



## DISCUSSION PAPER: RECOMMENDATIONS FOR ACHSC ORGANIZATIONAL AND GOVERNANCE STRUCTURE

January 2006

### Purpose

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The purpose of this document is to frame discussion about how the Alberta Coalition for Healthy School Communities (ACHSC) can best organize itself to continue in its emerging leadership role in school health promotion in Alberta. There are considerable opportunities for ACHSC to grow in the breadth and scope of its functions.

This document is intended to invite discussion as to the best organizational and governance structure for ACHSC's long term viability, credibility and growth. The target audience for this document is current ACHSC Executive Committee (EC) members and key stakeholders in school health promotion in Alberta.

### Current Structure

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ACHSC is a registered non-profit society representing a provincial network of individuals and organizations committed to promoting and fostering healthy school communities.

At present, ACHSC has a volunteer Executive Committee (EC) of 13 members that meets approximately 6 times per year. Current EC members are mostly front line and mid-management health and education professionals who work full time in regional health authorities (Capital, Calgary, David Thompson, East Central), school health promotion initiatives (Ever Active Schools, Schools Come Alive), provincial government departments (Alberta Education, Alberta Health and Wellness), and the University of Calgary. A teacher and a parent representative (Alberta Home and School Council Association) are also members. In kind support (time, conference calls, etc) from EC employers are gratefully received and acknowledged where possible.

The ACHSC general membership is historically comprised of those people who attend education forums and conferences and pay a \$10 membership fee. There are currently 183 members that joined as part of their delegate registration for the April 2005 ACHSC conference.

ACHSC stakeholders are regularly invited to consult on the development of strategic plans and implementing activities (e.g., conference). Consultations have occurred with the following stakeholders in 2005: Alberta Healthy Living Network, Alberta Centre for Active Living, Alberta Milk, Alberta Community Development, Canadian Cancer Society, Canadian Diabetes Association, Boys and Girls Clubs of Alberta, AADAC, Alberta Mental Health Board, College of Alberta School Superintendents, Alberta School Board Association, Alberta Home and School Council Association, Alberta Public Health Association, Alberta Cancer Board, Society for Safe and Caring Schools and Communities, University of Calgary, Centre for the Study of Social and Physical Environments and Health, and the Canadian Genetic Diseases Network.

**EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE** (date of last revision 22 Sept 22 04)

**1.0 Purpose**

*The Executive Committee's purpose is to provide leadership and support to promote the development, implementation and sustainability of a comprehensive approach to school health in Alberta schools.*

**2.0 Roles & Responsibilities**

*The Executive Committee will be accountable for the overall direction of the Coalition. Each member of the Executive shall have an equal voice in the direction of ACHSC. Nominations for positions on the Executive will be requested at the Annual General Meeting.*

**2.1 Executive Committee**

- *Work together to build and sustain an effective provincial coalition for the promotion of a comprehensive school health approach within Alberta.*
- *Advocate for the implementation of a comprehensive school health approach in Alberta schools.*
- *Share responsibility for decision and recommendations made by the Executive.*
- *Develop and operationalize the ACHSC strategic plan.*
- *Share and support research and information that increases awareness and knowledge of innovative practice affecting comprehensive school health.*
- *Facilitate the networking of appropriate government, non-government, volunteer agencies and interested individuals including students and families.*
- *Participate in the development of a national network to support comprehensive school health.*
- *Monitor progress and performance of comprehensive school health.*
- *Liase and communicate with senior levels of administration: government, non-government and volunteer agencies.*

**2.2 Representatives on the Executive Committee will participate actively in the work of the committee by:**

- *Attending meetings regularly.*
- *Being involved in working groups as required to operationalize the Strategic Plan.*
- *Participate in decision making.*
- *Performing other roles as required, furthering the development of ACHSC.*
- *Acquiring and sharing current research, which will promote a comprehensive approach to school health.*
- *Maintaining current membership with ACHSC.*

**3.0 Accountability**

*An Annual Report will be made available to the membership.  
Minutes will be distributed to the Executive Committee and members at large.*

**4.0 Structure**

*The Executive will consist of:*

- Chair(s)
- Secretary
- Treasurer
- Communications Coordinator
- Other Members
- Members at Large (Representatives with Regional and Program Expertise)

#### **4.1 Chair(s)**

*The work of the Executive may be facilitated by the appointment of Chair(s) positions. Ideally, persons sharing the Chair position should reflect a balanced perspective, e.g., health and education. This will be a minimum two-year term. In case of two Chairpersons, new appointments will occur on alternate years. Roles of the Chair(s) will be:*

