

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY:
Improving the Implementation & Enforcement of
Section One of PA 03-220:
An Act Concerning Indoor Air Quality in Schools

This report from the Connecticut Foundation for Environmentally Safe Schools (ConnFESS) seeks to answer the question: **How can the implementation and enforcement of Section One of PA 03-220, An Act Concerning Indoor Air Quality In Schools (Connecticut General Statutes 10-220(a)), be improved?** It identifies the central issues interfering with the law's implementation and enforcement while suggesting remedies to rectify them.

In 1999, the Connecticut General Assembly commissioned the Connecticut Academy of Science and Engineering (CASE) to investigate indoor air quality (IAQ) in Connecticut schools. When the CASE Report was released in July 2000, one of its most significant statements was that legislators needed to "require schools and school districts to establish indoor air quality management plans and operational manuals, and designate an Indoor Air Quality Coordinator for each school or school district."

PA 03-220 does not require IAQ management plans, operational manuals or the designation of IAQ Coordinators. Enacted in July 2003, Section One of PA 03-220 does mandate that local or regional boards of education: (1) Adopt/implement an IAQ program and (2) Report annually to the State Department of Education (SDE) on (a) the condition of school facilities and (b) action taken to implement the IAQ program.

In turn, the State Department of Education (SDE) must use these reports to prepare and submit an annual report to the Education Committee of the Connecticut General Assembly.

The first mandate of Section One, to adopt and implement an IAQ program, is complicated by the lack of a consensus definition as to what an acceptable or even optimal IAQ program includes. **ConnFESS's position is that the best IAQ programs use the EPA's Indoor Air Quality Tools for Schools Kit as well as a written management plan developed and implemented by a trained IAQ coordinator and school-based team.**

Chapter four of this report describes some exceptional IAQ programs in Ridgefield, Connecticut and Minnesota and Maine. All three embody suggestions made in the 2000 CASE report. Ridgefield hired a district-wide IAQ Coordinator to support the nine Tools for Schools teams in its district. District-wide coordinators who have completed a state sponsored training program are mandated in Minnesota. Maine and Minnesota provide local school districts with web-based models for IAQ management plans. Both of these states track compliance of local districts.

ConnFESS strongly urges Connecticut school districts to begin the process of adopting and implementing an IAQ program by completing and employing the five hour Tools for Schools training program offered by the Connecticut School Indoor Environment Resource Team (at no cost to local districts). This training program requires that school based teams designate an IAQ Coordinator.

Currently, Connecticut schools report to SDE by completing an IAQ section of the School Facilities Survey (ED050). School officials are asked to rate "the overall indoor air

quality for each school” using vague and highly subjective criteria. The 2003 ED050 reports provide absolutely no information on actions taken to implement an IAQ program as the law demands. **Therefore, it is impossible to assess how many schools have adopted IAQ programs or how effectively they are being implemented.** Connecticut would benefit from adopting an IAQ management plan model/template similar to those in Minnesota and Maine. If it did, the mandates of Section One of PA 03-220 could be met with greater efficiency and accuracy.

In December 2004, SDE released its first assessment of IAQ in Connecticut schools based on the fundamentally flawed ED050 forms. The report submitted to the Connecticut General Assembly states that 87% of Connecticut schools reported they had no or only minor IAQ problems. In chapter three of this report, ConnFESS provides ample evidence to support its concerns regarding the accuracy and credibility of such a claim.

SDE staff have repeatedly and consistently said that a lack of resources, staff and expertise account for the failure of this agency to comply with and enforce Section One of PA 03-220. Yet, Dr. Betty Sternberg, Commissioner of Education, did not request additional support to address IAQ issues in schools in the SDE 2006-2007 budget. As a result, ConnFESS submitted a proposal to the Connecticut General Assembly to establish and fund a position of School Environment Management Plan Coordinator.

After telling how ConnFESS participated in a statewide coalition that helped to shape and pass PA 03-220 in the introduction of this report, chapter one presents anecdotal reports and research emphasizing health impacts caused by water damaged buildings. The information in chapter one became available after PA 03-220 was signed into law.

In the report’s conclusion, ConnFESS calls for the convening of a statewide task force to:

1. Define what an IAQ program must include
2. Revise and replace the section of the ED050 form dealing with IAQ issues
3. Formalize in writing roles and procedures to be carried out by the state agencies as they relate to compliance and enforcement of school environmental health laws
4. Analyze the use of current state agency staff and determine needs for new staffing.

The achievement of these four goals would greatly advance efforts to:

- 1. Guarantee school children and employees a safe environment, free of preventable health hazards**
- 2. Provide school community stakeholders access to accurate and reliable assessments of school facility conditions**
- 3. Hold school officials and public agencies accountable for what they do or do not do to maintain safe and healthy school buildings.**