The Public Health Way

Public health, and most notably the maternal and child health (MCH) field, has a critical role in assuring the health of adolescents. “Adolescence” provides a unique opportunity to invest in the health and well-being of youth.

Good health (physical, emotional, social and spiritual) enables young people to make the most of their teenage years while laying a strong foundation for adult life. Lifestyle behaviors developed during adolescence often continue into adulthood and influence long-term prospects for health and risk for chronic disease. Therefore, the opportunities of adolescence fit with public health’s mission to fulfill “society’s interest in assuring conditions in which persons can be healthy” (Institute of Medicine - Committee for the Study of the Future of Public Health, 1988).

Addressing the health needs of adolescents is a complex task. But public health provides a framework to guide this work through core public health functions and essential public health services. These then provide the action steps to improve and nurture the health of youth.

Assessment

Monitor and Assess… adolescent health status to identify and address health problems and opportunities for health promotion.

Diagnose and Investigate … health problems and hazards affecting adolescents.

Policy Development

Inform, Educate and Empower … the public, families and youth about adolescent health and development issues.
Mobilize Community Partnerships … between policymakers, health care providers, families, youth, the general public, and others to identify and address adolescent health issues.

Provide Leadership … for priority-setting, planning and policy development to support community efforts that assure and promote the health of adolescents.

Assurance

Promote and Enforce … laws and regulations that protect and promote the health of adolescents, and ensure public accountability for the well being of youth.

Link Adolescents and their Families … to health and other community services, and assure access to comprehensive, quality and adolescent-focused health care.

Assure Workforce Capacity and Competency (public health and personal health) … to effectively address adolescent health and development.

Evaluate … the effectiveness, accessibility and quality of personal health and population-based adolescent health services.

System Management

Research … for new insights and innovative solutions that support adolescent health and development.

Principles

These action steps are further strengthened when they are grounded in traditional MCH principles:

- An emphasis on prevention
- The relatedness of health and development

- The central role of parents, families, and other caregivers in promoting the health of adolescents
- The importance of advocacy
- The need for governmental leadership and oversight
- A systems approach (Grason and Guyer, 1995).

As each of these action steps are strategically put into place, a web of resources is woven together. This web provides the critical supports for adolescent health and well-being. Through this systematic approach, young people are provided the opportunity to grow and thrive in healthy ways.

The U.S. has adopted a focus on adolescent health through the National Initiative to Improve Adolescent Health by the Year 2010. This initiative grew out of the national effort that began in 1998 to develop Healthy People 2010 Objectives for adolescents and young adults. During this process, a Core Work Group analyzed all of the 467 Year 2010 National Health Objectives and determined that 107 were important for adolescents and young adults (age 10-24). Of these, 21 objectives were identified as critical based on two criteria:

- They are critical health outcomes or contributing behaviors; and
- State-level data are or will soon be available to measure these outcomes.

### Critical Health Strategies

The National Initiative is focused on enabling states to work with influential social institutions to attain the critical health objectives for adolescents and young adults. This is being accomplished through 12 overarching strategies.

### Develop and distribute resources

1. Publish an annual review of state health policies;
2. Develop on-line database of funding sources for adolescent health programs; (Healthy Youth Funding Database found at: http://www.cdc.gov/nccdphp/dash/funding.htm)

### Analyze, synthesize and apply scientific information

3. Develop a companion document to the National Initiative to Improve Adolescent Health by the Year 2010;
4. Identify best policies, practices and partners to attain critical health objectives;
5. Integrate youth development efforts;
6. Implement and apply findings from Healthy Futures: Community-based Longitudinal Study of Adolescent Health;
7. Work with the World Health Organization to analyze and apply experiences across nations to improve adolescent health;

The material in this story is based on information on the National Initiative provided by:

- Casey Hannan, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, Division of Adolescent and School Health, (770) 488-6211 or clh8@cdc.gov
- Trina Anglin, Maternal and Child Health Bureau, Office of Adolescent Health, (301) 443-4291 or tanglin@hsa.gov

Contact either for more information on the National Initiative.
**Improve Adolescent Health**

**Continued from Page 3**

**Enhance the infrastructure**

8. Increase state core capacity in adolescent health program and service delivery;

9. Convene all State Adolescent Health Coordinators yearly;

**Report progress**

10. Publish state progress on critical health objectives every 2 years;

11. Publish state adolescent health performance measures; and

12. Broadcast the *National Healthy People 2010* progress reviews on adolescents and young adults to state health departments.

