

# 100

## Day Report:

### The Trump Administration's Actions on Student Health + Wellness

Updated May 1, 2017

**HEALTHY SCHOOLS  
CAMPAIGN**

EVERY CHILD DESERVES TO LEARN + THRIVE



## Introduction

The President of the United States has the opportunity to help create a better future for our children and our nation by improving health in schools.

Tremendous opportunity exists for the executive branch to support states, school districts and communities in creating the conditions of student health and wellness and giving all children a chance for a healthy, brighter tomorrow. In its first 100 days, how has the Trump administration acted on this opportunity?

This report provides an overview of actions taken or proposals made by the Trump administration and the potential impact on school health and student wellness in four key areas:

### **School Health Services**

Ensuring all students have access to the physical and behavioral health services they need to be in school and ready to learn.

### **Department of Education and the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA)**

Ensuring the Department of Education is able to support schools, particularly through implementation of ESSA, in a way that supports student health and wellness.

### **Healthy and Green Schools**

Ensuring schools are able to support student health and learning while preserving the environment.

### **Healthy School Food**

Ensuring all students have access to healthy and nutritious school meals by fully implementing the Healthy and Hunger-Free Kids Act of 2010.

Healthy Schools Campaign (HSC) has identified these key areas of influence as central to children's health and opportunities to learn. This report follows HSC's October 2016 report, [Healthy and Ready to Learn: Recommendations for the Next Administration](#), which details recommended actions for the administration in each area.

Based on the information presented in this report, HSC is concerned that the actions of this administration in its first 100 days indicate a lack of regard for the value of school health. These actions have in some cases put important supports for health and learning in jeopardy, including supports for our nation's most vulnerable children.

However, great opportunities remain for those who care about school health and children's well-being to productively continue the work of ensuring that all schools can support health and learning. Without clear support from the administration, the work of on-the-ground advocates and leaders at the national, state and community levels is more important than ever in ensuring that all schools can support health.

For more information or to discuss these findings in more detail, please contact Alex Mays, national program director, at [alex@healthyschoolscampaign.org](mailto:alex@healthyschoolscampaign.org).

# School Health Services

Ensuring all students have access to the physical and behavioral health services they need to be in school and ready to learn.

## Why This Matters

Increasing access to school health services presents an important opportunity to support children's health and achievement, particularly to reach vulnerable and underserved children. The prevalence of chronic diseases—including asthma, obesity and diabetes—has doubled among children over the past several decades. Today, one in four American children have health issues that affect their ability to succeed in the classroom, double the number just 30 years ago. This has implications not only for children's long-term health but also for their opportunities to learn and succeed at school. Research shows that school health services—including both physical and behavioral health services—can address this need and directly support the goals of the health and education sectors.

## Actions in First 100 Days

The American Health Care Act, introduced in the House of Representatives with the support of the Trump administration, proposes significant changes that would jeopardize student health and wellness. Specifically, the bill proposes dramatically changing the structure of Medicaid financing. The dramatic cuts in funding it proposes would inevitably limit the services children can receive in schools, jeopardizing the basic healthcare that enables them to be healthy and ready to learn.

In addition, the bill proposes cutting the Prevention and Public Health Fund, which currently provides almost \$1 billion annually to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and was designed to support the programs that prevent disease in communities across the country. Cutting this funding would mean deep cuts in public health initiatives, such as immunization programs and chronic disease programs, at the state and local level.

In addition, the new administration's budget blueprint proposes eliminating the Corporation for National and Community Service, which oversees AmeriCorps. AmeriCorps service members support a wide range of educational support programs, including school health programs, to students across the country. National Health Corps is a part of the AmeriCorps Service Network and serves a select number of U.S. cities. The program specifically focuses on providing and connecting children to health and social services, enrolling and connecting children to health insurance and providing health screenings.

## Impact + Implications

Under the American Health Care Act, low-income children across the country would be at risk of losing their healthcare coverage. (More than 45 million children have health insurance through Medicaid and the Children's Health Insurance Program, and 45 percent of all children under age 6 and 35 percent of all children and adolescents age 6-18 are covered by these programs.) At the same time, their access to care at school—a crucial provider of services to children



with no other source of care and for children with disabilities—would be jeopardized.

