

# Standards of Practice for Health Promotion in Higher Education

Second Edition, August 2004

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## Introduction and Guiding Principles

Student learning is at the core of the higher education academic mission. Health promotion serves this mission by supporting students and creating healthy learning environments. A wide range of professionals work to enhance health, both on the campus and individual level. It is common to find health educators, nurses, physicians, counselors, faculty, and staff from residence life, student activities, campus recreation and other student affairs departments leading or collaborating on health promotion initiatives that advance student learning and the mission of higher education. Programs and policies surrounding issues such as alcohol and other drug use, sexual misconduct, and mental health are increasingly viewed as campuswide concerns that affect student health and academic progress.

In 1996, the American College Health Association (ACHA) appointed the Task Force on Health Promotion in Higher Education to study the scope and practice of health promotion in colleges and universities (Zimmer, Hill, & Sonnad, 2003). The goal of this task force was to develop standards of practice to enhance the quality of health promotion in higher education, recognizing the multidisciplinary background of professionals who work to advance the health of students and campus communities. In 2001, ACHA published the culmination of that research as the first edition of *Standards of Practice for Health Promotion in Higher Education (Standards)* (ACHA, 2001).

Following three years of feedback from professionals who practice health promotion on college

campuses, ACHA's Committee on Standards of Practice for Health Promotion in Higher Education presents the second edition of the *Standards*. Like the first edition, the 2004 edition of the *Standards* provides measurable guidelines for enhancing the quality of health promotion programs in colleges and universities. For the individual professional, the *Standards* are designed to guide daily efforts, assess individual skills and capacities, and assist in decisions to improve practice through professional development. The *Standards* also delineate a set of indicators to evaluate comprehensive health promotion programs and guide recognition of those programs. The aims of this second edition are to articulate the *Standards* in simplified language with clear, measurable indicators and to disseminate them to the wide range of professionals who practice health promotion on college campuses.

The *Standards* are guided by several premises about the mission and scope of practice of health promotion in higher education as well as health itself. These assumptions include the following:

- In the broadest sense, health encompasses the capacity of individuals and communities to reach their potential.
- Health transcends individual factors and includes cultural, institutional, socioeconomic, and political influences.
- Health is not solely a biomedical quality measured through clinical indicators, a view that prevails in today's society.

The mission of health promotion in colleges and universities is to advance the health of students and to contribute to the creation of healthy and socially just campus communities. Thus, health promotion professionals strive to:

- Reduce risk for individual illness and injury.
- Enhance health as a strategy to support student learning.
- Advocate for safety, social justice, economic opportunity, and human dignity.

Health and social justice are inextricably connected. Therefore, health promotion professionals strive to:

- Identify and address the complex social, cultural, economic, and political factors that may contribute to or compromise the health of individuals or communities.
- Advocate for inclusive and equal access to resources and services.
- Eliminate health disparities and increase the quality and years of healthy life for all.

The scope of practice of health promotion on college campuses includes both individual and environmental approaches. Thus, health promotion professionals:

- Reduce the risk of individual illness and injury, as well as build individual capacity.
- Address larger institutional issues, community factors, and public policies that affect the health of students.

Health promotion and the academic mission of higher education are natural allies. Health promotion professionals in colleges and universities:

- Support the academic mission of student learning by assisting students in leading healthier lives.
- Engage individuals who will become political, social and economic decision makers, thereby advancing the collective health of the community.

Zimmer C.G., Hill M.H., & Sonnad, S.R. (2003). A scope-of-practice survey leading to the development of Standards of Practice for Health Promotion in Higher Education. *Journal of American College Health*, 51(6), 247-254.

American College Health Association (ACHA) (2001). *Standards of practice for health promotion in higher education*. Baltimore, MD: American College Health Task Force on Health Promotion in Higher Education.

### **Standard 1. Integration with the Learning Mission of Higher Education**

Effective practice of health promotion in higher education requires professionals to incorporate individual and community health promotion initiatives into the learning mission of higher education.

- 1.1 Develop health-related programs and policies that support student learning.
- 1.2 Incorporate health promotion initiatives into academic research, courses, and programs.
- 1.3 Disseminate research that demonstrates the effect of individual health behaviors and environmental factors on student learning.

### **Standard 2. Collaborative Practice**

Effective practice of health promotion in higher education requires professionals to support campus and community partnerships to advance health promotion initiatives.

- 2.1 Advocate for a shared vision that health promotion is the responsibility of all campus and community members.
- 2.2 Develop and participate in campus and community partnerships that advance health promotion initiatives.
- 2.3 Utilize campus and community resources to maximize the effectiveness of health promotion initiatives.
- 2.4 Advocate for campus, local, state, and national policies that address campus and community health issues.
- 2.5 Advocate for the institutionalization of health promotion initiatives through inclusion in campus strategic planning and resource allocation processes.

### **Standard 3. Cultural Competence**

Effective practice of health promotion in higher education requires professionals to demonstrate cultural competency and inclusiveness in advancing the health of individuals and communities.

- 3.1 Identify the social, cultural, political, and economic disparities that influence the health of students.
- 3.2 Design health promotion initiatives that reflect the social, cultural, political, and economic diversity of students.
- 3.3 Develop health promotion mission statements, program policies, staff recruitment and retention practices, and professional development goals that reflect the social, cultural, political, and economic diversity of the campus.
- 3.4 Provide leadership for campuswide understanding of the connection between culture, identity, social justice, and student health status.

### **Standard 4. Theory-Based Practice**

Effective practice of health promotion in higher education requires professionals to understand and apply professionally recognized and tested theoretical approaches that address individual and community health.

- 4.1 Review health promotion research from interdisciplinary sources as a guide for the development of health promotion initiatives.
- 4.2 Apply professionally recognized methods and tested theories to the development of health promotion initiatives.
- 4.3 Articulate the theoretical frameworks used in health promotion decision-making to the campus community.

*(continued)*

## **Standard 5. Evidence-Based Practice**

**Effective practice of health promotion in higher education requires professionals to understand and apply evidence-based approaches to health promotion.**

- 5.1 Review data gathered from published research on campus, local, state, and national health priorities.
- 5.2 Conduct population-based assessments of health status, needs, and assets of students.
- 5.3 Conduct environmental assessments of campus-community health needs and resources.
- 5.4 Develop measurable goals and objectives for health promotion initiatives.
- 5.5 Evaluate health promotion initiatives using valid and reliable quantitative and qualitative approaches.
- 5.6 Report evaluation data and research results to students, faculty, staff, and campus community.

## **Standard 6. Continuing Professional Development and Service**

**Effective practice of health promotion in higher education requires professionals to engage in on-going professional development and service to the field.**

- 6.1 Apply ethical principles to the practice of health promotion.
- 6.2 Participate regularly in formal professional development.
- 6.3 Assist others in strengthening their health promotion skills.

*Additional copies of this document may be obtained via the ACHA website, at [www.acha.org/about\\_acha/ctfs/com\\_hpshe.cfm](http://www.acha.org/about_acha/ctfs/com_hpshe.cfm)*

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