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**A Strategy for Growth**

The National Adolescent Health Center for State MCH Personnel is a new center located within the Konopka Institute for Best Practices in Adolescent Health in the Division of General Pediatrics and Adolescent Health at the University of Minnesota. The Center is funded through a Cooperative Agreement with the Maternal and Child Health Bureau (MCHB). The Center for Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) has provided additional funds for a focus specifically on adolescent mental health.

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**Association of Maternal and Child Health Programs (AMCHP)** is a national organization representing state public health leaders and others working to improve the health and well-being of women, children and youth, including those with special health care needs, and families. AMCHP has strengthened their focus on adolescent health in recent years through cooperative agreements with CDC-DASH and MCHB in addition to a formal partnership with the State Adolescent Health Coordinators Network.


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**“Fateful choices are also ours as a society — if we give adolescents sufficient attention and support, they may have the chance to grow up healthy and whole in body and mind. At stake are not only individual young lives, but our future as a nation.”**

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**KEY PARTNER**

**Association of Maternal and Child Health Programs (AMCHP)**

1220 – 19th Street, Suite 801
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(202) 775-0436
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**National Center**

**Turn to page 5**
Staff at the National Adolescent Health Center for State MCH Personnel have a singular mission:

To strengthen the knowledge, skills and capacities of state MCH professionals so they can more effectively address and improve the health of adolescents.

The Center will accomplish this by focusing on two strategies while working primarily with the State Adolescent Health Coordinators (SAHCs):

1. Strengthen states’ capacity to address Healthy People 2010 Critical Objectives for Adolescents and Young Adults through approaches grounded in best practices.

2. Increase states’ capacity to develop and strengthen mechanisms to promote healthy youth development and respond to adolescent health-related needs.

What can you expect?

Staff at the National Center serve as a resource for Adolescent and Maternal Child Health professionals. While the National Center focuses on many aspects of adolescent health, their work revolves around five sets of overlapping activities.

Support

Center staff provide technical assistance primarily to SAHCs and MCH Directors through use of structured conference calls, individual consultation (by phone or in person), fostering connections between states, trainings, publications and web-based information.

Partnerships are central to the National Adolescent Health Center’s success. Highlighted throughout this article are the Center’s “key partners”.

The CDC’s Division of Adolescent and School Health (DASH) is located within the National Center for Chronic Disease Prevention and Health Promotion. Their mission is to prevent the most serious health risk behaviors among children, adolescents and young adults. They accomplish this through the following strategies:

- Identify and monitor critical health problems, school health policies and programs to reduce these problems;
- Synthesize and apply research to increase the effectiveness of school health policies and programs;
- Enable constituents to implement effective policies and programs; and
- Evaluate to assess and improve the effectiveness of implemented school health policies and programs.

DASH collaborates with the MCHB-OAH as co-leads for the National Initiative to Improve Adolescent Health by the Year 2010.

477 Buford Highway NE MS K-29 Atlanta, GA 30341 (770) 488-6211
http://www.cdc.gov/nccdphp/dash


Maternal and Child Health Bureau — Office of Adolescent Health (MCHB — OAH) is a federal office within the Division of Child, Adolescent and Family Health of the Resources Services Administration, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. It is their responsibility to coordinate and provide mechanisms for the collaboration of adolescent health activities.

Their current focus includes programmatic contributions to the National Initiative to Improve Adolescent Health Status by the Year 2010, as well as supporting the development and implementation of state-level comprehensive Adolescent Health Strategic Plans.

Key partners: staff at the National Center, SAHCs, MCH directors, technical assistance providers, and key stakeholders in adolescent health.
These activities focus on building skills and competencies in four general areas:

1. Addressing Healthy People 2010 Critical Objectives for Adolescents and Young Adults
2. Developing adolescent health action plans
3. Strengthening interagency collaboration and partnership
4. Addressing adolescent health from a Youth Development framework

...Adolescent Health Information

The National Center provides access to information that is easy to use for planning, developing and implementing adolescent health strategies and programs. Although currently in the developmental phase, as resources are identified and materials produced, they will be distributed both electronically and in print.

...Training and Education

These activities focus on building and strengthening the adolescent health skills of SAHCs and other MCH professionals through activities such as workshops, orientation for new SAHCs, and distance learning opportunities.

