



ASHA Position Statement

The Role of the School Health Coordinator

The [American School Health Association](#) (ASHA) believes healthier students are better learners. Essential to cultivating a healthy student is an environment in which students acquire health-related knowledge and skills and are afforded the opportunity to practice healthful behaviors. To accomplish this, ASHA recommends each local education agency adopt the [Whole School, Whole Community, Whole Child](#) (WSCC) model and employ a School Health Coordinator to support implementation. Developed by ASCD and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, the WSCC model is an integrated set of planned, sequential, school-based and community-based policies, programs, activities, and services designed to support the physical, social, emotional, and educational development of every student.

BACKGROUND

The WSCC model's integrated system of supports, which may extend beyond one school department or division, requires passionate leadership, effective communication, and an understanding of the educational system and the social determinants of health. The School Health Coordinator provides direction and oversight, fostering collaboration among local education agency departments, students, families, and the community. The goal of employing a School Health Coordinator is to reduce the duplication of efforts, maximize resources, and ensure that evidence-based programs and interventions are provided to build and sustain a healthy school community.

The School Health Coordinator ensures that all local education agency health initiatives, services, and programs, are aligned, complementary, and effective. As part of this leadership role, the School Health Coordinator:

1. **Strengthens and implements school health policies that align with federal and state laws as well as regulations and best practices.** Staying abreast of the numerous federal laws and programs that support student health and safety, including but not limited to the Every Student Succeeds Act, USDA Local Wellness Policy, and Safe and Drug Free Schools, are essential to this role.
2. **Serves as a liaison to community health and safety programs.** The coordinator builds bridges, acts as a facilitator and specializes in collaboration, partnership-building, data collection, and advocating for the health, safety, and wellness of students and staff.
3. **Communicates school health and safety priorities to district administration, building principals, staff, parents/families, community organizations and students using a variety of tools.** The coordinator skillfully engages all these stakeholders to support the connection between health and learning.
4. **Conducts assessments of student health needs and evaluates school health policies, activities and programs.** The coordinator researches funding opportunities; uses data to develop funding proposals to support programs, services, and special initiatives; implements

funded proposals; develops and manages a school health budget; and uses best practices to evaluate activities.

5. **Provides professional development for local education agency and school-based personnel on policies and the implementation of health-related programming.**
6. **Establishes and maintains a Health Advisory Committee whose members are subject matter experts for the various components of the WSCC model; and provide cultural insight on behalf of the community.** A functional committee can assist the local education agency in ensuring that community values are reflected in health education instruction. Additionally, they can help districts meet performance goals and alleviate financial constraints through their volunteer efforts.

To stay current in the field, a School Health Coordinator has a responsibility to engage in professional learning opportunities, and to participate in local, state and national school-health conferences and organizations such as ASHA. A local education agency administrator should be responsible for supporting, implementing and assessing the work of a coordinator. This ensures consistency in policy and program delivery and communicates the importance of the work done by the coordinator.

Research shows that successful school health programs and services are contingent on administrative support and buy-in and an infrastructure of school-based health teams facilitated by a School Health Coordinator. The School Health Coordinator, as recommended by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, supports intentional coordination of health and wellness programs and activities in schools as described in the WSCC model.

CONCLUSION

ASHA believes school health is an array of programs and services grounded by the WSCC model and supported by several educational departments; and in some local education agencies, involves public health departments, healthcare organizations, and community agencies. The School Health Coordinator is the key organizer, facilitator, program evaluator, and implementation specialist for operationalizing the WSCC model at the school level. Additionally, the School Health Coordinator should be formally educated in a health-related field such as health education, physical education, public health, nursing or medicine; and have experience working in the educational system. Without a School Health Coordinator, it is difficult to successfully design, implement, and evaluate school health programs and services to meet the needs of every child.

ABOUT ASHA

ASHA's mission is to transform all schools into places where every student learns and thrives. ASHA is a unique multidisciplinary organization that provides a means for those employed by local, state and national education and health organizations to work collaboratively and synergistically with concerned parents and community members and with colleagues in higher education to meet ASHA's mission. ASHA members represent the ten components of the coordinated school health model. ASHA helped build the foundation for such a collaborative approach and today, the organization continues to define and strengthen our nation's efforts to improve the lives of children, families, and communities.

References

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