

National Collaborative on Education + Health

Overview of the National Collaborative on Education and Health

Educators know that healthy students are better prepared to learn and succeed in school. Public health officials know that a person's educational achievement impacts their health status. Yet, today's children could become the first generation to live shorter and less healthy lives than their parents and many of the nation's children struggle to thrive academically. In order to address this trend, the health and education sectors must work together and with others to support schools in creating the optimal conditions for student health, wellness and learning.

Mission of the National Collaborative on Education and Health

To identify opportunities for the health and education sectors, individually and together with others, to contribute to ensuring that all children, regardless of income, race, ethnicity, or geography, have the opportunity to be healthy and academically and developmentally successful, allowing them to reach their full potential as productive members of the United States.

Structure and Activities

The National Collaborative on Education and Health (the Collaborative) will be guided by a national steering committee which will be responsible for providing overall strategic guidance to the Collaborative, supporting the implementation of best practices and recommendations developed by the Collaborative, helping to disseminate information and attracting resources to the work of the Collaborative.

The work of the Collaborative will primarily take place through working groups that will bring together practitioners, experts and policymakers around a specific topic/charge set by the national steering committee. The working groups will develop recommendations and identify best practices addressing their charge and will identify strategies for supporting the adoption of these recommendations and best practices. The working groups will also propose a plan for disseminating this information to relevant stakeholders and encouraging key institutions to make the recommended changes.

In addition, the Collaborative will develop and implement a communications plan around the core values and mission of the Collaborative, emphasizing the economic and equity case, to educate and motivate key constituencies around best practices and policy recommendations.

Focus Areas

The work of the Collaborative will focus on changes that will support schools, with a focus on the K-12 environment, in creating the conditions for student health and academic success. Focus areas that are timely and have the potential to make a significant impact in meeting the mission of the Collaborative will be identified by the steering committee and addressed through working groups. Past focus areas of the Collaborative are as follows:

Addressing the Causes of Chronic Absenteeism

Chronic absenteeism—or missing 10 percent or more of school days for any reason—is an early warning sign of academic risk and school dropout. While the causes of chronic absenteeism are multi-fold, research shows that student health issues are a leading contributor. As a result, identifying and implementing health interventions is a critical step to addressing chronic absenteeism and a key opportunity for collaboration among the health, public health and education sectors.

Preventing Substance Use in Schools

Substance use and misuse remains a serious problem in the nation's schools and directly contributes to poor performance by students. Given that schools can serve as a point of intervention for both primary prevention and early screening and treatment of substance use, there is a need to identify evidence-based best practices and emerging models of intervention to prevent substance use and misuse among students.

Incorporating Health and Wellness Metrics into Education Data Systems

Given the education sector's increased emphasis on data-based decision making and transparency and given the importance of health to student's ability to learn, there is an important opportunity for integrating health and wellness metrics into education data systems. Incorporating metrics for health and wellness into these systems can provide educators, policy makers and the public with a more complete understanding of how student health and wellness are impacting learning and are key to improving academic outcomes.

Identifying New Models for Delivery of School Health Services

While schools have always been an important center for providing safety net and emergency care for students (e.g., school nurses, school-based health clinics) and having healthy students has been important to learning, the growing complexity of the health challenges faced by our students (from obesity and food insecurity to managing multiple chronic conditions) requires a reexamination of the health-related services available within schools and how they are financed.

In 2016, it is expected that the Collaborative will build on this work and focus on issues including working with the mental health community to develop and promote the use of a primary prevention framework and agenda; ensuring the implementation of the recently passed Every Student Succeeds Act supports student health and wellness; supporting increased access to and resources for school health services by leveraging the reversal of the free care policy; and, developing and promoting strategies to increase the capacity of the education sector to identify and address student health needs.