



Sustaining Your Tools for Schools Program

The purpose of this document is to provide ideas and suggestions to assist schools and school districts to sustain their Tools for Schools (TfS) programs for the “long haul.” As you know, TfS is an ongoing program. Each school year, the building teams should implement the process of documenting and assessing problems, prioritizing solutions, and working with the school administration to prevent and remediate problems. **Don’t forget to communicate your findings and actions to the school community – we have ample evidence that this is a key to success.** Schools often use the summer time to make larger improvements such as replacing roofs and upgrading HVAC systems. Maintaining your TfS program is important to preventing problems and keeping the school healthy. Another reason for maintaining your TfS program is the 2003 School IAQ law (PA 03-220). This new law requires that schools have an indoor air program. TfS meets this requirement of the bill.

Fall Kick-off Meetings:

It is strongly recommend that each school district start off the new school year with a meeting of the coordinators and team members from all the schools to review procedures, compare notes, find out what improvements were made over the summer, and to move forward with last year’s prioritized recommendations. Make sure the facilities director is at this meeting if at all possible. **If any of the schools in your district do not have a TfS building team, please urge your Superintendent to contact us to set up a training session for these schools.**

Keep Your Building Teams Fully “Staffed:”

Make sure each building team has at least 5 members (administrator, teacher, school nurse, custodian, parent) with a designated coordinator or co-coordinators. High schools might have students on their team. If you are no longer the coordinator or co-coordinator for your school’s team, please let us know immediately. Make sure there is someone to replace you, and then contact Kenny Foscue (kenny.foscue@ct.gov) or Joan Simpson (joan.simpson@ct.gov) at (860) 509-7740, or by email. Also, please send us your email address – preferably your school email address if you have one.

Communication is Key!

Multi-year experience with TfS has demonstrated the importance of a good communication plan as part of TfS. Keeping the school community informed – and therefore supportive of your efforts – is a key to success. Here are some suggestions for an effective communication plan:

- Make sure you have a parent representative on each of your teams. We strongly encourage this to ensure an open communication process.
- Use internal and external newsletters to inform school staff, parents and students about TfS activities (assessment results, prioritized recommendations, and especially improvements made). This could be used effectively in the fall to inform the school community about IAQ improvements made over the summer.
- Ask the superintendent to mention TfS and talk about what has been or will be done at the district-wide faculty meeting that usually starts off the school year.
- Post information on School web sites. They are an important source of information for parents and students. The central district web page might have a link to an “IAQ information” page with an overview about your school district’s program and links to other agencies like EPA’s TfS site. The 2003 School IAQ law mentioned above states that the Superintendent has to report annually to the Commissioner of ED on the individual school’s IAQ program and the condition of its facilities. This would be a good place for school community members to find that report.

- Involve the media to get information out about your TfS work and successes. Local weeklies are a good outlet, and are often looking for stories. If you have access to the local cable access station (some Superintendents may have their own regular program), consider approaching the station about having a special show on school IAQ and your TfS program.

Presentation to Board of Education:

It is strongly suggested that a formal presentation about your TfS program be made to the Board of Education at least once a year. This is a great way to make sure Board members (and the audience) is aware of school IAQ and the need to address building issues. This is the time to present a summary of your program's assessment results, prioritized recommendations and improvements made.

District-wide Coordination and IAQ Management Plan:

To make TfS successful and ongoing, each school district should have a written **IAQ Management Plan** that ensures that TfS is implemented and sustained. It is recommended that this plan be made available to the school community and public. EPA has recently revised the TfS kit to include a model IAQ management plan. A district IAQ team should coordinate your school district. To receive an updated TfS kit, call 1-800-438-4318 and ask for the 3rd edition.

Occupied Schools Undergoing Renovation:

It is very important to make sure there are active committees with parental participation in schools undergoing renovations. The TfS building team should play an active role in facilitating communication between the school administration, contractors and the school community. The team can play a crucial role in making sure the contractors are following renovation guidelines that protect building occupants.

CSIERT Free Services

Refresher Training:

Although TfS is an ongoing program, not all members of your team(s) will continue to be involved. It is important to maintain the teams, and so it may be useful to arrange for "refresher training" for new members of the building team. CSIERT offers a 2.5 hour TfS Refresher Workshop for your district. Please contact Kenny Foscue or Joan Simpson at (860) 509-7740, or email (kenny.foscue@ct.gov) to arrange this training.

Advanced TfS for Custodians & Facilities Personnel Workshop:

CSIERT offers a special workshop for school district custodial and facilities maintenance staff. Besides providing additional expertise and skills to participants, this training seeks to integrate all custodial and facilities personnel into the TfS program, and to encourage them to work with the building team members (which includes a custodian). The workshop also covers green cleaning and infection control issues. Please contact us at the number and/or email address above to arrange this training.

Cleaning for Health Green Cleaning Consultations: Cleaning for Health is an educational and technical assistance program designed to help schools transition to less-toxic cleaning chemicals and to adopt state-of-the-art cleaning practices. The program consists of a 2-3 hour consultation with facilities staff to help them evaluate their present program and provides a checklist and materials to improve your school's cleaning practices and products in cost-effective ways.

CSIERT Connecticut TfS "Users" Web Site: This is a "one-stop" source for information and referrals relating to the Tools for Schools program and other school environmental health issues for Connecticut TfS team members and others. Part of the site is the Information Sharing Forum where TfS team members, facility directors, administrators, etc, could share information in a Q & A format.

To reach the site, go to: <http://www.csiert.tfsiaq.com>