



Safety & Health in Education & Schools

Improvements through partnerships and research

The National Occupational Research Agenda (NORA) is a partnership program to promote innovative research and improve workplace practices. Unveiled in 1996, NORA is a framework for guiding occupational safety and health research throughout the nation. NORA stakeholders collaborate to identify critical workplace issues in industry sectors. The National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health (NIOSH) convened a number of these partners to develop the National Services Agenda which includes safety and health goals for Primary and Secondary Education. Groups such as school employees, school boards, professional organizations, and government agencies can build partnerships to implement these goals and help ensure that schools are safe for all employees as well as students.

Who Works in the Education Industry?

Education is the second largest U.S. industry with 13.3 million employees. Approximately 69% of these employees work in primary and secondary schools. Primary and secondary school employees include:

- Teachers
- Paraprofessionals
- Clerical Personnel
- Administrators
- Information Technology Staff
- Nurses
- Food Service Workers
- Bus Drivers & Aides
- Maintenance & Custodial Staff
- Garage Mechanics
- Groundskeepers
- Security Personnel

What are the Important Safety & Health Issues in Schools?

School employees complete tasks in school buildings and other settings where they may be potentially exposed to one hazard or a combination of many hazards such as:

- Asbestos
- Lead
- Volatile Chemicals
- Infectious Agents
- Diesel Exhaust
- Mold & Microbial Contaminants
- Stress
- Violence
- Ergonomic Hazards
- Slips, Trips, & Falls

These hazards and others, such as work organization factors, may increase employee risk of respiratory illness, infectious disease, stress-related disorders, strains and sprains, and chronic disease.



NIOSH is the federal agency responsible for conducting research and making recommendations to prevent work-related injury, illness, and death. Its mission is to generate new occupational safety and health knowledge and to transfer that knowledge into practice.

What are the Sector Goals for Education & Schools?

The NORA Services Sector Council developed strategic goals for Education and Schools to address priority workplace safety and health issues. The Council will ensure progress and track accomplishments through 2016. The current priorities were established specifically for Public and Private Education at the Primary and Secondary levels. Partnerships are needed to achieve these goals so that work-related injury, illness, and death among school-based workers is reduced.

Strategic Goal: By 2015, reduce the frequency and severity of injuries and illnesses among school-based workers.

- Ensure that injuries and illnesses are recorded and tracked to identify risks
- Create guidance documents for hazard identification, hazard control, and indoor air quality
- Characterize chemical, biological, and physical hazards in school environments such as classrooms, science laboratories, art studios, kitchens and cafeterias, music rooms, sports arenas, school buses, transportation facilities, and parking areas
- Deliver best practice guidelines for school construction and renovations
- Characterize work organization elements that may put workers at risk of illness such as chronic demand and control imbalances, inadequate communication, and poorly implemented safety/violence programs
- Identify essential components of effective occupational safety and health programs for dissemination throughout the Education industry
- Deliver guidelines through partner organizations

How Can You Help Improve School Safety & Health?

Your help is needed to improve safety and health at schools across the country. Partners in education can help achieve the Education and Schools safety and health goals outlined in the National Services Agenda. We invite you to participate in the following activities:

- Characterize hazards in the education environment
- Lead a work group to address priority issues related to a strategic goal
- Assist in the design of an effective system to track occupational injuries and illnesses
- Represent a partner organization to work on a goal implementation plan
- Advocate implementation plans for goals at the local, state, and federal level
- Provide input to the contacts below on the implementation of goals
- Suggest important issues to consider for future goals

Contacts

The above is a synopsis of the Education and Schools goals established by the NORA Services Sector Council. To participate or to receive additional information please contact:

- Darryl Alexander (dalexand@aft.org), American Federation of Teachers Health & Safety
- Jennie Young (jyoung@nea.org), National Education Association Health Information Network
- David Utterback (dutterback@cdc.gov), National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health

Please visit the NORA Web site for more information about NORA, the NORA Services Sector, or to obtain the complete text of the National Services Agenda.

www.cdc.gov/niosh/nora/