

**North Carolina**

**North Carolina's School Health Leadership Assemblies:  
Building Support for Coordinated School Health Programs Among  
Local Superintendents and Health Directors**

**Problem Overview**

The North Carolina Department of Public Instruction Healthy Schools Program strives to reduce the high prevalence of physical inactivity, unhealthy eating, and tobacco use among 1.4 million students in 2,000 schools. Support from the state's 115 local superintendents and 85 local health directors is critical for implementing successful coordinated school health programs (CSHPs).

**Program/Activity Description**

North Carolina's Department of Public Instruction and Division of Public Health, with support from CDC, established School Health Leadership Assemblies to assist superintendents and health directors in developing and implementing CSHPs by promoting student health as a strategy for improving academic performance. The purposes of the Assemblies are to

- Promote partnerships between public health and public education.
- Identify strategies and resources to improve student health and enhance academic outcomes.

The Assemblies required joint registration and joint travel, providing an opportunity for local officials to become better acquainted, discover common concerns, and develop strategies for improving the health and academic achievement of youth in their jurisdictions. Since 2003, three Assemblies have reached 43% of the superintendents and 59% of the health directors.

**Program/Activity Outcome**

As a result of participating in these Assemblies, superintendents and health directors have been instrumental in championing school health. Their successes include

- Creating a School Health Advisory Council (SHAC) in every school district.
- Encouraging development of local wellness policies through SHAC leadership.
- Leading approximately 40 local education agencies (LEAs) to adopt 100% tobacco-free school policies.
- Encouraging participation in the Youth Risk Behavior Survey and the School Health Profiles.
- Advocating for school nurses—all LEAs in North Carolina now have at least two school nurses, and 145 new permanent school nurse positions have been created.

Future Leadership Assemblies will target superintendents and health directors not yet reached.

