

2020 National Public Health Week: Education



Education and Public Health

Social Determinants of Health (SDOH) are the conditions in which people live, learn, work, and play that affect a wide range of health risks and outcomes. Education is a SDOH – such that, a lack of education is a determinant of poor health.ⁱ Education systems also support students’ physical and mental health.



Impact of Education on Health

- Graduates from high school have better health and lower medical costs than those who drop out. College graduates fare even better, health-wise.ⁱⁱ
- Students who receive free or reduced-price breakfast and lunch at school have lower rates of absenteeism and obesity, and lower rates of food insecurity.ⁱⁱⁱ Children with hunger are more likely to repeat a grade and receive special education services than low-income children who do not experience hunger.ⁱⁱⁱ
- School-Based Health Centers (SBHCs) have a positive effect on schools’ learning climates.^{iv}

Education in Maine

- For the 2017-2018 school year, Maine’s four-year high school graduation rate was 87%; however, it was 55% for children in foster care and 78% for children who are economically disadvantaged.^v
- 44% of Maine schoolchildren are eligible for subsidized school meals.^{vi}
- Maine’s SBHC’s provide access to care for thousands of students, allowing parents to stay at work instead of taking children to appointments, decreasing absenteeism and drop-out rates among students and improving worktime for parents.^{vii}
- Access to broadband is considered a “super-determinant of health.”^{viii} Broadband access serves as a gateway to education for children and adults. However, racial minorities, older adults, rural residents, and those with lower levels of education and income are less likely to have broadband service at home,^{ix} which can impair educational achievement.

Take Action

- Contact your local school system to see if volunteers are needed, whether for meal distribution, online learning support or other tasks.
- Looking for resources about how to talk with children about COVID-19? The CDC has [advice on how to talk to them about COVID-19](#), as does the [National Association of School Psychologists](#).
- Increase funding for SBHCS to provide additional hours for mental and behavioral health services to students.

- Support opportunities to expand poverty guidelines to enable more children to take advantage of free school meals.
- Support efforts to expand broadband coverage in Maine.

Maine Resources

- [Maine CDC's Adolescent and School Health Program](#)
- [ConnectMaine Authority](#) – a quasi-government entity that facilitates the universal availability of broadband to all Maine households and businesses.

ⁱCenters for Disease Control and Prevention. 2018. Social determinants of health: Know what affects health. <https://www.cdc.gov/socialdeterminants/index.htm>.

ⁱⁱAmerican Public Health Association. 2010. Public health and education: Working collaboratively across sectors to improve high school graduation as a means to eliminate health disparities. <https://www.apha.org/policies-and-advocacy/public-health-policy-statements/policy-database/2014/07/09/14/35/public-health-and-education-working-collaboratively-across-sectors-to-improve-high-school-graduation>.

ⁱⁱⁱFood Research and Action Center. 2020. Benefits of school lunch. <https://frac.org/programs/national-school-lunch-program/benefits-school-lunch>.

^{iv}Strolin-Goltzman, J. 2020. The relationship between school-based health centers and the learning environment. *Journal of School Health*. <https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/full/10.1111/j.1746-1561.2009.00480.x>

^vMaine Department of Education. 2020. Graduation rates & dropout rates. <https://www.maine.gov/doe/data-reporting/reporting/warehouse/graduation-dropout-data>.

^{vi}The Annie E. Casey Foundation. 2020. School children eligible for subsidized school lunch in Maine. <https://datacenter.kidscount.org/data/tables/1566-school-children-eligible-for-subsidized-school-lunch?loc=21&loct=2#detailed/2/any/false/574,1729,37,871,870,573,869,36,868,867/any/12834,3339>.

^{vii}Maine Public Health Association. 2016. Success story or missed opportunity? A brief history of the Fund for a Healthy Maine.

^{viii}Bauerly, BC, McCord, RF, Hulkower, R, & Pepin, D. 2019. Broadband access as a public health issue: The role of law in expanding broadband access and connecting underserved communities for better health outcomes. *The Journal of Law, Medicine & Ethics*, 47(2_suppl), 39–42.

^{ix}Pew Research Center. 2019. Internet/broadband fact sheet. <https://www.pewresearch.org/internet/fact-sheet/internet-broadband/#who-has-home-broadband>.