

**Comprehensive School Health “Corn” Model**  
**“Foundations for Healthy Students”**  
**Indian Health Service**  
**Health Education Program**

(Adapted from New Mexico Healthier Schools Model – 6/95)

Just as the corn plant is sacred to many American Indians, children are also a sacred resource that must be protected and nourished in order to grow.

Our goal in the Indian Health Service Health Education Program is to help **“pollinate”** and produce **healthy students**, like the **“ear”** of the corn plant. To reach this goal, we acknowledge the importance of the root system that nourishes the corn plant to mature and ultimately bloom. The **“roots”** of our corn plant represent the responsibility that culture, education, public services, media, families, community and business have in producing healthier students. The roots are also the nurturing network that supplies the resources and energy for the corn plant to grow. There is a saying that *“it takes a whole village to raise a child”*. If we want to raise healthy and educated children, we need the involvement of the whole community.

The **“leaves”** of the corn plant represent the eight components of a comprehensive school health program: nutrition; health education; physical education; staff wellness; family, school and community partnerships; healthy environment; counseling and support; and health services. Each leaf symbolizes the daily opportunities that schools have to interact with our children on health issues. Our children need: (a) teachers who model healthy behaviors, (b) nutritious foods on the campus and in the cafeteria, (c) a structurally safe and violence-free environment, (d) daily fitness activities, (e) regular planned health instruction, and more. To produce healthy and educated students, support for comprehensive school health strategies must be in all schools serving American Indian and Alaska Native children.

Children and youth who begin each day healthy and ready to learn can learn more effectively. The Indian Health Service Health Education Program supports the belief that, in working together with schools, we can provide opportunities for all students to develop sound health behaviors that enable them to reach their full potential. Strategies that encourage family, school and community partnerships, healthy behaviors, academic success and a positive life style are essential components of a comprehensive school health program. To promote health in our students and create healthy schools, the following are suggested:

- ◆ An understanding of the health risks faced by our youth
- ◆ Commitment and cooperation from the community, home, and school to provide a healthy and safe environment
- ◆ Learning experiences that enable young people to acquire the knowledge and skills essential to the adoption of healthy behaviors
- ◆ A safe and supportive learning environment that provides opportunities for students and staff to practice healthy behaviors
- ◆ Support and reinforcement from the community, home and school to increase the possibility that health behaviors will become lifelong health habits

# **The Indian Health Service Vision for Comprehensive School Health**

## **Our Mission**

The Indian Health Service Health Education Program will facilitate a cooperative partnership between schools, parents and communities to provide quality, culturally significant comprehensive school health programs. We will achieve this mission through a commitment to continuous improvement and by involving all the Health Educators, schools and communities.

## **Our Vision**

Our vision is to offer Native American and Alaska Natives the capacity to obtain, interpret, and understand basic health information and services and the competence to use such information and services in ways which are health enhancing to them as individuals and as community members.

- ◆ Students will comprehend concepts related to health promotion and disease prevention
- ◆ Students will demonstrate the ability to access valid health information and health promoting products and services.
- ◆ Students will demonstrate the ability to practice health enhancing behaviors and reduce health risks.
- ◆ Students will analyze the influence of culture, media, technology and other factors on health.
- ◆ Students will demonstrate the ability to use goal setting and decision making skills which enhance health.
- ◆ Students will demonstrate the ability to advocate for personal, family, and community health.

## **Our Values**

The Indian Health Service's Health Education program believes in the pursuit of excellence. In that pursuit, we embrace the following values:

### **Child and Family Focus**

We believe that all children and their families have the right to the highest quality school health program delivered with respect for each individual.

### **Family and School Involvement**

We believe that families and school faculty are important resources in providing the highest quality comprehensive school health program. In an environment of trust and shared responsibility, we will promote teamwork, educational and personal growth.

### **Continual Improvement**

We believe that by incorporating on-going evaluation into comprehensive school health, we will promote school health services, which are community appropriate, cost effective and efficient.

### **Collaboration**

We believe that quality comprehensive school health is the result of mutually beneficial partnerships between our program, schools, the community and other health and education organizations.

### **A Comprehensive School Health Education Program Includes:**

1. School Health Education/Instruction
2. School Health Services
3. School Health Environment
4. Physical Education
5. School Food and Nutrition Services
6. Guidance and Counseling
7. Staff Wellness
8. Family, School, Community Partnerships

## Health Education / Instruction

Health Education provides each child with the skills and knowledge that will enable them to make and practice health decisions that are best for them.

Successful planning of a school health education program requires active community involvement to ensure that the community's expectations and concerns are addressed the school health education curriculum.

Together, the community and school develop a school health education program which reflects the culture of the community and is sensitive to the needs of the child and their family.

