

*STRENGTHENING PARTNERSHIPS
BETWEEN PUBLIC HEALTH UNITS AND DISTRICT SCHOOL BOARDS*

***Terms of Reference
Revised October, 2015***

PURPOSE:

The purpose of the Council of Ontario Directors of Education (CODE)/Council of Ontario Medical Officers of Health (COMOH) committee is to contribute to the well-being of Ontario's students through: informing public policy at the provincial level; enhancing public health unit and school board partnerships; optimizing the delivery of mandated programs; and providing strategic support to innovative efforts of others whose goal is the well-being of Ontario's students.

BACKGROUND:

Health and education success are intertwined: schools cannot achieve their primary mission of education if students are not healthy and populations with higher levels of education are also healthier.

75% of factors that influence health are not related to the health care system but to socio-economic determinants. Education is one key social determinant of health. Studies have demonstrated that high school graduates use preventive health services more often, make fewer visits to doctors, have better knowledge of health behaviours and better overall health status than people who have not graduated from high school.

Schools provide an optimal setting to reach virtually all children and youth. Public health strategies in schools can reach the 95% of Ontario's children and youth who attend Ontario's 5,000 publicly-funded schools or target specific groups of students. Under the Ontario Public Health Standards, public health units (PHUs) are required to work with school boards in the delivery of a variety of programs (e.g., chronic disease prevention, including healthy eating and healthy weights, child health, immunizations).

School boards do not have a clear, reciprocal mandate or requirement to work with PHUs but Ontario's renewed vision for education emphasizes the need to focus on the whole child and student – their cognitive, emotional, social, and physical development .

Student well-being "lives" in the context of child and youth well-being and as such staff in school boards and PHUs share in this mandate. Strong partnerships that focus efforts on strategic priorities can improve the health outcomes for students, positively affect student achievement and reduce preventable illness and injuries in the student population which in turn will contribute to healthier and better educated students.

COMMITTEE OBJECTIVES

1. Informing public policy – through frank and engaged discussion on issues and initiatives brought forward at the request of either CODE, COMOH, Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care, Ministry of Education or external agencies, the committee can provide consensus opinions that can inform policy.
2. Improving program content and delivery in schools. The committee will use its leadership and networks to help foster, both formally and informally, strong, collaborative and sustainable partnerships between school boards and PHUs; including partnerships between Directors of Education and Medical Officers of Health and their respective staff.
3. Enabling public health to deliver its mandate in the most effective and fiscally **Word did not find any entries for your table of contents.**responsible manner.
4. Contributing to moving forward on the renewed vision for education, including the new 'Promoting Well-Being' goal focused on developing enhanced mental and physical health and a positive sense of self and belonging and skills to make positive choices for children and students.
5. Evaluating and selectively supporting the work of external agencies. Many stakeholders have a role in improving the health of students both inside and outside of school hours. Presentations from these groups about proposed initiatives may be heard by the committee and feedback, plus or minus endorsement can be given.

Structure and Composition of the CODE/COMOH Committee:

The committee will include current Directors of Education and Medical Officers of Health/Associate Medical Officers of Health. The Council of Ontario Directors of Education and the Council of Ontario Medical Officers of Health will each select 7 representatives from their respective organizations. Directors of Education will include representatives from public, Catholic and English- and French-language school boards.

The committee will include staff from the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care, the Ministry of Education and a project coordinator.

Chair: The committee will have two co-chairs; a representative from each of CODE and COMOH. The two co-chairs will decide the process of chairing any particular meeting.

Reports to: the Committee Co-chairs will report to CODE and to COMOH on the proceedings and decisions of the committee.

Committee Secretariat: The project coordination staff from CODE will be responsible for arranging committee meetings, preparing notes, agendas and assisting with the collection of resources and other matters as determined by the committee.

Meetings:

The committee shall meet three times per year. Additional meetings may be scheduled at the call of the co-chairs on a time sensitive and as needed basis.