Cuts to the Prevention and Public Health Fund would result in fewer resources to implement vital public health initiatives, such as vaccine programs, programs to identify and prevent lead poisoning and efforts to reduce the incidence of chronic disease. This means more children (and our society as a whole) would be susceptible to more preventable diseases, both chronic and acute. Supporting prevention and health promotion at the community level is key to making sure students can attend school healthy and ready to learn.

Eliminating the National Health Corps would take away access to an important service that provides health screenings to children, connects children with health and social services and helps connect children with health insurance.

## **READ MORE**

For more detail, see HSC's recent posts on this issue:

[Proposed Healthcare Bill Threatens Children's Health and Learning](#)

[Medicaid Cuts Would Hurt Vulnerable Children at School](#)

[What Would Repealing the Affordable Care Act Mean for Schools?](#)

# Department of Education and the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA)

Ensuring the Department of Education is able to support schools, particularly through implementation of ESSA, in a way that supports student health and wellness.

## Why This Matters

Supporting student health and school wellness through education policies and programs is key to promoting learning and academic success. This includes making sure schools provide students with a safe, supportive school environment and provide school staff with the training and support needed to ensure students are healthy and ready to learn. A school environment that supports the whole child is directly connected to school success. For example, a positive school climate can improve attendance, achievement and retention and rates of graduation. ESSA, the first major overhaul of our national education law since 2001, recognizes the importance of supporting the whole child and ensuring that all students have access to a safe and supportive school environment. The implementation of ESSA at the federal level and compliance with the new law by states and school districts provides an opportunity to more fully integrate health and wellness into education policy and practice, thereby supporting both health and academic success.

## Actions in First 100 Days

With the support of the administration, Congress repealed ESSA regulations supporting accountability and professional development. Secretary of Education Betsy DeVos then released new, less-detailed non-regulatory guidance on ESSA. This guidance scales back stakeholder engagement requirements but overall should not impede state efforts to support health and well-being.

In addition, the new administration's budget blueprint would cut the Department of Education budget by 13.5 percent. Key cuts and changes proposed by the budget blueprint that stand to impact student health and school wellness include:

- **Eliminating the Supporting Effective Instruction program** (\$2.25 billion) which is designed to better recruit, support and train educators; under ESSA this funding can be used to provide training on chronic absenteeism and mental health.
- **Eliminating the 21st Century Community Learning Centers program** (\$1.2 billion) which supports community learning centers that provide academic enrichment opportunities for students during non-school hours. Funding from this program is used to fund community school resource coordinators who play a key role in helping coordinate wraparound services for students, working to ensure they can access health services (including behavioral health) and other services that support their ability to be in school and learn.
- **Proposing a \$1.4 billion increase in Title I funding** focused on expanded school choice initiatives; a \$170 million increase for charter school grants; and \$250 million to expand private school voucher programs. Evidence that school choice programs (e.g. vouchers) improve student achievement is mixed. There is evidence, however, that school choice programs can result in greater socioeconomic segregation of students and schools.

Leaders in the Trump administration have publicly discussed weakening or eliminating the Office for Civil Rights (OCR) within the Department of Education. The OCR works to ensure a fair and equitable education system for all students. It has played an important role in connecting the school environment to equity and advancing discussions around school climate, bullying, chronic absenteeism, school support services and other issues. The Trump administration's lack of support for OCR was recently demonstrated by the Department of Education's appointment of Candice Jackson as a deputy assistant secretary. Ms. Jackson has openly criticized programs designed to assist people of color and has limited experience in civil rights law.

The administration withdrew protections for transgender students, which places their access to a safe, supportive, healthy school environment in jeopardy. These protections, which supported transgender students in using school bathrooms that match their gender identities, helped create a school environment supportive of all students.

The administration's policies and rhetoric on immigration have generated fear among children that they or members of their family will be deported. It is currently estimated that 4.6 million children in the U.S. are living with undocumented parents, and 1.1 million children are not documented.

### **Impact + Implications**

ESSA can put policies into place that reflect what educators and parents know: Healthy students are better prepared to learn and succeed. Fully implementing this law at the state and local level will have profound implications for children's learning and lifetime health. By directing the Department of Education to shirk its responsibility to support states and school districts in properly implementing the law, the administration is jeopardizing important progress for both education and health.

