



# American College Health Association Policy Platform

**The American College Health Association (ACHA)** serves as the principal leadership organization for advancing the health and well-being of college students and campus communities through advocacy, education, and research. ACHA represents 950 institutions of higher education and over 13,000 health and well-being professionals in higher education. Our membership also includes sustaining members, such as industry partners and nonprofit organizations, who support health and well-being in the higher education space.

This document outlines those policy areas of interest to ACHA and its members. As an advocacy organization, ACHA understands the importance of being responsive to current state, national, and international events, and proposed legislation and regulations. However, in a world dominated by the 24-hour news cycle and social media, it has become increasingly challenging to track multiple issues, recognize shifts in urgency, decide where and when to allocate resources, and select when ACHA should and should not comment, respond, and/or sign on to coalition initiatives. This document guides the ACHA CEO and National Office staff by listing ACHA's public policy priorities. While these issues represent a broad range of topics of interest to ACHA, our level of engagement on different specific issues will vary depending on the context, urgency, resources, timing, capacity, and so forth. Encapsulated within the document are statements and resources used to guide ACHA work.

In selecting issues of focus, ACHA prioritizes those that impact the most vulnerable and marginalized members of our community, while defending our shared values of cultural inclusion, respect, and equality for all students/members. ACHA champions healthy campuses for all students, faculty, and staff at institutions of higher education, and the communities where they reside.

As guiding principles, **ACHA** supports policies and government actions that:

1. Strengthen college health systems;
2. Advance the health and well-being of college students and communities; and
3. Help ensure accessible and quality college education.

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### 1. College Health Systems

*ACHA supports policies that advance greater acceptance and recognition of the critical role of college health and well-being in building healthy campuses and that ensure a quality health system for all institutions of higher education, including those that advance:*

A. Comprehensive health systems that:

- Provide or facilitate access to a wide spectrum of services, which support the health of the individual student and the campus community in its broadest sense
- Provide high-quality services and participate in and promote assessment and quality improvement
- Educate students on navigating the health care system and aid with the transition from parent-guided care to self-care
- Demonstrate that services are delivered efficiently and effectively
- Require that all staff maintain professional competencies, work within their scope of practice, and adhere to codes of professional practice
- Collaborate with community and campus partners to create a network of care and leverage resources
- Provide expertise on health matters to the campus and serve as campus public health representatives
- Provide student-centered services
- Exhibit professional excellence, responsiveness, and ethical practice
- Practice multidisciplinary and collaborative approaches to health

B. Health care policies and practices that:

- Ensure that any health care reform measures take into account the particular impacts on colleges and college students
- Advance efforts to decrease health disparities among all communities, including different races, ethnicities, backgrounds, and sexual orientations (such as around HIV prevention)
- Require students to receive adequate privacy protection for their health matters, such as policies relating to the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) and the Health Insurance Portability & Accountability Act (HIPAA)
- Advance parity in the treatment of physical and mental health care
- Utilize evidence-informed prevention measures, such as vaccines, education/awareness raising, prophylactics, and expedited partner therapy (such as EPT, masks, social distancing, and quarantining)
  - *See ACHA Position Statement: ACHA Position Statement on Expedited Partner Therapy*

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C. Immunizations. Immunizations offer safe and effective protection from vaccine-preventable diseases. ACHA strongly supports the use of vaccines to protect the health of our students and our campus communities. To that end, ACHA:

- Supports legislation, regulation, and/or policy development that increase access for the use of vaccinations against meningitis, COVID-19, and other diseases.
- Discourages nonmedical exemptions to required vaccines. Best practices for institutions of higher education include following [recommendations for institutional prematriculation immunization](#) guidelines, encouraging students who request nonmedical waivers to be counseled by a health service clinician, and considering the exclusion of unimmunized students from school during outbreaks of vaccine-preventable diseases.
  - [See ACHA Position Statement: ACHA Statement in Support of Vaccine Use to Promote Health and Prevent Disease](#)
  - [See ACHA Immunization Recommendations for College Students](#)

D. Funding. Meaningful and reliable funding of campus health and other well-being services for:

- Providing comprehensive quality services,
- Monitoring and data collection,
- Strategic/long-term planning,
- Appropriate facilities and equipment, and
- Research into ways to improve campus health practices.

E. Healthcare, prevention, and other well-being professional development. To ensure that we have diverse and high-quality campus health and well-being systems, ACHA supports the professional development, certification, or college-specific training of campus healthcare professionals through:

- Relevant minimum educational requirements
- Funding for ongoing professional development and training
- Advancement opportunities
- Career and retention planning
- Efforts to recruit and maintain underrepresented populations such that there is a diverse representation within campus health and well-being professionals

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### 2. College Health and Well-being

ACHA supports policies that promote a multi-faceted, data-driven, holistic approach to whole campus health and well-being, including those that advance:

