

# FLORIDA HEALTHY SCHOOLS

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## GADSDEN COUNTY WELLNESS PROJECT RESULTS IN SUSTAINABLE POLICIES AND PRACTICES

A Coordinated School Health (CSH) approach is an effective way of establishing policies and practices to sustain health and wellness initiatives. A CSH approach focuses on improving quality and increasing coordination, resulting in a planned, organized, and comprehensive set of courses, services, policies, and interventions that meet the health and safety needs of students in grades K-12.

An effective CSH approach can increase adoption of health-enhancing behaviors, improve student and staff health, and use resources more efficiently. In addition, research demonstrates that improving health increases academic performance. Widespread adoption of the CSH model can help improve the health and academic performance of all students regardless of socioeconomic status, gender, or race.

Beginning in 2005, the CDC-funded Florida CSH Program (CSHP) provided resources and technical assistance to Gadsden County, Florida, to implement a district wide CSH approach.

To begin the project, the school district, in partnership with the Gadsden County Health Department, formed a planning and advisory committee, Gadsden County Wellness Approach to Community Health (G-WATCH).

Next, every participating school was required to complete the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's (CDC) School Health Index (SHI), a self-assessment and planning guide, to identify its individual school health needs. G-WATCH used the results of the SHI assessments to develop a coordinated school health strategic plan that included 45 goals addressing all eight components of the CSH model with an emphasis on nutrition education and physical activity.

The state CSHP gave each of the participating schools up to \$2,000 yearly to maintain a Healthy School Team and implement activities consistent with the district strategic plan.

After three years of imple-



mentation, G-WATCH accomplishments include:

- Adopting a district policy that encourages physical fitness and discourages employing or withholding physical activity as punishment. The policy was communicated to principals.
- Passing a district policy for a daily 15-minute recess for students in grades pre-K-5. Four of seven elementary schools reported daily recess in 2006-7 school year.
- Implementing meal schedules that comply with the Florida guideline of a 20-minute seated eating time.
- Implementing Healthy School Teams in over 90% of mainstream schools.
- Training 140 participants through CSHP workshops and presentations.

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- Reaching elementary schools with Coordinated Approach to Child Health (CATCH) training.
- Integrating character education curriculum into the schools.
- Adopting a policy to ensure that schools provide physical education curricula consistent with Sunshine State Standards and National Physical Education Standards.
- Hiring of an Athletics/Health/Physical Education Coordinator at the district level.
- Adopting a policy to ensure that schools provide physical education instruction that includes emphasis on enjoyable participation in lifelong physical activity, active learning strategies, and opportunities to practice skills.

- Eleven of twelve participating schools completing the SHI tool.
- Nineteen staff attending a physical education teacher workshop led by state Physical Education Coordinator.
- Three physical education staff members attending a physical education workshop in Escambia County.
- Using grant funds for additional teacher professional development through other workshops/conferences.
- Physical Education teachers utilizing grant funds to purchase needed equipment.
- Six Gadsden County schools participating in the Healthy Schools Program offered by the Alliance for a Healthier Generation.
- Increasing student access to a variety of fruits.
- Adopting a policy to have school food services staff direct and promote lifelong healthy nutrition and good eating habits.
- Eliminating ala carte items such as slushies and ice cream, providing greater likelihood of healthier food consumption by those purchasing food.
- Increasing access to primary care and mental health services in two schools.
- Increasing access to health lesson plans for school nurses through CSHP providing Discovery Health Connection subscriptions.
- At least two schools partnering with a local university to provide nutrition and physical activity education to students.
- External partners and nursing staff providing support at Family Health Nights, Career Fairs, and field days with booths or activities for children.
- Three of the participating Healthy Schools writing a wellness goal in their School Improvement Plan in 2006-7.
- Seven of twelve schools opening fitness centers for faculty and/or staff.

At the end of the third project year, the Gadsden County School District and Florida's CSHP had made some considerable gains in the effort to increase health awareness and promote positive lifestyles for students, families, and staff. A final summary report was provided to district contacts to further manage strategic plan goals and address implementation.

