum qualification of RN since there are tasks required of school nurses that LPNs cannot perform such as:

- Write care plans
- Delegate performance of medical procedures
- Train and supervise school personnel to perform medical procedures
- Administer certain medications and procedures

Changing the minimum requirement for the position would have an economic impact since that would change the pay rate, which is currently based on the LPN qualification.

Concern was expressed that raising the qualification might diminish the size of the applicant pool and perhaps staffing a school with an LPN would be better than not having a school nurse. But raising the qualification and pay rate to market value may increase the applicant pool for RNs.

Kevin explained an overall plan to improve the school nurse staffing including the recent hiring of a full-time School Health Coordinator and, in an attempt to follow the recommended ratio identified by the NASN of 1 nurse to 750 students, a second nurse for Albemarle High School. He explained that the next phase would be to bring a second nurse to the other comprehensive high schools and then to the other larger schools.

A suggestion was made that at schools with fewer than 1500 students it might be worth considering breaking up FTEs so an additional nurse may cover more than one school so the ratio is not as over-exceeded. Perhaps current LPNs can be used as the secondary nurse at these larger schools.

The board acknowledged the important work the school nurses perform and supports raising the minimum qualification for school nurses to RN and applaud other efforts to improve the delivery of nursing services.

**Radio Frequency on School Campuses** A discussion ensued about how SHAB has discussed this several times in the past – in the context of cell phone towers, cell phones and Wi-Fi. There does not appear that there is any new evidence to modify the previous conclusions\*\* (See summaries below).

The board discussed whether it would be worth considering recommending that a certified industrial hygienist be commissioned to measure levels of EMF at a representative sampling of sites (classrooms, exterior spaces) across the division, but that it would be important to define the scope of the study – overall EMF from all sources or from specific sources such as cell phone towers.

The [FCC](#) and the [IEEE](#) have established safety standards, but it is not actually known what the true safety limits are. Perhaps it would be worth looking into any studies on the impact of EMF on those who have repeated high levels of occupational exposures such as service technicians.

**Student Mental Health** Mark reported that he discussed the issue of student mental health with an ACPS teacher who mentioned the addition of social emotional learning coaches placed in schools to assist with the mental health challenges of recovery from the pandemic and extended school closures. The primary care providers described the magnitude of mental health challenges they are seeing in their practices and how there are not enough therapists in the community to meet the need for services. A discussion ensued about the mental health challenges children, youth and adults are all experiencing and the shortage of services available to meet these needs.

Kevin explained that ACPS received funding to hire the [social emotional learning coaches](#) as well as created a new position of Coordinator of Mental Health Services. ACPS received a donation to place [Health Connect America](#) therapeutic day treatment programs in some schools.

Kevin also explained the role of safety coaches, who are assigned to each middle and high school in order to build relationships, particularly with students who may be struggling with behavior issues.

The board recommends that ACPS consider keeping the new positions and services when the current funding sources end.

**\*\*Recommendation to the School Board 11/2016:** *To date, leading experts in the field of public health and safety report that the preponderance of evidence indicates there are no correlations of ill health effects with exposures to radiofrequency transmissions from cell phone base stations. This includes official statements from the WHO, CDC, FCC, NIH and the American Cancer Society. A recent WHO report revived some concern about the safety of cell phone use. Interestingly, having a cell phone base station*

*nearby may actually be protective for cell phone users as this requires the phone to emit less power to search for a signal.*

The amount of RF EMF that will be emitted by the proposed station is well below the standards for safety recommended by all of the above regulatory agencies. It is also below, or comparable to, many other sources of RF. While there remains some concern about the safety of cell phone use, there is no new evidence that the EMF from base stations poses health risks on the ground when the base stations conform to US standards.

**Minutes 5/15/2019:** It remains the consensus of the board that as of this time there is still not enough evidence to recommend any change in technology based on concerns over the hazard presented by exposure to EMF in school settings from cell phone base stations and Wi-Fi. ACPS may consider not permitting the construction of any additional cell phone towers on school grounds for PR or aesthetic purposes, but at this time the board does not see any medical reason to prohibit these structures and devices. Perhaps the current posted policy about students having their cell phones turned off during school hours should be enforced, although sometimes students use their phones for legitimate academic purposes.

### **Upcoming Meetings**

Wednesdays 6:30 to 8:30 pm in Room 320 of the McIntire County Office Building

- January 18, 2023
- March 15, 2023
- May 17, 2023