The proposed reduction in the Department of Education budget would likely mean scaling back foundational supports for children's health and learning in schools, including professional development for teachers and much more.

Scaling back or eliminating OCR would be a tremendous setback for school health and educational equity, essentially rolling back the day-to-day work of supporting the nation's core promise of equal opportunity through education.

The withdrawal of protections for transgender students has the potential to create a hostile school environment for the more than 150,000 young people ages 13 to 17 who identify as transgender. And research shows a hostile environment leads to missed school and other health issues that, ultimately, negatively affect a student's ability to learn.

The stress and fear created by the administration's stance on immigration has the potential to become an Adverse Childhood Experience for these children. The education, health and social services sectors will need to develop strategies to meet the needs of children who are fearful of deportation and for children whose parents are taken into custody or deported.

## **READ MORE**

For more detail, see HSC's recent posts on this issue:

[Opportunities Remain in ESSA for Supporting Health](#)

[Transgender Students Deserve Safe and Inclusive Schools](#)

[Health and Education Equity Work at Risk in Threat to Eliminate Office for Civil Rights](#)

Also see HSC's [State ESSA Framework for Action](#), a guide for advocates and state-level leaders, which provides a clear pathway for implementing ESSA in a way that complies with federal education law and supports student health and school wellness.

# Healthy and Green Schools

Ensuring schools are able to support student health and learning while preserving the environment.

## Why This Matters

Today, children spend most of their waking hours outside of home in school. Because school attendance is mandated by law, governments have a responsibility to provide healthy school environments. Yet large-scale research continues to show this responsibility is not always met. Research continues to demonstrate that the physical environments in which children spend their time have a profound impact on their health and ability to learn. Providing a healthy environment for all children at school is an important responsibility of the government and can make an important impact on the lifetime health and academic success.

## Actions in First 100 Days

The budget blueprint proposed by the administration includes a 31 percent cut to the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), the body responsible for implementing school environmental health policy.

Representatives of the administration have frequently referenced a \$1-trillion infrastructure bill. While a detailed plan is not publicly available, it appears that the plan will include a combination of public-private partnership relying heavily on tax incentives. It is unclear if and how school construction would be included.

## Impact + Implications

The EPA currently offers guidance and tools for states, school districts and schools to ensure students have access to a healthy environment. These resources include Tools for Schools, state school environmental health guidelines and school siting guidelines. In addition, the EPA is naturally positioned to address critical unmet needs in school environmental health, including issues surrounding indoor air quality, safe drinking water and safe, health-promoting schoolyards. A cut in funding to this agency is a cut in the access that schools have to needed supports for safe, healthy school environments.

Research also shows that schools serving low-income communities of color have higher rates of environmental health hazards as compared to the national average. These environmental factors can exacerbate health problems and contribute to perpetuating educationally relevant health disparities such as asthma. Efforts to scale back support for the EPA's ability to implement national environmental health policy for schools means that this disparity is more likely to continue or worsen.

## READ MORE

For more detail, see these recent articles by HSC partner organizations:

Environmental Defense Fund:

[Four Important EPA Programs Threatened by President Trump's "Skinny Budget"](#)

Children's Environmental Health Network:

[President's budget will put children's health at risk](#)

# Healthy School Food

Ensuring all students have access to healthy and nutritious school meals by fully implementing the Healthy and Hunger-Free Kids Act of 2010.

## Why This Matters

School food directly affects students' health and learning. Many children consume at least half of their meals at school; for many children, food served at school may be the only food they regularly eat. Given the prevalence of both hunger and obesity among students, particularly among low-income students of color, it is important that all students have access to healthy and appealing school meals. A vast body of research shows that improved nutrition in schools can lead to increased focus and attention, improved test scores, better classroom behavior and a better understanding of healthy eating behaviors.

## Actions in First 100 Days

The budget blueprint proposed by the administration would cut the USDA budget by 21 percent. In this context, it is expected that earlier proposals to change the funding model for the school meal programs into a block grant program would be revived. The Congressional Budget Office warned in 2016 that such a block-grant model "would probably eliminate access to nutrition programs for some children and reduce it for others."

