

Cleaning for Healthy Schools Toolkit



ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS National Collaborative Work Group on Green Cleaning and Chemical Policy Reform in Schools

Collaborative Work Group Members: Healthy Schools Network, American Federation of Teachers, American Federation of State, County and Municipal Employees International, Green Purchasing Institute, Green Schools Initiative, New York State United Teachers, INFORM, Green Seal, National Association of School Nurses, American Lung Association of Maine, and Massachusetts Committee on Occupational Safety and Health/MA Healthy Schools.

The National Collaborative Work Group on Green Cleaning and Policy Reform in Schools emerged from technical presentations made at two annual meetings of the national ad hoc Coalition for Healthier Schools, and directly from key groups long-engaged in improving the conditions of our schools and occupant health & safety. Spear headed by Healthy Schools Network, Inc., the National Coalition and the Work Group members have worked together to advance healthy school environments for many years.

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NATIONAL COLLABORATIVE WORK GROUP ON GREEN CLEANING AND CHEMICAL POLICY REFORM IN SCHOOLS

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Introduction

Our nation's 120,000 schools are four times more densely populated than commercial office space and more heavily used today than ever before, yet half are reported to have indoor air quality problems. With community programs and before and after school time, many children are in school up to 10 hours a day increasing their exposure to poor environmental conditions. Cleaning and maintenance products add to the environmental pollution in schools. We know that custodial staff use an average of 194 pounds of cleaning chemicals per year and 25% or more have toxic ingredients. Many of the chemical ingredients in cleaners have not been tested for their effects on the developing bodies of children; children are more vulnerable to environmental hazards than adults. These hazardous chemicals can also create long-term pollution and worker health and safety problems during their manufacture and disposal, ending up in places like our water or landfills. Asthma is a leading occupational disease of custodians and teachers. If this isn't incentive enough to take a careful look at reducing toxins in the school environment, there is also increased scientific evidence linking cleaning chemicals with higher rates of asthma, allergies, sensitization and learning disabilities.

The **Cleaning for Healthy Schools (CfH) Toolkit** was developed with all of this in mind. CfH is an approach to facility maintenance that relies on preventing cleaning problems through the use of less toxic cleaning products, state of the art cleaning practices, and advanced technology to clean buildings while protecting the health of workers and other building occupants.

Who is the Toolkit for?

This toolkit was developed to accelerate the numbers of effective advocates and practitioners among parents, schools and their staff and unions, school administrators and others supporting healthy school environments by providing a set of easy-to-use presentations, factsheets and other resource materials that can be used for a:

- School audience meeting to introduce parents or school staff to the concepts and benefits of a CfH Program
- General audience presentation to a community group or coalition that is working to change chemical policy at the local or state level on toxics in the school environment

- Training workshop for school employees who will be implementing a CfH Program; and
- Train-the-trainer program to create a pool of agency, union, and advocate specialists who will then use the modules to train others

Overall objectives for Toolkit users:

- Understand the benefits of a CfH Program and the steps to implement it in a school or school district
- Learn about different strategies for changing chemical policy
- build skills for understanding chemical hazards and safer alternatives for green cleaners
- Be able to train and/or motivate your peers to implement a CfH Program.

What is in the Toolkit?

- Preparation instructions encouraging you to modify the presentations for your specific needs
- Four modules with: learning objectives and preparation instructions, power point presentations with notes, tips for successful, suggested interactive exercises that motivate audiences
- Facility checklists, audits, and chemical product inventory forms
- A poster
- A sample bill and executive order texts, and supporting policy resolutions by other organizations, as well as a strategy planning exercise for school policy reform
- An appendix of scientific citations and references, reproducible documents to customize to your needs, and links to original guides and reports on green cleaning or CfH

The Four Toolkit Modules Are:

1. **Overview:** This module is a basic explanation of the problems with conventional cleaners, benefits of a CfH Program and a brief description of the program. *Users of the toolkit can customize this presentation for different audiences and for the length of time allocated for your presentation/training in that setting.*
2. **Hazard Communication (Haz Com):** This module will help people understand and evaluate the hazards posed by chemicals used to clean the school. *The Toolkit is designed for worker training but it is not a substitute for required OSHA or Right to Know training. Users of the Toolkit are encouraged to modify and use portions of this module to introduce Haz Com to other audiences. OSHA does not provide a right to know for parents, but parent tips are included and parents should become familiar with this material, for themselves as workers and for their children.*

3. **Getting Started-- the Walk-Through:** This module will review what to look for in your school and how to assess current cleaning problems and the current cleaning program. It includes; a virtual walk-through for general awareness, CfH steps, and how parents and communities can get started without entering the school. *Users of the toolkit can customize this module for an on-site walk-through when invited by a local school to introduce the CfH Program.*
4. **CfH Implementation at School:** Intended to be used when you are invited to initiate a program in your school; audit the facility room-by-room; cleaning needs, equipment and product inventories; and, tips for preparing a report for the school to launch its CfH Program.

Training tips for all Modules:

Participatory training methods:

Adults learn best through active learning; sharing previous knowledge and experience; and they are motivated most by what they *need* to learn. For that reason, each module in this Toolkit has some opportunity for group discussion and participation such as: introductory icebreakers, brainstorming a list of challenges and opportunities; reading a Material Safety Data Sheet and answering questions; using past experience to respond to pictures of school building conditions; filling out an action plan worksheet; and a “3,2,1 wrap-up”.

