

## **School Health Screening Rules and Regulations: Project Update for Stakeholders #9 January 3, 2013**

On Thursday, November 1, 2012, public hearing was held on the proposed rules and regulations for school health screening in Nebraska public schools. Three individuals entered testimony in person. Another seven individuals entered written testimony into the public record.

No comments were made in opposition to regulating health screening in Nebraska schools, conducting health screening in Nebraska schools, or to the introduction of competencies for the screenings and screeners. Positive and supportive comments were made in person and in writing by Dr. Rob Rauner of Healthy Lincoln, and Dave McBride of the Nebraska Optometric Association.

Thoughtful remarks and suggestions were made on numerous topics, from the selected grades for minimum required screening, to the challenges of accessing suitable noise-free environments for screening hearing, to the challenges of screening preschool children. Other remarks included comment on the application of the regulations only to Nebraska's public schools, and the misleading title of Sections 7-003.02, originally called "Parent Refusal." Several comments reflected on how busy school nurses are, and the relatively few professional educational audiologists available to serve Nebraska schools and students in the state. Following the hearing, the School Health Screening Rules and Regulations Steering Committee reviewed all comments and recommendations for revisions in the proposed rules and regulations. The following items were identified for revision and improvement as a result of hearing testimony:

- Section 7-003.02 is renamed "Exception."
- In the dental screening competency attachment, Step 6 is modified as follows: "Urgent notifications should be made to parents when there are severe changes to any teeth, any complaints of mouth or tooth pain, and/or any areas of apparent swelling or drainage indicating possible active infection or injury."
- Additional language was added to the hearing screening competency attachment, to provide more information on assessing the suitable environment for hearing screening, and also to emphasize that the parameters for screening of hearing should not be changed (i.e., it is not appropriate to screen at 25 or 30 dB because the environment is too noisy to screen at 20 dB) to accommodate a noisy setting.
- Typographical errors were corrected in sections 7-004.02 and 7-005.01.

Additionally, input from stakeholders will translate into improvements in the school health guidelines, and resources and materials provided by the DHHS School Health Program. One particular area of interest for the School Health Program is making sure adequate resources and guidelines are available on screening of pre-school aged children, for those public schools hosting early childhood education programs as defines in Title 92 Nebraska Administrative Code, Chapters 11 and 51.

On Monday, November 19, 2012, a state Board of Health committee reviewed and approved all materials (proposed regulations, hearing summary, recommended changes to the regulations) and approved moving the proposed regulations on to the next step in the process of being adopted. This involves review by the Attorney General, the Governor's Policy Review Office, and finally approval by the Governor.

The effective date contained in the body of the proposed regulations is July 1, 2014. With luck, we will have final approval prior to the end of the current 2012-2013 school year. On this timetable, schools would then have an entire year before the regulations actually take effect.

Stakeholders are invited to continue dialogue with the DHHS School Health Program regarding concerns, questions, and suggestions to improve the quality of school health screening in Nebraska, and meet minimum standards for frequency and competencies of screening. Please contact Kathy Karsting ([kathy.karsting@nebraska.gov](mailto:kathy.karsting@nebraska.gov)) and/or Carol Tucker ([carol.tucker@nebraska.gov](mailto:carol.tucker@nebraska.gov)) for more information!