

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

What are the benefits of using the SHI?

Promoting healthy and safe behaviors among students is an important part of the fundamental mission of schools, which is to provide young people with the knowledge and skills they need to become healthy and productive adults. Improving student health and safety can

- Increase students' capacity to learn
- Reduce absenteeism
- Improve physical fitness and mental alertness

The SHI enable schools to

- Identify strengths and weaknesses of their health and safety policies and programs
- Develop action plans for improving student health, which can be incorporated into the School Improvement Plan
- Engage teachers, parents, students, and the community in promoting health-enhancing behaviors and

What are the differences between the elementary school SHI and the middle/high school SHI?

The majority of the items in the two versions are identical. However, there are a few questions that are targeted toward school level. For example, the elementary school SHI includes questions about recess and hand washing that are not included in the middle/high school SHI. The middle/high SHI asks about tobacco cessation services.

Also, there are certain questions that are included in both versions but reflect different requirements for the school levels. For instance, the elementary school SHI suggests a total of 150 minutes of physical education per week, whereas the middle/high school SHI suggests a total of 225 minutes per week.

Should I use the online version or the print version of the SHI?

The SHI can be completed online or on hard copy. Both methods are equally effective. Many schools have found that the online version saves time, because it allows you to

- Customize your SHI based on the health topics (i.e., physical activity, nutrition, tobacco-use prevention, safety, asthma, sexual health) you would like to address
- Save your responses in the system
- Leave and re-enter the system as often as you would like
- Have your module scores be calculated automatically
- Archive previous versions of the SHI, which may assist in record-keeping for schools who plan to complete the SHI annually
- Print and share Scorecards and School Health Improvement Plans with team members, administrators, and others

How much does it cost to get copies of the SHI?

Printed copies of the SHI cannot be ordered at this time. However, you can access it for free. Either interactively complete the SHI online at <http://www.cdc.gov/HealthyYouth/SHI> or download and print a copy from the same Web site.

Will it cost my school money to implement the SHI?

The main cost associated with implementation of the SHI is time. Many schools have done it with no funding at all—merely getting some dedicated time (perhaps part of a staff development day or teacher workday) for the school health team to come together to complete the self-assessment modules and create an action plan. Some schools have received a small amount (\$500-\$1,000) of seed money to pay for substitute teachers, refreshments, and materials for their SHI team meetings.

Once schools have developed their action plans, many have been able to implement some of the actions with no funding at all. For activities that might require some funding, many schools have used their SHI results to help obtain money or donated resources/time from community organizations, local businesses, state/local agencies, etc.

How long will it take to complete the SHI?

Field testing of the SHI has shown that it can be completed in as little as 6 hours, though this will vary depending on the number of health topics addressed and the amount of time needed to collect information or for discussion.

Can one person complete the SHI for my school?

No. The SHI is meant to be completed by school health teams. This gives teachers, administrators, students, parents, and community members a means of contributing to school health promotion by involving them in the assessment process and inviting them to help shape plans to improve school programs.

Do I have to report my results from the SHI to the CDC?

No. The CDC does not ask that schools report their scores. The SHI is a self-assessment process, and the data are not meant to be reported to outside agencies for the purposes of comparison.

Will my school be punished if we score poorly on the SHI?

Absolutely not. The SHI will help the school determine its own strengths and weaknesses solely for the purposes of self-improvement.

If I'm using the online version of the SHI, will my scores be automatically submitted to my school district or state?

Your online SHI scores will not be automatically sent to anyone. The only way your school's information can be viewed is using your team name and reference number.

Do I need permission to use the SHI?

No. The SHI was developed with federal funds by a federal agency, so you do not need any permission to use it.

Has the SHI been tested for validity and reliability?

The School Health Index was field tested for readability and user-friendliness. We have no validity and reliability data for the simple reason that the SHI is not a research tool; it is a community organizing and educational tool.

Has the SHI been evaluated?

Several articles have been published in scientific journals that have evaluated the SHI implementation process and described the results of the process. Other studies have used the items from the SHI as indicators of best practices:

- Austin SB, Fung T, Cohen-Bearak A, Wardle K, Cheung LWY. [Facilitating change in school health: a qualitative study of schools' experiences using the School Health Index](#). Preventing Chronic Disease [serial online] 2006 Apr.
- Brener ND, Pejavara A, Barrios LC, Crossett L, Lee SM, McKenna M, Michael S, Wechsler H. Applying the School Health Index to a nationally representative sample of schools. Journal of School Health 2006;76(2):57-66.
- Brener ND, Pejavara A, McManus T. Applying the School Health Index to a nationally representative sample of schools: update for 2006. Journal of School Health 2011;81(2):81-90.
- Pearlman DN, Dowling E, Bayuk C, Cullinen K, Thacher AK. [From concept to practice: using the School Health Index to create healthy school environments in Rhode Island elementary schools](#). Preventing Chronic Disease [serial online] 2005 Nov.
- Staten LK, Teufel-Shone NI, Steinfeldt VE, Ortega N, Halverson K, Flores C, et al. [The School Health Index as an impetus for change](#). Preventing Chronic Disease [serial online] 2005 Jan.