- A. Affordable and accessible health care. ACHA supports efforts to ensure student health and well-being, which includes:
  - Available, meaningful, and affordable, including student health insurance plans, at a reasonable cost and with appropriate coverage levels and options; and with safeguards against predatory practices
  - Accessible for those on Medicaid and those whose extended parental health coverage is not an option
  - Clear in addressing privacy and parental consent concerns
  - Comprehensive with quality care services that are accessible and support students' needs, wants, and life goals, and made universal to all and are not discriminating in any way, including age; race/ethnicity; sex; sexual orientation; backgrounds; marital status; physical size; religious, spiritual, or cultural identity; psychological/physical/learning disability; socioeconomic status; or veteran status. This includes access to:
    - Continued telehealth options with campus providers when not on campus, including for mental health
    - Unbiased, comprehensive, all forms of evidence-based sexual and reproductive health services, counseling, and education
      - [See ACHA State of Sexual and Reproductive Health on Campus](#)
      - [See ACHA Promoting Reproductive Health Care Access on Campus: Implementation Toolkit](#)
    - Medical and counseling services for students across *all backgrounds*
      - [See ACHA Position Statement: Statement on Legislation Affecting Medically Necessary Services for Transgender Patients](#)
      - [See ACHA Gender-Affirming Question Set](#)
    - Mental health care and education
- B. Positive mental health. ACHA encourages comprehensive approaches to improve mental health and well-being; the availability of professional counseling services; training for staff, students, and faculty; and infrastructure and services to prevent suicide and self-harm.
- C. Access to basic needs. ACHA supports efforts to facilitate meeting the basic needs of staff, students, and faculty, such as providing access to food, housing, affordable and accessible healthcare, appropriate insurance benefits, and information on how to access and utilize the aforementioned services.

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- D. Positive physical health (nutrition and physical activity). ACHA supports efforts to provide food security for all students through access to adequate, nutritious foods through food pantries and other programs, and access to physical activity opportunities on college campuses.
  - *ACHA is particularly concerned that students are opting to pay tuition at the expense of their bodily health.*
- E. Student housing. ACHA supports student access to affordable, safe, and healthy housing options.
- F. Campus safety. ACHA works to ensure that students and campus professionals have access to a safe environment free from bullying, hazing, sexual harassment/sexual assault, and other crimes and violence.
- G. Campus physical environment. ACHA encourages improving the health, safety, and sustainability of campus design, including buildings and dedicated green space, equipment, and practices.
- H. Campus accessibility. ACHA supports accessible campuses, including infrastructure, equipment, technology, and practices.
- I. Addressing unhealthy habits, mental disorders, and addictions. ACHA supports efforts to reduce the use/misuse of tobacco, prescription drugs, illegal drugs, alcohol, eating disorders, gambling, and other risky/physically and emotionally damaging behaviors.
  - *See ACHA Position Statement: Sexual and Relationship Violence on College and University Campuses*
- J. Intentional support. ACHA supports the health and well-being needs of a full range of student populations, such as student-athletes, veterans, those with unique health needs, those in recovery, historically marginalized populations, first-generation college students, those with disabilities and/or chronic conditions, and victims of trauma or violence.

### 3. Accessible and Quality Education

*ACHA supports policies that promote an evolving approach for the continued support of fairness for all in college health and well-being, including those that advance:*

- A. Nondiscrimination. ACHA believes that colleges should be guided by the values of inclusion, respect, equality for all students, and rejects all forms of intolerance and bias (whether implicit or explicit). Such a climate is essential for a healthy campus. Consistent with these values, ACHA rejects all forms of discriminatory conduct with respect to age; sex; sexual orientation; marital status; physical size, psychological/physical/learning ability; religious, spiritual, or cultural identity; socioeconomic status; veteran status, or background.
  - *See ACHA Position Statement: Non-Discrimination Policy*



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- B. Anti-bias/anti-violence/social fairness. ACHA supports social fairness, human dignity, and respect for all, and works to end bias and violence on college campuses. For a campus community to be truly healthy, it must be guided by the values of multicultural inclusion, respect for all students/members. Intolerance has no place at an institution of higher learning, and this is true for all individuals regardless of race, color, age, religion, sex, sexual orientation, national origin, veteran status, disability, genetic information, or background. Policies should engage in the struggle to end oppression, prevent bias-related violence in our campus communities, and take action to eradicate unfairness.
  - *See ACHA Position Statement: Anti-Bias/Anti-Violence Statement*
- C. Diverse environments. ACHA supports the creation of supportive and inclusive environments that facilitate belonging within the college community, which is the strongest predictor of emotional well-being among students, staff, and faculty.<sup>1</sup> Intersectionality contributes highly to the inclusivity and well-being of the campus community.
  - *See The Influence of Environmental Factors, Including Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion, on the Emotional Well-Being of Students, Staff, and Faculty, American College Health Foundation White Paper*

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<sup>1</sup> [https://www.acha.org/documents/ACHF/Influence\\_of\\_Environmental\\_Factors\\_on\\_the\\_Emotional\\_Well-Being\\_on\\_Students\\_Staff\\_and\\_Faculty.pdf](https://www.acha.org/documents/ACHF/Influence_of_Environmental_Factors_on_the_Emotional_Well-Being_on_Students_Staff_and_Faculty.pdf)