

Healthy & Fit School Advisory Committee

What is a HFSAC?

A Healthy & Fit School Advisory Committee is an **advisory group of at least six individuals** who represent segments of the community (teacher, coach, student, administrator, parent, school nurse, health care professional, community member, food service personnel, custodian, school bus driver, school secretary, school counselor). The group acts collectively to provide advice to the school regarding school health issues. HFSAC are committed to creating healthy school environments so students may reach their learning potential.

Why we need to get a HFSAC started?

- Senate Bill 1627, the Healthy and Fit Kids Act of 2004, requires each public school in Oklahoma to establish a Healthy & Fit School Advisory Committee
- A critical need for effective School Health Programs
- A critical need to improve the health of school age children and adolescents in Oklahoma
- Healthy People 2010 objectives focus on the role of schools in improving the health of young people
- HFSAC can improve the health of schools
- Senate Bill 265, passed in 2005, includes Healthy and Fit School Advisory Committees as a component for accreditation
- Senate Bill 1459, passed in 2006, includes resources for Healthy and Fit School Advisory Committees

Healthier Schools = Healthier Students, Faculty, & Staff

Healthier Students, Faculty, & Staff = Improved academic achievement, Increased productivity, Increased morale, and Increased retention

What do HFSACs do?

Healthy & Fit School Advisory Committees can have a variety of roles, depending on the school. HFSAC should be designed to **provide advice to the school on aspects of the school health program** (health education, healthful school environment, health services, physical education, school counseling, food service, health promotion for faculty and staff, integrated school and community programs). According to Senate Bill 1459, Healthy and Fit School Advisory Committees shall be involved in the monitoring, implementation, and evaluation of the newly established regulations limiting access to foods of minimal nutritional value and are encouraged to utilize the School Health Index or the Oklahoma Healthy and Fit Schools Scorecard as a program assessment and monitoring instrument. Some other roles of a HFSAC include, but are not limited to:

Needs Assessment: HFSACs use the School Health Index or the Oklahoma Healthy and Fit Schools Scorecard to identify strengths and weaknesses of the school's health policies/programs.

Action Planning: HFSACs use the School Health Index to develop an action plan for improving student health; problem solve; plan synergistic activities; participate in curriculum selection and adaptation; provide for discussion of health issues; provide in-service training programs.

Advocacy: HFSACs provide visibility for school health within the school and community; ensure that sufficient resources are allocated to school health; intervene when unfavorable changes alter school health program; facilitate understanding between school and community; engage representatives from community to provide resources and to serve as a buffer against threats to programs.

Fiscal Planning: HFSACs assist in determining how much funding is required to conduct school health improvement action plans; help raise funds for local programs; prepare grant applications.

Liaison with district and state agencies: HFSACs work with agency personnel in areas of curriculum selection, allocation of school nurse time, development of food service programs, distribution of federal or state funds, and policymaking.

Direct Intervention: HFSACs initiate policy related to smoking, alcohol use, and the sale of nutritious foods at schools; organize school-wide activities like health fairs and health promotion.

Evaluation, accountability, and quality control: HFSACs ensure that school health funds are spent appropriately, food service programs offer healthy menus, and that health-related activities are conducted; conduct focus groups with parents, teachers, administrators, and students; examine existing school services

relative to need; assess the physical and psychological environment of the school.

***Recommended to meet monthly**

Source: Improving School Health: A Guide to School Health Councils

How to get a HFSAC started?

If your school does not already have a HFSAC, here are some steps you can take to begin one:

1. Contact school
2. Speak with school administrator
3. Explain the need to organize the HFSAC
 - a. Provide fact sheet (Why we need to get a HFSAC started? & What do HFSACs do?)
 - b. Component of accreditation
4. Offer your help with facilitation/guidance
5. Inform administrator of whom to invite/assign/appoint to be on the HFSAC (see below Who are members of a HFSAC?)
6. Schedule first meeting

Who are members of a HFSAC?

Most importantly, HFSAC members are committed to quality health programs and policies for the children of their community. Members can include, but are not limited to:

- Parents
- Students
- School personnel
 - School nurse
 - Custodian
 - Classroom teacher
 - PE teacher
 - Coach
 - Health teacher
 - Secretary
 - Bus driver
 - Administrator
 - Counselor
 - School police officer
 - Food service manager
 - School psychologist/social worker
- Interested community members
- Medical professionals
- Social service agencies

- Business/industry
- Volunteer health agencies
- Churches
- Hospitals/clinics
- Public health agencies
- Government officials
- Professional societies
- Attorneys and law enforcement officials
- Colleges/universities

Other criteria to consider:

- Demonstrated interest in youth
- Awareness of the community
- Professional ability
- Willingness to devote time
- Representative of the population
- Credibility of individual

How to recruit partners?

- Utilize existing relationships
- Spread the word, let school and community know of the need
- Market Healthy & Fit School Advisory Committee through websites, newsletters, flyers, and/or radio
- Contact local public health professionals
- Identify and contact health advocates
- Contact PTA

What do we do at the first meeting?

- Introductions
- Purpose/Background
- Determine ground rules
- Establish a communication network
- Set regular meeting schedule

Tips for effective HFSAC meetings

- Establish a regular meeting schedule
- Develop/provide the agenda in advance
- Begin and end on time
- Provide refreshments
- Stick to the agenda
- Focus the discussion on agenda items
- Maintain an atmosphere that encourages participation
- Summarize periodically
- Maintain written record of ideas and decisions

- Identify task to be completed
- Confirm individual responsibilities
- Consider agenda items for the next meeting

Next Steps

- Continuously seek out advocates for your school from your local community
- Assess school's needs in the 8 areas of the Coordinated School Health Program
 - Use the School Health Index
- Develop action plans for school's health programs and policies
 - Districts use this information to develop District Wellness Policy
- Implement action plans
- Monitor progress
- Reassess school's needs

School Administration Responsibilities in Supporting the Work of HFSACs

Implementation of successful school health programs can begin with the schools, the school district, or the Healthy & Fit School Advisory Committees. Regardless of where ideas originate for development or revisions of school health policies, programs, or services, the support of the school administration is critical for successful implementation of recommendations for change. HFSACs are dependent on the leadership and support of the school district in maintaining its effectiveness as an advisory committee. To strengthen the effectiveness of HFSACs, school districts should consider the following supportive actions:

- Principal shall consider recommendations for healthy school changes
- Promote the Coordinated School Health Model
- Strengthen the communication channels among the HFSAC, the school administration, the school board, and the community
- Help the HFSAC members increase their understanding of the existing school health program so that they may become advocates
- Work with the HFSAC to identify the general functions and areas of concern that need attention, including a working definition of school health programming that is standard to all within the school district
- Identify potential members for the HFSAC
- Designate a school personnel member to serve as the primary contact for HFSAC activities
- Recognize and utilize the support of the HFSAC in improving the school health program within the school district