

## American Lung Association Fact Sheet: Using CDC's School Health Index for AFSI

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's (CDC) School Health Index (SHI) provides an easy-to-use self-assessment and planning tool that will simplify school needs assessments for AFSI planning. Although it is designed for use by and in schools the SHI can be used with organizations, such as the AFSI coalition, to assess schools. Using the SHI ensures that you gather all pertinent school data on which to build your AFSI plan.

Note: The SHI is designed to be used on a school-by-school basis. When working throughout a district, or with several schools within a region, complete the SHI for each school and compile the data to identify and prioritize needs.

The SHI helps schools identify strengths and weaknesses of their health and safety policies and programs and has been used successfully by schools in nearly every state. It provides tools for both collecting and analyzing data. It addresses factors in eight modules, reflecting a coordinated school health program; four modules should be completed for AFSI (health education, physical education, health services, and healthy school environment).

The 2005 edition of the SHI addresses five issues, including asthma. The SHI incorporates discussion questions and self-assessment questionnaires ("score cards") focused on strengths and weaknesses of a school's asthma programs and policies in the eight coordinated school health program modules. You can use either an interactive online format ([www.cdc.gov/healthyYouth/shi](http://www.cdc.gov/healthyYouth/shi)) or a paper version (available at same URL) as you conduct a school needs assessment for your AFSI efforts.

### School Health Index, Step-by-Step

1. Assemble team
2. Identify coordinator
3. Meet with team
4. Review and assign modules
5. Create an Account (for online SHI)
6. Answer discussion questions
7. Review score cards and plan for improvement

Schools using the SHI involve individuals from different parts of the school community who share information and plan together, resulting in connections among individuals and departments that are among the most important outcomes of the process.

Schools follow a step-by-step process:

1. *Assemble the SHI Team:* Create a new team; use an existing team, such as the school health council; or create a new subcommittee of the school management council. Broad and diverse participation is important for meaningful assessment and successful planning and implementation. You may want to include people from the school community and from the local community. Possible members from the school community include: principal, assistant principal; physical education teacher; health education teacher; classroom teacher; student; school psychologist or social worker; school nurse; bus driver; custodial and maintenance staff. Possible members from the local community include: parent or other family member; community-based health care and social services provider; asthma coalition representatives; local health department staff member.
2. *Identify a SHI Coordinator:* Many schools have found that it is best to have someone from outside the school facilitate the SHI process. A SHI coordinator should be a skilled group facilitator; an excellent listener who does not attempt to impose his or her own opinions on the group; and highly respected by all participants and by the school administration. A member of the AFSI coalition can function as the SHI coordinator if they are acceptable to the school team.
3. *Meet with All Members of the SHI Team:* Explain the SHI and its purposes to the team. Make sure they understand that results will not be used for punishing schools or comparing schools to one another. Team members should understand that their work on the SHI can make a great difference

in the lives of your school's students. Emphasize that the purpose of the SHI is not to find out if the school is "passing" or "failing"; rather, the purpose of the SHI is to help the school identify the strengths and weaknesses of its policies and programs for creating an asthma-friendly school.

4. *Review and Assign the Modules.* Assign at least two people to each module, because having more than one person involved will increase accuracy and elicit a variety of creative insights for improving school policies and programs.
5. *Create an Online Account and SHI.* Create an account on the SHI home page ([www.cdc.gov/HealthyYouth/shi](http://www.cdc.gov/HealthyYouth/shi)) and distribute the login information to the team members. Members of your team can log into the system at any time by using the account information to answer the discussion questions assigned to them or to perform other tasks.
6. *Answer the Discussion Questions:* The discussion questions are displayed in eight modules according to the topic(s) (asthma) selected. The modules correspond to the CSHP's eight components; focus only on the four pertinent to AFSI. Cross-cutting questions will always appear, regardless of the topic(s) you have selected. If a question does not apply to your school, you can designate it as not applicable. If you are not sure or need more information before you can answer the question, you can skip the question and return to it at another time. You do not have to answer all the questions in a module. The online SHI will calculate your total points and a module score (percentage). SHI also will create an overall scorecard that can be used to identify strengths and weaknesses.
7. *Review the scorecards with team:* Meet again with the team and review scorecards for each module; discuss the identified strengths, weaknesses and recommended actions in each module; review the overall scorecard.