A quality health education program includes a sequential curriculum spanning pre-kindergarten through high school graduation. A health education curriculum that supports a vision of health children is the first step toward helping all students develop their own best personal growth. To be considered a comprehensive health education curriculum, the following issues would be addressed within a comprehensive curriculum:

- ◆ two to three hours of instructions weekly in each elementary grade,
- ◆ two semesters of health education at the high school level,
- ◆ routine health education inservice to strengthen teachers' skills,
- ◆ a curriculum that is sequentially based, and includes the Ten content areas of health education, etc.

## **School Health Services**

The Comprehensive School Health Model promotes the delivery of health services for children of all ages. School health services include: fluoridation, development of student health records, mental health services, counseling, speech therapy, well-child physicals and dental exams; immunizations; physical development screenings; eye exams, treatment of health problems, and; prevention and control of disease. Health Services are delivered by such people as school nurses, school psychologists, and public/community health nurses from the tribal or IHS health programs. Comprehensive school health services are identified at each school.

## **School Health Environment**

Children and staff work and learn best when they can focus on learning. The Comprehensive School Health Model recognizes the importance of providing a safe social and physical environment. A "safe" school is a school that promotes personal growth, healthy interpersonal relationships with fellow students and staff, wellness and freedom from discrimination and abuse. The child who does not worry about safety is in a position to grow, learn and explore their world.

The community, school, parents and business must work together to develop policies and procedures that assure that a healthy school environment is created and children are protected. Specific examples of guidelines to follow for a health school environment include establishing emergency procedures for bomb scares, drug-related situations, gang member disruptions, emergency communications, tobacco use, universal precautions for handling blood and other body fluids, sanitation, playground safety, attractiveness of school, etc.

## Physical Education

The mind and body are not separated in a comprehensive school health program. Physical education should be promote and provide opportunities for children to develop lifelong fitness habits. Physical education provides all students the opportunity to develop movement skills, to increase muscle strength and flexibility, to improve their aerobic endurance and maintain a healthy body weight. Physical Education develops confidence and skills. By providing outlets for stress, developing goals and decision-making skills and emphasizing self-confidence and personal discipline, children gain a positive sense of self-worth.

Components of a comprehensive physical education program include daily participation by all students in physical education; at least 50% of PE class time is spent in physical activity. Teachers have curriculum that is sequentially developed by grade and developmental level of students, all PE teachers have teaching certification in physical education, teachers are trained in adaptive physical education, at least 70% of the physical education classroom time in upper grades is devoted to lifetime physical education activities.

## **School Food and Nutrition Services**

Nutrition plays a vital role in the child's ability to learn. Children need the support of the comprehensive nutrition and services. The Comprehensive School Health Model supports a sound student nutrition program of wholesome and enjoyable foods in the cafeteria and throughout the school. Good nutrition also includes positive nutrition education provided by staff and parents. In the classroom, nutrition can be used as a tool for teaching math, science, reading and languages. Inservice nutrition education for food service personnel, following the Dietary Guidelines for Americans, funding raising activities involve only health foods, classroom instruction on nutrition are among only a few of the guidelines followed by a comprehensive school health program.

## **Guidance and Counseling**

A school counseling program provides prevention and intervention programs, career awareness and skill building tools for success in work, relationships and life. Professional staff within the school counseling program provide: early detection of potential problems, identification of at "risk" children and programs and referrals which support children and their families.

How established are the counseling services at your school? School-based counseling and personal support to students would include inservice education on the students' culture, support of life skills training for students in health classes, working with families regarding special health needs of the students, providing leadership on school-wide mental and emotional health promotion programs.

## **Staff Wellness**

Nurturing the skills and potential of a child requires teachers and all school staff to be wellness promoters themselves. "Heal thyself." School staff serve as role models, their actions and words have tremendous influence over a child's health behaviors. The Comprehensive School Health Model promotes the involvement of school staff in their own personal wellness. We encourage the school staff to participate in activities such as stress management, smoking cessation, nutrition classes, exercise and positive support programs. Examples of "worksites" wellness for the staff include providing healthy food choices for teachers and staff, providing an environment free of alcohol and other drugs, providing a smoke free environment, sponsoring weight control classes for staff, and offering self-improvement classes for staff.

## **Family, School, Community Partnerships**

In a village everyone works together to create harmony, maintain balance and assure general good health. A child is ready to learn and to be healthy when everyone, their family, the school and community works together to support their growth. The Comprehensive school Health Model encourages partnerships between the school, family, and community. The purpose of these partnerships is to coordinate and activate all possible health and education resources. School health councils which include members from the community, local businesses and the medical profession can serve as a means for developing partnerships and improving the health of students.

What describes your school's current efforts on following activities to promote partnerships for healthy development of your students: sharing information with collaborating tribal and community agencies, teachers routinely visiting student's homes, parent involvement in the school? These are just some of the many ways in which we encourage a partnership between the school, the family and the community.