The G-WATCH committee continues to meet and a district wellness coordinator is in place. Particularly notable, is the focus on providing both professional development for faculty and staff and opportunities for faculty and staff to exercise. With the assistance of the Healthy School Teams, 7 of 12 schools have opened fitness rooms and other schools have formed walking clubs. Through grant monies, children and youth now have increased access to skills-based physical activities and equipment both in physical education class and other school events. Students are receiving health messages through morning announcements, school-wide activities, and through community partnerships. Progress has also been made towards improving food choices for youth both through meals provided by schools and through fundraising efforts.

In order to provide continuing support after the project period, Gadsden County School District has been aligned with nine other districts throughout the state of Florida, known as the Healthy District Collaborative. These districts, representing 1196 schools, have elected to implement the Coordinated School Health approach in all schools. CSHP serves the needs of these ten districts by providing professional development, technical assistance, and other resources as needed. These progressive and forward thinking districts also share information with each other, providing further support for Gadsden County's ongoing wellness activities.

## FLORIDA DENTAL ASSOCIATION WORKS WITH SCHOOLS TO SUPPORT DENTAL HEALTH

**Florida School Health Association Annual Convention:** School Resource Dentist, Dr. James McIwain presented "Dental Thrills, Chills and Spills" at the conference on May 13, 2008. Mouth Wise dental education curricula and access-to-care dental resource directories were distributed to school health personnel. Dental products were given to participants at the conference compliments of the Florida Dental Association.

**Florida Association of School Nurses Annual Conference:** Dr. Bruce Gordy of Orlando gave a presentation entitled "Open Wide" on Saturday, February 9, 2008 to 70 school nurses who attended his breakout session at the Marriott Lake Mary Hotel in Orlando. Dr. Gordy's presentation provided information on protecting oral health early in life and the connection between lifelong oral/dental health and good overall health. Mouth Wise dental education curricula, dental hygiene products and access-to-care dental resource directories were given to the class participants.

**Health Literacy in the Classroom:** The Florida Dental Association partnered with the DOH Read for Health's "Health Literacy in the Classroom" program held during Children's Dental Health Month in February, 2008. The program focused on oral health to encourage proper oral health maintenance as part of good daily health practices. The FDA secured a large donation of Colgate toothbrushes, toothpaste and Den Tek flossers to provide along with 30,000 mirror stickers to remind children to brush, floss and visit the dentist. These items accompanied other health promotion items that were given to 30,000 kindergarten and first graders who received a reading from a volunteer classroom visitor of the book "Dora the Explorer, Show Me Your Smile: A Visit to the Dentist."

**School Resource Dentist Program:** Thirty school resource dentists have been designated as liaisons to their school district's health program for consultation in matters related to dental concerns and/or emergencies. The Florida Dental Association will continue to designate school resource dentists until all school districts in Florida have a school resource dentist.

**Dental Screening & Preventive Care Program:** Kids Dent of Highlands County is a school-based dental program under the direction of Dr. Stephen Hulen that provides dental screening exams, sealants and some restorative and endodontic treatment for children in the free and reduced price school lunch programs.

**St. Lucie County Dentists Provide Dental Assessment for School Children:** Dr. Reza Ardalán, Florida Dental Association Project: Dentists Care Coordinator, for the Treasure Coast Dental Association, attends meetings of the St. Lucie County Oral Health Coalition and passes along information to the members on how they can assist the community. Dr. Dave Boden is also involved in the project and was instrumental in the early planning stages. Doctors Reza Ardalán, Martine DeCambre and Francisco Arias have been doing dental screenings at the schools. Baseline data is being gathered so that when they go to the school board in the future and recommend changes, they have some statistics to back up requests for improvements in the school health program.

**Give Kids A Smile:** Give Kids A Smile (GKAS) is an access to dental care program founded by the American Dental Association and observed by local dental associations in every state. GKAS focuses on dental care for disadvantaged children. The former one-day event held on the first Friday of February has been expanded to a program that has its kickoff every year on that date, but continues throughout the year as often as dental personnel wish to conduct it. In 2008, so far, sixteen dental associations held GKAS programs that served school children. GKAS Coordinators worked with school nurses to provide the care for children who qualified for free and reduced school lunches.