Introductory Activity: At the beginning of the training or presentation, the Trainer will introduce him or herself, review the learning objectives and agenda, then set some group rules such as: inviting interaction throughout the day (expressing facilitator’s preference; for example, “Feel free to raise your hand at any time”, or, “I’ll open up the floor for discussion after each presentation”); defining unfamiliar terms; requesting no use of cell phones.

Icebreakers: We encourage Trainers to use an opening activity with large and with small groups. Here are some suggestions for a group “go around” and for small group discussion and report-out. See the suggested time allotted for an icebreaker in the Agenda for each module.

Small group (use A or B)

- A. **Go around the room.** Ask each person to give their name, role in the school community, and answer an icebreaker question.
- B. **Paired introductions.** In pairs, have people discuss one of the icebreaker questions. Each pair will introduce their partner and summarize the answer to the icebreaker question.

Choose an icebreaker question or use your own.:

- What brought them to the workshop/conference/or training?

- Does anyone use 'green' cleaning products at home? Why?
- What are the cleaning activities that happen in a school and what kinds of cleaners are used in schools?
- Ask if familiar with existing school efforts to address Indoor Air Quality.

Large group (Use A or B)

- A. Ask for a show of hands in response to your icebreaker questions.
- B. Have people in the group turn to 3 or 4 people around them to briefly discuss your icebreaker questions. Trainer will do "popcorn" style report back from as many groups as time allows.

Choose an icebreaker question or use your own.

- State type of job/constituency they fall into.
- How many have seen or now use 'green' cleaning products at home?
- What previous knowledge or experience do you have in green cleaning for large scale buildings like schools?
- Is anyone familiar with existing school efforts to address environmental safety and health issues in their facility?

3-2-1 Wrap up:

Make sure to leave time at the end of the session for a wrap-up question such as:

- What are three new things you learned today?
- What are the two things that you think you could do?
- What is the one thing you will commit to doing this/next month in your school system?

EVALUATION. A presentation EVALUATION FORM is in the appendix to the Toolkit to use as a template for creating your own evaluation of your workshops.

CERTIFICATE OF COMPLETION. A sample certificate of completion is in the appendix to the Toolkit for organizational or agency presenters to consider offering to attendees.

Pre- Training Preparation Worksheet:

Gathering background information BEFORE the first training session or workshop.

See the Introduction page to each Module to make sure you have all the files and hand outs you need and that you are prepared to answer questions from the floor. The tips below are for introducing concepts to a local school.

It is always helpful to gather some background information, if possible, before the training session or workshop. Who invited you and why are you interested? Consider interviewing some of the local school stakeholders such as: the union, school custodian, school administrator, nurse, students or other parents about school maintenance and history of how environmental health and safety issues are addressed in the school or school district. Getting local background information may depend on your access to the school. *Are you “inside” the school such as an employee or official, “outside” such as a parent or a healthy schools group?*

- **Awareness training:** If you are at the beginning stages of developing trust and awareness for a CfH Program you should try to find some allies or health and safety champions in the school that can fill you in on some of this background information. These “champions” can also help to motivate others.
- **Implementation training:** If the school is already interested in a CfH Program use these questions to understand who is interested and involved with environmental safety and health issues. It is best to be working with a “stakeholder group” or school environmental health and safety committee as you prepare this training session. See Module 3 for tips on working with existing school committees.

1. Are there any district policies related to environmental health and safety?
If there are policies, you should get copies and have them available to review at your workshop.

2. Does the school district have a process in place for handling environmental health and safety complaints? *If so, what is it? What are some of the common complaints?*

3. Are school staff unions involved in any work around environmental health and safety issues? *If yes, what have they done and who is most involved?*

4. Are parents involved or concerned about environmental health and safety issues? *If yes, what have they done and who is most involved?*

5. What is the current system for cleaning and purchasing of cleaning products and equipment? See Module 3 Tips for Parents and Communities for background on how schools conduct purchasing. See chemical product inventory forms to guide your onsite discussion of what products and practices are in place, and which CfH steps can be phased in quickly.

6. In summary – who in the school is most likely to be a “champion” for a CfH program *and* is there a “stakeholder group” or school environmental safety and health committee already in place?

Cleaning for Healthy Schools Toolkit Training LOGISTICS CHECKLIST

Use this form as a guide to ensure that you are fully prepared for your workshop or training.

- Outreach** Audience is:_____
 - Flyer copied, posted
 - Announcement emailed.
 - RSVP's are being tallied by_____
 - School staff: arrangements made for time away from work
 - School or other accessible meeting room reserved
 - (Optional) Newspaper announcement or press release
 - Refreshments ordered

- Pre-training Information Form completed**

- Room set up:**
 - Room is checked ahead of time to see if there is space for the screen/ flipchart and outlet for projector.
 - Chairs set up: circle, horseshoe or at tables to encourage small group discussion
 - Decide whether you will have refreshments and if you can have food in the room

- Materials Needed:**
 - Attendance Sheets
 - Evaluation Forms
 - Info – Packet
 - Small group activity materials (implementation cards and action plan)
 - Flipchart
 - Markers
 - Optional: Samples such as micro fiber cloths
 - Optional depending on audience – background info from *Pre-training Information Form* (school policies, list of products, material safety data sheets)

