

School Health Advisory Councils

Brad Victor, MAT
Sexuality Education Specialist
Oregon Dept. of Education
Healthy Kids Learn Better Cadre



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Influencing students to lead healthy and productive lives is likely to be most effective when schools, community, and parents work together. Each has unique resources, each can access students in ways the others can't, and each has a different means of influencing the behaviours of young people. But the coordination of these efforts requires planning. Local school health advisory councils are one means of planning consistent and focused action.

The health of young people is directly tied to academic achievement and their potential for school success and overall quality of life. Schools alone cannot solve or prevent health-related problems. However the schools ability to have a positive impact on students' health behavior and academic gains is enhanced with the help of families and communities.

*If schools do not deal with
children's health by
design, they deal with it by
default.*

Health is Academic, 1997



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Session Objectives

- Understand the role and function of School Health Advisory Councils.
- Discuss criteria for council membership and successful recruitment of community partners.
- Develop 3 action steps to get started in developing your school's School Health Advisory Council.



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What are School Health Advisory Councils (SHACs)?

- Advisory group composed primarily of individuals selected from segments of the community & school.
- The group acts collectively in providing guidance & leadership to the school system on all aspects of the school health program.



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A School Health Council is a core group of parents, youth, educators, and others who represent different segments of the community. The key purpose of a School Health Council is “advising.” The group works together to give advice and support to the school on all parts of its school health program. The Council is not part of the school’s administrative structure nor does it hold any legal responsibilities. The kind of advice given depends upon the role the school wants it to serve.

Thus, like snowflakes, no two Councils are alike.

Why Have a School Health Advisory Council?

- Schools can't do it alone.
- Research endorses community connections and involvement for children and youth.
- Changing systems require infrastructure to support that change over time.



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A coordinated school health program is designed to help young people grow into healthy and productive adults by focusing on their physical, emotional, social and educational development. An effective school health program is a working partnership between schools and the community, including parents. Primarily, it recognizes that health and academic success go hand in hand.

By creating a SHAC schools can find partners within their communities to identify health problems & concerns, set priorities, and design solutions

When engaged as decision makers, communities have proven time and again they are up to the task of addressing local problems and supporting their schools in their responsibilities

Research suggests that one of the most effective vehicles for interacting with the local community on school health issues is through a SHAC. There are many ways that staff and schools at the local level can help ensure that the SHAC provides a community voice in planning and implementing comprehensive school health programs.

Benefits of a School Health Advisory Council

- Increase parent and community involvement.
- Link schools with community health & social services and resources.
- Educate the community about the school and health issues.
- Increase effectiveness & sustainability of school-community initiatives



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Increasing meaningful parent & community involvement – this is no small feat!

Link with community health resources – la pine example

What are the Functions of a SHAC?

- Create a vision and goals for its school's CSHP
- Assess, advise, assist and support the school on all parts of its Coordinated School Health program
- Promote parent and community involvement
- Advocate for school health within the broader community
- Access and link with community health services and resources

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SHAC has a variety of roles depending on how the school system use it. The current definitions of school health includes the 8 components of CSH. SHAC's are designed to address the more comprehensive definition of school health.

SHAC perform many functions in addition to their overall purpose of advising and supporting CSH.

Recruit and Orient Your SHACs

- Gain administrator commitment to work on school health.
- Invite and involve the right people - cheerleaders and naysayers.
- Use the first meeting to orient members to the importance of school health.
- Establish group norms and decision-making processes.
- Encourage members to invite one additional person to the next meeting.
- Identify next steps.

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The quality and quantity of SHAC activities are primarily determined by its members. Careful consideration must be given to identify potential members and the process of gaining their willingness to become active members.

Major criteria for selecting members should include:

Demonstrated interest in youth

Awareness of the community – general understanding of the cultural, political, geographic, and economic structure of the community – can really facilitate goal accomplishment.

Professional abilities with training in a youth related discipline

Willingness to devote time – before appointing any member, communicate about the time commitment to determine willingness to make time for SHAC.

Representative of the population

Credibility of members – those who are respected by those who know them.

Honesty, trustworthy, dependable, commitment and ethics all contribute to the overall character of the SHAC

Include representation from the 8 areas of CSH

Group norms/ground rules – at the beginning, help the group agree on the ground rules that members will follow – establishes an environment that time together is meaningful and productive for everyone. “successful collaboration requires that everyone in the group contributes to and develops a stake in the process. Ground rules insure that partners use time wisely, share leadership, and head in the same direction.

