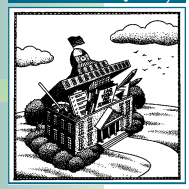
HEALTH PROFESSIONALS

Your Role on the Indoor Air Quality Team

Indoor Air Quality



Tools for Schools

*"It is more satisfying to spend time preventing illness than treating illness. A big part of my job is educating people about health and wellness. The **IAQ Tools for Schools** Program provides a 'lesson plan' to use as we strive to maintain a healthful environment for our students."*

— Deresa Hampton, Nurse, Independence School District, Missouri

Indoor Air Quality and Health

The air quality inside your school affects the health and comfort of every student and staff member. The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency's (EPA's) Science Advisory Board consistently ranks indoor air pollution among the top five environmental risks to public health. Poor indoor air quality (IAQ) is about more than just comfort. It can cause or contribute to short- and long-term health problems, including asthma, respiratory tract infection and disease, allergic reactions, headaches, nasal congestion, eye and skin irritations, coughing, sneezing, fatigue, dizziness, and nausea.

As a school-based health professional—district health officer, nurse, hygienist, or dietician—you are responsible for the health and well-being of staff and students. School nurses, in particular, can play a primary role in the early detection of an IAQ problem when observing children who are sick. Illnesses due to poor IAQ may not, however, produce easily recognizable symptoms. If multiple pollutants are involved, tracing the causes of the student's discomfort or illness will be your challenge.

Improving IAQ can reduce the number of student visits to the nurse's office, reduce absenteeism due to illness, and enhance the general health and well-being of all students and staff.

Ensure the Good Health of the Students in Your Care

You can help the students you care for by using EPA's one-stop resource for your school building's health—the *IAQ Tools for Schools* Kit. The Kit gives your school a practical plan for protecting and improving indoor air and explains your role on the IAQ Team. Your input can help the team identify the sources and types of indoor pollutants. Specifically, the Kit features forms, checklists, and a Problem Solving Wheel that helps nurses link health symptoms with possible IAQ problems.

The Kit also contains *Managing Asthma in the School Environment*, a guide with valuable information on how to identify and control common environmental factors in schools that trigger asthma attacks. It includes an "Asthma Action Card," which can serve as a daily asthma management plan. *Indoor Air Pollution: An Introduction for Health Professionals* is available on EPA's Web site (www.epa.gov/iaq) and provides an overview of acute conditions, patterns that point to particular pollutants, and suggestions for appropriate remedial action.

USE THE ENCLOSED CARD TO ORDER THE *INDOOR AIR QUALITY TOOLS FOR SCHOOLS* KIT TODAY

VISIT OUR WEB SITE AT www.epa.gov/iaq/schools

INDOOR AIR QUALITY IN SCHOOLS

Maintaining good IAQ in your school means:

- Controlling airborne pollutants
- Bringing in and distributing adequate outside air
- Controlling moisture and mold
- Maintaining acceptable temperature and humidity

Sources of pollutants in and around schools:

INDOOR SOURCES

- Radon
- Classroom pets
- Excess moisture and mold
- Dry-erase markers and similar pens
- Dust and chalk
- Cleaning materials
- Personal care products
- Odors and volatile organic compounds from paint, caulk, adhesives
- Insects and other pests
- Odors from trash
- Students and staff with communicable diseases

Potential high-pollution areas

- Science laboratories
- Vocational arts areas
- Copy/print areas
- Smoking lounges
- Food preparation areas

OUTDOOR SOURCES

- Pollen, dust, and fungal spores carried inside on shoes and clothing
- Vehicle emissions or unsanitary debris near building air intakes
- Pesticides used on school grounds
- Dumpster odors
- Leakage from underground storage tanks

The Issues

Indoor levels of air pollutants can be 2-5 times higher, and occasionally 100 times higher, than outdoor levels. Nearly 56 million people, approximately 20 percent of the U.S. population, spend their days inside elementary and secondary schools. In 1999, the National Center for Education Statistics of the U.S. Department of Education reported that approximately 25 percent of public schools described unsatisfactory ventilation, while 20 percent of schools told of unsatisfactory IAQ. IAQ problems can cause discomfort and contribute to short- and long-term health problems for students and staff.

The Solution

IAQ problems can be much less expensive and time-consuming to prevent than to fix. The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency's *IAQ Tools for Schools* Kit provides you with resources and checklists to help evaluate your school's indoor air quality and prevent IAQ problems. The Kit also offers easy steps for identifying and correcting current IAQ problems.

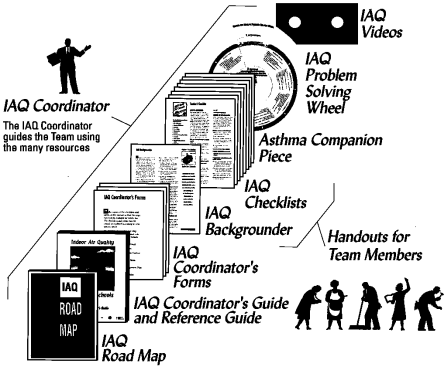
The Team

The awareness and effort of a team of individuals will help ensure that your school improves its indoor air quality. The checklists in the *IAQ Tools for Schools* Kit provide a thorough but simple means for all IAQ Team members to participate, including the IAQ coordinator, administrators, teachers and staff, facility managers, health professionals, maintenance crews, and others.

The Rewards *(in addition to good indoor air quality!)*

By using the Kit successfully, your school will have the opportunity to:

- Receive public recognition for outstanding environmental leadership through EPA's National Awards Program.
- Serve as a role model or mentor to other schools.
- Work with EPA to communicate success through case studies.
- Include your Web site link on EPA's IAQ page so other schools can learn from your IAQ efforts.



Order the *IAQ Tools for Schools* Kit today!