Advocating for Change: Working to create asthma-friendly schools

- Part One -

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Learning Objectives

After this call, learners will be able to:

• Identify the benefits of policy change as it relates to creating an asthma-friendly school environment;

• Access appropriate AFSI Toolkit resources that can support school policy activities; and

• Recognize how policy structures work within education systems.
What is AFSI?

• Keeping students healthy, in school and ready to learn
• Comprehensive approach to asthma management in schools
• Coalition-based model
• Aligns with the NAEPP and CDC strategies for addressing asthma in school
Asthma & Children

- 7 million children live with asthma
- 14.4 million lost school days due to asthma in 2008
- 1,681,000 ER visits in 2006
The Need for Policy

National Asthma Public Policy Agenda:

• All school systems should adopt and implement a comprehensive plan for management of asthma.

• All school systems should adopt and implement an environmental assessment and management plan.
Asthma School Policies

- Self-carry medications (all states)
- Asthma Action Plans
- Bus idling
- Asthma education
- Tobacco-free campus

- Full-time school nurse
- Emergency protocol
- Exposure to outdoor air pollution
- Indoor Air Quality (IAQ) Policies
Linda Sheriff
Coordinator, School Health Programs
National School Boards Association
National School Boards Association, founded in 1940, represents state associations of school boards and their more than 90,000 local school board members throughout the United States.
There are Many Levels Involved

Federal level: President, Congress, Department of Education

State level: Governor, Legislature, State board of education, Chief state school officer, State education agency staff

School district level: School board, Superintendent, Central office staff

School level: Principal, School staff, School improvement council

Local government
Education Governance 101

• States, not the federal government, are responsible for educating all children in their state.

• Each state creates its own education structure, standards and policies.

• Traditionally, state governments have given the running of schools to local jurisdictions, mostly through local school boards.
Federal Role in Education

• The influence of the U.S. Department of Education on state and local governance of education has been increasing, especially since NCLB in 2000.

• The Department of Agriculture (USDA) and the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) also play a role.

• Less than 10% of funding for education is from the Federal Government.
Where does the Money come from?

Figure 1a. Percent Distribution of Total Public Elementary-Secondary School System Revenue: 2007-08

- Federal sources: 8.1%
- State sources: 48.3%
- Local sources: 43.7%

Total: $582.1 billion

State Role in Education

- There are 50+ distinct education systems in the United States.
- States set general guidelines
- Most states defer to local districts to control schools within the guidelines they have set.
Who’s Who at the State Level in Education

- Governor
- Legislature
- State Board of Education
- Chief state school officer
- State education agency staff

• Become knowledgeable about who has what authority and how they interact.
Who’s Who at the Local Level in Education

School board

Superintendent

Central office staff

Local government

*In theory*…

- The school board makes policy
- The superintendent implements it
School’s Role in Education

- Individual superintendents and principals have broad autonomy within the bounds of federal, state, and local policies.
- Principal runs the school based on the policies and procedures and guidelines from the central office.
- Much of what occurs in the school is set by the Principal.
- Schools can set school policies that are aligned with state and district policies,
Who’s Who at the School Level?

- The Principal is the key gatekeeper
- Other entry points for health issues
  - school health council
  - health and mental health services staff
  - school improvement team
  - classroom teachers
  - parent organizations
  - student organizations
Understand How Policies and Procedures are Organized

- Elements of comprehensive policy may not be in one policy
- Assess policies by element to determine comprehensiveness of district policy approach
- NSBA asthma policy checklist: www.nsba.org/schoolhealth
Policy Initiatives: Where to start

• Needs assessment.

• Review current policies
  – Determine which are state and which are local policies.
  – Are there gaps? How can they be filled?

• Understand the policymakers’ context
  – Learn about priorities and beliefs
  – Monitor budgets, agendas, discussions, boards processes, and board members’ interests
Policy Initiatives: Make a plan

- Set priorities
- Find out who to contact within the school system
- Identify a champion.
- Identify ways you can help overcome potential issues
How to be heard by education leaders

– Serve on advisory committees
– Testify at meetings and public hearings
– Send e-mails, letters, etc. to the best entry point
– Contact the person responsible
– Make presentations at meetings and conferences attended by policymakers
– Join the local PTA or PTO and voice your issue
Making your case

• Link to the district’s education mission and goals
• Develop key messages and simple strategies
• Note serious problems/needs, but emphasize solutions
• Use good data
• Identify options
Presenting Information

- Brief oral presentation - only the most important points
- Provide succinct written rationale
- Use credible and balanced research findings
- Avoid jargon
- Prepare simple charts and graphs to show key findings
More Tips

• Work within the hierarchy
• Stay focused on the goal
• Don’t expect quick or easy success - sustain the effort
• Be willing to adapt or compromise…but know your bottom line
• Avoid burning bridges
Guide for Families, Schools, and Communities

Sharing Successes

Claudia Guglielmo
American Lung Association in New York
Asthma Coalition of Long Island
Successes in Asthma Policy Development and Adoption

• Asthma Champion
  Well respected, Longevity in the district, Proven track record
• Paves the way for other initiatives
• Programs that would have otherwise not existed
• Partnerships for sustainability
• Needs assessment
Barriers Surrounding Asthma Policy Development and Adoption

- The ‘P’ word
- Sustainability
- Weak policy
- Bureaucracy
- Other more pressing issues
Top Ten Tips for Working With Schools...

1. The best times to approach schools would be the months of October, late January, and February.

2. If possible, approach a school with an internal partner, for example a teacher or parent you already have a relationship with. This will legitimize you even more!

3. Working with schools should be a partnership. Explain what you can offer and why you benefit from working with schools.

4. Ask yourself - “Why Should They Care?” When you share your thirty-second spiel over the phone or with a person in the hallway, you need to be to the point. Why are your prevention services important?

5. Use local (school or county) data if possible to talk about prevention in their school.

Source: Bogli Consulting
Top Ten Tips for Working With Schools...

6. Know the education language. The word “standards” to someone in public health means something very different to a teacher.

7. Align what you are offering to curriculum standards, school policies, raising test scores, increasing attendance, etc.

8. Understand that many teachers and other school staff are overwhelmed. Don’t add something to their plate. Consider having them do what they do, but in a different way.

9. Schools are stressed. There is overall a lack of funding, support, resources and pressure to raise test scores. If you can offer a solution (for example, be a resource) you’re in!

10. Ask questions. If you don’t understand something, explain that you come from a different perspective and realize schools are unique entities!

Source: Bogli Consulting
Resources

• AFSI Toolkit (www.lungusa.org/afsitoolkit)

• National School Boards Association (www.NSBA.org)

• CDC’s Division of Adolescent and School Health (http://www.cdc.gov/HealthyYouth/index.htm)

• American Lung Association - National Staff
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We will breathe easier when the air in every American community is clean and healthy.

We will breathe easier when people are free from the addictive grip of cigarettes and the debilitating effects of lung disease.

We will breathe easier when the air in our public spaces and workplaces is clear of secondhand smoke.

We will breathe easier when children no longer battle airborne poisons or fear an asthma attack.

*Until then, we are fighting for air.*