

IN BRIEF: Promoting Effective HIV and STD Prevention Through Schools: CDC's Division of Adolescent and School Health



The Importance of Schools

- In the United States, schools have direct contact with more than 56 million students for at least 6 hours a day during 13 key years of their social, physical, and intellectual development.
- After the family home, schools are the primary places responsible for the development of young people. This gives schools an opportunity to dramatically improve the health and well-being of their students each day—including playing an important role in HIV and STD prevention.
- Research shows that well-designed, well-implemented, school-based HIV/STD prevention programs can significantly reduce sexual risk behaviors among students.

How DASH Is Making a Difference through Schools

- CDC's Division of Adolescent and School Health (DASH) is a unique source of support for HIV prevention efforts in our nation's schools.
- DASH provides funding and training resources directly to state and local education agencies (SEAs and LEAs) to help schools implement effective HIV prevention programs that are based on the best science available.
- DASH-funded SEAs and LEAs offer essential tools, resources, and professional development trainings to schools to ensure that teachers are up-to-date on the latest HIV prevention research and the teaching techniques that have been proven to provide students with the knowledge and skills they need to avoid infection with HIV and other STDs.
- Without the strong support of education agencies, state and local health departments, which lead most HIV prevention efforts, are usually unable to incorporate their HIV prevention programs into schools. DASH-funded SEAs and LEAs are required to collaborate closely with public health departments to improve program effectiveness, increase efficiency, and reduce redundancy.
- Because SEAs and LEAs understand how schools operate, they can develop and recommend policies and practices for HIV prevention education that are better matched to the needs of schools and are therefore much more likely to be implemented and sustained.
- When education agencies directly sponsor HIV prevention programs, it sends a message that HIV prevention is part of the fundamental mission of schools and makes implementation of these programs an important priority for schools.

How DASH Is Making a Difference through National Partnerships

- DASH funds a network of nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) to provide national-level support for HIV prevention efforts in education agencies and other agencies that serve youth at risk for HIV infection.
- NGOs have access to a wide range of highly trained experts who know how to tailor HIV prevention guidance and tools for school board members, administrators, teachers, and parents in ways they can understand and apply.
- NGOs have relationships with state and local decision makers who are critical partners for improving HIV prevention in schools but who are not easily reached through education agency efforts.
- Because HIV cases in the United States are highly concentrated in specific groups and locations, DASH-funded NGOs complement the work of education agencies and health departments to reach youth in high-risk situations, including those in juvenile justice centers and shelters for runaway and homeless youth.

How DASH Resources Benefit Schools

- DASH's scientific surveys, including the *Youth Risk Behavior Survey*, the *School Health Policies and Practices Study*, and *School Health Profiles*, provide the most comprehensive national, state, and local data about the sexual behaviors of young people and the steps schools are taking to improve student health. These data enable DASH-funded education agencies and NGOs to identify programmatic needs, target resources, establish measurable objectives, and monitor progress and improvement over time.
- DASH provides national leadership in identifying effective practices for school health programs and translates the latest scientific findings into resources for use by education agencies and NGOs.
- For example, DASH's *Health Education Curriculum Analysis Tool* helps schools assess health education curricula and select or develop a program that is most likely to have a positive impact on sexual risk behaviors among the youth they serve.

For More Information

For more information about DASH and its programs, surveillance, and research, please contact:

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