



Healthy Youth & Schools Commission

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OFFICE OF THE
SECRETARY

APR 24 2018

The Honorable Phil Mendelson
Chairman
Council of the District of Columbia
1350 Pennsylvania Avenue N.W., Suite 504
Washington, D.C. 20004

Dear Chairman Mendelson:

The Healthy Youth and Schools Commission (HYSC) is pleased to submit to the Council of the District of Columbia its report on the health, wellness, and nutrition of youth and schools in the District pursuant to the Healthy Schools Act of 2010 (HSA), DC Official Code § 38-827.01.

The report includes a snapshot of the work performed, matters reviewed, and recommendations made by the HYSC for School Year (SY) 2016-17. More specifically, the report addresses areas in which the commission has worked with the Office of the State Superintendent of Education (OSSE) and other District agencies to address issues affecting the health of District youth and to make recommendations for improving processes, data collection, HSA legislation, and internal policies. The report also contains a list of current HYSC commissioners.

Please feel free to contact me to discuss any questions you may have regarding this report.

Sincerely,

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Healthy Youth and Schools Commission
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Annual Report to the Mayor and the Council of the District of Columbia

April 2018

Introduction

Pursuant to the D.C. Healthy Schools Act (HSA or the Act), DC Official Code § 38-827.01, the Healthy Youth and Schools Commission (the Commission) is charged with advising the Mayor and the Council of the District of Columbia on health, wellness and nutrition issues concerning youth and schools in the District. As required by the Act, the Commission is pleased to submit to the Mayor and the Council its Annual Report on the implementation of the Act in School Year (SY) 2016-17.

The Healthy Youth and Schools Commission began 2017 by setting a number of key priorities for the year:

- Contributing to the dialogue around amendments to the Health Schools Act (HSA)
- Strengthening the HSA grants process
- Increasing awareness of the role Mental Health/Behavioral Health plays in healthy youth
- Increasing the accuracy of data collected as part of the Healthy Schools Act

HSA Amendments

Throughout 2017, the Commission focused much of its attention on dialogue with community members on how to strengthen the HSA by working in collaboration with the Office of the State Superintendent of Education (OSSE) and the Council of the District of Columbia. The Commission, recognizing that OSSE is the governmental body charged with implementing most of the HSA, supported OSSE's recommendations for amendments to the HSA. The Commission reviewed all of OSSE's proposed changes, which included changes to sections governing nutrition, physical activity/physical education (PA/PE), and the school health profiles.

The Commission offered feedback to OSSE and discussed additional topics that may merit discussion as the Council considered the future of the Act. These included the role that mental health plays in keeping children in school so they can learn, as well as the presence of lead in water at schools. The Commission also spent considerable time reviewing recommendations from its PA/PE subcommittee on how best to ensure that children are getting adequate amounts of physical activity.

Strengthening the HSA Grants Process

The Commission recognizes the important role grants made to schools play in ensuring the success of the HSA. However, the Commission discussed how many schools are unable to devote the staff or parental resources to producing successful competitive grant applications. The Commission suggested that OSSE create workshops in high need neighborhoods to help schools apply for grants, while being mindful of any conflict of interest issues. Individual members of the Commission also expressed interest in participating in reviewing grants to increase transparency in the process.

Mental Health/Behavioral Health

The Commission discussed several times in 2017 the need for mental health/ behavioral health needs to play a more prominent role in the dialogue about "healthy schools." The majority of the Commission's

May 2017 meeting was devoted to a greater understanding of what mental health/ behavioral health services are offered in DC schools, trends in this area, and ways the Commission could strengthen services.

Specifically, the commission heard presentations on restorative practices, primary prevention, early intervention services, treatment services, crisis interventions, the School Mental Health Program, the DCPS School Climate Initiative, the Comprehensive School Safety Initiative, and bullying prevention.

The Commission discussed ways to build upon existing programs within the HSA to strengthen mental health services at schools, including demonstrating the correlation between PA/PE and the effects on the mind and mental health. The Commission also asked OSSE to assist in cataloging existing pieces of legislation and regulations that impact mental and behavioral in schools.

