

SECTION 3: SCHOOL HEALTH PROGRAMMES

Introduction

When a child reaches school going age, it is necessary that, the health care that was provided when they were under five years is continued.

School health focuses on ensuring health promotion, conservation, protection and correction of abnormalities of the school population.

A school health programme is an integral part of community health. A school health approach is advocated in the provision of health services as school children are easy to reach, they also disseminate health messages to the larger population.

It is therefore important to consider school health programmes as a priority need of the community.

Objectives

By the end of this section you will be able to:

- Describe how to organise a school health programme
- State the objectives of a school health programme
- Explain how to plan and implement school health services
- State the activities undertaken during a school health service
- Evaluate school health programmes

Organisation of School Health Programmes

In Kenya, it is your responsibility as a community health nurse to design school health programmes. In order to organise a practical school health programme you need to involve the rest of the health team members, the school administration and the community.

Who are members of school health committees?

The following are members of the school health team:

- Teachers
- Pupils and students
- Parents
- Community formal and informal leaders
- Community health nurse

To organise a good school health programme, you need to do the following:

- Assess the problems of school children
- Establish practical goals for the school population
- Carry out the needed activities
- Evaluate the process and results of the programs

The whole idea behind a school health programme, is to ensure that the needs of the school child are met.

What are the needs of the school child?

A Stable Home

The home should provide basic needs especially shelter and security.

Proper Nutrition

The child needs to grow well physically and mentally. It is therefore important for the child to take adequate nutrition at least three times a day. The diet should have extra proteins and vitamins to meet there nutritional needs. This will help the child to cope with demands of school life. The meals may be provided at home, school, or may be packed.

Freedom from Fatigue

The child needs to have enough rest at home from school activities. The evening meal should be taken early so that the child will have enough sleep and rest.

Clothing

This is normally provided as school uniform, which should be clean and tidy. The child needs to wear shoes to prevent injuries and hookworm infestation

Good Sight, Hearing and Speech

Defects of sight, hearing and speech interfere with the learning process of a child. Early detection of all disabilities and referral to appropriate specialist is a very important activity of a school health programme.

Freedom from Infection

All school children should be immunised against childhood diseases. Treatment of common conditions, for example colds, skin rashes, sore throat and cuts should also be given. The treatment could take place in the school clinic or in the local health care facility.

Pure and Safe Water

This should be provided in the school and at home to prevent water related diseases. Adequate sanitation, proper excreta and refuse disposal is important at home and in school.

Clean Buildings

The home and school environment should be kept clean.

Objectives of School Health

The health programmes aim at:

- Promoting and maintaining the health of the school children.
- Promoting positive health behaviour among staff and students.
- Bringing up citizens who understand basic good health habits.
- Ensuring general community health by using the child as a channel for health messages to the family.
- Improving the physical and social environment of the school.
- Providing the following aspects of prevention of disease; Primary prevention, for example eating diets rich in vitamins A and C, iron and protein; Secondary prevention, that is, early diagnosis and treatment; Tertiary prevention which includes rehabilitation.

The following activities are undertaken to achieve the objectives of the school health programme:

- Carrying out observation, screening, physical examination and epidemiological investigations.
- Rendering emergency services and care of a continuing illness.

- Counselling or arranging for counselling of pupils, teachers and other persons in the school population.
- Involving parents, pupils and teachers in planning and conducting health care activities.
- Contributing to the development of a curriculum in health related matters, through clubs such as, biology, mathematics, scout association, Red Cross, social clubs and home science.
- Consultation with teachers and other personnel.
- Referral for specialised/continued care.

Planning and Implementation of School Health Services

The first step in organising a school health programme is to assess the health problems. One way of doing this is by conducting a survey.

Assessing Health Needs

Where can you source information about school health needs in your catchment area?

The Clinic Records

Clinic records from the health care facility near the school. This will provide information about the health problems that are commonly seen among school children who attend the centre.