People Join SHACs to:

- Inform
- Influence
- Infiltrate
- Implement
- Impede
- Invest



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Remember you want everyone there from the beginning!!

Tackling the increasingly complex issues of our evolving society requires the variety of perspectives and insights, attributes and skills afforded by a diverse group of stakeholders

a growing collaborative can encourage broad based involvement by framing a particular issue using the inclusive language of a unifying theme that attracts individuals that otherwise may not want to be involved.

SHAC Team Member Qualities

- What types of people would make good council members?
- Brainstorm a List of at least 5 criteria for selection



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Keep in Mind: Membership Should...

- Represent all segments of your community.
- Involve people with a variety of backgrounds & experiences.
- Involve people with a passion for kids & health.
- Include people who can commit the time.
- Include key players/influencers in the school & community.
- Involve the least powerful as well as the most powerful.

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School Health Council Membership should be as representative of our school and community as possible. We want to involve people with a broad variety of education, experiences, opinions, economic levels, gender, race and ethnic backgrounds and ages. Key leaders from the community and school need to be included as well as those we may not typically think of for those kinds of leadership and volunteer activities. Don't overlook the importance of passion and also time. Your Council will be stronger if all members genuinely hold student health and success to be the driving priority.

Before You Recruit SHAC Members...

- Be able to articulate your purpose.
- Draft SHAC roles and responsibilities.
- Have a meeting structure in mind (how often, how long), but don't be wedded to it.



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When approaching new SHAC members...

- Put yourself in their shoes.
- Help them understand what they can contribute and how they can benefit.
- Be sensitive to constraints on their time and resources.



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What's Your Pitch?

- Based on the information we just discussed, create a 30 second “pitch” your team could use to invite key individuals to be a part of your SHAC.
- Remember...
 - ✓ Why people join
 - ✓ Purpose
 - ✓ Time commitment

We'll pull back together in 10 minutes



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Brainstorm a list of ideas for
“delivering” your pitch!



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SHAC Members Stay Involved Because...

- They are invested in the vision and mission.
- They feel a part of the decision-making and action plan implementation.
- They are recognized for their accomplishments.
- They feel like their time is well-spent.



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The early stages of a collaborative are very important to its long term success. By allowing for plenty of front end time, a collaborative can ensure the development of a strong foundation for moving forward. The early stages are allocated to a variety of relationship building and planning activities (learning about each others organizations and establishing trust; developing a leadership structure and management capacity to sustain over time) in contributing to a solid foundation, these activities are fundamental to the development of shared vision and plan for sequential change.

Evidence suggests that a non-hierarchical and shared approach to leadership is an effective way to engage the strengths of individuals while contributing to a working environment where all members feel valued.

The momentum of an initiative can be altered at times by the addition of new organizations, staff turnovers, and new members that have to be familiarized with the work completed prior to their arrival. This take time, but also serves as an opportunity for renewed energy and ideas. Times of change and turnover could be opportunities to revisit the mission, goals and objectives.

Maintain consistent and effective channels of communications – invaluable in building working relationships – fundamental to the success of the collaborative as they contribute to trusting relationships.

What we've learned...

Factors that **help** a SHAC work

- Active Administrative support (get one on the team!)
- Take the time to carefully plan your member selection process
- Dedicated, consistent meeting time
- Communicate effectively
- Committed team members who “step up to the plate”
- Involve the entire school in some way
- Divide the team into component task teams
- Create smaller, achievable goals
- Share & celebrate your progress & success with others

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Factors that **hinder** a SWC's work

No time!

No administrative support

Finding a common meeting time

Communicating effectively

Trying to do too much

Team leader expected to “do it all”

Not taking the time to carefully plan your member selection process

What's Next?

- What else do you need to know to support a school health advisory council?
- Set 3 [Action Steps](#) you can accomplish in the next 4 weeks to “start up” your school’s SHAC.
- Develop a list of potential SHAC members and identify how they can benefit from being involved.

We'll pull back together in 20 minutes



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Resources

American Cancer Society website on School Health Councils

www.cancer.org/docroot/PED/content/PED_13_2x_School_Health_Councils.asp

Texas tools & resources to establishing School Health Advisory Councils

http://staffweb.esc12.net/~mbooth/documents/shac/shac_overview.htm



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*“Unless someone like you
cares a whole awful lot,
nothing is going to get
better. It's not.”*

- Dr. Seuss



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Thank you!

Brad Victor, MAT
Sexuality Education Specialist
Oregon Dept. of Education
Healthy Kids Learn Better Cadre
brad.victor@state.or.us
503.947.5655
www.hklb.org/cadre



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