

Background

In response to the first informal draft of the rule revision, the Department of Health has received more than 85 pages of detailed comments. The comments cover a broad range of topics such as compliance and rule enforceability, as well as very specific comments on water quality and air quality issues. The Board of Health staff and the department recommend additional study to adequately address the issues raised in public comments before rule making continues. The recommended delay in the original rule making schedule is supported by a number of stakeholders, including the Washington Education Association, the Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction, various school districts, parents, and student advocates.

Next Steps

The School Environmental Health and Safety rule involves complex regulatory issues that cross jurisdictional lines of many government entities. Counties, school districts, local health agencies, the legislature, the Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction, the Building Code Council, the state Departments of Health, Ecology, Agriculture, and Labor and Industries, and the United State Environmental Protection Agency all have a stake in the issue. Authority and responsibility varies among this group, as do methods for assuring accountability. It is important to identify the roles, responsibilities, and authorities of other state and local entities before revising this rule. This will ensure the rule revisions complement rather than contradict existing authorities also responsible to promote a healthy and safe environment in our schools.

Department and board staff will examine the authorities and responsibilities of other agencies and their roles in creating and maintaining safe and healthy school environments. This work may help identify existing activities and model programs that make schools safer for students. It may also help find ways to coordinate the work of all entities involved in school environmental health and safety. In addition, the department received many technical comments on the informal draft rule revision that must be considered as the next draft is developed.

Meanwhile, the department supports the board staff proposal to hold a series of public study sessions to provide additional opportunities for people to better understand these complex issues. The study sessions will also provide an opportunity for the board to learn more about successful programs that could be used as models for effective school health and safety programs.

When will another draft of the proposed rule be published?

At this time, that is uncertain. There is no specific timeline for publishing a second discussion draft. Timing of the second draft will depend upon the outcome of the work sessions with the board and the follow-up work being conducted by the department.

Contact

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