



COMMONWEALTH of VIRGINIA

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September 26, 2012

The Honorable Benjamin L. Cline, Chairman
Joint Commission on Health Care
900 E. Main Street, 1st Floor
P.O. Box 1322
Richmond, Virginia 23218

Dear Delegate Cline:

I am writing in response to your letter dated March 27, 2012, attached, regarding eating disorders awareness and screening in Virginia public schools. It is my pleasure to provide you with the information below.

A work group of Virginia Department of Health (VDH) and Virginia Department of Education (VDOE) staff researched information pertaining to the findings from the Joint Commission on Health Care (JCHC) study of eating disorders. Myra Shook, health promotion programs manager, and Janet Wright, school age health specialist, from VDH, Tia Campbell, school health specialist, from VDOE, and Sherry Shrader, nurse manager, Richmond City Health District, researched various eating disorder programs and resources. Vanessa Wigand, health and physical education specialist, from VDOE, provided written input regarding Standards of Learning. Included in the research were materials and resources developed by the National Eating Disorders Association (NEDA).

Based on recommendations from Michelle Chesser at the JCHC, work group members contacted Lara Gregorio at the NEDA for more information and for additional contacts working in the area of eating disorders. Information obtained from these contacts resulted in identifying the following information in response to the three areas outlined in your letter:

- 1) *Encourage school divisions to provide homeroom teachers and school nurses in all secondary schools with instruction or information approved by the American Medical Association (AMA) or the National Eating Disorders Association (NEDA) on how to recognize eating disorders and how to help youth who may be affected get care they need.*

Different evidence-based resources available through the NEDA were reviewed. The NEDA has toolkits for teachers, parents, and coaches that contain resources, suggested curricula, and community resources on eating disorders. Additionally, VDOE did a video several years ago on eating disorders and copies were distributed to school nurses. This summer, a workshop for school nurses was offered at the Summer Institute for School Nursing on eating disorders. Tia Campbell conducts technical assistance for school nurses throughout the year and will provide

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additional resources on eating disorders. The Health Smart Virginia Web site, <http://healthsmartva.pwnet.org/>, has information and resources posted on eating disorders aligned with the Virginia Standards of Learning (SOL). The information is available and promoted to all school personnel.

- 2) *Encourage school divisions to provide instruction or information approved by the AMA or the NEDA on healthy eating habits and positive body images to students at some point during the fourth, fifth, or sixth grade.*

The VDOE Standards of Learning in health and nutrition for each grade level regarding healthy eating and positive self-image indicate this information is currently included in school curricula. Both issues are already addressed in the SOL. The SOL information is also addressed in the NEDA toolkit for teachers.

- 3) *Partner with Department of Health to collaborate with the NEDA and other interested stakeholders to study an evidence-based eating disorder screening program for potential implementation in Virginia's school systems. In addition, JCHC staff were asked to report in 2012 regarding progress and any staff recommendation related to this initiative for potential legislative implementation.*

The work group researched eating disorder screening tools including the Eating Attitudes Test (EAT-26), The National Eating Disorders Screening Program (NEDSP), and the SCOFF questionnaire. SCOFF is an evidence-based, short screening interview that school nurses, school psychologists, school counselors, teachers, or administrators can use in working with students. The SCOFF questions are:

- S:** Do you make yourself Sick because you feel uncomfortably full?
- C:** Do you worry that you have lost Control over how much you eat?
- O:** Have you recently lost more than One stone (14 lbs.) in a 3-month period?
- F:** Do you believe yourself to be Fat when others say you are too thin?
- F:** Would you say that Food dominates your life?

The literature reviewed by the work group indicates that screening is typically done in the health practitioner's office and is mainly clinical in nature. It is our recommendation, based upon ease of use and time required to survey, that information regarding the SCOFF questionnaire be provided to school staff for use in one-on-one situations where an eating disorder might be suspected.

After thoughtful consideration, the work group made the following overall recommendations:

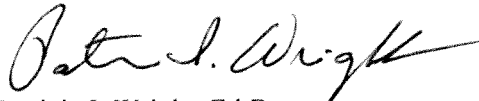
- Conduct training within the clinical community, such as physicians and nurse practitioners, in recognizing and treating eating disorders since this is a complex disorder and is extremely sensitive and clinical in nature;
- Continue efforts to raise awareness of school personnel regarding the signs and symptoms of eating disorders and appropriate referral;

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- Increase awareness of the Health Smart Virginia Web site with ready-made lesson plans for healthy eating habits and positive body image aligned with Virginia SOL; and
- Provide information on the SCOFF questionnaire to school nurses, school psychologists, and school social workers for use in evaluating the need for referral to a health care provider.

I trust the information provided has addressed each of the policy options recommended. Should you have additional questions, Tia Campbell, school health specialist, would be happy to assist you. You may reach Mrs. Campbell at Tia.campbell@doe.virginia.gov or 804-786-8671.

Sincerely,



Patricia I. Wright, Ed.D.
Superintendent of Public Instruction

PIW/TBC/tbc

c: The Honorable William A. Hazel, Jr., Secretary of Health and Human Resources
The Honorable Laura Fornash, Secretary of Education
Karen Remley, MD, MBA, FAAP, Commissioner of Health
Kim Snead, Executive Director, Joint Commission on Health Care

