



School Health



Indian Health Service Division of Diabetes Treatment and Prevention
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Is a Best Practice School Health Program right for your diabetes program?

➔ Do you want your diabetes program to be better at:

1. Providing clinical services?

Yes No

What you will be doing: Offering to provide clinical services, such as physical exams, referrals, and follow-up, as a way to get started working with school systems

Who will be doing it: Health care providers

2. Providing programs to improve dietary behaviors?

Yes No

What you will be doing: Helping schools develop policies that promote wellness, healthy food choices at school functions, and healthy school menus ♦ Providing healthy eating interventions for youth ♦ Providing training for food service staff and teachers

Who will be doing it: Community program staff ♦ Health care providers

3. Providing programs to promote physical activity?

Yes No

What you will be doing: Providing training for teachers to maximize the effectiveness of their physical activity approaches and strategies ♦ Encouraging daily, structured, developmentally appropriate physical education classes for K–12 ♦ Integrating traditional and cultural activities into physical activity plans, such as powwow dances and stick games

Who will be doing it: Community program staff ♦ Health care providers

4. Promoting mental health using a “whole school” approach?

Yes No

What you will be doing: Working with students, teachers, staff, parents, and community members ♦ Implementing mental health promotion programs ♦ Establishing partnerships with existing mental health resources ♦ Providing mental health training to school personnel

Who will be doing it: Community program staff ♦ Health care providers ♦ Organization leaders

5. Creating a dialogue among local tribal programs, clinics, and schools?

Yes No

What you will be doing: Discussing basic issues of childhood overweight, its potential effect on students, and the school’s role in addressing these issues ♦ Enhancing health curricula to include a behavior skills focus and to devote adequate attention to nutrition, physical activity, reducing sedentary behaviors, and energy balance ♦ Involving school health services in obesity prevention efforts ♦ Performing periodic assessments of each school’s policies and practices

Who will be doing it: Community program staff ♦ Health care providers ♦ Organization leaders

➔ If you answered “Yes” to many of these questions, go to page 2 to learn how a Best Practice School Health Program can benefit your diabetes program!

What are school health programs?

School health programs are school-based activities that can raise awareness in youth about healthy lifestyles, help youth practice healthy lifestyles, and create supportive environments for good health practices. School health programs can also play a major role in preventive care by offering immunization and safety programs, providing youth counseling, and educating students on good health.

Why is school health important to American Indian and Alaska Native communities?

- Many school-aged children do not regularly visit a primary care provider, especially for preventive services.
- Overweight and diabetes are increasing among American Indian and Alaska Native youth.
- Raising awareness of the risk factors for overweight and type 2 diabetes offers youth the ability to take greater control of their health.
- Creating a supportive school environment for good health may have the greatest effect in producing lasting change.

The good news about school health...

Your diabetes program can partner with schools to provide clinical services, teach skills that promote healthy behaviors, and change the school's social and physical environment to support healthy behaviors and create healthier youth.



"One father, who has a son and daughter in the diabetes prevention program, said his children now talk about health and nutrition. They are more active. They eat more fruits and vegetables. They are more aware."

—Estella St. John,
Yankton Sioux Diabetes
Prevention Program

A Best Practice School Health Program will require a coordinated approach. Here are some tips on how schools, health care providers, community programs, health care administrators, and tribal leadership can work together.

➔ Working together to improve school health:

1. Who can help?

Ask for and enlist support from: The "whole" school, including students, teachers, staff, and parents ♦ Health care providers ♦ Tribal and community leaders ♦ Clinic administrators ♦ The media ♦ Decision and policy makers

2. Why is it important to work together?

Working with school, clinic, community, and leadership partners will help you: Leverage resources ♦ Avoid duplicating services ♦ Share staff, ideas, and resources ♦ Get support for your common goal of improving the health of your community

3. How can you work together?

Work with your partners to: Form partnerships with schools to offer clinical services (e.g., physical exams) ♦ Establish a school health program to teach skills that promote healthy behaviors ♦ Change the social and physical environment of the school (e.g., ban sugary drinks from schools) ♦ Create links with the wider community