Secretary of Agriculture Sonny Perdue has also indicated a willingness to weaken nutrition standards for school meals.

In addition, as is described above, the budget blueprint also proposes eliminating the Corporation for National and Community Service which oversees AmeriCorps. In addition to National Health Corps, FoodCorps is a part

of the AmeriCorps Service Network and specifically focuses on connecting kids to healthy food in school.

The administration has circulated a draft executive order that would define school meals as a public benefit, thereby providing grounds to deport immigrants who are in the country legally if they accept school meals for their children. (Currently, many immigrants are prohibited from receiving a range of public benefits—but food programs have never been included in this definition.) In addition, comments from the administration have given rise to fears among undocumented immigrants that they will be deported if they accept free school meals for children.

## Impact + Implications

More than 30 million children participate in the USDA National School Lunch Program, and 12 million participate in the USDA School Breakfast Program. Healthy meals support schools' core mission of education, especially when it comes to boosting students' concentration, focus and cognitive function. Research continues to document the powerful connection between good nutrition and classroom performance. Limiting students' access to healthy meals at school would directly undermine schools' efforts to support student learning and academic success.

The National School Lunch and Breakfast programs provide a vital lifeline to students living in poverty, allowing these students to escape hunger during the school day and concentrate on their education. Scaling back access to these programs would inevitably perpetuate or worsen the academic achievement gap. Efforts aimed at limiting access to healthy meals for particularly vulnerable groups—such as immigrant children—would compound this damage.

## READ MORE

For more detail, see HSC's recent post on this issue:

[Why Block Grants Are Bad for School Meals](#)

# Conclusion

The actions outlined in this report indicate that in its first 100 days, the Trump administration has demonstrated a lack of regard for the value of school health and children's well-being. This disregard puts crucial programs in jeopardy and has the potential to profoundly damage children's opportunities for health and learning. Yet powerful opportunities exist for advocates and leaders at the national, state and local levels to make a difference and support children's health at school.

While the first 100 days of an administration can reveal its direction, they are followed by 1,360 more days in which the administration will make decisions that either support or undermine children's health and learning.

In this context, your advocacy and leadership are more important than ever. These first 100 days show that it's up to us—parents, teachers, advocates, elected officials and all who care about children's health and learning—to carry on the work of ensuring every school can provide a safe and healthy learning environment for our nation's children. We can show the President that we care about student health and wellness and his administration should, too!

HSC will continue to closely monitor these issues and the administration's actions. To receive updates and be alerted of key opportunities to take action, please stay connected:

- Visit [healthyschoolscampaign.org/100days](https://healthyschoolscampaign.org/100days) to take action
- Sign up for our newsletters at [healthyschoolscampaign.org/subscribe](https://healthyschoolscampaign.org/subscribe)
- Follow us on Twitter [@healthyschools](https://twitter.com/healthyschools) and on Facebook at [facebook.com/healthyschools](https://facebook.com/healthyschools)

To discuss this report in more detail, please contact Alex Mays, national program director, at [alex@healthyschoolscampaign.org](mailto:alex@healthyschoolscampaign.org).

## ABOUT HEALTHY SCHOOLS CAMPAIGN

Healthy Schools Campaign (HSC), an independent not-for-profit organization, is a leading authority on healthy school environments and a voice for people who care about our environment, our children, and education. HSC advocates for policies and practices that allow all students, teachers and staff to learn and work in a healthy school environment. Since beginning as a local project in Chicago in 2002, HSC has grown into a vibrant national organization with

diverse strategic partnerships and effective outreach to schools, communities, and policy makers. As HSC works for policy and systems change, it continues to pioneer new strategies through a special focus on Chicago schools and the district's low-income and minority students. HSC co-convenes the National Collaborative for Education and Health, a multi-sector collaboration to create systems that support schools in creating the conditions of student health and wellness.

## Take Action:

Visit [healthyschoolscampaign.org/100days](http://healthyschoolscampaign.org/100days).

Contact Alex Mays, national program director, at [alex@healthyschoolscampaign.org](mailto:alex@healthyschoolscampaign.org) to discuss this report in more detail.

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