

# **School Health Councils/ Teams**

# School Health Councils/Teams



**The School Health Council/Team is an advisory group composed of committed individuals from both the school and the community. The group works together to provide guidance on all aspects of the school health program. Mississippi Code of 1972, Annotated Section 37-13-134 requires the recommendations made by a school health council/team be based on a coordinated approach to school health.**

**A coordinated school health program is an effective system designed to connect health with education. This coordinated approach to school health improves students' health and their capacity to learn through the support of families, communities and schools. This section includes:**

- Operating Guidelines for the Health Council/Team**
- Roles & Responsibilities of a School Health Coordinator**
- Guidelines for Getting a School Health Council/Team Started**
- Sample Meeting Agendas**
- Resources for School Health Councils/Teams**

## Office of Healthy Schools Operating Guidelines for School Health Councils/Teams

The following guidelines are provided by the Office of Healthy Schools to support quality implementation of school health policies and standards through a school health council/team:

- Should meet a minimum of three times per school year.
- Should maintain accurate minutes of the meeting to document the recommendations and topics of each meeting.
- Provide at least one annual presentation or written report to the local school board to approve any revisions to the local school wellness policy, identify successes, and/or make recommendations for future policy development.

### Steps for Operating a School Health Council/Team:

- Step 1: Get Together and Establish Structure
- Step 2: Assess the Needs and Create a Vision
- Step 3: Develop a Local Wellness Policy and Action Plan  
*(Note: The Wellness Policy Guide to Development can be found on the Office of Healthy School's website at <http://www.mde.k12.ms.us/ohs/home> under What's New. It should be used when developing a local wellness policy as it addresses all school health related regulations and Accountability Standards)*
- Step 4: Take Action-Implement the Plan
- Step 5: Evaluation, Celebration, and Sustainability

The order of the steps may vary in different school administrative units. Also, steps may occur simultaneously and/or loop back on one another. The process of coordination can begin at the school or district level. Eventually coordination will need to occur at both levels.

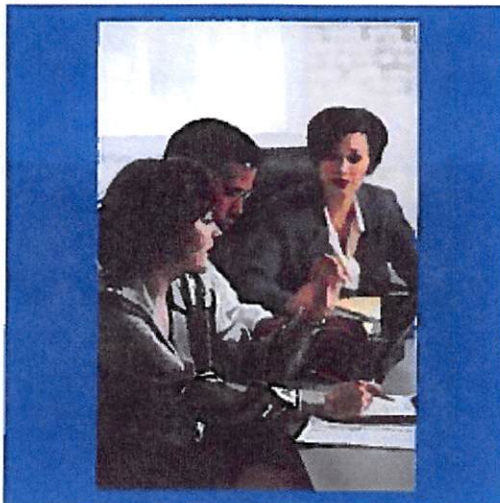
**The topic of operating a school health council/team is addressed more fully in the following pages.**



# School Health Coordinator Roles & Responsibilities

Getting started with a School Health Council/Team is easier if the school appoints a person to coordinate their school health programs. This **School Health Coordinator** will be a school's team leader to improve the programs and policies that impact the health of its students and faculty.

- The **School Health Coordinator's** primary role is to lead the school council team in coordinating all components of a school health program and facilitating implementation of the School Health Council's/Team's plan for school health improvements.
- The **School Health Coordinator** is charged with coordinating wellness initiatives in the school as required by Accountability Standard 17.5.1. They assist the school principal and other administrative staff with the integration, management, and supervision of the school health program.
- The **School Health Coordinator** helps to identify and use resources available to assist in the organization of the School Health Council/Team and communicates with faculty members and team members on health issues and initiatives. They provide or arrange for necessary technical assistance.
- The **School Health Coordinator** works with the group to use the 3-step approach to developing an effective wellness policy that includes:
  - 1) Gathering input and assessing the school's current situation by using either the School Health Index (SHI) or the Mississippi Healthy School Self Assessment.
  - 2) Developing and approving a Local School Wellness Policy using the Wellness Policy Guide for Development found on the Office of Healthy Schools website at <http://www.mde.k12.ms.us/ohs/home> under What's New
  - 3) Implementing and evaluating the Local School Wellness Policy
- The **School Health Coordinator** facilitates the collaboration between the school and other agencies and organizations in the community who have an interest in health and well-being of children and their families.



## ***School Health Councils/Teams: Getting Started***

- Meet informally with a small group of community members and/or school staff.
- Share the need for and benefits of a Whole School, Whole Community, Whole Child approach (WSCC) with local school administration. Discuss forming a School Health Council and appointing a coordinator.
- Design a brief presentation that includes information on the health needs of students, the connections between health and educational success, and the benefits of coordinating school health programs.
- Contact and recruit leaders in the school and community who support WSCC programs to be a part of the school health council/team.
- Make presentations, as needed and distribute information to build awareness and support among community and school groups.
- Support/encourage the adoption of a local school wellness policy and the allocation of resources for a WSCC Program. (The *Wellness Policy Guide for Development* will be used to develop an appropriate local policy.)
- Recruit and/or interview qualified candidates for the school health coordinator position.

