



**Students**

**Section: JICHA**

## **SUBSTANCE USE PREVENTION AND EDUCATION**

### **Introduction**

Massachusetts is one of the states affected by the growing opioid epidemic. Schools play an important role in preventing substance use among students and educating students about the dangers of substance abuse. Hudson Public Schools (HPS) is one of many districts that are taking action to address the potentially devastating effects of substance abuse on our students and their families through establishment of policies, protocols and educational programs that address substance use prevention. In accordance with Mass. General Laws c.71, s. 96, and the guidance and recommendations from the Massachusetts Department of Public Health (MDPH) and the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE), HPS continues to implement preventive and educational substance use strategies. Guidance and recommendations shall be reviewed and regularly updated to reflect applicable research and best practices. HPS shall file its substance use prevention and abuse education policies with the department of elementary and secondary education in a manner and form prescribed by the department.

### **Leadership**

HPS believes that all students should be supported to continuously strive for academic, personal and professional success. A healthy lifestyle, a safe and supportive school environment, and a committed and supportive team is essential to achieve these expectations. This teamwork approach is the foundation of substance use preventive strategies for HPS. Our district substance use prevention team includes the superintendent, school administrators, school committee members, educators, school nurses, athletic director, athletic coaches, guidance counselors and other support personnel, students and families. The HPS Health and Wellness Advisory Council, comprised of educators, school nurses and school nurse leader, district and community leaders, parents, and students is another source of leadership supporting substance use prevention activities. Our district will strive to collaborate with community organizations and coalitions to implement and oversee youth substance use prevention programs.

### **Professional Development**

The faculty and staff who work closely with students may recognize potentially troublesome changes in student academic performance, physical appearance and general demeanor that may indicate a student may be engaging, or are at risk of engaging, in unhealthy behaviors such as substance abuse. Therefore, it is important for staff to be trained in the recognition of early warning signs and other factors that may indicate misuse, or potential misuse, of substances by students. HPS will provide a tiered training approach so that all school staff will know district policies, procedures, and protocols for prevention, intervention and follow up in order to prevent and respond to substance use and abuse. HPS school nurses and other support personnel, such as middle school guidance counselors, will receive training on the use of a verbal screening tool for

substance use disorders. HPS wellness educators and other staff responsible for developing and implementing substance use prevention curricula and other evidenced-based substance use prevention programs will be provided with specific training and professional development.

### **Access to Resources and Services**

Any school staff member who identifies potential or actual substance abuse by students should confer with the school counselors, school nurses or other appropriate support staff for appropriate referrals, counseling or other interventions. A resource list of area agencies, counseling services and substance use treatment programs will be established and be made available to appropriate school staff, administrators and parents. HPS will work collaboratively with community-based behavioral health providers and other resources to address student-specific issues, including interventions such as individual supports and establishment of appropriate school re-entry plans, and for consultative support and input, when indicated.

HPS will collaborate with community substance abuse prevention coalitions and other appropriate organizations that are established to positively impact substance use or misuse among Hudson youth.

### **Academic and Non-Academic Strategies**

HPS health and wellness educators will utilize evidenced-based and developmentally appropriate instruction for educating students on alcohol, tobacco and other substance use prevention strategies in grades 5-12. Periodically, health curricula is evaluated and revised to meet current state and federal guidelines.

Student athletes are expected to conform to the Massachusetts Interscholastic Athletic Association's (MIAA) chemical health policy. All student athletes and their families are provided with written educational material on substance use prevention and identification prior to the beginning of each athletic season.

HPS school nurses and middle school guidance counselors have been screening students in grades 7 for the past several years as a pilot district for an evidenced-based verbal substance use prevention screening tool. Grades 8 and/or 9 were included in this pilot as well. Beginning in school year 2017-2018, Massachusetts regulations now require this screening in 2 different grade levels in all school districts on an annual basis. Parent/guardians or pupils may opt out of the screening, in writing, any time prior to or during the screening. HPS collects and reports de-identified screening data to MDPH, as required. This data may also be shared with other stakeholders, including the school committee, appropriate school staff and administrators, school health and safety advisory council, and community substance abuse coalitions, as appropriate, to inform and enhance our substance use prevention strategies.

HPS participates in the MetroWest Adolescent Health Survey (MWAHS), along with other local communities. This survey is administered biennially to students in grades 6-8 and 9-12 through a grant by the MetroWest Health Foundation. Data from the survey is utilized to determine specific

substance use trends and other trends reflecting unhealthy behaviors in our students. Data is also used to identify school and community interventions that may be indicated to address any significant, negative trends in unhealthy behaviors.

### **Policies and Protocols**

HPS expressly prohibits the use, serving, consumption, or possession of any alcoholic beverage or controlled substances on school property or at school functions. Further, any student will be barred from any school sponsored activity if he or she has consumed alcoholic beverages or drugs prior to attendance at or participation in said school activities. Violations may result in suspension or expulsion from school. HPS abides by the MIAA Chemical Health policy for student athletes which stipulates that any student who, at any time during the regular school year, regardless of the quantity, uses or consumes, possesses, buys/sells, or gives away any drugs, including but not limited to alcohol, tobacco, or marijuana, or any other controlled substance, will be subject to the penalties prescribed in the MIAA rules and regulations.

School Committee approved the use of an opioid overdose reversal medication by HPS school nurses. At the start of each new school year, HPS nurses are provided with standing orders from the school physician that allow for HPS school nurses to administer nasal naloxone (Narcan©) to students, staff or visitors that may be experiencing an opioid related overdose. HPS is currently in the process of developing written protocols regarding the verbal screening tool, Screening, Brief Intervention and Referral to Treatment (SBIRT).

HPS policies and protocols are provided to students and families in several formats, including parent-student handbooks, home mailings, newsletters, on HPS school websites, and through other forms of distribution. Annually, parent signatures are required to verify that they have received and read the handbooks.

### **Collaboration with Families**

HPS believes that families are crucial partners in the schools' efforts to prevent student substance abuse. Parental input helps to identify and establish priorities for substance abuse prevention in the schools. This input is especially vital when parents are aware of or suspect that their child has substance related problems. The school-community-home collaborations are important for establishing resources for comprehensive, multifaceted approaches to preventing substance use and abuse. With this in mind, HPS will provide parents/guardians with information on the district's and school's substance use prevention and abuse education policies through written and online sources and through other informational, educational and interactive forums.



## References

Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (2016). Guidance on school policies regarding substance use prevention. Retrieved from: <http://www.doe.mass.edu/ssce/Guidance-SubstanceUsePrevention.pdf>

Milford Public Schools (2016). Substance use prevention and education policy. Retrieved from: <https://www.milfordpublicschools.com/cms/lib/MA01907662/Centricity/Domain/4/Substance%20Use%20Prevention%20and%20Education%20Policy.pdf>

Worcester Public Schools (2016). Substance use prevention and education policy. Retrieved from: [http://worcesterschools.org/sites/default/files/Department/Nursing/worcester\\_public\\_school\\_substance\\_use\\_education\\_prevention\\_policy.pdf](http://worcesterschools.org/sites/default/files/Department/Nursing/worcester_public_school_substance_use_education_prevention_policy.pdf)

*Approved by Hudson School Committee -January 9, 2018*