- *Coordinate the work of the Executive Committee*
- *Facilitate meetings by preparation/distribution of an agenda, chairing of the meeting, ensuring follow-up to meeting decisions.*
- *Function as the official spokesperson to other bodies and agencies on behalf of ACHSC.*
- *Appoint an appropriate individual, or attend meetings as necessary to represent ACHSC.*
- *Disseminate appropriate incoming information/correspondence to Executive Committee members.*
- *Maintain copies of resource materials.*
- *Supervise and communicate with the ACHSC Project Coordinator*

#### **4.2 Secretary**

- *Record and distribute meeting minutes to Executive Committee members.*
- *The format of the minutes will be action oriented, including areas of issues, decisions, action, person responsible and date.*
- *Distribute correspondence as requested by Chair(s).*
- *Distribute minutes to ACHSC members upon request.*
- *Maintain a master file of ACHSC meeting minutes*

#### **4.3 Treasurer**

- *Develop an operating budget in conjunction with the Executive. Budget should be based on strategic directions of the Coalition.*
- *Maintain accounts and up to date membership list.*
- *Provide financial updates at each meeting of the Executive Advise the Executive on resource allocation.*
- *Provide a year-end statement and report for AGM*
- *Prepare annual audits and annual return for the Alberta Corporate Registries*

#### **4.4 Communications Coordinator**

- *Develop and distribute a minimum of two newsletters per year to ACHSC members.*
- *Produce and distribute promotional materials related to the strategic direction of the Executive.*
- *Communicate with web master to ensure the ACHSC website is current and informative.*

#### **4.5 Other Members**

- *Support the implementation of the ACHSC strategic plan*
- *Attend and participate in ACHSC executive meetings*

#### **4.6 Members at Large**

- *Receive and share meeting minutes /information with others.*
- *Provide feedback and suggestions to executive.*
- *Attend meetings if desired.*
- *Participate in working groups.*
- *Assist with tasks at forums, conferences, etc.*

*The positions of Secretary, Treasurer, Communications Coordinator and Other Members will be for a minimum one-year term.*

#### **5.0 Process**

- *A minimum of four meetings per year. Additional meeting may be necessary as determined by the Chair(s).*
- *Members will work towards achieving consensus on all issues. If it is necessary to vote, one vote will be allocated to each of the Executive members.*
- *Guests can attend Executive meetings upon approval or invitation of the Chair(s).*
- *Travel subsidies, for travel on behalf of ACHSC, will be considered upon request.*

*The Terms of Reference will be reviewed annually by the Executive Committee.*

### Organizational Functions

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As part of exploring a new organizational and governance structure, it is important to identify the goals and functions that ACHSC and key stakeholders wish the organization to carry out.

The main reason for ACHSC to exist is *to promote and foster healthy school communities through a comprehensive school health approach that enhances the health of Alberta children and youth.* Several core functions are under review as per the *Draft Strategic Plan: Building Capacity for Healthy School Communities through Comprehensive School Health* (January 2006) and they are as follows:

#### **Core Functions**

1. Through partnership development, develop and maintain a provincial **inventory** of school health promotion initiatives in Alberta schools and make information accessible to school communities for networking purposes.
2. Through partnership development, identify **best or promising practice** to support development processes, practices, strategies, and delivery systems for CSH. Maintain a clearinghouse that is easily accessible to school communities. Build upon existing professional development initiatives and provide **educational opportunities**. Implement **mechanisms for communicating** and disseminating effective and ineffective practice.
3. Through partnership development, provide school communities with resources (e.g., knowledge, skills) to develop and implement **healthy school community policies** and to strengthen understanding and implications of **health disparities** among children and youth, families, and communities in the school setting.

4. Through partnership development, create and/or support existing intersectoral and interdisciplinary **regional networks** to advocate for the adoption of CSH approaches in every school in Alberta, to share knowledge as to best practice and to develop and implement strategies for action.
5. Through partnership development, establish an **Alberta Healthy School Community Fund** to provide funding for additional human resources to facilitate CSH approaches in local school communities and to provide additional financial resources for the implementation of best practices.

## Organizational Options

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Options for future ACHSC organizational structure are considered below:

1. Continue with current structure.
2. Continue with current structure and focus on developing strategic alliances.
3. Strengthen current structure.