The ACORN Dental Clinic in Alachua County has a "tooth fairy" program where a dental hygienists and dental assistant go into the schools with dental hygiene education in a fun way for the kids.

Contributed by Mary Lyons, Dental Health Program Specialist with the Florida Dental Association. For more information you can contact Mary at (800) 877-9922 ext. 180 or [mlyons@floridadental.org](mailto:mlyons@floridadental.org).

### Calendar of Upcoming Events in 2008

Oct. 1-3	Florida Prevention Conference and Suicide Prevention Symposium (Sept. 30-Oct. 1)	Orlando
	<a href="http://www.meetingmasterminds.com/prevention.htm">http://www.meetingmasterminds.com/prevention.htm</a>	
October 20 - 23	Pro Bike/Pro Walk Florida	St. Petersburg
	<a href="http://www.bikewalk.org/calendar.php">http://www.bikewalk.org/calendar.php</a>	
October 2 - 4	2008 Florida Alliance for Health, Physical Education, Recreation and Sport Conference	Orlando
	<a href="http://www.fahperd.org/">http://www.fahperd.org/</a>	

## Florida's Coordinated School Health Program

### Your CSHP Staff Contacts

DOE Director  
DOH Director  
Assistant Director  
Physical Education  
HIV/AIDS Prevention  
Healthy Schools  
Resource Center

Penny Detscher  
Carol Vickers  
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Nichole Wilder  
Ksena Zipperer  
Kari King  
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FLORIDA DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION  
www.fldoe.org



## FLORIDA'S POISON CENTERS AND POISON PREVENTION IN SCHOOLS

There is a great opportunity for poison prevention education in Florida's schools. Although most poisonings occur in young children in the home, teachers, school nurses, social workers, and school volunteers can assist in teaching poison prevention to students and parents in several ways. Some ideas may include sending informational flyers home for parents explaining poison center services, discussing poison prevention at PTA meetings, or incorporating poison prevention information into a health class.

Prevention is easy. Some ways to prevent poisonings are to teach the following tips:

Always respect medications — mistakes can happen fast and have dangerous consequences.

Always keep medications, chemicals and pesticides locked up and out of the reach of children; use childproof locks.

Take special care and time when giving medication to a child to prevent errors.

Do not leave a medicine bottle out on a table; child resistant caps are not child-proof.

Pills should never be left on a table; they may look like candy to a child. Teach children to always ask first.

Special occasions with gatherings of people may increase a child's risk of poisoning because adults may be dis-

tracted with conversation or activity and purses or bags may be left unsupervised.

Special situations such as packing for a vacation, a move or even spring cleaning may increase a child's risk of poisoning because medications or other items may be out of their normal safe keeping place.

Do not use over-the-counter cold and cough products in children less than 2 years without discussing with child's healthcare provider.

Communicate with care givers so that everyone knows exactly when and what medication is being given.

Keep medications, cleaners and chemicals in their original containers, so they can be identified in case of poisoning.

Teach teenagers that misusing over-the-counter medications can be deadly.

Remember for a poisoning emergency or question, call 1-800-222-1222.

The Florida Poison Information Center Network is comprised of three poison centers located in Jacksonville, Tampa, and Miami. The Network provides free and confidential service to Florida's residents and is staffed with highly skilled Certified Specialists in Poison Information...nurses, pharmacists and physicians who provide expert treatment advice. If advanced medical care is needed at a health care facility, the Certified Specialist in Poison Information will indicate this based upon medical need. In Florida,



approximately 83% of the calls are safely managed at home or school with no further medical treatment needed.

If you would like more information on how you can help, call 1-800-222-1222 and ask for the Poison Educator. Visit [www.poisonhelp.hrsa.gov](http://www.poisonhelp.hrsa.gov) or one of the Florida Poison Centers' websites for helpful educational information, including downloadable brochures and flyers.

- Florida/USVI Poison Information Center – Jacksonville [www.fpic.org](http://www.fpic.org)
- Florida Poison Information Center – Tampa [www.poisoncentertampa.org](http://www.poisoncentertampa.org)
- Florida Poison Information Center – Miami [www.miamipoison.org](http://www.miamipoison.org)

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