



Preventing Injuries and Violence in Schools: New Resources for Public Health Professionals

***Public health professionals have an important role to play
in making schools safer.***

Research indicates that between 10 and 25 percent of childhood injuries occur in and around schools.ⁱ Each year, over 3.7 million children suffer an injury at school substantial enough to limit activity or require medical attention.ⁱⁱ There are nine unintentional injuries for every one intentional injury at school.ⁱⁱⁱ Over 10 percent of students report being bullied “sometimes” or “weekly” and another 13 percent report being a perpetrator of bullying.^{iv} The most common unintentional injuries at school occur on the playground, in sports and during transportation.^v

Today, schools are assuming an increasingly important role in health promotion, disease prevention, and injury prevention. Now there are injury and violence prevention guidelines for schools.

Public health professionals are important partners for educators and other school personnel, bringing expertise and resources that can strengthen efforts to prevent injuries and violence in schools. The following are some of the ways public health agencies can promote safer schools:

- In cooperation with school officials, review and apply injury prevention guidelines, such as those being developed by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and the American Academy of Pediatrics/National Association of School Nurses.
- Provide information and technical assistance to schools interested in developing and evaluating the impact of school-based injury prevention activities.
- Assist state and local education agencies to assess and track the causes of injuries within individual schools systems in order to develop strategies to address these injuries.
- In states that mandate reporting of school injuries, assist the central source (department of education or department of health) with accessing, tabulating/analyzing and reporting on injuries. Disseminate findings broadly (officials, staff, students and communities) and use for developing and evaluating interventions.
- Collaborate with school administration, education and health officials, students, and families in community-wide injury and violence prevention efforts.

A variety of federal agencies and national organizations have instituted projects in the past several years to address the problems of injury and violence in schools. The resources and guidelines developed by these projects provide useful tools for public health officials who are interested in initiating or strengthening collaborative efforts with officials responsible for education, school facilities, pupil transportation and school health programs. The following describes some of these initiatives. It is not intended to be a comprehensive list; we welcome additional ideas and resources.

Key Resources

- **School Health Guidelines to Prevent Unintentional Injuries and Violence:** The Center for Disease Control and Prevention's (CDC) Division of Adolescent and School Health (DASH) coordinated a multi-agency effort to develop guidelines that will assist state and local educational agencies and schools in promoting safety and teaching students the skills needed to prevent future injuries and violence. They provide guidance for all components of a coordinated school health program for grades K–12. Released on 12-14-01 in the Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Report *MMWR* 50(No. RR-22): 1-84.
For more information: <http://www.cdc.gov/mmwr/preview/mmwrhtml/rr5022a1.htm>
- **Health, Mental Health, and Safety in Schools Guidelines:** The guidelines will cover 14 broad health, mental health, and safety areas to assist school health program directors and others in creating a healthy and safe school environment. They will include injury, suicide and violence prevention. The first edition is to be released in Fall, 2002. The American Academy of Pediatrics and the National Association of School Nurses coordinated the development of the guidelines with funding from the Health Resources and Services Administration's Maternal and Child Health Bureau (HRSA/MCHB).
For more information: Su Li at the American Academy of Pediatrics, sli@aap.org
- **The Children's Safety Network (CSN):** This unique group of resource centers assists states, communities and others to prevent children and adolescent injuries. CSN's four national resource centers provide information, training, and technical assistance to facilitate the development of new injury and violence prevention programs and to enhance and support existing efforts. CSN is funded by HRSA/MCHB. Some of the school-related publications include:
 - *Youth Suicide Prevention Fact Sheets*
 - *MCH Agencies: Traffic Safety Partners Fact Sheet*
 - *Taking Action to Prevent Adolescent Violence: Educational Resources for Schools and Community Organizations*
 - *Costs of Injuries in Schools Fact Sheet*
 - Fact sheets on violence prevention, suicide prevention, and injury prevention in rural areas
 - *Summary of School Safety Resources on the World Wide Web*, a list of organizations active in school safety
 - List of curricula that address injury and violence prevention
 - *Injuries in the School Environment: A Resource Guide*, revised edition available Fall 2002 (1997 Edition is still available from CSN)**For more information:** <http://www.ChildrensSafetyNetwork.org>
- **SHPPS (School Health Policies and Programs Study):** Sponsored by CDC's DASH, SHPPS is a national survey periodically conducted to assess school health policies and programs at the state, district, school, and classroom levels. SHPPS 2000 Fact Sheets include data on school policies and educational programs on unintentional injury prevention, violence prevention, and suicide prevention. Results from SHPPS 2000 were published in the September 2001 *Journal of School Health*.
For more information: <http://www.cdc.gov/shpps>
- **Safe and Drug-Free Schools Program:** The Safe and Drug-Free Schools Program, aimed at reducing violence and drug, alcohol, and tobacco use, provides grants for a wide range of school- and community-based education and prevention activities. Grantees include state and local education agencies, institutions of higher education, and other public and private nonprofit organizations. To see grant opportunities and grant recipients, go to: <http://www.ed.gov/offices/OESE/SDFS/grants.html>.
For more information: <http://www.ed.gov/offices/OESE/SDFS/>

- The **National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA)**: NHTSA offers a variety of resources supporting safe pupil transportation, including publications and links to partner organizations such as the National Association of State Directors of Pupil Transportation Services. NHTSA materials include the *Getting To School Safely Community Action Kit* addressing the full range of school transportation safety issues and resources for the annual National Walk to School Day.