Options	Strengths	Weaknesses
<b>Current structure</b>	Non-profit status allows for accepting and distributing private and public sector funding.	Current ACHSC Bylaws and Terms of Reference do not state the functions of the organization.
	Advocacy and lobbying activities can be coordinated through ACHSC (a non-profit society).	Some Executive Committee members are unable to advocate and lobby the public sector because of potential conflicts with employers (e.g., regional health authorities, provincially funded initiatives).
	ACHSC EC members, front line health and education professionals consistently demonstrate knowledge, skill, passion and dedication to the work of ACHSC	Not clear if/how provincial government employees can participate in ACHSC decision making or other activities.
		No secure funding for administration/ infrastructure (staff, office, etc)
		No formal mechanism for key stakeholders and members to fully participate.
		EC members lack influence at senior levels of health and education sectors.
		Recent resignations of several EC members and no Nominating Committee/process is in place to replace members.
<b>Current structure + strategic alliances</b>	Potential for providing multiple stakeholder participation in decision-making and implementation of strategic plans.	Does not fully address EC member issues described above and the ability of ACHSC to move on strategic plans.
	Considerable interest from stakeholders in creating a shared vision and working together	Requires time and resources to establish, organize, and coordinate operating agreements, protocols.
	Accountabilities are more easily shared.	Complex relationships and many stakeholders in delivery systems.
	Potentially provides additional knowledge, skills and resources.	Leveraging resources from existing initiatives difficult.

<b>Strengthen Current Structure</b>	Governance level: Create Board of Directors and accompanying committees (e.g., executive, budget and finance, fundraising, nominating) comprised of key stakeholders (not specific designees for every organization) who meet quarterly to provide leadership and make decisions as to ACHSC operations and activities.	Difficulty finding senior, influential people to champion ACHSC.
	Advisory level: Establish a broad association of representatives from people with vested interest in CSH who meet annually to provide stakeholder input and support for ACHSC activities.	Potential over burdening or duplication of people who attend various committees, boards for school health promotion.
	Operations level: Hire an Executive Director and a central staff.	Would require new organizational and governance structure.
	Provide greater reach and access to decision makers	

## Recommendations

(Developed with Judy Birdsell, On Management Consultants, Calgary)

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### **Recommendation #1:**

**Recruit champions (high level advisors) to support ACHSC in this period of transition.**

Efforts are under way by current EC members to recruit champions to support defining and implementing an optimal organizational and governance structure and recruiting new EC or Board members.

### **Recommendation #2:**

**Craft a clear vision statement for ACHSC as an organization.**

The current vision statement – *every school-aged child and youth is part of a healthy school community* – and mission statement -- *to promote and foster healthy school communities through a comprehensive school health approach that enhances the health of Alberta children and youth* – do not clearly describe what the ACHSC does or will do. Vision and mission statements should be revisited and revised. Working vision statement is: *Building capacity for healthy school communities through comprehensive school health.*

### **Recommendation #3:**

**Create a clear vision for CSH in the province.**

The *Draft Strategic Plan (January 2006)* is a beginning to crafting a vision for CSH in the province. However, the strategies contained in the plan have a provincial and regional coordination focus and a clear vision for what CSH looks like at the local school community level needs considerable discussion. It is important to note that the very developmental nature of the CSH approach results in unique experiences at the local school community level. This is due to the unique needs, capacities and priority issues addressed. ACHSC is pleased to be partnering with Alberta Education, Alberta Health & Wellness, and the School Health and Wellness Management Team to support the development of a School Health and Wellness Plan for Alberta in 2006.

### **Recommendation #4:**

**Prepare proposals to public and private sector funders and secure resources.**

The *Draft Strategic Plan (January 2006)* paints a broad picture of what ACHSC Executive Committee members heard through extensive stakeholder consultations. In 2006, a School Health and Wellness Plan will be created for Alberta and ACHSC will wait until this work is completed before seeking resources.

**Recommendation #5:  
Work towards establishing a Board of Directors.**

Given the background contained in this paper, it appears that a Board of Directors, with adequate senior level support, is required to ensure ACHSC has the credibility and viability necessary to carry out strategic plans. Work has begun on recruiting to the Executive Committee in the interim.

**Recommendation #6  
Explore the establishment of strategic alliances.**

The *Draft Strategic Plan* describes a high degree of coordination, integration and collaboration with key stakeholders in order to move forward on initiatives. Formal strategic alliances have begun (e.g., the development of school nutrition policies/guidelines with the Dieticians of Canada).

**Recommendation #7  
Create a credible and viable organizational and governance structure.**

The following is one proposed structure for ACHSC in the future:

