



CDC Healthy Schools Stories of Achievement

Healthy Students, Ready to Learn

NORTH CAROLINA

Developing a *virtual*, on-demand, *professional development* hub for public health and education stakeholders in the midst of the COVID-19 pandemic

Designing **professional development activities** in the context of a rapidly evolving situation is challenging. It requires tremendous *flexibility* and a *willingness* to adapt and revisit as circumstances change.

In 2021, the North Carolina Institute for Public Health supported the North Carolina Department of Public Instruction in creating the North Carolina Healthy Schools [School Staff Training Center: COVID-19 and Beyond](#). The Training Center is a repository of short, online courses to help school staff in each of North Carolina's 100 counties to respond to needs that emerged during the pandemic. As of December, 2021, **68 people have completed the Training Center's professional development (PD) modules**, and evaluation data were positive. Participants agreed that the completed training enhanced their knowledge of the subject matter (89%), provided content relevant to their daily job (92%), and provided content relevant to their roles during COVID-19 (89%).

"I feel more confident in my role as a school nurse and what actions to take with positive COVID-19 cases. I will continue my close relationship with the health department and allow them to work with me on contact tracing."
- School Nurse

Launched in May 2021, **the Training Center contains 19 training modules** that are accessible and designed using best practices for online training. More importantly, these were formulated to be useful even beyond the context of COVID-19. The modules are presented in two tracks: **school nurse trainings** and **school staff trainings**.

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Topics covered in the [school nurse trainings](#) are:

- **Communicable disease management** – This two-part training series describes the role of school nurses in communicable disease outbreaks. It covers mitigating disease spread, creating a safe school environment to support in-person instruction, and contact tracing.
- **School nurse extenders** (trained practitioners who support a school nurse) – These trainings support school nurses in leading and managing a school nursing team. They include a two-part series focused on roles and responsibilities of school nurses and support staff and a seven-part series on leadership and management principles.
- **The virtual school nurse** – This three-part training series is designed to help school nurses carry out their work in a virtual environment, whether supporting students who are learning from home or managing responsibilities across multiple schools where virtual visits may be helpful.

Topics covered in the [school staff trainings](#) are:

- **Oral health** – These three trainings are designed to raise awareness of the considerable oral health problems facing North Carolina's children and the impact of these issues on students' learning and overall health. They focus on the important role that schools can play to improve their students' oral health.
- **Social and emotional learning** – These two trainings describe the impact of COVID-19 on the social and emotional health of students and school staff and ways to support them.

Moving Forward

Even though these virtual trainings were developed use during the COVID-19 pandemic, they will continue to be useful for maintaining a healthy school setting post-pandemic.