



Friday Beat

December 20, 2024, Edition

The newsletter that takes a [Whole School, Whole Community, Whole Child](#) approach. The *Friday Beat* is a free publication of the Texas Department of State Health Services. It is edited and compiled by the [School Health Program](#).

Announcements

Happy Holidays

The Texas Department of State Health Services (DSHS) School Health Program wishes everyone a happy and safe winter break. Thank you for your service to Texas students and families! The Friday Beat will not be published on December 27th or January 3rd and will resume January 10th, 2025.

Health Alert: Increase in Pertussis Cases

The number of pertussis cases in Texas has tripled in 2024 compared to 2023. Based on preliminary data, this follows a national trend, which has seen a more than fivefold increase in 2024 cases. DSHS advises clinicians to follow the recommendations in the [health alert](#) and report any cases to their [local health department](#) within one workday. Please send questions to the Vaccine-Preventable Disease Team at VPDTexas@dshs.texas.gov.

Professional Development

Start with Hello Program

The [Texas School Safety Center \(TxSSC\)](#) is teaming up with [Sandy Hook Promise](#) to offer the "[Start with Hello](#)" training program. This program teaches students how to be more socially inclusive and connected. With activities and programs available for all ages, students are empowered to end social isolation in three steps: see someone alone, reach out and help, and start with hello.

The training is 2.5 hours and includes various activities to help schools incorporate this training into their culture. You can [register](#) for the next session on January 21, 2025, from 9:30am-12:00pm.

Safety Planning Interventions

The [Texas Health and Human Services Commission](#) will hold [Safety Planning Intervention Trainings](#) throughout 2025. This training teaches participants how to conduct safety planning with individuals who may be at risk of suicide. A safety plan is a written, prioritized list of coping strategies and resources to reduce suicide risk. This plan is made together by an individual and a mental health professional, such as a school counselor, nurse, social worker, or licensed professional counselor.

To register for the training on January 30, 2025, or to see other training dates, please email suicide.prevention@hhs.texas.gov.

Funding Opportunities

2025 TAAIS Memorial Foundation Asthma Scholarship Award

The [Texas Allergy, Asthma, and Immunology Society \(TAAIS\) Memorial Foundation](#) announced the [2025 TAAIS Memorial Foundation Asthma Scholarship Award](#). This \$3,000 one-time award will be granted to up to five qualified Texas high school seniors who live with asthma and plan to attend college. The deadline to apply for the award is March 3, 2025. Visit the [TAAIS webpage](#) to apply and for additional information.

Health Education

Understanding Polysubstance Use and How to Make Health-Enhancing Choices

The [National Institute on Drug Abuse](#) and [SHAPE America](#) have created lesson plans for high school students to help them [understand polysubstance use and make healthier choices](#). This lesson teaches decision making using the [DECIDE model](#), which is a tool that can help teens feel equipped and empowered to make good decisions about their health.

Physical Education and Physical Activity

Move Your Way

The [U.S Department of Health and Human Services](#) and [Office of Disease Prevention and Health Promotion](#) updated the [Move Your Way resources](#). Parents can use an interactive webpage to find out how their children can reach the recommended 60 minutes of physical activity. This can include activities before, during, and after school as well as in the evenings.

FitnessGram Overview Sessions by Greenlight Fitness

[GreenLight Fitness](#) will hold sessions for Texas school districts and charter schools using the FitnessGram® platform. The sessions will cover how to sign up, navigate the system, create test events, enter data, and generate reports. You can register for the sessions on [January 22nd](#) or [January 28th](#) through the respective links.

Family Engagement

Holidays with Food Allergies

The [Allergy and Asthma Network](#) recorded a webinar on [Holidays with Food Allergies](#) to help participants navigate the holiday season safely. Allergies and asthma are a challenge to manage on a regular day and the holidays may create new obstacles to plan around. Participants will learn how to navigate the holiday season safely with food allergies.

Take Care of Texas Holiday Guide

[Take Care of Texas](#) has [created a series](#) of blogs about holiday sustainability to help you reduce waste, save energy, and make environmentally friendly choices during the holidays. You can find tips for sustainable decorating, cooking without wasting food, and using low-waste options for wrapping gifts.

Community Involvement

Share Safe Firearm Storage Information Prior to the Holiday Break

The [Texas School Safety Center \(TxSSC\)](#) advises school districts to share [information about safe firearm storage](#) with parents before the holiday break, including the new educator toolkit and sample letters. Districts can use this template to introduce the resources and share information about [section 46.13 of the Penal Code](#). The [Texas Department of Public Safety](#) has an [educator toolkit](#) and [social media graphics](#) available for schools to download.

Quote to Note

“May your walls know joy, may every room hold laughter, and every window open to great possibility.” –Mary Anne Radmacher

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