### **Stage 1. Establishing Structure**

#### **Step 1. Appoint a school health coordinator and define/clarify his or her responsibilities**

- School health coordinators have multiple roles and responsibilities, including facilitation of school health council/team meetings, delegation of tasks to team members, presentations at School Board meetings, and advocating for improvements
- A written and approved description of roles and responsibilities may be helpful in clarifying this new role.

#### **Step 2. Gain support from school leaders**

- Meet with school administrators, and with others that are informal leaders among staff.
- Explain benefits of a *Whole School, Whole Community, Whole Child Program*, especially the positive impact on health, which in turn affects educational success.

#### **Step 3. Increase awareness about the Coordinated School Health Program within the school and community**

- Get the word out to a wide audience.
- Keep the message simple and avoid jargon. For example, phrases like "healthy school," "healthy students," "healthy children are better learners" will be easier for many to understand than "WSCC programs."
- Listen carefully to ideas and concerns. This will strengthen your work and can indicate barriers that need to be addressed.

**Step 4. Recruit members for appropriate School Health Council Team to guide and assist with coordination.**

- The purposes of the committee(s) are to develop, guide, implement and evaluate a work plan for coordinating quality school health programs.
- The team should include representatives from all component areas within the school system and the community at large. Make sure to include a teacher, administrator and a school health champion as your core group. Students and family members are critical participants in addition to administrators, school staff and health professionals.
- The team should be diverse with a wide variety of backgrounds and expertise.
- Select people with a passion for kids and health
- Select people who can commit time and energy

**Step 5. Establish a strong team.**

- Take time to build good working relationships and to develop ownership among team members from the beginning. This will improve effectiveness and help to prevent problems later on.
- Develop a vision and mission for the school health council/team. (Where do you want to go?)
- Recognize and reward the efforts of team members

**Step 6. Discuss group process including effective communication, participatory decision-making and conflict resolution.**

- Facilitate action and change by providing opportunities for involvement, building skills and by giving recognition or incentives to team/committee members.

**Stage 2. Assessing Need: Where are we now?**

**Step 7. Assess/Evaluate strengths and weaknesses of existing school health programs and student health needs by using a valid and reliable assessment tool. Schools may use either the *School Health Index* or the *Mississippi Healthy School Self-Assessment* (MS Code 37-11-71)**

- Identify and analyze key findings from the needs assessment, focusing on items that are ranked as high in importance and low in existence.
- Create a short written report that summarizes key findings and includes general recommendations for improvements.

**Stage 3. Planning: How will we get where we want to go?**

**Step 9. Use assessment findings to help set priorities.**

- Consider other important factors along with the findings from the assessment tool that was used. These factors may include student health needs, best practices for WSCC, feasibility, resources, state mandates or grant requirements.
- Priorities should include strengths that need to be sustained as well as needs or challenges that should be addressed.

**Step 10. Develop an action plan to address priorities.**

- Link the action plan to the vision and mission of the school health council/team to implement and coordinate all components of the WSCC model.
- Coordination will need to be an ongoing process. Try to find a balance between shorter, and longer-term objectives.
- For each priority, identify tasks and person(s) responsible, resources, timeline, process and outcome.

**Step 11. Decide how the team or council wants to organize itself to complete the action plan.**

- Set up task groups or subcommittees to work on the action plan.

#### Stage 4. Implementation and Evaluation: How well are we doing?

##### **Step 12. Arrange for training and support.**

- Set up system-wide staff development to raise awareness about the benefits of WSCC Programs. Emphasize that everyone shares the responsibility for and can contribute to, healthy students and a healthy school.
- Organize activities and training as needed to support and maintain a strong school health council.

##### **Step 13. Monitor and document process and progress toward achieving action plan objectives.**

- Discuss progress on the action plan at regular team/committee meetings. Identify successes, challenges and strategies for addressing challenges.
- Adjust activities and timeline as needed.

##### **Step 14. Provide ongoing communication, advocacy and training about WSCC Programs.**

- Regularly publicize school health activities and accomplishments in school and community media. Events that can be photographed seem to be of most interest to the media, but press releases are also a good idea.
- Regular communication and training help to address changes in personnel (especially of key players) and help to maintain the momentum for change.
- The goal is to eventually saturate the school and community with consistent and reinforcing health promoting messages.

