

**ACTION TOOLKIT:**

MAY 2015

**Investing in coordinated school health for all students**

Improving the health of our region's students not only ensures their success in school today, it also creates a foundation for lifelong health and well-being. Coordinated school health programs are a proven and effective tool for achieving these goals. Use the information below to guide your conversations and action around coordinated school health with family, friends, school organizations, government officials, or the media. **Be a thought leader and an agent of change in your community!**

**TAKE ACTION!**  
Be part of the solution.**There are many steps you can take to invest  
in coordinated school health for all students.**

The success of coordinated school health programs depends on collaboration among school administration, staff, parents, students, and the entire community. If you want to get involved, you may want to start first with your local school or district. Or, you may want to look outward to other schools and districts in the region, particularly those lacking in resources or serving vulnerable students.

**Educate and inform:**

- Read the companion [Discussion Guide](#).
- Read the *For the Sake of All* brief: [How does health influence school dropout?](#)
- Watch the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation video, [Education: It Matters More to Health Than Ever Before](#), to learn about the connection between education and health, and share with others.
- Explore research on the [link between health and educational outcomes](#).
- Share what you've learned with others. This could be as simple as having a discussion with a friend or colleague. Or bring the message to a larger audience, such as hosting a panel discussion, or giving a presentation to your local parent-teacher organization or school board.

**Organize and advocate:**

- Identify and promote the use of resources for developing school health policy and for planning and assessing school health programs, such as [CDC's School Health Index](#), [NASBE's Fit, Healthy, and Ready to Learn](#), and [USDA's Changing the Scene](#). Make these resources available to school districts in the region.
- Meet with school personnel, students, parents, and community members to determine what support (e.g., materials, expertise, time) they can offer to advance the eight components of a coordinated school health program. Or identify how they can support implementation of the [School Health Index](#) process.



- Advocate for coordinated school health programs by writing to or calling your local and state policy makers, such as [Missouri Senators](#) or [Missouri House of Representatives](#).
- Participate in parent-teacher organizations, attend school board meetings, and speak at community forums on the topic of coordinated school health (see *Talking Points* on page four).
- Talk to the administrators in your school district about making school facilities available outside of school hours through [joint-use agreements](#) to promote physical activity opportunities for students and their families.
- Ask local businesses to donate incentives for students, staff, parents, and volunteers to participate in coordinated school health planning and delivery.
- Organize a resource fair that showcases the positive youth development programs that currently exist in your community.
- Write a letter to the editor or op-ed in support of increased funding for coordinated school health programs, developing school-community partnerships to support improving student health, and/or expanding access to positive youth development programming.



## Get involved and volunteer:

- Serve on a school health advisory council. If such a committee does not yet exist, volunteer to help organize and develop one to bring together school, student, and community volunteers to coordinate resources, activities, and services. [The Guide to Community-School Health Councils](#) or [School Health Advisory Council Guide](#) can help with this process.
- Serve as a mentor, coaching assistant, monitor, chaperone, or tutor for school health activities and programs.
- Lend your time and expertise to help schools, districts, or community organizations apply for funding to expand coordinated school health programs.
- Volunteer your time with youth organizations that provide youth development or health-related programming outside of school hours. Just a few examples in the St. Louis region include:
  - » [Big Brothers Big Sisters of Eastern Missouri](#)
  - » [Boys and Girls Clubs of Greater St. Louis](#)
  - » [Girls Incorporated of St. Louis](#)
  - » [Girls on the Run](#)
  - » [Mathews-Dickey Boys' and Girls' Club](#)
  - » [Wyman Center's Teen Outreach Program](#)
  - » [YMCA of Greater St. Louis](#)
  - » [Youth In Need](#)

These are just a few of the many organizations in our community working to improve the health and well-being of youth. There are many others who would welcome your contributions of time, talent, or resources.

Of course, health patterns and behaviors begin at home. You can also make an impact by modeling and reinforcing health education messages that are taught in the classroom with your own children at home.



## Key components for developing a coordinated school health program



At the center of these efforts is involvement of partners. The most effective coordinated school health programs involve state or local governments, foundations, community organizations, and businesses to manage efforts and maximize resources. Look to partners to provide expertise, funding, training, or technical assistance to support and sustain coordinated school health programs. Also, students should have meaningful involvement in planning and supporting efforts.

### Involve partners



### Build support

- Engage school administrators and establish a school health council. Identify a point person, like a school health coordinator, who will lead overall direction of efforts. Involve students both in the planning and leadership. Clearly establish the roles council members will play.
- Provide professional development opportunities to equip school staff and council members with the tools and knowledge of coordinated school health. Focus on building leadership, communication, and collaboration skills. For example, see [Building Competencies for Managers and Staff of Coordinated School Health Programs](#), or have staff join a state or national listserv such as [Comprehensive Health Education Network](#) to learn of new training opportunities.



