



Background Information for Health Officer/School Nurse Checklist

MAINTAINING STUDENT HEALTH

Evidence suggests that children, pregnant women, and senior citizens are more likely to develop health problems from poor air quality than most adults. In addition, indoor air quality (IAQ) problems will most likely affect those with pre-existing health conditions as well as those exposed to tobacco smoke.

Tracking health records and records of health-related complaints by students and staff could be useful for evaluating potential IAQ problems. Student health records should include information about known allergies, asthma, and other conditions. Although privacy considerations may limit the disclosure of student health information, you should provide information about students' potential IAQ sensitivities to teachers. This is especially true for classes involving gaseous or particle emissions from art, science, or industrial/vocational education sources.

It may be helpful to acquire a map of the school and track health complaints by location. Alert the IAQ Coordinator if you observe a trend indicating a potential problem in a specific area of the school. Use the *IAQ Problem Solving Wheel* to identify potential IAQ sources of the problem.

HEALTH AND HYGIENE EDUCATION

From a public health perspective, schools are unique. Schools accommodate more people within a smaller area than most public buildings. This proximity increases the potential for airborne contaminants (germs, odors, and constituents of personal products) to pass among students. Raising awareness about the effects of personal habits on the well-being of others can help reduce such IAQ-related problems. Check with local public health agencies that may have information that is suitable for older students.

PROVIDE INFORMATION ABOUT IAQ AND HEALTH

School nurses can help teachers develop activities that reduce exposure to indoor air pollutants for students with IAQ sensitivities, such as those with asthma or allergies. Contact the American Lung Association (ALA), the National Association of School Nurses (NASN), the Asthma and Allergy Foundation of America (AAFA), or Asthma and Allergy Network*Mothers of Asthmatics (AAN*MA) for help developing these activities. (See **Appendix L** of the *IAQ Reference Guide* for contact information.) Consider conducting a workshop for teachers, parents, and other school staff on IAQ-related health problems and providing individual counseling when necessary.

HEALTH OFFICER'S OFFICE

Since sick students and staff frequent the health office, it is important to take steps that can help prevent transmission of airborne diseases to uninfected students and staff. Use this checklist to identify and prevent IAQ problems associated with the health office.

Ventilation

Ventilation is the process by which air is circulated throughout the school. Stale indoor air is exhausted to the outside, and outdoor air is drawn into the building. Schools may either have mechanical ventilation (supplied by fans) or natural ventilation (i.e., operable windows). Improperly operated or poorly maintained ventilation systems can cause serious IAQ problems. In addition, the ventilation system can carry air pollutants from one location in the school to another.

Use the diagrams in the *IAQ Background* to determine your office's ventilation method. If you have mechanical ventilation, confirm that air is flowing into the room from the air supply vent(s). Check for airflow by

Instructions

Read this section before completing the Health Officer/School Nurse Checklist.

holding a piece of tissue paper near the air supply vent(s); if air is flowing, the tissue will flutter away from the supply vent. Don't obstruct the airflow with books, papers, furniture, or other obstacles. Never place anything on top of unit ventilators.

If you have mechanical ventilation, confirm that air is flowing from the room into the air return grille(s). Check for airflow at air return grille(s) in the same manner as above. If air is flowing, the plastic or tissue will be pulled toward the return. In addition, a piece of plastic that nearly covers the grille will stick to the face of the grille if air is flowing properly. Again, don't obstruct airflow with books, papers, furniture, or other obstacles.

Check for unexplained odors. Improperly operated or poorly maintained ventilation systems may cause IAQ problems. Odors, or the desire to use scented air fresheners, may indicate a ventilation problem. Remember, the ventilation system can carry air contaminants from another location in the school to your office.

In addition, maintenance vehicles or buses should never idle near the outside air intake vents. If your school or state has anti-idling policies in place, locate and review these. If not, consider creating such a policy (refer to **Appendix B** of the *IAQ Coordinator's Guide*).