#### Stage 5. Evaluation, Celebration and Sustainability: How will we know when we get where we wanted to go?

##### **Step 15. Evaluate and report on the impact of the action plan for coordinating a quality school health program.**

- Identify improvements in the quality of each of the components of WSCC.
- Identify increases in coordination among school components and between school and community services and programs.
- Report regularly on action plan progress and WSCC impact to school administrators, to the school board or committee, and other appropriate groups.
- Organize a gathering at least once a year to recognize those who have contributed to the quality and coordination of school health.

##### **Step 16. Advocate with the school board and administration to formalize and sustain Whole School, Whole Community, Whole Child (WSCC) programs.**

- Work with the team/council to advocate for policy, procedures and/or funding that will sustain changes, e.g., the coordinator position and council/team operation.



# Sample Agendas for School Health Council Meetings

## Meeting 1:

- Have all participants sign-in, provide name tags
- Maintain minutes throughout the meeting
- Introduce the council chairperson; including a brief discussion of his/her role as chairperson
- Have each council/team member introduce themselves; allow everyone in the group to share their name, role, and why they are interested in being involved in the School Health Council
- Have the principal address the council, expressing his/her interest and commitment to the health issues facing students, faculty, and staff
- Explain What, Why and How to coordinate school health programs
- What is the Whole School, Whole Community Whole Child Program? Why are Wellness Policies needed? (<http://www.mde.k12.ms.us/ohs/Resources>)
- Provide a brief overview of School Health Councils/Teams
  - What they are?
  - What they do?
  - Who can be a member?
  - Why it is important for a council/team to be established at the school level?
- Questions and Answers
- Closing remarks by the chairperson or principal to include:
  - Next meeting date, time, location and purpose
  - Reminder of any commitments made by team members.

## Meeting 2:

- Have all participants sign-in
- Maintain minutes throughout the meeting
- Review the minutes of the previous meeting
- Have the council/team begin working on a school needs assessment using either the CDC's School Health Index found at <http://apps.need.cdc.gov/shi> or the Mississippi Healthy School Self-Assessment found at <http://www.mde.k12.ms.us/ohs/Resources> (MS Code 37-11-17)

*A needs assessment raises awareness of the issue of school health and promotes interest in engaging the team to create change. The assessment provides comprehensive, useable, and accurate information for decision making, and helps the council/team identify strengths and weaknesses of school health programs within the school.*

- Closing remarks by the chairperson to include:
  - Next meeting date, time, location, and purpose
  - Reminder of any commitments made by council/team members





# Sample Agendas for School Health Council Meetings (Continued)

## Meeting 3:

- Have all participants sign-in
- Maintain minutes throughout the meeting
- Review the minutes of the previous meeting
- Establish ground rules for operating the council/team
- Develop a vision and mission for your council/team
  - The **vision** defines the council's desires and commitments for school health.
  - The **mission** statement describes the overall purpose of the council/team and helps define the actions of the group.
- Develop a **marketing plan** for distribution of successes.
- Closing remarks by the chairperson to include:
  - Next meeting date, time, location, and purpose
  - Reminder of any commitments made by council/team members

## Meeting 4:

- Have all participants sign-in
- Maintain minutes throughout the meeting
- Review the minutes of the previous meeting
- Begin writing an **action plan**
- Brainstorm ideas
- Set priorities
- Assign action steps to each council/team member

*Based on the findings of the needs assessment begun in the second meeting, the council should develop an **action plan**. The **action plan** is a written framework of the changes desired in your school and community and how the council/team hopes to achieve them. The **action plan** holds members accountable to the commitments they make.*

- Closing remarks by the chairperson or principal to include:
  - Next meeting date, time, location, and purpose
  - Reminder of any commitments made by members

### **Note:**

- *After the **action plan** is developed, the council/team should conduct regular meetings that fit their unique situation.*
- *If refreshments are provided during the meetings ensure that these food items are nutritious and healthy. It is important that the council/team set a positive example for the school's effort towards creating a sustainable school health program.*

### **Additional/Future Agenda Items**

- Develop an **Evaluation Plan**
- Invitation for new members
- Community resources/partnerships
- Post the Needs Assessment Results for others to see

# Resources for School Health Councils



- Local School Wellness Policy Guide for Development  
<http://www.mde.k12.ms.us/ohs/home>
- Mississippi Healthy School Self-Assessment - <http://www.mde.k12.ms.us/ohs/Resources>
- [MyActiveHealth.com](http://MyActiveHealth.com)
- Office of Healthy Schools Monitoring Tool  
<http://www.mde.k12.ms.us/ohs/home>
- Resources for School Health Councils  
<http://www.mde.k12.ms.us/ohs/home>—Click on Resources
- School Health Index  
<http://www.cdc.gov/healthyyouth/shi>
- USDA resource materials page for guidance -  
<http://healthymeals.nal.usda.gov/school-wellness-resources>