### Assess the current environment

- Start by assessing your school's or district's strengths and opportunities for improvement using [CDC's School Health Index](#).
- To help gather support from school administrators, it will be helpful to outline what resources exist and what is currently going on in your district around health. Useful information to gather may include:
  - » Student health status, needs, and health-risk behaviors. Schools can assess health-risk behaviors as well as general health status through formal surveys such as the [Youth Risk Behavior Survey](#) and [School Health Profiles](#).
  - » School attendance and academic performance. See [Missouri Department of Education's Comprehensive Data System](#) for data on your school or district.
  - » Talk with others to find out what organizations or programs provide youth with positive opportunities for development, especially those that promote nutrition and physical activity. Check out [CAP4Kids](#) for a list of programs and resources across our region.
  - » See [Funding Coordinated School Health](#) for more information on exploring funding opportunities.



### Develop an action plan

- Focus on students. Coordinated school health programs should address the unique health and education needs of students and give students opportunities to build skills, exercise leadership, and form relationships with caring adults.
- Prioritize areas for improvement based on needs of students. Develop a clear plan of how these areas will be addressed – and include a timeline.
- Look to existing programs for guidance. Choose from evidence-based programs that already exist. See [registries of effective programs](#) and check out [guidelines](#) CDC developed to help schools promote physical activity and healthy eating.
- Use multiple strategies. Include a wide range of approaches such as classroom instruction, policies and procedures, environmental changes, health and nutrition services, and parent, student, and community involvement that promote the health and well-being of students.
- Plan for ongoing data collection to inform how the effort is progressing.

## Talking points:

- All students in our region deserve the opportunity to be healthy. However, due to race and socioeconomic factors, not all children have access to the same health information, resources, and care.
- Outside of the family, schools play the most significant role in a child's development. Delivering health and well-being programs and services through schools can be an effective way to meet the needs of students, but requires the collaboration of educators, families, and the community.
- Coordinated school health programs can improve student performance, reduce absenteeism and dropout rates, decrease fighting and risky behaviors, and improve cooperation among parents, teachers, and the community. Coordinated school health programs can also help students develop healthy habits that last a lifetime.
- Outside of school, positive youth development programming, such as mentoring programs, community service, and leadership activities, can also have an impact on health. These types of programs support emotional and social development and provide opportunities for youth to develop healthy relationships.
- Positive youth development programs can increase self-esteem, improve academic performance, and reduce violence and risk behaviors, along with helping to instill healthy habits and improve overall well-being.

Use these TALKING POINTS when informing others about investing in coordinated school health.

## Resources:

1. [CDC Resources for Coordinated School Health](#) offer statistics, resources, and tips on implementing and improving coordinated school health programs.
2. [Alliance for a Healthier Generation](#) is a catalyst for children's health and works with schools, companies, community organizations, healthcare professionals, and families to transform the conditions and systems that lead to healthier kids.
3. The [Manual for School Health Programs](#) offers tips for developing and evaluating coordinated school health plans, as well as recommended policies and procedures.
4. [Missouri Coordinated School Health Coalition](#) is a collaborative of public and private organizations assisting Missouri's schools, families, and communities with their coordinated school health programs, using the CDC's model.
5. [School-Based Health Alliance](#) is the national voice for school-based health care and serves the school-based health care field by providing technical assistance, resources, and trainings so they can provide the best-quality health care to their patients.
6. [Afterschool Alliance](#) works with public and private partners to increase investments in and access to affordable, quality afterschool programs for students nationwide.
7. [American Graduate](#) is an initiative led by the Nine Network of Public Media to help communities across the country, including St. Louis, engage with teachers, students, their families, and other local stakeholders to address the dropout crisis.
8. [BJC School Outreach and Youth Development](#) partners with schools throughout the St. Louis region to administer K-12 health education and provide youth development resources to the classroom in the areas of nutrition, sexual behaviors, tobacco, safety, physical activity, substance abuse, and career exploration.
9. [Boys and Girls Club](#) provides a safe and empowering space for hundreds of youth to learn, play, and grow every day. Youth involved in their programming can participate in character and leadership development programs, health skills, arts, outdoor recreation, and more.
10. [The Community Guide](#) offers research, systematic reviews, and recommendations on health-related interventions, including school-based and after-school programs.



## Sample social media posts:

When using these sample posts, make sure to include a link to the *For the Sake of All* website: <http://forthesakeofall.org>.

- 61% of African American h.s. students in MO are not physically active. Learn how coordinated school health programs can promote health.
- Healthier students are better learners. Find out how you can help invest in coordinated school health programs in our community.
- All students, regardless of race, deserve the opportunity to be healthy. Coordinated school health programs can help.
- Positive youth development programs improve academic success, increase self-esteem & reduce violence – invest today.
- Does your community offer positive youth programming and safe spaces for out-of-school hours? Learn how this can affect health.