

CONSENSUS STATEMENT OF PRINCIPLES AND RECOMMENDATIONS

2001-2004 National Task Force on Accreditation in Health Education

Sponsored by the Society for Public Health Education and
The American Association for Health Education

The following principles and recommendations are contained in the report Toward a Unified System of Accreditation for Professional Preparation in Health Education. This report was developed by the National Task Force on Accreditation in Health Education, commissioned by SOPHE and AAHE in 2001. The Task Force heard presentations and testimony from accrediting agencies and health education program leaders, conducted a literature review, and conducted two surveys whose results have been presented at the annual meetings of AAHE, SOPHE, American Public Health Association (APHA), Association of State and Territorial Directors of Health Promotion and Education (ASTDHPPE), American School Health Association, International Union of Health Promotion and Education (IUHPE), and other groups. Comments also were solicited from the Council on Education for Public Health, SOPHE/AAHE Baccalaureate Approval Committee (SABPAC), and the National Commission for Health Education Credentialing.

The consensus statement of principles and recommendations were approved in the Spring of 2004 by the AAHE Board of Directors and the SOPHE Board of Trustees. The report's recommendations will be addressed by the National Transition Task Force through continued profession-wide dialogue, dissemination and discussion of the report and its recommendations, and negotiation with accrediting bodies and other stakeholders

Principles and Recommendations

The work of the 2001-2004 Task Force resulted in the development of several key principles that guided its deliberations and seven recommendations.

A. Principles

1. Health education is a single profession, with common roles and responsibilities.
2. Professional preparation in health education provides the health education specialist with knowledge and skills that form a foundation of common and setting-specific competencies.
3. Accreditation is the primary quality assurance mechanism in higher education.
4. The health education profession is responsible for assuring quality in professional preparation and practice.

B. Recommendations

1. That accreditation be the quality assurance mechanism for health education professional preparation institutions, and should replace existing approval processes in an orderly transition.
2. That there be a unified accreditation system, comprising two parallel, coordinated accreditation mechanisms for community and school health education preparation institutions, which are responsive to the needs of the health education profession. These mechanisms must assure that common and specific competencies in health education are addressed at the undergraduate and graduate levels.
 - a. **That the National Council for the Accreditation of Teacher Education (NCATE)** is the preferred accrediting entity to provide a single coordinated accreditation mechanism for school health education programs at the undergraduate and graduate levels. If a dual teacher certification program is in place, health education is to be reviewed as a separate program.
 - b. **That the Council on Education for Public Health (CEPH)** is the preferred accrediting entity to provide a single coordinated accreditation mechanism for community/public health education programs at the undergraduate and graduate levels.
3. That a coordinated accreditation system should build upon the best practices of existing community and school health accreditation mechanisms.
4. That graduate professional preparation programs must assure that students perform all health education competencies, and that their performance reflects graduate-level proficiency.
5. That new designations should be created to distinguish the practice level of health educators at the undergraduate and graduate levels, parallel with other professional disciplines such as nursing and social work. The Task Force recommends that these designations be:
 - a. **Health Education Specialist (HES)** for undergraduate level practitioners from an accredited program.
 - b. **Master Health Education Specialist (MHES)** for the graduate level practitioners from an accredited program.
6. That the National Commission for Health Education Credentialing (NCHEC) is the appropriate entity to oversee the process of individual certification at both the undergraduate and graduate levels. The Task Force further recommends that:
 - a. Persons who successfully complete the certification processes should be designated as a Certified Health Education Specialist (CHES) (undergraduate level) or Master's-level Certified Health Education Specialist (MCHES) (both masters and doctorate graduate level). Only students from accredited programs/schools should be eligible for CHES and MCHES certification; however, those individuals who hold the CHES certification prior to the implementation of this process would remain certified.

- b. Appropriate deeming of those undergraduate level practitioners holding CHES should be considered, with students currently from non-accredited undergraduate programs/schools permitted to sit for CHES for a reasonable, multi-year period of time. After such time, only students from accredited undergraduate programs/schools should be eligible to sit for CHES. A multi-year window of time should allow the new accreditation system to be fully functioning, while offering a transition period for programs/schools to prepare and qualify for accreditation.
 - c. Appropriate deeming of those Master's or Doctorate level practitioners holding CHES be considered, with a window of time of up to 24 months to earn MCHES designation.
7. That the results of the work of the Task Force be articulated to the American Public Health Association, Association of Schools of Public Health, Association of Teachers of Preventive Medicine, Coalition of National Health Education Organizations, National Commission for Health Education Credentialing, and other relevant groups.