

Expanding Student Involvement in Maine's SBHC's

Working with Student Health (Advisory) Committees

Assumption: That extensive involvement of students in providing advice and direction to SBHC's and their programs will have several benefits:

- The services and programs of the health centers will be more effective with the organized input of student users;
- Students will learn about designing and implementing programs to address health problems as well as gain experience in group processes and decision making; and
- Students can have a positive impact on public policy related to school-based health.

Goals:

Students are playing an active role in guiding and carrying out the health programs of the Partner SBHC's. They are learning significant skills and improving the effectiveness of the programs.

The staff of the SBHC's are skilled in techniques for recruiting students for involvement and in helping students become effective advocates, planners and team members.

The Assembly and Partners create effective models for student involvement in SBHC's health programs and related public policy that can be shared with all of Maine's SBHC's.

Learning objectives for students and staff: (some off-the-top ideas)

- How to run meetings that work.
- How to plan and carry out a health initiative aimed at a significant health problem among students at the school. How to do a budget. How to know if you are succeeding.
- How to evaluate the performance of the SBHC and how to help it be more effective.
- How to evaluate the performance of various preventive programs that are currently underway.
- How health policy is made.
- How to use the health system or how to protect yourself from the health system.
- How powerful interests and companies conspire to make youth unhealthy and what to do about it.
- How to organize an after school exercise program.
- How to help students move to contemplate tobacco use cessation.

Possible Options for Recruiting Students

- Determine whether there are other student groups dedicated to health improvement. If so and it appears to be a representative group, check if they would be willing to be an advisory group to the health center.
- Determine if there is a way for students to receive credit for participation in the health advisory group.
- Consider asking a class to be the SBHC advisory group. Perhaps a teacher would permit one or two class sessions per month or per two weeks to be Advisory Committee Meetings.
- Perhaps the advisory committee has a one semester life. Or a year.

Draft General Guidance for working with student advisors (more off the top ideas):

- The learning is generally experiential and related to undertaking an initiative or evaluating and improving a program.
- Be clear about the purpose and scope of the committee's decision making and recommendations.
- Provide some training in how to run meetings and reach agreement on how the group will make decisions and recommendations.
- Take student generated ideas seriously and show that their input actually has an impact on the program.
- Help the students develop the capacity and confidence in talking to people in positions of authority.
- Consider inviting guest experts to engage the students in discussion around key health issues that they have identified as important or of concern.
- Consider field trips to a local hospital or health facilities.
- Consider the setting and amenities such as drinks and snacks.
- Consider simple projects or assignments that students could undertake between meetings and report back on. *We need some ideas for projects.*