Reports

Previous reports on school health services at the health centre and at the district level. These reports are given monthly and quarterly.

Health Team Workers

You can hold discussions with the health care teams in your catchment area, to find out health problems of school children and their possible solutions.

Teachers, Students and Parents

Discussions with teachers, students and parents will yield useful information about their problems, and will also give you a chance to explain the importance of school health services.

Personal Observations and Experiences

You can gather a lot of information merely by observing and listening to people, as you make contact and interact with them.

Formal and Informal Leaders

Village leaders usually have a repertoire about the most disturbing health care problems, and can assist you to plan school health services.

Once you gather the information regarding the health needs of school children in your catchment area, you then need to discuss your findings, and plan your programme with stakeholders from the Ministry of Health.

These include the:

- District medical officers of health
- District public health nurse
- Transport officers
- District health administrative officer
- District health education officer
- District public health officer
- District medical records officer

Implementing a school health programme requires quite a lot of resources. You will require funds for equipment, drugs, supplies, fuel and staff. You will also need cooperation from your team members. It is therefore very important for you to carefully identify each member of the team, and discuss with them their roles during the school health services.

Resources Required for School Health Programmes

Like all good programmes, you will require some resources to implement a school health programme.

What resources do you think you would require for a school health programme?

Money

Funding for school health programmes mainly is the responsibility of the government. Stakeholders also give financial support to the government through procurement of equipment, drugs and supplies, vehicles, training of personnel, supporting advocacy, meetings and development of policies, guidelines and standards.

Manpower

Personnel from the ministry of health and education need to be trained on relevant issues for the implementation process.

More human resources can also be sourced from the community by training the community leaders, and the communities own resource personnel to ensure support and sustainability of the programme.

Materials

Policies, guidelines and training materials, drugs, vaccines, supplies and transport.

Time

Time is required for the planning, implementing and evaluating. The time for the programmes should not interfere with school activities, and should be convenient for both the implementers and the beneficiaries. There should be sufficient time for the implementation process.

During the planning phase you also need to consider the following supporting activities.

Effective partnerships between teachers and health workers, and between the education and health sectors.

The success of school health programmes demands an effective partnership between ministries of education and health, and teachers and health workers.

The health sector retains the responsibility for the health of children, but the education sector is responsible for implementing, and often funding the school based programmes. These sectors need to identify responsibilities and present a coordinated action, to improve health and learning outcomes from children.

Pupil Awareness and Participation

Children must be important participants in all aspects of school health programmes, and not simply the beneficiaries.

Children should participate in health policy development and implementation efforts, to create a safer and more sanitary environment.

Health promotion aimed at their parents, other children, community members is taught during school health services. Children in turn disseminate. This is an effective way to help young people and the community acquire the knowledge, attitudes, values and skills needed to adopt healthy lifestyles, and to support health and education for all.

Implementing School Health Services

You should start by preparing a work plan together with members of your health facility team. Make sure you allow enough time, depending on the number of schools to be covered and their health needs.

You should also organise the resources you will need to perform the tasks at hand, so that you and your team can be punctual on the day of the service. Since some of the resources at your disposal will be teachers, pupils and community leaders, remember to promote teamwork during implementation. Their morale and enthusiasm should be kept high as they participate.

Activities Carried out During School Health Services

Physical Examination

The objective of carrying out a physical examination is to recognise the signs of common ailments, treat the minor ones and refer those which require specialised attention. This examination should be done systematically from head to toe for every child. A cumulative record of a child's history, medical examination and immunisations should be kept for each child.

Head

Tinea capitis(ring worms), hair colour, texture, cleanliness and lice.

Eyes

- Visual acuity.
- Colour of conjunctiva.
- Discharge.
- Pallor would indicate anaemia.
- Yellow discolouration would indicate jaundice.
- Redness would indicate conjunctivitis such as trachoma.
- Check for ulceration and softness, which would indicate signs of keratomalacia (vitamin A deficiency).
- To determine the eye sight. A snellen eye chart is used to check left and right eyes.

