



Partners in Student Health: Schools & Health Centers of RI

Writing Policy: Stylebook Tips

Tip #1: Start with what exists and build from there.

Start with other well-written and effective district policies as an *initial* guide for consistency in style and language, then customize for your purposes.

Tip #2: Use present tense.

Avoid using the words “shall” and “will”. When a reader sees future tense in a policy, the obvious understanding is that people don’t follow this policy today, but they will soon follow it in the future. This makes a policy weaker than if it is in present tense.

Instead of “shall” and “will”, use “must” or “must not” to imply required or mandatory elements.

Example: “School nurses must keep copies of student medical referrals” instead of “School nurses shall keep copies of medical referral provided for students”.

Tip #3: Use clear communication - keep sentences simple and short.

Imagine an academically sound high school student reading the policy. Choose language easily understood by your reader and avoid unnecessary words.

Tip #4: Avoid healthcare jargon and “legalese” terms such as:

Above-mentioned	Henceforth	Thereafter	Whatsoever
Aforementioned	Hereafter	Thereof	Wherein
Foregoing	Hereby	Therewith	Whereof

Tip #5: Consider adding a *General Purpose* or *Background* section.

This helps to make the connection between student health and academic achievement. Use language that directly connects to district strategic plans or School Committee goals.

Example: “Promoting healthy and safe behaviors among students is an important part of the fundamental mission of our schools. Our comprehensive health program consists of health education, health services and a healthful environment...” etc.

Tip #6: Consider adding a *Definitions* section.

This helps to clarify terms used within the policy that might be confusing for readers.

Tip #7: Consider adding a *Legal Reference* section (with links).

This helps to easily reference federal/state laws and regulations in one place at the end to ensure a smooth policy flow.