Accuracy of School Health Data

Several times over the year, the Commission discussed improving the accuracy of data from the HSA School Health Profiles, particularly in areas where the only sources of data are school-reported ones, such as the number of physical education and physical activity minutes. The Commission asked OSSE if there were ways to independently verify such self-reported data (such as conducting school visits and reviewing school schedules.) The Commission also asked OSSE if data from School Health Profiles could be presented to the public in a way that facilitates comparisons between schools.

Open Governance Issues

With the guidance of the professional staff at OSSE, the Commission committed to serving as a model body with regard to open governance in the District of Columbia. Each commissioner agreed to be bound by a “commitments of commissioners” document that outlines expectations of commissioners for meeting attendance, commission procedures, reporting, subcommittees, and grant review. The Commission also formally reviewed and adopted minutes of each of its meetings, published those minutes and accompanying documents on open-dc.gov.

In its 2016 annual report, the Commission noted the strength of the leadership at OSSE. With additional team members joining OSSE’s Division of Health and Wellness, the depth of leadership increased in 2017. The Commission is pleased to continue its collaborative work with OSSE and the talented team working on Healthy Schools Act programs.

Priorities and Recommendations for 2018

For 2018, the Commission intends to continue working with community members and OSSE to address a number of issues impacting the health of youth in DC and promoting a healthy school culture, including:

- The impact of absenteeism and attendance on the health of children;
- Accountability and enforcement of physical activity standards in the Healthy Schools Act, and assessing the impact of amendments when enacted;
- Understanding the impact of amendments to the Healthy Schools Act on student participation in school meal programs;

- Continued analysis of the quality of school-reported data on health, physical activity, and the physical environment in schools;
- Coordination with the Department of Health on collecting student-level health data.

Commission Membership

The Commission added several new members in 2017, including an active student member, Lauren Polite; a pediatrician, Danielle Dooley; a public policy expert, Taryn Morrissey; and a public health expert, Robin Diggs Outlaw. The new Assistant Superintendent of Health and Wellness, Heidi Schumacher, also joined the Commission. Four Commissioners were re-appointed by Mayor Bowser for three year terms (Diana Bruce, Charneta Scott, Jeff Travers, and Audrey Williams). Below is a complete list of current Commissioners.

Name	Appointing Organization	Affiliated Organizations	Starts/End Date of Appointment	Ward of Residence
Jeff Travers	Chairperson, Mayoral Appointee	Cancer Support Community	October 2017 – October 2020	Ward 3
VACANT	Appointed by the Chairman of the Council			
VACANT	Appointed by the Chairperson of the Council Committee with oversight of education			
Audrey Williams	Appointed by the Chair of the Public Charter School Board	DC Public Charter School Board	October 2017 – October 2020	Burtonsville, MD
Heidi Schumacher	Designee Representative of OSSE, Mayoral Appointee	OSSE	October 2017 – October 2020	Ward 6
Diana Bruce	Designee Representative of DCPS, Mayoral Appointee	DC Public Schools	October 2017 – October 2020	Ward 6
Charneta Scott	Designee Representative of DBH, Mayoral Appointee	Dept. of Behavioral Health	December 2017 – December 2020	Ward 4
Robin Diggs Outlaw	Designee Representative of DOH, Mayoral Appointee	Dept. of Health	October 2017 – October 2020	Odenton, MD
William Dietz	General Member, Mayoral Appointee	George Washington University	May 2015 – May 2018	Ward 6
Beverly Wheeler	General Member, Mayoral Appointee	DC Hunger Solutions	May 2015 – May 2018	Ward 1
Taryn Morrissey	General Member, Mayoral Appointee	American University, School of Public Affairs	October 2017 – October 2020	Ward 4
Danielle Dooley	General Member, Mayoral Appointee	Children’s National Health System	October 2017 – October 2020	Ward 2
Lauren Polite	Student Member, Mayoral Appointee	Friendship Public Charter School	October 2017 – October 2018	Ward 7