For more information: <http://www.nhtsa.dot.gov/people/injury/buses/index.html>
- The **National Organizations for Youth Safety (NOYS)**: Working with 45 youth membership and youth-serving organizations and agencies, NOYS recently released *Make Your Parties Rock Substance-Free! A Guide to Safe and Sober Event Party Planning* to assist youth, parents, educators and others in planning alcohol- and drug-free parties. Other materials developed by young people for young people include *The Speak Out and Make NOYS Project Planning Kit*, a step-by-step guide for creating and implementing a community health and safety project. Major support for NOYS is provided by NHTSA.

For more information: <http://www.noys.org>
- **Safe Schools/Healthy Students Initiative**: This initiative is aimed at the prevention of violence in schools. To support this effort, the Department of Education's Safe and Drug Free Schools Program, the Department of Justice's Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention, and the Department of Health and Human Services' Center for Mental Health Services created a grant program for state and local government organizations to promote mental health and prevent violence and substance abuse among youth. The program supports the development of self-sustaining coalitions of state and local governments that have community service delivery systems to promote community-wide understanding of youth problem behaviors and approaches to violence prevention.

For more information: <http://www.mentalhealth.org/schoolviolence/initiative.asp>
- **Anti-Bullying Media Campaign**: HRSA/MCHB is working with Widmeyer Communications and Clemson University's Institute for Family and Neighborhood Life (<http://virtual.clemson.edu/groups/ifnl/mission.htm>) on a national bullying prevention campaign aimed at "tweens", children between the ages of 9 and 13. HRSA/MCHB, Widmeyer, and Clemson will be focused on research and production for the next two years and expect to launch the campaign in September 2003. They are currently soliciting input on effective materials and would like to hear from state agencies interested in collaborating on this project. The final campaign will offer a wide range of tools and resources to aid injury and violence prevention professionals.

For more information: Jason Smith at Widmeyer Communications, Jason.Smith@widmeyer.com
- **Healthy Schools, Healthy Communities**: The Health Resources Services Administration's Bureau of Primary Health Care promotes school health centers as a way to improve access to health services for vulnerable children and adolescents. More than 500 school-based health center programs have been created through the Consolidated Health Centers Program; 130 of these centers are funded through the Healthy Schools, Healthy Communities Program. To search for Healthy Schools, Healthy Communities centers in your state, go to: <http://www.bphc.hrsa.dhhs.gov/databases/fqhc/>.

For more information: <http://www.bphc.hrsa.dhhs.gov/center/>
- **National Strategies for Advancing Bicycle Safety**: This document is the national agenda for bicycling safety developed at a 2000 conference sponsored by NHTSA, CDC, the Federal Highway Administration, and the Pedestrian and Bicycle Information Center. This agenda, which can be downloaded from the NHTSA Web site, provides specific strategies and action steps to improve bike safety. Key areas include enhancing bicycle safety education and increasing bicycle helmet use. A video on helmet use featuring middle school students was developed and will be available in early 2002.

For more information: <http://www.nhtsa.dot.gov/people/injury/pedbimot/bike/index.html>

- **Federal Activities Addressing Violence in Schools:** This comprehensive compilation of programs and resources provides background on surveillance activities, evaluation, research, research synthesis and application, resource development and programmatic activities, and resource and technical assistance centers.
For more information: <http://www.cdc.gov/nccdphp/dash/violence>
- **Young Worker Safety Resource Center:** The Center promotes the safety of youth in the workplace. Resource center staff, located at Education Development Center, Inc. and University of California at Berkeley, have developed a three-hour skill-building curriculum to teach high school-aged youth the fundamentals of occupational safety. Staff provide the curricula and training on its use to school-to-career, vocational education, and other professionals who are responsible for training and placing youth in jobs. The resource center received its initial funding from the National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health, and is currently funded by the US Occupational Safety and Health Administration.
For more information: Chris Miara, Education Development Center, Inc. 617-618-2238
cmiara@edc.org
- **Safeguarding our children: An action guide:** Produced jointly by the US Department of Education and the Department of Justice, this guide provides strategies for developing school safety plans designed to implement the recommendations of the 1998 publication, *Early Warning, Timely Response : A Guide to Safe Schools* which provided schools with information on early warning signs to help troubled children. The Action Guide delivers practical steps schools can take to design safety plans to reduce school violence and get children the help they need. It stresses the importance of a three-stage comprehensive model--which includes prevention, early intervention, and intensive services--to address school violence.
For more information: <http://www.ed.gov/offices/OSERS/OSEP/ActionGuide/>

i Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. (2001). School health guidelines to prevent unintentional injuries and violence. MMWR 50(No. RR-22): 1-84.

ii Miller TR, Spicer RS. (1998). How safe are our schools? American Journal of Public Health. 88(3):413-18.

iii Children's Safety Network. (1997). Injuries in the school environment (2nd ed.). Newton, MA: Author.

iv Nansel TR, Overpeck M, Pilla RS, Ruan WJ, Simons-Morton B, Scheidt P. (2001). Bullying behaviors among US youth: prevalence and association with psychosocial adjustment. JAMA. 285(16): 2094-100.

v Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. (2001). School health guidelines to prevent unintentional injuries and violence. MMWR 50(No. RR-22): 1-84.