



EPA Indoor Air Quality Tools for Schools Program & Connecticut's School Indoor Environment Resources

The *Indoor Air Quality (IAQ) Tools for Schools (TfS)* Program was developed by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) to reduce exposures to indoor environmental contaminants in schools through the voluntary adoption of sound indoor air quality management practices. The *IAQ Tools for Schools* Program is a comprehensive resource to help schools maintain a healthy environment in school buildings by identifying, correcting, and preventing IAQ problems. Poor indoor air quality can impact the comfort and health of students and staff, which, in turn, can affect concentration, attendance, and student performance. In addition, if schools fail to respond promptly to poor IAQ, students and staff are at an increased risk of short-term health problems, such as fatigue and nausea, as well as long-term problems like asthma. In Connecticut, a consortium of 24 agencies and organizations has formed the Connecticut School Indoor Environment Resource Team (CSIERT). This group assists schools with the implementation of the TfS program throughout the state.

Since 2000, TfS has been implemented in hundreds of schools across the state. School districts that have implemented TfS find that there are common elements to successfully implementing the program.

1. **Organizing** a team with a committed group of individuals dedicated to ensuring good IAQ and with clear support from senior management
2. **Assessing** current IAQ conditions and issues
3. **Creating a Plan** outlining a strategic approach to identifying, resolving, and preventing IAQ problems
4. **Taking Actions** to improve IAQ in the school that lead to increased student and staff health and productivity
5. **Evaluating** the IAQ management program by tracking and assessing results
6. **Communicating** the intent, results, and next steps of the IAQ management Program

The TfS Program provides materials and guidance at no cost to help schools implement an indoor air quality management program. In addition to the IAQ TfS Action Kit, specialized fact sheets, brochures, and software programs are available to provide in-depth information on environmental topics.

In Connecticut, CSIERT provides a two part, five hour TfS implementation training to the TfS team members in school districts. Each school within a school district forms a five member team that consists of a teacher, nurse, administrator, custodian, and parent. The trainings are done free of charge by trained environmental health professionals. The first training includes basic IAQ information and the importance of good IAQ for schools as well the steps for successful implementation. Each school team completes checklists and compiles the data. At the second training the team learns how to conduct a building IAQ walkthrough. The teams then conduct a walkthrough at their school and combine this data with the checklist data to identify problem areas. A report is produced that provides recommendations and establishes priorities for the school administration and board of education. The next step is to act on the recommendations.

The TfS program emphasizes low or no cost solutions to indoor air issues. Many small changes can often make a big difference in air quality.

Outcomes

Successful TfS programs have seen marked reductions in the number of visits to the school nurse, a decrease in school absenteeism (students and staff), and improved health outcomes. The program also helps to open the lines of communication between staff, teachers, administrators and parents. More information about TfS can be found at the following web sites:

- CT DPH's Healthy School Environment web page: www.ct.gov/dph/schools
- CSIERT web site: www.csiert.org
- EPA TfS site: <http://www.epa.gov/iaq/schools>

To arrange for a training workshop, contact the Connecticut Department of Public Health at 860-509-7740 or email kenny.foscue@ct.gov.

CTDPH/CSIERT Tools for Schools Training Programs & Resources

Implementation Workshop Program:

The First Session is a 3-hour workshop that covers an overview of school IAQ issues, an exercise and presentation on IAQ health issues, and a detailed review of how to use the TfS kit. There are 2 trainers from CTDPH who conduct the workshop. The workshop uses PowerPoint presentation, video, and hand-on exercises.

The Second Training Session is a 2-hour workshop on conducting walkthrough investigations, and is scheduled around 2 months after the first session. The basics of building IAQ investigations are covered, and a group investigation exercise is conducted in one or two areas of the training site (a school).

Refresher Workshop:

CSIERT offers 2 workshops for TfS teams to assist school districts to sustain their program. The workshops combine elements of the 2 implementation workshops, with an emphasis on IAQ problem source identification, finding no or low-cost solutions and educating staff, students and parents about their role in keeping the buildings clean and healthy. A walkthrough exercise is included as part of the trainings. A 2 hour workshop is conducted for school districts that have a combination of experienced and new members, and need to update their knowledge and skills. A 3 hour workshop is offered for districts whose programs have lapsed and need to re-establish their teams.

Advanced TfS for Custodians & Facilities Personnel Workshop:

CSIERT offers a special workshop for school district custodial and facilities maintenance staff. Besides providing additional expertise and skills to participants, this training seeks to integrate all custodial and facilities personnel into the TfS program, and to encourage them to work with the building team members (which includes a custodian). The workshop also covers green cleaning and infection control issues.