



Healthy Teen Network

PUBLIC POLICY RECOMMENDATION

INCREASE ADOLESCENT HEALTH THROUGH SCHOOL-BASED APPROACHES

- TOPIC:** Health Promotion
- SUBJECTS:** Adolescent Health, Sexual Health, Substance Use Health, Mental Health, Violence Prevention
- RECOMMENDATION:** Increase appropriations for the CDC Division of Adolescent and School Health to at least \$100 million annually

CONGRESSIONAL ACTION REQUEST

- U.S. Senators: Submit an FY 2021 appropriations programmatic request of at least \$100 million for CDC Division of Adolescent and School Health to the Senate Appropriations Labor-HHS-Education Subcommittee.
- U.S. Representatives: Submit an FY 2021 appropriations programmatic request of at least \$100 million for CDC Division of Adolescent and School Health to the House Appropriations Labor-HHS-Education Subcommittee.

The Division of Adolescent and School Health (DASH) within the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) collaborates with state, territorial, tribal, and local education agencies to monitor youth health behavior, implement HIV and STI prevention programs, and provide expert guidance to schools on quality health education, school-based and school-linked health services, and safe and supportive school environments.

Congress appropriated \$33.1 million to CDC DASH in FY 2020. Funding at this level allows CDC DASH to reach about two million students annually through its school health program as well as conduct important public health research and surveillance work. The President's FY 2021 budget request for CDC suggests (but is not explicit on) level funding for DASH.

Congress should increase the appropriation for CDC DASH to at least \$100 million in FY 2021. Funding at this level would enable DASH to add many more local education agencies to its effective school health program, thereby improving health of *most* of the nation's middle school and high school students.

WHY THIS MATTERS

- Far too many of the nation's youth are at risk for health adversities such as human immunodeficiency virus (HIV), sexually transmitted infections (STIs), unintended pregnancies, substance misuse, suicide, and interpersonal violence.
- Schools are an ideal venue for promoting healthy youth because they have direct contact with millions of youth daily and are often staffed and capacitated to deliver effective interventions and services.

- Research by CDC DASH and others establish that an effective school health program includes quality sexual health education, connection to youth-friendly sexual health services, and safe and supportive school environment components.
- DASH research establishes that schools implementing these effective components produce decreases in sexual risk behaviors and positive impacts on substance use, mental health, and experiences of violence for their students—impacts that persist into adulthood.
- For example, over a two-year period (2015-2017), schools served by DASH-funded local education agencies saw statistically significant declines in the percentage of students who ever had sex (40.8% to 37.1%), were currently sexually active (26% to 23.8%), or had four or more lifetime sexual partners (12% to 10%).
- Further, DASH research demonstrates that schools receiving DASH funds achieve more positive health outcomes for students than do those schools that do not receive DASH funds.
- The DASH school health program reaches approximately two million students in 28 large school districts, at a cost of less than \$10 per student. There are approximately 26 million middle school and high school-aged youth in the United States. So, DASH reaches just eight percent of U.S. middle school and high school students.
- An increase of at least \$67 million in federal funds over current level to DASH would allow the division to establish collaborations with 47 additional local educational agencies and thereby bring effective school health programs to more students across the country's overlooked areas.

BACKGROUND

The Division of Adolescent and School Health (DASH) within the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) promotes school environments where youth can gain fundamental health knowledge and skills, establish healthy behaviors for a lifetime, and connect to health services. DASH supports a network of leaders in primary adolescent health promotion by funding state, territory, tribal, and local education agencies. DASH translates science into innovative programs and tools that work to protect youth. And DASH administers the Youth Risk Behavior Survey, a school-based survey measuring adolescent health risk behaviors and experiences, as well as School Health Profiles and the School Health Policies and Practices Study.

CDC operates DASH under various general authorities Congress established through the Public Health Service Act. DASH is a division within CDC's National Center on HIV/AIDS, Viral Hepatitis, Sexually Transmitted Infections, and Tuberculosis Prevention (NCHHSTP). Congress directed \$33.1 million to DASH within the section of the FY 2020 consolidated appropriations measure that specifies funding levels for various divisions within Health and Human Services, CDC, NCHHSTP.

LEARN MORE

- U.S. Centers for Disease Prevention and Control, Division of Adolescent and School Health: <https://www.cdc.gov/healthyouth/>
- U.S. Department of Health & Human Services, Fiscal Year 2021, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, Justification of Estimates for Appropriation Committees: <https://www.cdc.gov/budget/documents/fy2021/FY-2021-CDC-congressional-justification.pdf>
- Healthy Teen Network resources relevant to working with schools: <https://www.healthyteennetwork.org/tag/schools/>