

September 14, 2007

## BC Healthy Schools

There have been several announcements this fall and last spring that deal directly with Student Health Initiatives. I wanted to provide an overview of these program changes in this week's newsletter.

### *Daily Physical Activity*

As you are aware, on September 4, 2007, an announcement was made which included a new Daily Physical Activity (DPA) initiative. We know that physically active students learn better and achieve more, and if we can help students achieve healthy habits when they are young, their chances of living healthier and longer lives are much higher. By September 2008, DPA will be in every school and for every student. K-9 students will do at least 30 minutes each day and grades 10-12 students will do at least 150 minutes each week. During the 2007/08 school year, a number of early leader schools across BC will be testing this process in advance of DPA's full implementation.

### *Anaphylaxis*

On September 10, 2007, the Honourable Shirley Bond announced that BC school districts are required to develop and implement anaphylaxis policies that meet new, rigorous provincial standards. The government will be putting a Ministerial Order in place that has the force of law, to provide a rapid response to ensure schools are prepared to deal with an emergency situation involving a student with a life-threatening allergy.

Over the summer, the Ministry of Education led a comprehensive consultation process with major stakeholders, including Anaphylaxis Canada, the

Allergy/Asthma Information Association, the BCMA, health authorities, health officers, educators, trustees and parents to develop an Anaphylaxis Child Health and Safety Framework.

The framework will direct districts as they develop school-based policies for managing anaphylaxis in schools. The Ministry, in consultation with members of the committee, will develop additional guidelines for schools and districts in the areas of training, monitoring and reporting. These materials are being sent out to all districts.

### *Guidelines for Food and Beverage Sales in BC Schools*

In 2005, a survey of food and beverage sales and policies in BC schools and school districts was conducted. The findings led to the development of the *School Food Sales and Policies Provincial Report*, providing a baseline for future comparison and informing the development of the *Guidelines for Food and Beverage Sales in BC Schools* (2005). The Guidelines help BC schools make informed choices for healthier food provision by classifying foods and beverages typically sold in schools into four categories: Not Recommended, Choose Least, Choose Sometimes, and Choose Most.

On September 4, 2007, the Minister announced that the Ministry had revised the Guidelines to align with the most current evidence (Canada's Food Guide, 2007) and with the recently released Provincial Public Building Food and Beverage Guidelines. The revised Guidelines (2007) will require schools to eliminate foods and beverages falling into the Choose Least and Not Recommended categories by January 2008 in elementary schools and by September 2008 in middle and secondary schools.

### *School Guidelines Support Initiative*

In May 2007, as part of its larger healthy eating strategy, the BC Healthy Living Alliance announced it was providing \$1,000,000 to support schools in implementing the *Guidelines for Food and Beverage Sales in BC Schools*. This initiative is being led by Dietitians Canada, and quicker implementation will be achieved through:

- Creating a centralized resource (i.e., 1-800 line, resource expert, access to inventory of local supports, resources/ tools) targeted at schools and responsive to school needs.
- Providing school districts and schools with customized support that enables them to move ahead in achieving the Guidelines, while recognizing differences in capacity and readiness.
- Raising school community awareness about the Guidelines, including awareness of general and customized supports available to schools and school districts.
- Providing easy access to a current list detailing which foods fit in the Choose Most, Choose Sometimes, Choose Least and Not Recommended categories.
- Providing vendors with training and support to encourage the provision of Choose Most food choices.

### *Tobacco Control Act*

The Ministries of Health and Education have worked collaboratively to develop tools to support school districts in meeting their obligations under this new legislation. These resources are accessible through the Ministry of Health's Tobacco Control site <http://www.health.gov.bc.ca/tobacco/>

The Ministry of Health is supporting districts through the provision of outdoor signage. Metal signs for entrances to school grounds and buildings will be available through the Ministry of Transportation. A maximum of two signs per school are available at no cost to the district. Additional signs are available at cost (\$16.50 each including shipping and taxes).

### *Ordering Outdoor Signage*

Districts must order for all schools within their district - individual school orders will not be accepted. The Ministry of Transportation has requested that whenever possible, district cluster ordering would be appreciated. To order, please go to the Tobacco Control site <http://www.health.gov.bc.ca/tobacco/> and follow the links to the order form located under School Resources, Signage, Outdoor Signage.

For more information, districts can contact Murray Smith at (250) 314-6171 or [Murray.I.Smith@gov.bc.ca](mailto:Murray.I.Smith@gov.bc.ca)

### *Action Schools!BC*

Action Schools!BC is a best practices model designed to assist schools in creating individualized action plans to promote healthy living. The program provides a framework for action, building on best practices and existing resources within the school community, targeting six Action Zones. Action Schools! BC promotes the creation of inclusive and diverse physical activity and healthy eating opportunities throughout the school day and supports school initiatives to make healthy choices the easy choices for children. All BC school districts now participate in Action Schools!BC.

### *School Fruit and Vegetable Snack Program*

Introduced in the 2005/06 school year as a pilot project in 10 BC schools and led by the Ministry of Agriculture and Lands, the program provides a free piece of BC grown produce to students in public schools, along with information for their teachers and families. In January 2007, the program expanded from 10 to 51 schools and further expanded to 162 schools in the fall of 2007. By 2010, all public schools will have the opportunity to participate in the program. <http://www.aitc.ca/bc/snacks/>

### *Healthy Living Family Guides*

Released in April 2007, four guides give age-appropriate tips and ideas on how to help children and youth be physically active and eat nutritiously. Three different booklets are aimed at parents of students in grades K-3, 4-7 and 8-9. A fourth guide is aimed at students in grades 10-12 to help them make their own healthy choices. The booklets can be downloaded online at <http://www.bced.gov.bc.ca/health/healthylivingbooklets.htm>

### *Healthy Eating and Physical Activity Learning Resource(s)*

These new learning resources support teachers to build student skills and knowledge in making lifelong healthy choices in physical activity and healthy eating. The resources are aligned with the Ministry of Education Health and Career Education (HCE) curricula for grades K-9 and Planning 10. Grade 8-10 has been field tested with teachers and students and will be implemented in fall 2007. Kindergarten to Grade 7 will be field tested in early 2008 and fully implemented in the fall 2008.

### *Provincial Crystal Methamphetamine Strategy*

The Ministry of Education, with support from the Ministry of Health, developed the school-based awareness component of the Provincial Crystal Methamphetamine Strategy. In consultation with students, teachers, parents, and experts in the field of substance use and addictions, the Ministry has developed learning resources that include classroom lessons and resources to help students make healthy and informed decisions; teacher resources to support classroom lessons; a guide for parents providing information to help parents talk to their children about the harms associated with crystal methamphetamine and other substance use; and an interactive website, featuring games, activities, and information on the effects and dangers associated with the use of crystal methamphetamine use.

You can see the extensive programming changes and initiatives that are being implemented. I realize this is a huge undertaking, but we all know the changes are necessary if we are to improve the life chances of our students.



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