Nose

Check for, nasal discharge, deviated septum and polyps.

Ear

Ear discharge or pain, tinnitus and impacted wax.

Mouth

Cleanliness or oral hygiene, smooth appearance, swollen beefy red sores and atrophic papillae.

Teeth and Gums

Dental cavities, malpositioned, molted appearance (fluorosis), bleeding and cleanliness

Neck

Enlarged cervical glands, distended jugular veins and enlarged thyroid gland.

Arms

Absence or presence of B.C.G scar.
Weak and tender or swollen arms and presence of oedema.

Hands

Cleanliness.

Nails

If short and clean. Colour: Pallor indicates signs of anaemia.
Shape: Spoon shape indicates iron deficiency anaemia.

Skin

Rashes, cuts, scabies, lack of fat under the skin. Rough and dry swollen.

Body

Tinea corporis, cleanliness and signs of malnutrition.

Legs

Orthopaedic problems, jiggers, injuries, deformities, bowed and knock knees.

Clothing

Cleanliness.

Height and Weight

Screening the children for height and weight to assess their development.

Referral Services

This service is given to children who have ailments needing care outside the school. They are referred to the nearest health facility or hospital, depending on the nature of illness and if it requires to be seen by a specialist.

Inspection of the School Environment

Since the children spend a lot of the time in school, it is important to ensure that their environment is safe and clean.

Location of the School

Surroundings should be clean, free from noise pollution, away from industrial and other waste or swampy area.

Sanitation

The school should have a good water supply, clean and enough latrines, and solid waste disposal systems. There should be separate toilets for female and male students. The environment should be clean and well maintained.

Playground

It should be dry with no potholes or stones to prevent accidents.

Classroom

This should be clean, well ventilated with adequate lighting. It should not be overcrowded and the students should be able to hear the teacher and see the black board from where they sit.

Furniture

The seats should be simple and not attached to each other so that the pupils can move them. The children's feet should be able to touch the floor when they are seated.

Promotion of Proper Nutrition

This consists of the importance of eating a balanced diet and good feeding habits, if there is a feeding programme observe the following:

- Methods of cooking and storage of food
- Personal hygiene of food handlers and children
- Cleanliness of the utensils
- Cleanliness of the kitchen
- Screening of the food handlers

Sharing Health Messages

You should identify and plan to share the appropriate health messages with the school population. The health messages shared should include, prevention of common health problems, such as, sexually transmitted infections, HIV/AIDS, skin conditions amongst others.

Promotion of Personal Hygiene

This is done by advising the children to do the following:

- Taking a daily bath
- Brushing teeth after meals
- Washing of hands before eating and after visiting the toilet
- Keeping the hair and nails short and clean
- Wearing clean clothes

Record Keeping

It is important to record every health activity that you undertake. This applies to school health service activities. These records are used for evaluation.

The records should reflect:

- The number of schools covered.
- The number of pupils treated and types of ailments
- The number of pupils referred
- Activities carried out
- Health messages shared
- Information on the environmental health
- Effectiveness of the school health services

Evaluating School Health Services

When you started planning your school health services, you formulated objectives. It is important to find out whether you have achieved them. This is where you start when evaluating your school health services. You should also ask yourselves the following questions:

- Did you follow the work plan?
- Were the services geared towards meeting the priority health needs?
- Did you carry out all the necessary activities during the school health services?
- How effective were the services you provided?

You can use the following steps to evaluate your school health services.

Gathering Information

This is done using the same sources that you used earlier during planning.

Analysing Information

Compare the work actually done with what you had indicated in your work plan. For example,

- How many schools were included in your plan and how many actually received the services?
- What is causing the difference between planned activities and the actual work done?

Identify Areas Needing Improvements

You can gather this information from your analysis once you identify the type or nature of improvement needed, you will then need to decide your course of action.

It might be that you will need to change the roles and activities of the team.

Take Corrective Action

Make a list of things that should be done and then go ahead and do them.