...Convening Stakeholders

Staff at the National Center advocate for and represent state adolescent health interests to other national initiatives. In addition, the National Center builds connections across the variety of initiatives in which it plays a role.

...Information campaign

National Center staff are working with national partners to develop two information campaigns on adolescent health issues.

The first campaign will promote the National Initiative to Improve Adolescent Health by the Year 2010.

The second will aim to raise the visibility of adolescent mental health promotion among state SAHCs, MCH Directors and other MCH professionals.

Guiding Principles

There are a number of principles that guide the National Center’s work.

Adolescent health is defined broadly. Health is more than an absence of disease or poor
Some of the absolutely fantastic children featured in these newsletter photos have grown up to be the staff at the National Adolescent Health Center.

Answers are below, but first, take a closer look at the photos in the “Key Partners” boxes. Recognize anyone?

Send your own “teen” photos and see yourself in the next edition!

Who do you know?

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State Adolescent Health Coordinators Network (SAHCN)

is a formal network of State Adolescent Health Coordinators. It’s goals are to: 1) provide consultation to national, state, and local organizations responsible for planning, implementing, evaluating and/or funding adolescent programs; 2) support

and strengthen the formal network among State Adolescent Health Coordinators for the purpose of sharing strategies to further the adolescent health agenda; and 3) establish mechanisms for the professional growth and advancement of State Adolescent Health Coordinators.

Carol Hinton, SAHCN President
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National Center
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outcomes – it includes a sense of wholeness, a sense of belonging to a community, and experiencing control over one’s circumstances and fate (World Health Organization, 1993; Coalition for Healthier Cities & Communities). It is an optimal state of well-being in all areas of a young person’s life – physical, emotional, social and spiritual.

Adolescent health is framed through a healthy youth development perspective. It’s not enough to focus solely on those factors that put young people at risk for poor health outcomes. In order for young people to achieve the broader definition of health, we also need to focus on those factors that provide youth with a sense of industry and competency, a sense of control over their life, connectedness to supportive people with high expectations, and a sense of identity.

Strategies are grounded in a public health approach. This approach revolves around the core public health functions and ten essential public health services.

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ADOLESCENT HEALTH COORDINATORS

... by the numbers

70%
Percent who have worked in the adolescent health field for 10 or more years. (28% for 20 years or more)

30%
Percent who have been in their position for 1 year or less

52%
Percent who are expected to spend 50% or less of their time on SAHC duties

68%
Percent holding a position funded entirely by Title V MCH Block Grant

62%
Percent reporting increased emphasis on adolescent health in state program planning and/or funding in the past 2 years

four
Number reporting a completed Adolescent Health Plan for their state
The Konopka Institute is an inter-disciplinary group of experts in pediatrics, public health, nursing, law, public policy, social work, child development, and education that is focused exclusively on the needs of young people.

The Institute has a singular mission:

To work with community organizations, service providers, policy makers, public agencies, and other citizens to adopt and/or adapt interventions, policies and systems that show the greatest promise of supporting healthy youth development.

Dr. Gisela Konopka serves as the Institute’s namesake and inspiration. Renowned for her work “Requirements for the Healthy Development of Youth,” Dr. Konopka continues to guide the Institute’s mission.

SAHC Exclusive – Free Research and Information Service

The National Adolescent Health Center will be introducing a new on-line resource located within the Konopka Institute’s web site. In addition to information about each state’s adolescent health resources, the Center will offer a Research and Information Service exclusively for State Adolescent Health Coordinators.

With just one call or email, SAHCs will be able to request their own custom search conducted by graduate students here at the University of Minnesota. Stay tuned for information about how to use this new service.

Up-Coming Workshops

Media: What it can and cannot do for teen pregnancy prevention
AMCHP Workshop – Arlington, VA
February 27 - March 1, 2002
Kristin Lake: 202-775-0061

State Adolescent Health Coordinators Network (SAHCN)
Annual Meeting
March 2-6, 2002 - Arlington, VA
Carol Hinton: 515-281-6924

Association of Maternal Health and Child Health Programs (AMCHP)
Annual Meeting
March 2-6, 2002 - Arlington, VA
(202) 775-0436
http://www.amchp1.org

Growing Absolutely Fantastic Youth

The January 2002 issue of Growing Absolutely Fantastic Youth e-Newsletter will be available as a PDF file on the Konopka Institute website. Permission is granted to photocopy this publication.

http://www.konopka.umn.edu

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